



### **WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF September 12, 2018**

"Sox bats go cold as Covey takes loss in KC" ... Scott Merkin, MLB.com

"Palka's power shines in rebuilding year"... Scott Merkin, MLB.com

"Giolito finds rhythm, but bullpen misstep costly" ... Scott Merkin, MLB.com

"As Yoan Moncada closes in on 200 strikeouts, he's actually finishing on a good note" ... Vinnie Duber, NBC Sports Chicago

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"5 things to know about new White Sox reliever and Chicago-area native Rob Scahill" ... Phil Thompson, Chicago Tribune

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"Palkamania: A White Sox fan base finds its spirit animal" ... James Fegan, The Athletic

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### **Sox bats go cold as Covey takes loss in KC**

*Questions remain about right-hander's future role*

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 11, 2018

KANSAS CITY -- Is he a starter or is he a reliever?

That question has been asked often of White Sox right-hander Dylan Covey, who has experienced some success in both roles but also had his fair share of struggles across the board. Covey should get a chance for three more starts in 2018 due to Michael Kopech being placed on the 60-day disabled list, with Tommy John surgery apparently imminent due to a significant tear of his ulnar collateral ligament announced Friday, and Covey began that journey with a 6-3 loss to the Royals on Tuesday night at Kauffman Stadium.

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Covey didn't exactly get crushed, but he still allowed six runs (five earned) on six hits over 4 1/3 innings. He struck out four and walked three in 74 pitches.

"I feel like the line is not indicative of how I felt, or how I threw," Covey said. "I put myself in a hole that third inning with a leadoff single and the walk. But they did a good job of getting them over and putting pressure on us to make some plays."

"His stuff looked pretty good, the action was good," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "He's been relieving, but all and all he held his own."

Tuesday marked Covey's 30th career start. In that time, the right-hander has a 4-18 record with a 6.71 ERA. As a reliever, Covey has a 1-2 mark with a 5.01 ERA in 12 appearances. Those splits appear far

more pronounced in 2018, where Covey is 4-11 with a 6.09 ERA over 18 starts and 1-2 with a 2.25 ERA during six games as a reliever.

His numbers also are a bit skewed considering Covey finished 0-7 with a 7.71 ERA in 2017 as a Rule 5 Draft selection who by his own admission was overmatched. In '18, as a starter, he picked up a 1-0 victory over Boston and Chris Sale at Fenway Park and followed up that shutout effort by defeating the Indians.

Clearly, the ability is there. It's just a matter of figuring out what role suits Covey best and suits a future contending White Sox team best as well.

"Minus a few things I threw the ball decent today," Covey said. "Obviously you don't ever want to give up six runs, [but I] feel like I did a good job trying to minimize in the third. Minimizing has been my issue in the past. I feel like I did it today, but things didn't kind of go my way."

There was little offensive support for Covey on this night, despite the White Sox scoring first in the third inning on Avisail Garcia's infield single. Brad Keller yielded four hits over seven innings, striking out six and walking two for the Royals, as the White Sox fell for a seventh straight time.

They didn't go down without a fight. Tim Anderson singled home a run in the ninth, and Yoan Moncada drew a seven-pitch walk to force home a run. But Yolmer Sanchez's pop up off of Wily Peralta left the rally three runs short.

"We gave them a little scare here in the ninth," Renteria said. "I was envisioning a big surprise from Sanchy there but it wasn't too be."

#### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Jones returns: For the first time since June 12, Nate Jones made an appearance in a big league game. The right-hander, who has the longest White Sox service time on this current roster, threw a scoreless seventh with one strikeout and one infield hit. Renteria said before the game Jones was available, but they would be careful how they used him in a return from a pronator strain.

"During the warmups, I could start feeling the adrenaline coming on being back in a big league game," a noticeably happy Jones said. "I was lucky enough to keep those emotions under control and stuff like that. It feels good now and next step being make sure it feels good tomorrow, which I'm sure it will be."

"It's a grind whenever you go on the DL. It's a grind with all the boxes you have to check and all the exercises you have go through. But in the end it's all worth it to get back out here. It was different and it was exciting. I got that adrenaline going and that was nice too."

#### SOUND SMART

Covey has lost each of his last seven starts against the Royals, matching Tim Belcher (1993-95) for the most consecutive losing starts vs. the Royals all-time.

#### YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Veteran reliever Rob Scahill made his first big league appearance since July 21, 2017. He was pitching for Milwaukee against the Phillies at that point. Scahill pitched a perfect eighth on Tuesday.

#### HE SAID IT

"We don't look pretty right now, but hopefully we catch our breath here and kind of turn it around a little bit."  
-- Renteria, on his team's seven-game losing streak

#### UP NEXT

Left-hander Carlos Rodon (6-5, 3.11 ERA) is scheduled to make his 17th start of the season in Wednesday's season finale against the Royals. Rodon is 3-2 with a 4.22 ERA, a .191 opponents' average and 1.16 WHIP allowed over his last five starts (three quality). Eric Skoglund starts for the Royals in the 7:15 p.m. CT contest at Kauffman Stadium.

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## **Palka's power shines in rebuilding year**

*McEwing remembers 9/11; Jones comes off 60-day DL*

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 11, 2018

KANSAS CITY -- Call him the Punisher. Or maybe you prefer Palka Power.

Whatever the description, both the eye test and the Statcast™ numbers back up Daniel Palka as one of the hardest hitters in all of baseball. But the White Sox outfielder, who entered Tuesday tied with Jose Abreu for the team lead at 22 home runs, wants to be so much more.

"Yeah, that stuff, it's cool and I feel like it's a good sign," said Palka during a recent interview. "For me, it's more like I not only want to do more but I need to do more to stick here.

"I've got to be more consistent because the 30 at-bats where you are hitting .500 is great. But when you have the next 30 and you are hitting .100, you've got to make an adjustment."

The left-handed hitting Palka, who was claimed off waivers from Minnesota on Nov. 4, 2017, ranks third among American League rookies with 22 home runs, 57 RBIs and 39 extra-base hits (tied). His 22 homers are tied with Pete Ward (1963) for the most by a left-handed hitting rookie in White Sox history.

According to Statcast™, Palka's 108.6-mph average exit velocity on his home runs is third-highest in MLB of the 213 hitters with 10-plus homers. He narrowly trails Giancarlo Stanton (108.8) and Gary Sanchez (108.7).

His nine homers of 110-plus mph are tied for fourth-most, while 11.2 percent of his batted balls have been 110 mph or greater, ranking him fifth in the big leagues. All three of these rankings are out of 255 hitters with at least 200 batted balls.

In a rebuild year when players not among the elite prospects have had a chance to prove their value, Palka has run with the opportunity.

"It's not the No. 1 thing in my mind, but any time you are mentioned with Stanton, it's pretty cool," Palka said. "It's just a matter of getting away from wanting to do it every pitch. I need to pick my spots, when to be a little more aggressive. I need to keep being more productive and wait for people to attack me instead of trying to take the bait."

McEwing remembers 9/11

White Sox bench coach Joe McEwing was an integral part of the New York Mets 17 years ago on Sept. 11, 2001. He remembers the team being in Pittsburgh at the time of the unspeakable atrocities taking place on that day in New York, and also remembers his feelings the first time the Mets came by bus back into the city following the terrorist attacks.

"Humbling," McEwing said. "We turned on the Jersey Turnpike at 8:30 or 9 o'clock at night, and it was completely black with nobody on the roads. And for me, growing up in the East Coast, you never see that. I don't care if it's 3 or 4 in the morning, you never see that. You never see blank road way.

"We turned and when you saw the first glimpse of the city, you saw all the smoke from all the rubble and you couldn't see the skyline for the first time. You are sitting there just breathless, just trying to take in what literally just happened.

"When we were going over the GW (George Washington Bridge), the toll booths were lined with tanks and armed forces with machine guns, and for that moment, you knew your life was going to change forever," McEwing said. "It made a lot of people understand and be thankful for what they have and understanding that was going to change from that moment on."

McEwing and his Mets teammates would work out at Shea Stadium and then help the firefighters and police officers stationed at the ballpark who were being sent to the site of attack for assistance.

"One of the biggest accomplishments in my baseball career, as far as moment wise, was being able to be part of the relief efforts to help out, to give back, in any possible way we could," McEwing said. "It changed my life and changed America forever."

Jones officially returns

The White Sox returned Nate Jones from his injury rehabilitation assignment with Class A Winston-Salem and reinstated him from the 60-day disabled list prior to Tuesday's contest. Jones, 32, was placed on the disabled list June 13 with a pronator muscle strain in his right arm.

Jones is 2-2 with a 2.55 ERA, four saves, six holds, 27 strikeouts over 24 2/3 innings and a .215 opponents average in 27 relief appearances this season, his seventh with the White Sox. He has not pitched in a game since June 12 vs. Cleveland, but Jones talked Monday about being close to a return. With the move, the White Sox active roster increases to 32 and the 40-man increases to 40.

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### **Giolito finds rhythm, but bullpen misstep costly**

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 11, 2018

KANSAS CITY -- On the first pitch thrown by Lucas Giolito Monday night at Kauffman Stadium, the White Sox right-hander found himself down one run.

But following that Whit Merrifield home run, Giolito grew awfully stingy over the next seven innings. He allowed three runs in total over seven, striking out three and walking two, in the Royals' 4-3 walk-off victory in 10 innings.

"Just tip my cap to Whit," said Giolito of the leadoff home run, which was followed by a walk to Adalberto Mondesi and an Alex Gordon double, but only one run scored in the first. "First pitch of the game, I pretty much always throw a fastball.

"I mislocated. I left it up over the middle of the plate and he did some damage to it. It happens. Like to have it back, get another shot at it, but it is what it is."

Kansas City (48-95) walked off with the win on a throwing error by Jeanmar Gomez off an Alcides Escobar sacrifice bunt to score Brian Goodwin. It was the sixth straight loss for the White Sox (56-88). Gomez might have had a play on Goodwin if he didn't hesitate, but then lofted the throw over Yolmer Sanchez.

"He did a nice job getting to it quickly," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "He saw the play, that it was designed for Sanchez to read and go back. Allow the pitcher to go ahead if he thought he had a play to go there. But that play just broke up by the errant throw, that was it."

Giolito has turned in six quality starts over his last eight trips to the mound and bounced back from a 1 1/3-inning effort in a loss to the Tigers, against whom he allowed five runs (four earned) on Tuesday. The right-hander didn't have his best stuff, calling it a grinder day, but recorded 12 ground-ball outs.

At 29 starts and 159 1/3 innings pitched during the 2018 season, Giolito still feels strong moving toward his final three starts.

"Physically, I feel good," Giolito said. "I feel like my innings aren't that high. I would like them to be higher, but earlier in the season wasn't very good. I actually feel better now physically than I did the first three months of the season, so that's a good indication.

"Fastball command was a little iffy. Definitely didn't have my changeup today. There were a few good ones, but not up to the standard it has been more recently. Grinded through it. Few mistakes. Got through seven innings so overall pretty solid."

The White Sox erased an early 2-0 deficit via a three-run outburst in the third off Royals starter Jakob Junis. Adam Engel homered to center field, his sixth of the season, and after Jose Abreu reached on a two-out infield hit, Daniel Palka pulled a drive just fair down the right-field line for his 22nd home run. Abreu had three hits in his first game played since Aug. 20, after recovering from surgery to relieve pain caused by testicular torsion.

That lead lasted until the sixth when Ryan O'Hearn connected for a game-tying solo home run with one out. Giolito topped out at 94.6 mph among his 106 pitches per Statcast™. He recorded seven swinging strikes, including four off the slider, but just one with the fastball.

"Like I said, I didn't have my best stuff or my best feel," Giolito said. "I don't think I'm going to go out there and strike out the world with what I had, but we were able to grind through."

#### SOUND SMART

Giolito put together his seventh straight quality start on the road, a stretch in which he's 4-1 with a 3.11 ERA and a .195 opponents average. It's tied for the third-longest streak in the Majors this season, trailing only Jacob deGrom (nine, active) and Justin Verlander (eight).

#### HE SAID IT

"I wasn't really good on first-pitch strikes and I fell behind a lot of guys. When runners were on base, I was able to flip it and get ahead of some guys and get some good outs."-- Giolito

#### MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

The Royals likely lost a run in the first when Mondesi's successful steal of second was overturned by video replay after Renteria challenged the call. Gordon followed with a long double to left-center field, which could have easily scored the fleet-footed Mondesi.

#### UP NEXT

Dylan Covey (5-12, 5.44) returns to the rotation to take the spot vacated by Michael Kopech, who figures to have Tommy John surgery to repair a significant tear of his ulnar collateral ligament. Covey starts Tuesday at Kauffman Stadium with a first pitch of 7:15 p.m. CT and Brad Keller is on the mound for the Royals. Covey is 4-10 with a 5.87 ERA over 17 starts and 1-2 with a 2.25 ERA over six relief appearances.

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### **As Yoan Moncada closes in on 200 strikeouts, he's actually finishing on a good note**

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / September 11, 2018

It might not come as much of a comfort to White Sox fans bummed out about how this season will end for the South Siders, but Yoan Moncada has been a lot better lately than his disappointing 2018 campaign would lead you to believe.

Moncada is almost surely going to finish this year with the 11th 200-strikeout season in major league history. His .224/.304/.391 slash line can only get so much better with 17 games remaining on the schedule. And while these are examples of the to-be-expected growing pains of a still-developing young player, Moncada's recent status as the top prospect in the game and one of the biggest names of the White Sox rebuild have made him fall drastically short of fans' expectations of him in his first full big league season.

But for those looking for something positive to focus on heading into the offseason, Moncada's numbers as the season has wound down have been significantly better than they were earlier in the summer.

Following Tuesday night's loss to the Kansas City Royals, the second baseman is slashing .263/.333/.408 with 20 hits, six extra-base hits and 11 RBIs in his last 21 games. Additionally, he's racked up only 19 strikeouts during that span.

Those numbers might not exactly leap off the screen, but compare them to what came before it, and you'll notice a sizable difference. In the 22 games prior to this current stretch, Moncada slashed .145/.250/.241 with only four extra-base hits and a whopping 40 strikeouts.

Interestingly, though perhaps not very meaningful, Moncada's stretch of increased success came after a day off and started with Michael Kopech's major league debut against the Minnesota Twins on Aug. 21. He homered that night, too.

And, as a quick aside, Moncada has only committed five errors since the beginning of July. So that's five errors in a two-and-a-half-month span after he committed 13 in the season's first three months. He still ranks fourth in baseball with 18 fielding errors on the year.

What about, though, the area of Moncada's game that the White Sox remain so high on, his eye at the plate? The team keeps talking up Moncada's mastery of the strike zone, using it as a kind of explainer for the high strikeout numbers. But are there walks to go along with that good eye?

Over his last 21 games, Moncada has walked eight times in 84 plate appearances. That includes a pair of bases on balls Tuesday night, one of which came with the bases loaded and forced in a run during an interesting ninth inning. In the prior 22 games, he walked 12 times in 97 plate appearances.

Before jumping to any conclusions from that, though, perhaps the smallish amount of walks could be Moncada doing what the White Sox want him to do and being more aggressive at the plate. That would be, maybe, a good sign that the strikeout numbers won't be quite as high in 2019.

General manager Rick Hahn was asked about Moncada's high strikeout total earlier this month and had this to say:

"That's part of his game. And we try to evaluate players holistically, for lack of a better word, and that being based on everything they bring to the table and not just one element. I'm not going to tell you this guy is an impact player simply because he has power. And we're certainly not going to disregard what a player can bring, in his case a substantial ceiling, simply because of strikeouts.

"Is the number higher than we would like? Absolutely. It's higher than he would like. One encouraging part of it, though, is as you guys have seen him repeatedly take pitches on the borderline, some of which have gone against him despite their location, the kid knows the strike zone and that's a tough thing to teach. If we have to teach him to be a little more aggressive earlier in counts when he gets hittable pitches that he's looking for, we'll take that challenge.

"This kid's got a world of hitting ability, blessed with fantastic tools, power. The plate discipline's one of the things that's tough to teach, and he already comes with that. So the things that we do have to teach in order to decrease those strikeouts a little bit down the road, that's a workable project."

Should Moncada's final 17 games look like his last 21, he probably won't break baseball's single-season strikeout record of 223 punch outs. He probably won't break the franchise record of 222, either. (In case you were wondering, that's Adam Dunn's record, set in 2012.) But he's still probably going to strike out at least 200 times during his first full season in the majors. The White Sox are confident such a campaign won't write the script for the remainder of Moncada's career, and there's plenty of recent precedent from some of the game's best young players to back that up.

A lot of strikeouts would probably be more palatable if Moncada's other numbers looked better. It's possible, should he keep this up over the campaign's final weeks, that his last roughly 40 games will make that a bit of a reality.

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## **Dylan Covey's struggles mount in White Sox's 6-3 loss at Kansas City**

By David Smale / Chicago Tribune / September 11, 2018

Brad Keller pitched seven strong innings to win for the fourth time in six starts, leading the Kansas City Royals to a 6-3 win over the White Sox on Tuesday night.

Whit Merrifield had two hits, two RBIs, and scored two runs for the Royals. He also stole two bases to increase his American League lead to 33 steals, including a league-best 12 of third base.

Keller (8-6) gave up one run and four hits and two walks while striking out six. He is 4-1 with a 1.62 ERA in his last six starts, lowering his ERA to 3.04 — leading all AL rookies.

Wily Peralta picked up his 10th save in 10 chances, despite walking two in one-third of an inning.

The Royals have won a season-high seven straight at home — and 10 of 11. After starting 11-35 at home before the All-Star break, the Royals are 16-10 since the break. They need to win three of their final nine games to avoid tying the franchise's worst home record (1998).

Dylan Covey (5-13) allowed six runs — five earned — and six hits in 4 1/3 innings for the White Sox. He walked three and struck out four. He is now 0-6 with a 9.00 ERA in his last six starts. Over his last 11 outings, he's 1-9 with an 8.59 ERA.

Covey has struggled against the Royals, falling to 0-7 with a 6.37 ERA in nine career starts.

The White Sox scored a run in the third when Avasail Garcia beat out an infield single, scoring Yolmer Sanchez from third. Garcia rolled it sharply to short, but Adalberto Mondesi appeared to take too long to release the throw to first.

Mondesi made up for his gaffe with an RBI single as part of a three-run third for Kansas City. Merrifield blooped a single to short right field, scoring Brian Goodwin. Mondesi followed with a bunt single that scored Rosell Herrera. A bad throw by catcher Welington Castillo sent Merrifield to third. He scored on Alex Gordon's sacrifice fly to the wall in right.

The Royals added another run in the fourth. Ryan O'Hearn led off with a triple down the right-field line and scored on Jorge Bonifacio's ground-rule double to make it 4-1.

Hunter Dozier had a two-run single in the sixth to give the Royals a five-run lead.

The White Sox pulled within three in the ninth against Royals relievers, with Tim Anderson driving in Ryan LaMarre with a single and Yoan Moncada scoring Jose Rondon on a bases-loaded walk.

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### **White Sox reliever Nate Jones pitches scoreless inning after long recovery from forearm injury**

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / September 11, 2018

Reliever Nate Jones returned to the White Sox on Tuesday after another arduous recovery in an injury-plagued career.

The 32-year-old right-hander had a 2.55 ERA, 27 strikeouts in 24 2/3 innings and four saves before being placed on the disabled list with a pronator muscle strain in his pitching arm. Before Tuesday night's 6-3 loss in Kansas City, he had last pitched June 12 against the Indians, allowing a hit and a walk in one-third of an inning.

Jones pitched the seventh Tuesday, facing four batters and allowing only an infield single. He struck out one, and seven of his eight pitches were strikes.

Starter Dylan Covey allowed all six Royals runs (five earned) on six hits and three walks in 4 1/3 innings.

Sox manager Rick Renteria watched Jones throw Monday.

"He was throwing the ball well," Renteria said. "Felt good; hitting his spots. Ball was coming off his hand pretty easy. So we're happy for him. It has been a long time coming. He has been working very hard trying to get back."

Jones, a fifth-round draft pick by the Sox in 2007, has had a string of hard-luck injuries since reaching the majors in 2012. In 2014, hip and elbow injuries limited him to two appearances. He had a microdiscectomy that May and Tommy John elbow surgery in July.

Recovery from the latter kept him out until August 2015, and he pitched in 19 games that season.

After Jones made a career-high 71 appearances in 2016, the injury bug bit the hard-throwing reliever again last season. Scar tissue from the Tommy John surgery had built up, and Jones required another operation to reposition the ulnar nerve. He was limited to 11 games.

When Jones felt soreness in his right forearm in June, the Sox believed it was a mild injury that would heal quickly, but that was not the case. Jones was making progress from the pronator strain but suffered a setback in July while pitching a bullpen session with Triple-A Charlotte.

He continued his recovery and did a rehabilitation assignment with Class A Winston-Salem that began Wednesday. His activation brings the active roster to 32.

Jones' two-seam sinking fastball has averaged 97.1 mph this season, according to Statcast. The sinker has accounted for 64.8 percent of his pitches.

Renteria said Sox coaches and Jones felt it was important for him to get work with three weeks left in the season.

"He wanted to make sure he can come back in healthy and finish out the season," Renteria said. "And we'll manage him so he can have a little bit more control and we can keep him out there as long as we can."

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### **5 things to know about new White Sox reliever and Chicago-area native Rob Scahill**

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / September 11, 2018

When Michael Kopech suffered a season-ending elbow injury, it opened the door for Rob Scahill, who played for Willowbrook in high school and at Bradley in college, to fulfill a lifelong dream to play for the White Sox.

The reliever, who posted a 5.64 ERA and 71 strikeouts in 52 relief appearances this season for Triple-A Charlotte, joined the Sox on Saturday.

Over parts of six seasons with the Rockies, Pirates and Brewers from 2012-17, Scahill, 31, has posted a 5-7 big-league record in 118 games with a 3.79 ERA in 144 2/3 innings as a reliever.

In his Sox debut Tuesday night, he pitched a perfect eighth inning in his new team's 6-3 loss to the Royals in Kansas City.

Here are five things to know about him.

**Bittersweet opportunity:** Retired teacher and Lombard resident Joe Scahill raised Rob as a White Sox fan, so his son's call-up came with a dose of sadness, knowing what Kopech means to the franchise,

"I felt terrible for him, and then on the flip side of it Rob gets an opportunity," he said. "So happy for my son and really unfortunate for Mike."

The pitchers also have been teammates in Triple-A Charlotte and Joe met Kopech during spring training.



"I went to a game and sat next to him in the stands. He seemed like the nicest kid. Soft-spoken, he talked about his mom and his dad. ... We didn't get into a big conversation because he was charting pitches ... but Rob said he's a hard worker, he's quiet and he said he's a good kid."

Sox family: Dad Joe admitted he pushed hard to make sure sons Rob and Dan turned out to be Sox fans while daughter Jeni rooted for the Cubs with their (now late) mother.

It stuck: Joe remembers hearing about Rob and Bradley teammate Dan Brewer "running up and down the hallways" at college after the Sox won the 2005 World Series.

Even in the majors, Scahill has reveled in Cubs misery.

After he pitched two scoreless innings against the Cubs as a Pirates reliever in May 2015, he told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, with a smile, "I'd love nothing more than to beat up on the Cubbies."

Now Rob's passing on his baseball addiction to his 2½-year-old son, though Maxwell's allegiances aren't settled yet.

"He's just a huge fan of his father," Joe said. "Doesn't matter if it's Charlotte or wherever it is, seeing dad in a uniform is exciting for him."

Devastating injuries: On more than one occasion, Scahill contemplated whether an injury would ruin his future in baseball.

When he was playing football as a freshman at Willowbrook, a player's helmet hit his pitching hand and dislocated his wrist.

"It was dislocated completely out (of the socket), sticking off to the side," Joe Scahill said.

When baseball season rolled around, he broke his elbow on his pitching arm. During a fall tryout for a travel team, he dislocated the other wrist during an outfield collision.

Rob also required right labrum and rotator cuff surgery after his freshman college season.

"He has been through the battle. Lot of rehab," Joe said.

Stat-diving: According to [baseballsavant.mlb.com](http://baseballsavant.mlb.com), the four-seam fastball was his dominant pitch in 2014, but he began making the transition to the sinker. And he added the curveball to his repertoire as he started phasing out his changeup.

During a May 2015 interview with the Post-Gazette, Scahill credited A.J. Burnett with helping him locate his two-seam sinker so he could use it more often than his four-seam fastball.

"In years past, I didn't really have the ability to throw it to my glove side," Scahill said about the two-seamer. "So I would throw a four-seamer to that side. Then I started to throw a little harder and I started to fall in love with my four-seam over my two-seam."

In 2017, 41.6 percent of his pitches were sinkers (which averaged 93.8 mph), and they yielded a 6.4 percent strike rate and 12.2 percent whiff rate.

Scahill used the slider and curve less than 29 percent of the time, but they produced whiff rates of 23.5 and 40 percent, respectively.

Renaissance man: Scahill loves photography and cooking. He has posted photos of various stadiums on Instagram, including Guaranteed Rate Field. He also shoots cityscapes.

Baseball has allowed him to travel and chronicle his experiences through photography.

"Looking back on it, when I'm done playing, it will be something to remember; what I got to do," he said.

Joe said Rob once entertained notions of becoming a chef and opening his own restaurant.

"I went over to his house the day he got called up (by the Sox) right before he got called up. And he had this nice meal set out for the family," Joe said. "Some chicken dish with veggies and things. It looked really good, it looked like a restaurant-type meal."

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### **White Sox lose seventh in a row**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 11, 2018

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — So much for finishing on a high note.

After going 17-12 in August and winning two of their first three games in September, the White Sox were trending toward a second solid month to use as a springboard toward next season, but their 6-3 loss Tuesday to the Royals, the second-worst team in baseball, was their seventh in a row.

The result left the Sox (56-89) one loss shy of their season-high eight-game skid in June. They need to win seven of their last 17 games to avoid becoming the fourth team in franchise history with 100 losses.

Sox right-hander Dylan Covey (5-13, 5.64 ERA), replacing Michael Kopech in the starting rotation, opened with two scoreless innings but allowed six runs (five earned) and six hits and walked three in 4 1/3 innings in his first start since Aug. 18. Royals rookie righty Brad Keller (8-6) lowered his ERA to 3.04 with seven innings of one-run ball. The Sox' only run against Keller came on Avisail Garcia's RBI infield single in the third inning.

The Sox made it 6-3 in the ninth on Tim Anderson's single that scored Ryan LaMarre and Yoan Moncada's bases-loaded walk against Wily Peralta with two outs. But Yolmer Sanchez, representing the go-ahead run, popped out to end the game.

The Royals are 49-95.

The Sox have been outscored 46-17 during their seven-game skid.

"If your offense goes dormant a little bit, it starts to look like things aren't going well," manager Rick Renteria said. "And we've had some [defensive] miscues out here."

Jones comes off disabled list

Right-hander Nate Jones, out since June 12 with a pronator muscle strain, returned from the 60-day disabled list to pitch a scoreless seventh inning. Jones struck out one and allowed an infield hit.

Renteria said Jones' usage will be monitored in the last three weeks of the season.

"We want to make sure we use the rest of the season to get him in ballgames and get him out through the rest of the year healthy," Renteria said.

Achy Davidson recovers

Matt Davidson, used primarily as a designated hitter before Jose Abreu went on the disabled list but as a regular first baseman afterward, missed his second straight start with "lower extremity discomfort," Renteria said. Davidson played 18 games in the field since Aug. 21, all but one at first base, which is not as stationary a position as one might think.

"Hoping to get him back in there [Wednesday]," Renteria said.

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## **White Sox shortstop Tim Anderson 'reaching for the stars'**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 11, 2018

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — As shortstop Tim Anderson winds down his second full season, his confidence could not be higher.

That it comes with a dash of humility and a sense of knowing he's far from the finished product he has in mind will serve him and the White Sox well.

"I'm never satisfied," Anderson said before the Sox played the Royals on Tuesday night. "I just want to keep getting better and better."

Hard work with bench coach and infield specialist Joe McEwing is paying off on the defensive side.

"Oh, he works his tail off," said third-base coach Nick Capra, the Sox' director of player development during Anderson's formative years after he was drafted in the first round in 2013. "When we're on the field, he's first in line."

Anderson is making plays to his right and to his left and charging in. The routine plays are becoming just that, as they need to for a middle-infield presence the Sox view as championship-caliber. The doubters about his defense, and there were many when he opened the season with 12 errors in the first three months, are diminishing.

"I still have to eliminate some of those errors, but right now I'm just playing balls to the wall, and if I make errors, so what," Anderson said. "I have a lot of range, and some of those errors come on plays some shortstops don't get to. I like where my game is going.

"Defensively, it's been a matter of doing my work every day to try to become one of the best shortstops to ever play the game. I just keeping pushing myself and keep reaching for the stars."

"He's made tremendous strides defensively," Capra said. "He's been focused. He's taking the information he's getting, and he's running with it. It's like he's on a mission to prove everyone wrong who said he couldn't be a shortstop."

Offensively, Anderson is reaching for places where few have gone, a .247 batting average and .289 on-base percentage notwithstanding. With 18 homers and 26 stolen bases, he was one of four players in the majors with at least that many, joining Mookie Betts, Starling Marte and Jose Ramirez.

No Sox shortstop has had at least 20 homers and 20 stolen bases in a season, and outfielders Alex Rios in 2010 and Tommie Agee in 1966 are the only Sox to have 20 homers and 30 stolen bases. The 30/30 club looks even better, and attainable one of these years, to Anderson.

"Why not set the bar high?" Anderson said. "It's out there and the potential is there for me to grow into that as I become a better hitter, so it's a possibility. Right now where I'm at, I'm in a great spot. I just have to keep working, keep breaking down video and learning my swing."

Anderson, second on the Sox behind Jose Abreu with 60 RBI, said he knows the book on him is breaking balls away and hard stuff in. Adjusting is part of the learning process.

"I've learned something new every year," he said. "I have to keep at it until I figure it out to become a complete hitter. The average isn't where I want it to be, but the power numbers have been up. I'm still learning and trying to figure out who I am."

Married with a baby daughter, Anderson, 25, said he needs no more inspiration than that to be the best he can be.

"If I don't go out and work, they don't eat; I have to provide for them," he said. "I keep them in the back of my mind with their names in my hat, so they push me every day to get better. Of course I want to get better. It's easy when you come to the ballpark every day and do something you love."

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### **White Sox reinstate right-hander Nate Jones from DL**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 11, 2018

White Sox right-hander Nate Jones, out since June 12 with a pronator muscle strain, was reinstated from the 60-day disabled list Tuesday.

Jones threw a scoreless inning for Class A Winston-Salem Wednesday and threw live batting practice to Jose Abreu Saturday.

"He was nasty," Abreu said.

"I even mixed some righty-on-righty changeups," Jones said. "I threw strikes, and everything is feeling good. I think we are getting close."

Manager Rick Renteria said Jones was available Tuesday when the Sox played the Royals in Kansas City, looking to snap a six-game losing streak.

"But we're going to monitor his usage," Renteria said. "We want to make sure we use the rest of the season to get him in ballgames and get him out through the rest of the year healthy and enter the winter in a good position and get him ready for the following season."

Jones, 32, has a club option on his contract for next season and 2020.

"We are not promised tomorrow so you don't know what exactly is going to go on next year," he said. "Either to prove to the White Sox or another team, 'He's healthy and he's back and he can pitch.' "

Jones, 32, has been on the DL since June 13. He is 2-2 with a 2.55 ERA with four saves over 24 2/3 innings this season, his seventh with the White Sox.

The Sox' active roster increases to 32 and the 40-man roster increases to 40.

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### **After serving suspension, Chicago White Sox's Castillo gets back to work**

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / September 11, 2018

Stepping to the plate for the first time in a long time in a Labor Day game against the Detroit Tigers at Guaranteed Rate Field, Welington Castillo was greeted with near silence from the crowd.

An optimist would say, "Hey, at least they weren't booing."

Understandably, there was no applause either from Chicago White Sox fans who have had little to cheer about over a stretch that is soon to be six straight losing seasons.

The Castillo case is a little more personal.

As he admitted back on May 24, when he was suspended for 80 games without pay after testing positive for a performance-enhancing substance, Castillo "let many people down, including my family, my teammates, the White Sox organization and its fans."

The 31-year-old catcher was still sincere about his error in judgment when he returned to the Sox last week, and all he can do is try to make the most of the rest of the season.

"I'm going to continue to do my job and try to help as much as I can every time I have the opportunity behind the plate," Castillo said. "And when I'm not playing, I'm going to try to help them on the bench, talk to them with the little bit of experience that I have and try to make them feel like they belong here."

"I know we won't go anywhere (in the postseason), win the division, but we can take a lot of positive stuff in this last month, especially for those young guys. I'm going to try to do my job and help them as much as I can to be ready for next year."

Signed to a two-year, \$15 million contract on Dec. 1, Castillo was seen as a great fit on a rebuilding team. Most important, he was going to help develop young starting pitchers such as Reynaldo Lopez, Lucas Giolito and Michael Kopech.

Castillo wasn't able to help anyone from May 24-Sept. 2, but he was welcomed back with open arms after serving his suspension.

"It's important to have him in there," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "He's a part of who we are right now. He brings a lot of experience. There are some things you see him doing that stand out a little bit. We're glad to have him back."

When Castillo was out, Omar Narvaez and Kevan Smith split catching duties. They both have produced with the bat but still are gaining experience handling s pitching staff and throwing out basestealers.

"Narvy and Smitty have done a really nice job," Renteria said. "I don't want to take that away from them. Getting Wely back, I think there are a lot of catchers that are very insightful in how they approach, see swings and things of that nature. They go through the reports, they understand the pitchers' strengths and weaknesses, and they're able to do things in certain situations. I think that comes with experience."

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### **Palkamania: A White Sox fan base finds its spirit animal**

By James Fegan / The Athletic / September 11, 2018

Despite being built like a pro wrestler, Daniel Palka wouldn't call himself a huge wrestling fan. He followed it as a kid, he loves the big personalities like everyone else, but these days the only wrestler he's a fan of is Demon, aka White Sox conditioning coordinator and former professional wrestler Dale Torborg. Except when Demon is trying his moves on him.

"Yeah, he does it all the time. I hate it," Palka said. "He's very confident that he'll hit your hair on your face when he does punch. I tell him, 'No, I don't want to do it,' and he just does it anyhow and every time he hits the hair. It's pretty amazing. It's like full speed. He knows exactly where to be extension-wise to clip your hair. Every time."

He's not quite willing to spring \$50 for a Demon figurine, but there's a bit of wrestling-style paraphernalia hanging in his locker: a yellow T-shirt designed by a fan that reads "PALKAMANIA" across the front in the style of the "HULKAMANIA" gear that became synonymous with Hulk Hogan. It's actually a little too much in the style, and that particular shirt is unlikely to make it much farther than Palka's locker due to copyright issues. At least not onto a TV appearance, where his dry and sarcastic humor is becoming increasingly in demand.

But one search of "Palkamania" on Twitter shows the phenomenon is a little too strong for a little hurdle like legality to quell demand. Fresh Brewed Tees in Cleveland has an MLB Players Association license, and has already contacted Palka's representation at the Ballengee Group. A copyright concern-free version could be on sale by the end of the week.

"They hit up my agent before they hit me up: 'Hey we see this and we want to do something with it,'" Palka said.

The 26-year-old waiver claim turned standout rookie is tied with José Abreu for the team lead with 22 home runs, despite not getting called up until the last week of April. He is 15th in all of baseball in average exit velocity, and first on the team. He swings hard, and when he connects, he hits the ball hard. He knows his on-base percentage needs to come up to provide more staying power. He does early work with first base coach Daryl Boston every day without fail to improve his defense, but mostly he is a slugger without much artifice. He is here to hit for power and he delivers, and with six home runs in the ninth inning, he has zero fear of the moment. He has weaknesses as a player, but his strengths are impossible to miss.

This does not fully explain his appeal.

"Palka looks and talks like the ringer you get to join your 16-inch softball team, and when he shows up, he also brings a 30 rack of High Life."

That's the description given by Twitter user @chorizy of the Sox fan collective @fromthe108, a trio of White Sox season ticket holders who sit behind the right field foul pole, drink their share of beers during games, blog a little, sell some T-shirts, and have given rise to a larger Sox fan practice of "108ing." They define "108ing" more abstractly as just "good times," but it's more literally defined as "watching the White Sox while drinking." And while there have been plenty of players over the years that Sox fans would love to have a beer with, Palka stands out in that the feeling seems to be mutual.

"It's awesome, I mean, I think it's kinda funny how much I kind of fit in on the South Side as opposed to any other big league city, you know what I mean?" Palka said. "I don't know. Just like personality-wise, I feel like I fit in well. They've taken a liking to it and it's a lot of fun."

Palka spoke about feeling uniquely at home with the team's identity back in February in Glendale. The White Sox are the first team he's ever been in the majors with, but as someone who called tailgating the most fun part of his time in college at Georgia Tech, he's delighted that there's dedicated group doing the same thing on a regular basis at Sox games. Not only has that feeling of connection survived his first slump, and his first costly defensive misplay, it's spread to the rest of his family.

The 108 guys said they've talked Tyler Saladino into a mustache growing contest before, and that Todd Frazier asked for one of their Jersey Demolition shirts, but no other player has been quite as involved as Palka. Certainly no other player has had their brother ask for their T-shirts so he could wear them to work at his landscaping company.

"Some fan told me they were going to be in 108 in Seattle, section 108," Palka said. "I told them, 'You better be 108ing if you're going to be sitting in that section. I don't want to look up there and see some guy just watching the game. I want to see a little party up there.'"

"It's a lot of fun. It kind of just makes your day. I was at some farmer's market a week ago and some dude saw me and raced up to his office. I guess he bought my helmet at an auction and got me to sign his helmet and I was pumped for the whole day. It's fun interacting with them."

Tim Anderson responded to being minted as the shortstop of the future by putting down roots in the south suburbs and dedicating himself to his anti-violence efforts on the South Side. José Abreu was meeting with a group of special needs children outside the White Sox clubhouse just the other day — days after he returned from groin surgery — as part of his Abreu's Amigos work, which helped earn him the team's Clemente Award nomination. Yolmer Sánchez once played catch with a fan in the stands, in addition to being one of the most nakedly fun-loving players in the league

Still, there's something unique about the player who hears the voices of well-lubricated fans yelling at him from the outfield corner and finds his community. It's enough to forge a connection with the White Sox fan

base that goes beyond Palka's status as a lefty power bat fighting for playing time, at least with a certain corner of it that is enjoying Palkamania.

"He's the spirit animal of the 108," said @chorizy. "We can't speak for the M&M guy."

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## **Crowning the second-half All-Stars: American League edition**

By Cliff Corcoran / The Athletic / September 11, 2018

The All-Star Game is a welcome respite in the middle of the long Major League Baseball season, but one common, and justified, complaint about holding the game mid-year is that selecting in-season All-Stars with the season less than half complete puts an unfair emphasis on first-half performance. Before the culmination of the pennant and awards races consume us, I wanted to make an effort to balance that emphasis by anointing some second-half All-Stars. My American Leaguers are below. The National League will follow tomorrow. Listed statistics are from July 19 through September 10; sOPS+ is OPS+ relative to league average for the split in question.

On to the All-Stars!

Catcher

Salvador Pérez, Royals

.255/.298/.516 (117 sOPS+) 11 HR, 6 BB, 36 K, 168 PA

The fans correctly chose Wilson Ramos to start behind the plate for the American League in this year's Midsummer Classic, but a hamstring strain passed that honor down to players' ballot pick Pérez, who wound up making his fifth-straight All-Star start. Pérez, who hit just .221/.259/.394 (78 sOPS+) in the first half, didn't appear deserving of that distinction, but he has earned it since, rising back to the top of the AL's thin catching field with a power surge in the second half.

Ramos, meanwhile, didn't return to action until after being traded back to the National League, having played all of 149 games in the AL over parts of two seasons. The runners-up to Pérez for this second-half honor are Twins rookie Mitch Garver, and the White Sox's on-base machine Omar Narváez.

First Base

José Abreu, White Sox

.345/.405/.655 (183 sOPS+), 9 HR, 11 BB, 28 K, 131 PA

The eighth different starting first baseman for the AL All-Stars in the last eight years, Abreu nonetheless seemed, like Pérez, to be something of a default pick at a thin position in mid-July. The White Sox slugger hit just .253/.311/.441 (106 sOPS+) in the first half, but, again like Pérez, he flipped the switch in late July and began earning the honor after the fact. In Abreu's case, however, an injury interfered. Abreu underwent emergency surgery to correct a testicular torsion on August 21 and missed nearly three weeks. He returned to action Monday night with a 3-for-4 performance that suggests that he might be able to hold off the assortment of small-sample challengers to his throne, including the Rays' dancing machine Ji-Man Choi, the Yankees' Luke Voit and Royals rookie Ryan O'Hearn.

The most serious threat to Abreu's second-half prominence, however, is the Astros' Tyler White. The 27-year-old White has forced his way into the Astros' regular lineup in the second half by hitting .331/.393/.654 (179 sOPS+) in 140 plate appearances. With a touch less than three weeks remaining in the season, there is ample time for either player to pull ahead, but I'll give Abreu the edge for now, if only because White has been spending more time at designated hitter since the Astros' infield returned to full health.

Second Base

Rougned Odor, Rangers

.298/.366/.569 (151 sOPS+), 12 HR, 19 BB, 43 K, 205 PA

After posting the worst 30-home-run season in major league history in 2017 (.204/.252/.397, 65 OPS+), Odor was even worse through the first two months of 2018. However, he started to find his swing in June and has been reborn at the plate since the All-Star break, easily out-playing every other second baseman in the majors. Overall, he has actually put together his best major league season on both sides of the ball, showing continued improvement in the field and newfound patience at the plate. Still just 24, Odor may yet prove to be an elite major-league second baseman.

Shortstop

Xander Bogaerts, Red Sox

.305/.381/.513 (142 sOPS+), 5 HR, 19 BB, 29 K, 176 PA

One could argue that Francisco Lindor's fielding still carries the day here. However, given the degree to which Lindor's bat has cooled since the break, particularly in the power department, I'm happy to shed some light on Bogaerts, who was an All-Star snub at mid-season and has easily been the best hitter at the position, in either league, in the second half. Just 25, Bogaerts continues to mature at the plate. He has already set a career high in doubles (41) and tied his career high in home runs (21), and is well on his way to career highs in walks (he needs nine more), strikeout-to-walk ratio, isolated slugging, on-base percentage, slugging percentage, OPS and OPS+.

Third Base

Matt Chapman, A's

.326/.394/.653 (179 sOPS+), 12 HR, 19 BB, 51 K, 213 PA

José who? Like his teammate Lindor, fading MVP candidate José Ramírez has cooled considerably in the second half, particularly in the power department. Meanwhile, two rivals who are even younger than the 25-year-old Ramírez have emerged as potential top-five MVP finishers. Alex Bregman, 24, has drawn the most attention, hitting .317/.423/.605 (177 sOPS+) with 10 home runs since the break for the defending world champions, while going viral with his dugout-camera stares and increasingly elaborate home-run celebrations. However, Chapman, also 25 but six months younger than Ramírez, has been even better, hitting for more power in a less homer-friendly home ballpark and contributing his usual elite glove work at the hot corner. Here, the fielding does make the difference, though it's worth noting that, since the break, Chapman leads the majors in doubles (20), and the AL total bases (124) and hits (62, tied with yet another young third baseman, 23-year-old Yankee Miguel Andújar). Per Baseball-Reference's wins above replacement, Chapman is now third in the AL in bWAR, ahead of Ramírez, Lindor and Bregman, not to mention J.D. Martinez and Chapman's more celebrated teammate, Khris Davis.

Outfield

Mookie Betts, Red Sox

.315/.409/.534 (156 sOPS+), 6 HR, 27 BB, 36 K, 9 SB (69%), 208 PA

Mike Trout, Angels

.341/.500/.670 (217 sOPS+), 8 HR, 27 BB, 28 K, 7 SB (88%), 120 PA

You can add Betts to the list of MVP candidates whose bats have cooled in the second half, but after hitting .359/.448/.691 (211 sOPS+) in the first half, Betts had room to slow down and still remain one of the best players in the game and the likely AL MVP. As for his main rival for that award, Trout missed 19 games in August with a sprained wrist, but has been so productive on either side of that injury, hitting .373/.500/.588 since his return from the disabled list, that he demands inclusion here despite his relative lack of playing time. Apologies to Joey Gallo, Randal Grichuk, and the remarkable turnaround of Trout's teammate, Kole Calhoun.



Malle Smith, Rays

.350/.430/.496 (153 sOPS+), 1 HR, 17 BB, 24 K, 15 SB (83%), 159 PA

The Rays' bullpen shenanigans have not been the only reason for their success in the second half. They have also been buoyed by the pitching of emergent ace Blake Snell (see below) and a collection of performance surges in the lineup, including those of Rookie of the Year candidate Joey Wendle, mid-season acquisitions Choi and Tommy Pham, and, most of all, Smith, who was acquired along with the team's top "follower" (headliner?) Ryan Yarbrough in the trade that sent Drew Smyly to the Mariners prior to the 2017 season.

Since the All-Star break, Smith, one of the 10 fastest players in the game per Statcast's sprint speed metric, has led the AL in batting average, is tied for the major-league lead in stolen bases and triples (4), and trails only Trout in American League on-base percentage. He has done all of that despite missing eight games with a viral infection that required a hospital stay in late August.

Designated Hitter

J.D. Martinez, Red Sox

.339/.420/.618 (179 sOPS+), 11 HR, 23 BB, 39 K, 193 PA

Martinez has hit for a bit less power in the second half but has compensated for that with an increase in batting average and intentional walks. The result is that he has been almost exactly as productive on both sides of the All-Star break, which is to say, insanely productive. Martinez has easily been the best DH in a league that has also seen Khris Davis hit a major league-leading 20 home runs since the break (albeit with a .333 on-base percentage), and Shohei Ohtani hit .306/.386/.677 (183 sOPS+) with 12 homers in 140 second-half plate appearances despite the torn ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow.

Starting Pitchers

Carlos Carrasco, RHP, Indians

2.31 ERA, 66 1/3 IP, 10 GS, 6.6 IP/GS, 1.06 WHIP, 8.09 K/BB, 33.6 K%

Blake Snell, LHP, Rays

1.42 ERA, 38 IP, 7 GS, 5.4 IP/GS, 0.82 WHIP, 7.43 K/BB, 37.7 K%

David Price, LHP, Red Sox

1.78 ERA, 50 2/3 IP, 8 GS, 6.3 IP/GS, 0.89 WHIP, 5.89 K/BB, 26.6 K%

Masahiro Tanaka, RHP, Yankees

2.30 ERA, 58 2/3 IP, 9 GS, 6.5 IP/GS, 1.04 WHIP, 6.10 K/BB, 26.5 K%

Snell has been outstanding in the second half, but his second half didn't start until August 4 due to a shoulder injury. Price had a start wiped out by rain in late July, but has otherwise been crucial in helping Boston cope with Chris Sale's absences in the second half. Tanaka has similarly picked up the slack let out by Luis Severino's second-half struggles. Great as all of them have been, however, Carrasco has arguably been the American League's most valuable starting pitcher in the second half due to the combination of his dominance and workload.

Relief Pitchers

Blake Treinen, RHP, A's

0.74 ERA, 24 1/3 IP, 22 G, 0.66 WHIP, 6.60 K/BB, 37.1 K%

Edwin Díaz, RHP, Mariners

0.89 ERA, 20 1/3 IP, 20 G, 0.69 WHIP, 13.00 K/BB, 51.3 K%

Ryan Pressly, RHP, Astros

0.87 ERA, 20 2/3 IP, 22 G, 0.58 WHIP, 13.00 K/BB, 35.1 K%

José Leclerc, RHP, Rangers

0.92 ERA, 19 2/3 IP, 20 G, 0.61 WHIP, 6.40 K/BB, 44.4 K%

Treinen and Díaz have been the league's dominant relievers all season, with Díaz still on pace to tie the single-season saves record. Pressly has reached a new level since going from the Twins to the Astros on July 27, in part by discarding his sinker in favor of more curveballs. As for the 24-year-old Leclerc, he has allowed one hit — one hit! — in 13 innings since taking over as the Rangers' closer in the wake of the non-waiver trading deadline and is now three outs away from a hidden no-hitter.

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### **Farm Fresh: The 2018 Minor League Awards**

By Emily Waldon / The Athletic / September 11, 2018

In a season when more than one major league front office is working to mend broken fences, fan interest in minor league baseball is soaring. With the spike in attention, major league brass must carefully balance the timing of player's individual development, avoiding a rush up the pipeline that might push prospects too quickly.

As the players progress, the value — or lack thereof — of the investment made by each front office clarifies. With the regular minor league season concluded, we decided to have some fun and spotlight some of the players around the league who impressed this year.

Before you begin composing your argument about how I hate your team and its farm system, a few notes. First, this collection of names isn't a concrete Top [insert-large-number-here] list, so cancel the picket line. There are always legitimate arguments to be had about minor league players, because no one can know for sure what they will become. While many of these categories could certainly have been filled by more than one name, keep in mind that my selections acknowledge the player's overall profile, rather than amount of innings pitched or games played this season. And the defensive awards below are meant to highlight defense alone, ignoring a player's offense.

Differing opinions are a common occurrence on the farm. But at the end of the day, we can all agree that we're on the verge of seeing a legitimate wave of talent cross the threshold onto the major-league scene.

**Pitcher of the Year: Forrest Whitley**

2018 Assignment(s): Double-A Corpus Christi Hooks (Astros)

Ht/Wt: 6-7/195 lbs. B/T: R/R DOB: September 15, 1997

Season Stats: 26 1/3 IP, 3.76 ERA, 15 H, 11 ER, 11 BB, 34 K

Although his 2018 began with a poor life choice, Forrest Whitley has continued to prove the worth of the Astros' \$3,148,000 investment into the former high school arm. Whitley, 20, missed the first 50 games of the 2018 season following a violation of the MLB drug policy, holding him to eight appearances on the year with Double-A Corpus Christi.

The 6-foot-7 right-hander is ranked as the only Top 10 pitcher named to the Top 100 prospect lists with MLB Pipeline and Baseball America and the 2018 Top 131 prospect list from FanGraphs.

With plenty of development time remaining, Whitley's four-pitch mix as a whole sits above-average to plus-plus, led by a lively 97-mph fastball with natural cut. Whitley's lanky frame gives him plenty of downhill plane, and with a natural ability to miss bats, the process of tightening his arsenal should only escalate his value moving into 2019.

Hitter of the Year: Vladimir Guerrero Jr.  
2018 Assignment(s): GCL, High A, Double A, Triple A (Blue Jays)  
Ht/Wt: 6-1/200 lbs. B/T: R/R DOB: March 16, 1999  
Season Stats: 408 PA, .381/.437/.636, 136 H, 67 R, 29 2B, 20 HR, 78 RBI

I mean... did you expect me to consider someone else?

Far and away the most elite hitter in 2018 at any level, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. has excelled against pitching at every level he's been assigned to.

The only real sign that the 19-year-old is, in fact, human was a trip to the DL in June, followed by a brief rehab assignment before returning to Double-A New Hampshire and eventually ending the year in Buffalo. His ISO hasn't dipped below .222 throughout his career, also dropping his already impressive 13.4 percent strikeout rate from 2017 in High A to 7.8 percent with Triple-A Buffalo.

While his physique still needs to tone up, Guerrero's plate discipline has only gotten better, and with the raw power he possesses, he's still pacing to be one of the most electric hitters in Major League Baseball once he arrives.

Infielder of the Year: Fernando Tatis Jr.  
2018 Assignment(s): Double-A San Antonio (Padres)  
Ht/Wt: 6-3/185 lbs. B/T: R/R DOB: January 2, 1999  
Season Stats: 394 PA, .286/.355/.507, 101 H, 77 R, 22 2B, 16 HR, 43 RBI

This was a tougher category to conclude on, with multiple names who could qualify, but ultimately it was Fernando Tatis Jr.'s natural fit as a middle infielder that secured my decision.

Part of a collection of teenage phenoms to hit the minor league scene in the last few years, Tatis also carries the bloodlines of a father who created his own legacy in the game.

Fueled by a plus arm at shortstop, Tatis' raw athleticism, coupled with the accuracy of his throws has turned him into a no-doubt defensive asset.

Some evaluators question if he'll stick at shortstop long term, but for now, he's making it very hard to imagine the Padres will move him elsewhere anytime soon.

Outfielder of the Year: Jo Adell  
2018 Assignment(s): Class A, High A, Double A (Angels)  
Ht/Wt: 6-3/208 lbs. B/T: R/R DOB: April 8, 1999  
Season Stats: 441 PA, .290/.355/.543, 115 H, 83 R, 32 2B, 20 HR, 77 RBI

Step into the outfield and you're greeted with another teenage defensive wizard in Jo Adell.

The 19-year-old boasts obscene degrees of athleticism and since surfacing as the Angels' No. 1 pick in 2017, his athletic antics have been on full display.

A plus-plus runner, Adell, a natural human highlight reel, covers a great deal of ground with little issue, backed by a plus arm and advanced reads off the bat. Adell's 6-foot-3, 208-pound frame is well-proportioned enough to let him stay light on his feet, with enough twitch to dart back and forth on his already-impressive routes.

There is some talk of Adell shifting to a corner post in the future, but as his profile has shown early on, don't be surprised if he wills his way into staying in a center-field role.

On the Rise: Dylan Cease

2018 Assignment(s): High A, Double A (White Sox)

Ht/Wt: 6-2/190 lbs. B/T: R/R DOB: December 28, 1995

Season Stats: 124 IP, 2.40 ERA, 82 H, 33 ER, 50 BB, 160 K

In an exchange that sent four Cubs' prospects to the other side of town for José Quintana, the value of the trade looks to benefit the White Sox in the long term and the work of Dylan Cease in 2018 only seemed to solidify that belief.

Rated the No. 5 prospect in the White Sox farm by MLB Pipeline, Cease, 22, is a Tommy John success story by every stretch after undergoing the procedure in high school.

Of his three offerings, Cease's heater touches 98 mph with little effort, complimented with a crippling 12-6 curve that leaves hitters baffled as a 1-2 punch. The 6-foot-2 right-hander showed more confidence in his changeup this year than before, although still needing some refinement which should come with time.

Cease fanned 12 hitters twice this season, adding an 11 strikeout performance and 10 of his 23 outings going without an earned run allowed.

Top Farm System: San Diego Padres

While combing through the Top 100 prospect lists, it's clear that the pieces have started falling into place for San Diego Padres general manager A.J. Preller and his staff with eight names selected by Baseball America and seven by MLB Pipeline.

Under the leadership of international scouting director Chris Kemp, the Padres have expanded their territory into Mexico, securing teenage behemoth Tirso Ornelas and taking a gamble on an underweight right-hander by the name of Luis Patiño who has developed into a Top 100 prospect nearly overnight in 2018.

With Luis Urías getting a taste in San Diego and the likes of Fernando Tatis Jr. not far behind, Preller and his team now shift their focus to streamlining their collection, as young as it may be, to strengthen the Padres' foundation for the future.

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