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Sox bring back Gonzalez on one-year deal

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

CHICAGO -- Miguel Gonzalez has officially returned to the White Sox.

The White Sox agreed to terms with the right-hander on a one-year, \$4.75 million contract announced on Thursday. Outfielder Jacob May was designated for assignment to make room for Gonzalez on the 40-man roster, which stands at 40.

"It's good to be back," said Gonzalez during a conference call. "The coaching staff, they treated me well. And obviously the players, we had a really good connection."

"You saw Gonzo pitch very well for us," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "One of the hardest workers, most prepared professionals that I've seen in a while. We're glad to have him. It puts us in a better position to move forward, especially with all the young guys we have."

Gonzalez was a well-liked, steady presence in the White Sox starting rotation for much of the 2016-17 seasons. He has a 12-18 mark with a 4.02 ERA over 46 games with the White Sox, of which 45 were starts.

It was important for the White Sox to bring in at least one veteran starting pitcher to their rotation. White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper told MLB.com this week he doesn't expect Carlos Rodon to be ready at the start of the 2018 season after undergoing season-ending arthroscopic shoulder surgery in September, sidelining him for six to eight months at the time. Lucas Giolito, Carson Fulmer and Reynaldo Lopez also will be pitching through their first full seasons at the big league level, while Michael Kopech, MLB Pipeline's No. 1 pure pitching prospect, continues his development at Triple-A Charlotte.

"We're trying not to rush anything," Renteria said. "We're trying to make sure everything is running on schedule in terms of the development of everybody we have. We don't want to put ourselves in a position where we call somebody up just because there's a need."

Adding Gonzalez, 33, gives the White Sox a reliable starting option. In 156 innings last season with the White Sox and Rangers, Gonzalez combined for an 8-13 mark with a 4.62 ERA and 100 strikeouts over 27 starts.

From April 30 to June 14, Gonzalez struggled with a 6.79 ERA and .320 average against over nine starts. But the right-hander was pitching through some pain and was placed on the disabled list retroactive to June 15 with inflammation in his AC joint in his right shoulder.

Upon his return to the mound on July 18, Gonzalez posted a 3.11 ERA over his final nine starts with the White Sox. He was traded to the Rangers on Aug. 31 in exchange for infielder Ti'Quan Forbes, but even thought at that point he could return to the White Sox via free agency.

Renteria and Gonzalez shared a cordial exchange on Thursday's conference call, making it seem as if the pitcher had never left the rebuild.

"I know we're rebuilding, but I'm excited for this season. Who knows? We can surprise some people," Gonzalez said. "I talked about it with my wife and she loves Chicago.

"She enjoys it there. As soon as we started talking with the White Sox about the contract, I was pretty pumped, pretty excited to come back."

Cooper not counting on Rodon for start of 2018

Lefty had shoulder surgery in September, was expected to miss 6-8 months

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

CHICAGO -- White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper doesn't see much on the agenda for Carlos Rodon other than enjoying newly married life with his wife, Ashley.

Rodon had arthroscopic surgery on his left shoulder in late September, leaving him out for the next six to eight months. So Cooper wants to watch Rodon actually throw before making more specific plans for Rodon's immediate pitching future.

"I'm not counting on and I don't think anybody is counting on him being ready to start the season," Cooper said. "Obviously, we will learn more at SoxFest [Jan. 26-28] and we'll learn some when Spring Training opens up.

"He's going to have some 'take-care-of-himself' time, some 'let's-get-him-well' time."

The White Sox took it easy on Rodon as he dealt with injuries in 2017, as well. After one four-inning Cactus League start, the lefty didn't make his regular-season debut until June 28, due to biceps bursitis. The season-ending surgery meant Rodon's last start came on Sept. 2, leaving him with a 4.15 ERA over 12 trips to the mound and 76 strikeouts and 31 walks over 69 1/3 innings pitched.

Cooper bristles at any doubts regarding the southpaw's high-end potential. Rodon has one of the game's most effective sliders and a fastball averaging 93.3 mph for his career, per Fangraphs, and has fanned 383 over 373 2/3 innings. But the question is when he'll be back near 100 percent.

"I personally believe this is just an obstacle put in his way and we are going to take care of that obstacle and help him in any way we can," said Cooper. "He is going to resume his career and continue on the path of trying to be as good as you can be.

"Prior to the injury, I would like to hear a club that wouldn't want Carlos Rodon. There are 30 teams that would say, 'Yeah, I'll take a go at Rodon.'

"Who wouldn't? Just his strikeout numbers and the streaks he's been on. But my point is the skepticism should not be on his ability and how good he is, the gifts he has. It should be more on he's run into a couple of physical problems, and how is that going to pan out."

Calls from Cooper and bullpen coach Curt Hasler are going out to White Sox pitchers, gauging what they are doing in the offseason and what to expect at the start of camp. Cooper, Hasler and baseball video coordinator Bryan Johnson had their own calls over the past few months, breaking down video and numbers and looking for ways to improve each hurler.

Improvement for Rodon, at this point, has more to do with ongoing shoulder rehab work.

"As important as Carlos is, he can't be in the front of my mind right now," Cooper said. "He's just got to travel his little course.

"The course he's got is work your [butt] off, rehab, get yourself in top shape, take care of that shoulder. Get on the throwing program and hopefully you can build up from the throwing program to sidelines to games to innings and to pitches and to back in Chicago."

Happy, healthy Adolfo talks breakout season

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

CHICAGO -- Micker Adolfo selected jersey No. 27 to honor his favorite player, Vladimir Guerrero.

As Guerrero awaits the results of Baseball's Hall of Fame voting, Adolfo -- the White Sox No. 14 prospect, per MLB Pipeline -- is reveling in a breakout 2017 season, his most successful with the White Sox. The 21-year-old discussed his breakthrough while taking part in Major League Baseball's Rookie Career Development Program.

"Being able to stay healthy this year helped me a lot [with] progressing and moving forward," Adolfo said. "I can't help but thank all the coaches in the White Sox organization, all the conditioning and strength coaches for helping me set up a nice program to keep me on the field and do my job day by day."

Rated as the White Sox top international amateur signing until the Luis Robert move this past season, Adolfo joined the team with a \$1.6 million bonus on July 2, 2013, two months shy of his 17th birthday. Since then, the right-handed outfielder has transformed from a shy, skinny kid learning into a gregarious, powerfully built prospect.

Taking part in the Career Development Program will help Adolfo's growth, too.

"I heard about it from a couple of guys that I played with before," Adolfo said. "They told me it was a really good program. When the White Sox selected me to come here, I was very honored. I'm learning a lot of things that will come in handy in the future."

In 424 at-bats across 112 games, Adolfo hit .264 with 16 homers, 28 doubles and 68 RBIs for Class A Kannapolis in 2017, notching career highs in average, homers and RBIs. During the Instructional League in Arizona, Adolfo rehabbed a fractured knuckle on his left pinky -- the result of a freak accident -- that ended his season early on Aug. 22.

There also was a trip to the Dominican Instructional League in November, where Adolfo got an extremely positive first impression of Robert, the No. 23 prospect in baseball.

"His first at-bat in Dominican instructs was a home run, first pitch he saw. He cleared the trees. It was probably 430 feet," Adolfo said. "But the guy is a specimen."

"He can field, hit, run, throw and everything. He plays hard. He's a really good fit for the White Sox and I would love to be playing next to him some day in Chicago."

White Sox bring back Miguel Gonzalez on one-year deal

By Mark Strotman/NBC Sports Chicago/ Jan. 11, 2018

The White Sox have reached a one-year deal worth \$4.75 million with Miguel Gonzalez, the team announced Thursday.

Gonzalez went 8-13 with a 4.62 ERA last season with both the White Sox and Rangers. The Sox dealt Gonzalez, an impending free agent, to the Rangers on Sept. 1 for infielder Ti'Quan Forbes.

Gonzalez struggled with Texas, amassing a 6.45 ERA in five starts. Now he'll be thrown back into a White Sox rotation where he's started 45 games the past two seasons.

Gonzalez will join a starting rotation that includes Carlos Rodon (health-pending), James Shields, Lucas Giolito and Reynaldo Lopez. Carson Fulmer could round out that group, as we wrote about yesterday.

"Bringing Miggy back not only strengthens the options for our pitching staff but also returns another quality individual to our clubhouse," GM Rick Hahn said in a press release.

Jacob May was designated for assignment in a corresponding move.

Meet the Prospects: Alec Hansen

By Vinnie Duber,/NBC Sports Chicago/ Jan. 11, 2018

Alec Hansen

Hansen, the 23-year-old right-handed hurler, was the White Sox second-round draft pick in 2016 and is one of the top names viewed as a member of the team's future starting rotation.

A Colorado native, Hansen joined the White Sox organization after pitching at the University of Oklahoma.

Hansen piled up an eye-popping amount of strikeouts last season, his first full season in the minor leagues. He whiffed a combined 191 batters in 141.1 innings between Class A Kannapolis, Class A Winston-Salem and Double-A Birmingham. In just 54.2 innings in 2016, he fanned 81 opposing hitters. A strikeout machine, he made 26 starts at the three stops and finished the year with a 3.57 ERA.

As of their most recent rankings, MLB Pipeline had Hansen rated as the No. 91 prospect in all of baseball and the No. 6 prospect in the White Sox organization

Return of Miguel Gonzalez brings White Sox starting rotation into focus for 2018

By Alec Hansen/NBC Sports Chicago/ Jan. 11, 2018

The pitchers who will make up the White Sox rotation of the future will spend much of 2018 developing in the minor leagues. But the pitchers who will make up the White Sox rotation of the present came into much clearer focus Thursday.

The White Sox welcomed Miguel Gonzalez back to the South Side with a one-year deal. The pitcher who was dealt away to the Texas Rangers in a trade last August wasn't out of town for long.

Gonzalez figures to all but finalize the five-man group that will leave Glendale, Arizona, and start the season as the White Sox starting staff. Rotation spots are locked in for James Shields, Lucas Giolito and Reynaldo Lopez, with general manager Rick Hahn indicating last month that Carson Fulmer will be in the mix, too. Gonzalez makes five.

Sure, there are things that could throw that group into question. The health of Carlos Rodon remains a mystery, and Hahn has said on multiple occasions that Rodon could be recovered from September shoulder surgery by Opening Day or perhaps not until June. Rodon missed most of the first three months of the 2017 season while recovering from injury, and there's a possibility that 2018 could see a repeat.

If Rodon is healthy, of course he'll be a part of the White Sox starting rotation. And the possibility exists that the White Sox could sign another veteran along with Gonzalez. But more likely is that they want to see what they have in Fulmer, 2015's eighth-overall pick who has just five big league starts under his belt.

Signing Gonzalez also decreases the likelihood that a highly rated pitching prospect like Michael Kopech or Alex Hansen could do enough to make the team out of spring training, though something like that happening might not have been very likely to begin with, considering the rebuilding White Sox are in no rush to bring their wealth of prospects to the majors ahead of schedule.

Gonzalez is a solid addition to the rotation, as White Sox fans know. He had a nice 2016 season, posting a 3.73 ERA in his first campaign on the South Side. Prior to being traded last summer, Gonzalez had a 4.31 ERA in 22 starts. He was terrific in his final five starts with the White Sox, posting a 1.85 ERA over 34 innings. He struggled in Texas, tagged for 16 runs in his five starts with the Rangers.

But Gonzalez's value is increased by his presence in the clubhouse, as well, a veteran leader for a team and specifically a pitching staff that is young and is expected to only get younger as the rebuild keeps moving along. Gonzalez could also once more be a midseason trade candidate should he perform well. He could once again fetch Hahn a piece to help deepen the farm system during this rebuilding effort.

So with Gonzalez's addition, the White Sox biggest roster mystery is seemingly solved. Barring any unexpected happenings, the rotation and starting lineup appear set. And with Hahn's acquisitions of four potential bullpen pieces — Joakim Soria, Luis Avilan, Thyagio Vieira and Jose Ruiz — there figures to be plenty of depth with which to form a relief corps

White Sox sign Miguel Gonzalez to 1-year contract

By Chris Kuc /Chicago Tribune / Jan. 11, 2018

Miguel Gonzalez and Rick Renteria spoke after the White Sox acquired the veteran right-hander and the manager let his newest starter know how the team feels about him.

"You know we love ya, Miggy," Renteria exclaimed Thursday, not long after the Sox announced they were bringing Gonzalez back to the organization with a one-year, \$4.75 million free-agent contract.

Gonzalez spent almost two seasons with the Sox before he was traded to the Rangers on Aug. 31 for minor-league prospect Ti'Quan Forbes. And the love fest has been rekindled.

"It's good to be back," Gonzalez, 33, said. "The coaching staff, they treated me well. And obviously the players, we had a really good connection. I know we're rebuilding and everything still, but I'm excited for this season. Who knows? We can surprise some people."

It didn't come as a big surprise that general manager Rick Hahn turned to Gonzalez as an innings-eater who was well-respected in the clubhouse and can continue to serve as a mentor to the Sox's young starters, including Reynaldo Lopez, Lucas Giolito and Carson Fulmer. Gonzalez embraces the role of big brother in the clubhouse.

"I got a chance to spend time with most of the young guys that were coming up late in the season," Gonzalez said. "There's definitely a lot of talent, but they always like to come to the older guys and feel comfortable talking to us. I love to give them feedback and help them out as much as I can. That's what we're here for."

"Bringing (Gonzalez) back not only strengthens the options for our pitching staff but also returns another quality individual to our clubhouse," Hahn said in a statement.

Gonzalez went 7-10 with a 4.31 earned-run average with the Sox last season and was 1-3 with a 6.45 ERA in five starts with the Rangers. After overcoming a shoulder issue, Gonzalez was particularly effective before the trade with eight quality starts in nine outings. Renteria is hopeful that is the version of Gonzalez the Sox will get in '18.

"All things being equal and the health is there, (we hope) he's going to be able to do the same thing for us this year," Renteria said. "Give us quality starts (and) always give us a chance to win ballgames. (He's) well-prepared, a competitor, a hard worker (and he's) great with his teammates. They all love him. It's just a nice fit for us."

Like last season, Gonzalez knows that if he pitches well, Hahn will likely shop him around the league come trade deadline in exchange for a prospect or two.

"Being a free agent, it can happen," Gonzalez said. "But that's something we have to ... not really think about too much. When you're playing on a certain team, all you've got to do is just go out there and perform and do the best you can every time you get the ball."

To make room on the 40-man roster, the Sox designated outfielder Jacob May for assignment.

White Sox Q&A: What are the chances Eloy Jimenez and Michael Kopech make the big-league roster?

By Chris Kuc /Chicago Tribune/ Jan. 11, 2018

It's the dead of winter. Let's liven things up with answers to some key questions about the White Sox.

You probably have gotten this question a thousand times, but what's the percent chance we see Eloy Jimenez or Michael Kopech on the White Sox in 2018? – Brandon Anderson, Chicago

Actually, I've gotten this question 2,193 times over the last few months, which is no doubt a lot fewer than general manager Rick Hahn. But it's worth answering each time because when it comes to the Sox, it's all about the future and Jimenez and Kopech are the biggest pieces of the organization's rebuild.

Both players took big leaps in their development during '17 and earned minor-league promotions, Kopech to Triple-A Charlotte and Jimenez to Double-A Birmingham. Those are the places each will likely begin the season but don't expect them to remain there all summer. Like Yoan Moncada, Lucas Giolito and Reynaldo Lopez before them, Jimenez and Kopech figure to get their opportunities at some point—later rather than sooner barring some spring training heroics. I make it a solid 75 percent chance Kopech dons a Sox uniform in '18 and 60 percent for Jimenez.

Besides a pitcher or two, do you think the Sox need a left-handed bat in order to have a better season than last year? – John Carpenter, Lake Geneva, Wis.

One of the biggest weaknesses of the Sox's projected lineup for 2018 is the lack of a power from the left side. Nicky Delmonico is currently slated to be the Sox's left fielder and is the only true left-handed hitter among the likely starting nine. Delmonico possesses some pop, having launched nine home runs in 43 games last season but after that, the pickings are slim. Yoan Moncada is a switch hitter and figures to up

his power numbers as he becomes more familiar with major-league pitching. Meanwhile, Yolmer Sanchez is also a switch hitter and belted 11 of his 12 home runs in '17 while hitting left-handed so there is some power behind that stroke.

Here's the big disclaimer: With the Sox still in the midst of their rebuild, winning games still takes a back seat to the development of young players. So it likely won't be until 2019 when the Sox start really looking at balancing power from both sides of the plate.

If you got to manage the White Sox for a day, who makes up your 2018 outfield? – Mike, Oak Lawn

I'd have to go with Giancarlo Stanton in left, Mike Trout in center and Bryce Harper in right.

Just kidding. I'm guessing you want my Sox outfield from the players currently in the organization so I'll go that direction. Since this is fantasy, I'm going to cheat a little and give you my Sox outfield on or about Aug. 15. It would include Jimenez in left, Blake Rutherford in center and Avisail Garcia in right. Jimenez and Rutherford aren't expected to make the Opening Day roster and Delmonico is targeted for left while Adam Engel will likely claim the centerfield spot. But Delmonico would seem like a good fit as a left-handed designated hitter and while Engel is among the top fielders in baseball, he hasn't shown he can hit major-league pitching so changes in both spots would be ideal for the South Siders.

While we're on the subject, how about my Sox starting outfield for 2020? Jimenez in left, Luis Robert in center and Garcia in right. Not too shabby,

Do you think GM Rick Hahn has some more tricks up his sleeve to bolster the 40-man roster before spring training? – @wtbyffl

Following Wednesday's trade for infielder Jose Rondon from the Padres, the Sox's 40-man roster sits at 40. In addition to acquiring Rondon this offseason, Hahn has added a starting catcher in Welington Castillo and revamped the bullpen with the acquisitions of Joakim Soria and Luis Avilan. There is little doubt that Hahn will remain active prior to spring training with his top priority now adding a veteran starting pitcher or two. With Carlos Rodon's status following shoulder surgery still a great unknown, the Sox need some innings eaters who can help limit the workload of the team's young starters. Hahn's pattern has been to target reclamation projects who can be flipped for more prospects later in the season and he will look to do so once the big names come off the free-agent board. A starting centerfielder could be another area Hahn addresses unless the Sox believe Engel's offseason work to become a productive hitter pays off.

Will the Sox be contenders in the wild-card race this season? – @lukestanbery

The Sox finished 67-95 last season and would need to turn about 20 of those losses into victories to be in the American League wild-card mix in 2018. Most encouraging was the 15-14 record the Sox posted in September, thanks mostly to strong efforts from young starters Lopez, Giolito and Carson Fulmer and a late-season surge from veteran hurler James Shields.

There will be continued growing pains for the Sox in '18 and reaching the .500 mark would be a significant step in the rebuild. Despite the positive direction the team is headed, it still appears the Sox won't be contenders until 2019 at the earliest.

But, hey, stranger things have happened.

White Sox-Miguel Gonzalez reunion is all about comfort

By James Fegan /The Athletic/ Jan. 11, 2018

The White Sox had such a small, strange balance to try to strike filling out their starting rotation for the start of 2018.

"We're trying to make sure everything is running on schedule in terms of the development of everybody we have," said manager Rick Renteria Thursday. "We don't want to put ourselves in a position where we call somebody up just because there's a need."

They needed reliable innings, but it made no sense to pay up for a front-end starter who would be entering their decline phase by the time their young core is ready to compete. As much as they needed reliable innings while Carlos Rodon recovers and Michael Kopech matures in Triple-A, they didn't want to create a logjam when both of them, and others, are ready. But they also didn't want someone who would regularly get shelled; rather, it'd be nice to find someone they could even trade mid-season.

Ultimately, the only way to hit such a pinpoint target, was to secure the guy who fit the bill last season. Right-hander Miguel Gonzalez returns to the White Sox on a one-year deal (first reported by The Athletic's Ken Rosenthal), and proves himself to be a true rarity: a player who gets traded during a rebuild, but when the season ends and they enter free agency, a reunion still makes perfect sense.

As Gonzalez bounced back from shoulder inflammation in mid-July and put together a stretch of eight quality starts in nine outings, the mystery of why another team wouldn't see him as a worthy target to pry away and stabilize their rotation became harder to understand every day. At the same time, the 33-year-old's presence never grew uncomfortable.

"The White Sox treated me well since the first day I got there," Gonzalez said. "You never want to leave but when it happens you do start thinking about what's going to happen. We really talked about it this off-season, I talked about it with my wife and she loves Chicago. She enjoys it there. As soon as we started talking with the White Sox about the contract, I was pretty pumped, pretty excited to come back."

Perhaps he was meant to stay, since his ultimately disastrous month-long cameo in Texas likely suppressed his market enough to enable a return to the level the Sox were looking to outlay for starter depth. Gonzalez failed to get into the fourth inning in his first two starts with the Rangers, and battled control and walked five batters in his third. By the time he started looking like himself again, the slim playoff hopes his new team was clinging to when they made the late-August deal had long since evaporated.

He went through a similarly rough stretch in Chicago last year as he tried to pitch through his shoulder soreness that addled him throughout May. Renteria said Gonzalez kept the pain he was in "pretty close to the vest" but spoke up after a stretch where he racked up a 6.79 ERA through his last nine starts as his strikeout rate plummeted, but in his determined fashion, somehow averaged just shy of six innings per start even while getting knocked around.

"I wasn't able to help out the team," Gonzalez said of going to the disabled list in mid-June. "You just feel like no one likes you during that moment, no one really pays attention to you. Sometimes that's just part of the game and I just started working hard again to get back to where I needed to and then I started pitching well that second half."

That guy — as well as the guy who reeled off a 3.11 ERA over a far superior nine-start stretch, dueled Clayton Kershaw and outdueled Justin Verlander — is lurking in there too when projecting Gonzalez going forward. Gonzalez thought throwing tons of cutters contributed to his shoulder problems and sapped his velocity, but at the same time, he dismissed the idea that he could simply ditch one of his most effective pitches. Gonzalez's strikeout rate (14.6 percent) was a career low in 2017 and his ground ball rate was well under 40 percent, even as he flashed all his veteran guile to navigate through major league lineups, or knowing exactly when the wind at Wrigley was going to be able to keep Anthony Rizzo in the ballpark.

"I think now that we've had him and we kind of understand where he's at and what drives him," Renteria said. "I think we have to be a little bit more aware of the things that are going on with him whether it's through performance or lack of performance. There are a lot of different indicators that you can use but at

the end of the day, the player's voice, his expressing what is exactly going on and being honest with us gives us a better sense of what we can and cannot do with him."

Gonzalez will need to be well-managed, his health and the crispness of his stuff will need to be monitored, and the Sox will have to respond when he's trying to pitch through pain that diminishes his performance, because part of why he's so beloved in the clubhouse is that it's known he always will. But the Sox have been there with Gonzalez before. They know he'll respond to Don Cooper's adjustments, they know he'll bond well with the young pitchers on their staff, they know he'll accept his role on a rebuilding team, and they know he'll provide a professional effort every time the mariachi music starts blaring from the Guaranteed Rate Field speakers before his starts, because he already has.

"We were very excited about the possibility of you rejoining us and you're now with us," Renteria said to Gonzalez during Thursday's conference call. "You know we love you Miggy, and all the fans love you. You've done a great job."

White Sox sign right-hander Miguel Gonzalez to 1-year deal

By Daryl Van Schouwen/Chicago Sun-Times/ Jan. 11, 2018

The White Sox are bringing back right-handed starter Miguel Gonzalez.

Traded by the Sox to the Rangers after spending the 2016 season and much of 2017 on the South Side, Gonzalez, 33, returns on a one-year, \$4.75 million deal to stabilize a young group. He had a combined 8-13 record with a 4.62 ERA in 27 starts last season.

Gonzalez was traded to Texas on Aug. 31 for minor-league infielder Ti'Quan Forbes and had a 6.45 ERA in five starts for the Rangers. He had a 4.31 ERA in 22 starts with the Sox.

During a nine-game stretch before the trade, he made eight quality starts with a 3.11 ERA. That followed a stretch in which he missed a month with inflammation in the AC joint in his right shoulder.

"It's good to be back," Gonzalez said.

A popular and steady presence in the clubhouse, Gonzalez (3.95 career ERA) gives the Sox a veteran in a rotation that includes young starters Lucas Giolito, Reynaldo Lopez, Carlos Rodon (when he's healthy) and perhaps Carson Fulmer as well as veteran James Shields.

"Bringing Miggy back not only strengthens the options for our pitching staff but also returns another quality individual to our clubhouse," general manager Rick Hahn said.

"One of the hardest workers, most prepared professionals that I've seen in a while," manager Rick Renteria said of Gonzalez. "We're glad to have him. It puts us in a better position to move forward, especially with all the young guys we have."

Rodon, who had arthroscopic shoulder surgery in late September, is not expected to be ready by Opening Day.

Adding a veteran to the young staff allows "us an opportunity to heal and develop," Renteria said. "We're trying not to rush anything. We're trying to make sure everything is running on schedule in terms of the development of everybody we have. We don't want to put ourselves in a position where we call somebody up just because there's a need.

"Certainly it allows us to safely give Rodon an opportunity to heal and our younger guys in the system time to continue to develop."

When Gonzalez was traded by the Sox, he knew that coming back was a possibility. He and Shields embrace their roles as mentors on a young staff.

"I know we're rebuilding, but I'm excited for this season," Gonzalez said. "Who knows? We can surprise some people."

To make room on the 40-man roster, the Sox designated outfielder Jacob May for assignment.

May, 25, was the Sox' Opening Day center fielder in 2017 but spent most of the season at Class AAA Charlotte, hitting .248 with four home runs, 27 RBI and 54 runs in 110 games. He struggled offensively in his debut in the majors, going 2-for-36 (.056) in 15 games before being optioned to Charlotte on May 1.