



WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF September 10, 2018

"Lopez dazzles with 10 Ks, 2 hits, but no win" ... Scott Merkin, MLB.com

"Davidson hopes he could be like Ohtani in '19" ... Scott Merkin, MLB.com

"Mike Trout's South Side slugfest sparks thoughts of White Sox rebuild yielding its own offensive superstar" ... Vinnie Duber, NBC Sports Chicago

"Jose Abreu expected to return to White Sox lineup this week" ... Phil Rogers, Chicago Tribune

"Series preview: White Sox at Royals" ... Phil Rogers, Chicago Tribune

"White Sox fall to Angels 1-0 despite stellar outing from Reynaldo Lopez" ... Phil Rogers, Chicago Tribune

"Reynaldo Lopez strong, but White Sox swept by Angels" ... Brian Sandalow, Sun-Times

"Shohei Ohtani draws praise from White Sox manager Rick Renteria" ... Brian Sandalow, Sun-Times

"Lopez gives Chicago White Sox's rotation a needed lift" ... Scot Gregor, Daily Herald

"Now a one-way sensation, Ohtani still does damage against Chicago White Sox" ... Scot Gregor, Daily Herald

"Tim Anderson enjoying his midseason defensive breakout: 'Confidence level is way up'" ... James Fegan, The Athletic

"Michael Kopech's teammates confident he has what it takes to thrive in rehab process: 'The kid's got a drive I've never seen before'" ... James Fegan, The Athletic

Lopez dazzles with 10 Ks, 2 hits, but no win

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 9, 2018

CHICAGO -- There was no win to be had for Reynaldo Lopez during one of his best starts of the 2018 season, with the Angels completing the weekend sweep of the White Sox via a 1-0 shutout Sunday afternoon at Guaranteed Rate Field.

But missing out on that particular individual accolade is nothing new to the White Sox right-hander. Over his last eight starts, Lopez has a 1-0 record and seven no-decisions. The work he did Sunday was more important than improving his 5-9 ledger.

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Lopez pitched six scoreless innings, striking out 10, walking three and allowing two Mike Trout singles, while throwing 71 of his 105 pitches for strikes. In his last four trips to the mound, Lopez has given up four earned runs on 15 hits over 25 2/3 innings to go with eight walks, one home run and 29 strikeouts.

"I am feeling good. I feel strong," said Lopez through interpreter Billy Russo. "My mindset in every outing is to go at least six. If I can go more, that's even better. Go at least six innings and try to finish strong."

"He had a really good fastball today. Really good life on the fastball," White Sox catcher Welington Castillo said. "Our game plan was to attack those hitters with fastballs, throw a couple good changes. That was the game plan and he executed well."

Against the Angels, Lopez recorded 16 swinging strikes and 22 called strikes per Statcast™. Ten of those swinging strikes came on the fastball, which topped out at 98.6 mph, and 16 of the called strikes were on the fastball. Lopez made liberal usage of his changeup, throwing it 23 times against 72 fastballs, with six swinging strikes and three called strikes off the pitch.

An adjustment with his arm angle upon delivery helped give Lopez a little more life on his fastball, according to the hurler.

"When you use that arm angle and you are consistent with it, you are getting more speed with your fastball and at the same time you are being more effective with your changeup," Lopez said. "That was the case today. If you are able to stick with that arm angle during the whole game, you are going to be more effective with all your pitches."

"I thought his fastball was really good today," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "He was elevating and when he needed to throw a strike early, off-speed, get a swing, he was working it very well. He just looked really composed today."

Andrew Heaney was every bit as good as Lopez for the Angels. The southpaw set a career-high with 12 strikeouts and did not issue a walk.

The Angels scored the game's lone run in the seventh, charged to Ian Hamilton, when Kole Calhoun's single off Caleb Frare brought home Jose Fernandez. It left the White Sox with five straight losses and a 3-7 mark on this second-to-last homestand.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Close, but no run: Yoan Moncada opened the eighth with a single off reliever Ty Buttrey, moved to second on Adam Engel's sacrifice bunt and stayed there when pinch-hitter Daniel Palka took a called third strike. Tim Anderson followed with a line drive to left, looking like the game-tying hit, but Justin Upton, made a sliding catch for the third out.

Close again, but still scoreless: The White Sox had the tying and winning runs on base in the bottom of the ninth, with Yolmer Sanchez at second and pinch-runner Kevan Smith at first against Blake Parker. But Parker induced a long fly out from Castillo, and Jose Alvarez struck out pinch-hitter Nicky Delmonico to end the game.

It was Delmonico who hit a walkoff homer against Parker last Sept. 27, eliminating the Angels from the playoffs, putting the Twins into the playoffs and causing then-Minnesota second baseman Brian Dozier to call Delmonico his favorite player.

"We knew he started rushing to get the lefty ready also. We knew either way there was a chance they might do something there," Renteria said. "But we're going to give [Delmonico] a chance to have the at-bat and hopefully give us a chance to put a run across the board. It didn't work out."

HE SAID IT

"Today, there was just a really good look about him. He was very calm, very focused. Again, trusting what he was capable of doing with all the pitches he had." -- Renteria, on Lopez

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

Shohei Ohtani was ruled safe on an attempted steal of third in the eighth inning. But Renteria challenged the call and it was overturned, with third baseman Jose Rondon getting the tag on Ohtani before he hit the base. With Upton striking out for a fourth time on that play, the overturn completed the double play and ended the inning.

UP NEXT

Right-hander Lucas Giolito (10-10, 5.85 ERA) is scheduled to make his 29th start of 2018, 15th on the road and sixth career against the Kansas City Royals Monday night at Kauffman Stadium with a first pitch set for 7:15 p.m. CT. Jakob Junis gets the call for the Royals. Giolito is 3-1 with a 4.05 ERA, 30 strikeouts over 26 2/3 innings and a .216 opponents average over his last five starts.

Davidson hopes he could be like Ohtani in '19

Infielder says he could incorporate more pitching into repertoire
By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 9, 2018

CHICAGO -- Matt Davidson was looking forward to facing Shohei Ohtani in Sunday's series finale against the Angels. But an MRI revealing a tear of Ohtani's ulnar collateral ligament took the two-way sensation out of the rotation and left him swinging the bat as designated hitter.

In some ways, and at a slightly different level, Davidson would like to have similar job responsibilities as Ohtani. The third baseman/first baseman/designated hitter entered Sunday with a .237 average, 20 home runs and 58 RBI. He also has made three scoreless relief appearances, albeit with the game out of reach, and fanned two in three innings.

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If Davidson were to incorporate pitching into his 2019 repertoire, he doesn't believe training would have to necessarily change.

"Throwing program and getting your arm in shape would be the biggest thing," Davidson said. "I was pretty sore after that third outing.

"Just the intensity of doing that it's pretty tough when you give everything you got every pitch. It's pretty intense. But yeah, definitely, I would love to explore that."

When asked if he had talked to the White Sox about the future pitching add-on, Davidson said, "We haven't really gone anything too, I would say, formal.

"But we'll see what happens," said Davidson, who has done sides here and there and tried to play a little long toss since his last outing on Aug. 6 against the Yankees. "If the opportunity was given to me I think I would like to do it."

Even a couple of innings per month could help some in relieving the bullpen's workload. As White Sox manager Rick Renteria pointed out, there could be a logistics issue involved if Davidson was playing first base and he needed to warm him up to get in a game, for example.

At this point, Davidson can enjoy his two-way accomplishments this season and admire the high level of work turned in by Ohtani with both the bat and on the mound.

"It's really impressive," said Davidson of Ohtani. "He's obviously hitting really well. He pitched really well when he was healthy, too. It's cool to see. It's exciting. Wish we could have faced him.

"I think that's something in the future there will be a lot more guys doing it. Right now, there are so many utility guys who play tons of positions. It used to be solely kind of the bench role 10 years ago. Now, some teams are switching guys every day almost. I could see that in the future."

Third to first

- Jose Abreu took grounders and did some sprint work prior to Sunday's series finale. Renteria is hopeful Abreu returns to the lineup Monday in Kansas City, after being out of action since Aug. 20 due to surgery relieving pain caused by testicular torsion.

"We are not trying to rush him," Renteria said. "We want to make sure he feels really good about where he's at and as soon as we are assured that he feels good and our guys in the medical staff feel good about it, then we will go ahead and proceed."

- The White Sox have yet to announce a starter for Tuesday's game at Kauffman Stadium, a spot previously belonging to Michael Kopech, who was diagnosed with a significant tear in his ulnar collateral ligament. In a pitching-related move, the White Sox outrighted right-hander Tyler Danish to Triple-A Charlotte. Danish

finished 1-0 with a 7.11 ERA over seven relief outings for the White Sox this season. His move leaves the White Sox 40-man at 39.

Mike Trout's South Side slugfest sparks thoughts of White Sox rebuild yielding its own offensive superstar

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / September 9, 2018

It's overzealous to imagine that any rebuild will produce a superstar as good as Mike Trout.

Baseball's best player did his thing this weekend on the South Side, most notably with a five-hit, five-RBI, two-homer game Saturday night.

But while the White Sox rebuilding effort likely won't yield one player that does everything Trout does and as well, there are players either already playing in the majors or still developing in the minor leagues that have superstar potential and superstar expectations. Other successful rebuilds have produced multiple superstars: The Cubs have Kris Bryant, Anthony Rizzo and Javy Baez, while the Houston Astros have Jose Altuve, Carlos Correa and Alex Bregman. Those top-billed players are of course surrounded by plenty of others who make those teams championship caliber.

The White Sox are trying to accomplish the same kind of thing.

We've seen that the mere presence of a once-in-a-lifetime player like Trout does not a perennial contender make. The Los Angeles Angels have played in a grand total of three playoff games and won none of them during Trout's career, now in its seventh season. But what if the White Sox are able to stick one of the game's best hitters in their lineup every day?

"Anybody would be happy to have the type of talent," manager Rick Renteria said before Sunday's game. "I'm sure that someday soon we'll be able to do something like that and be very happy that we're in that position."

The most obvious candidate to achieve superstardom is Eloy Jimenez, baseball's No. 3 prospect and the top-ranked prospect in the White Sox loaded farm system. Jimenez already has monster expectations after turning in a .337/.384/.577 slash line to go along with 22 home runs and 75 RBIs in his first full season in the organization. The fan base seemed to welcome each homer and extra-base hit this summer with calls for his promotion to the big leagues.

Fans — and most likely the White Sox front office, too — have been dreaming about slotting Jimenez into the middle of the batting order ever since he was acquired in the Crosstown swap with the Cubs last summer, and he figures to make his way to the majors relatively soon. The kind of power bat he swings could make for the kind of home-run show Trout put on Saturday night.

While fans have perhaps decreased their expectations for Yoan Moncada during his strikeout-heavy 2018 campaign, the White Sox second baseman is not far removed from top-prospect status and superstar potential. The team still believes he can achieve it, and the frequent flashes of brilliance coupled with Moncada's still-young age of 23 make it look anything but impossible.

Trout has led baseball in on-base percentage in two of the last three seasons, owning the American League's highest mark in that third one. He entered Sunday's series finale with a staggering .465 on-base percentage in 2018. Well, that's the attribute the White Sox point to when talking about Moncada, who had a .377 OBP with Triple-A Charlotte last season and a combined .407 OBP in the Boston Red Sox system in 2016. This season, despite a .223 batting average and a major league leading 193 strikeouts, he still boasts an on-base percentage above .300, thanks in part to a team-high 58 walks.

Now those numbers are hardly Trout-esque, but they do highlight what the White Sox believe is the best part of Moncada's game, a part that could power him to eventual superstardom, even if he hasn't exactly blown the doors off his first full season in the majors.

"This kid's got a world of hitting ability, blessed with fantastic tools, power," general manager Rick Hahn said last week. "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."

Heading back to the minors, there is another position player who could one day be a White Sox superstar: Luis Robert. Just 21, the Cuban-import center fielder still has only played 50 minor league baseball games in the United States. Thumb injuries limited his first full season in the White Sox organization, and he finished the year without a home run. But he's been talked about as a player with many tools, with rave reviews about his speed, his glove and his bat.

The power, too, is expected to return, simply a side effect of the thumb injuries.

"I do think one thing to keep in mind about Luis is as we see all the time with thumb or wrist or hand injuries, that it does take a little time for the power to come back, and I think we've seen that," Hahn said. "He's swinging the bat well, we've seen that plus hit tool. The power hasn't quite been there yet this year, but with two DL stints for a hand and for a thumb injury, that's not a shock. I look forward to seeing where he's at next spring."

Is Robert heading for big league superstardom? It's way too early to tell at this point, considering he's played just 32 games at Class A Winston-Salem and is still so young and so inexperienced. But he's ranked as the organization's No. 3 prospect and as the No. 25 prospect in the game, and if the batting practice shows he put on during spring training are any indication, the guy can do some special things with the bat.

It goes to show how insanely good Trout is that discussions of each of these young White Sox reaching superstar status revolve around one or a few of the skills that Trout displays on a daily basis. Jimenez, Moncada and Robert reaching their potential and becoming among the game's best hitters could still place them nowhere near Trout. That's hardly a knock against them.

The White Sox, of course, would prefer to have multiple stars, if not super, on their roster if it means competing for championships on an annual basis, as opposed to the Angels' situation, steaming toward another postseason-less campaign while Trout is once again in the conversation to win the AL MVP. And of course there's the possibility of the White Sox producing one or more pitching superstars. Michael Kopech, Carlos Rodon and Dylan Cease all have their own batches of star-level expectations and could lead a star-studded rotation.

Having a Trout might be out of the question for the White Sox — and 28 other teams around the game, for that matter — but they could be developing their own superstar right now to lead the team from rebuilding mode to contention mode. And once contention mode arrives, having a bona fide, one-of-the-best-in-the-game superstar in the thick of that lineup could mean the difference between contending for a championship and winning one.

Jose Abreu expected to return to White Sox lineup this week

By Phil Rogers / Chicago Tribune / September 9, 2018

Jose Abreu is expected to rejoin the White Sox lineup this week, perhaps as early as Monday in Kansas City.

He fielded ground balls and ran on the field Sunday after taking live batting practice Saturday. The Sox could use a lift, although they have averaged 4.1 in the 19 games he has missed after surgery for a testicular torsion.

"We are not trying to rush him," manager Rick Renteria said. "We want to make sure he feels really good about where he's at, and as soon as we are assured that he feels good and our guys in the medical staff feel good about, then we will proceed."

Abreu will need to hit the ground running to continue his streak of having 25 home runs and 100 RBIs in every year of his career.

Albert Pujols, Joe DiMaggio and Abreu are the only hitters to do that in each of their first four major-league seasons. Abreu is three homers and 22 RBIs away from a fifth straight season.

Hometown audition: Rob Scahill is hoping he can pitch well enough in September to stay on the 40-man roster and go to spring training with the Sox next year. He's a Villa Park native who was at home after wrapping up his season with Triple-A Charlotte when the Sox added him as a replacement for Michael Kopech on Saturday.

"I just drove about 30 miles to the ballpark," said Scahill, who pitched at Bradley. "Little easier than most commutes."

Scahill, 31, signed a minor-league contract with the Sox last winter but didn't earn a promotion during the season, compiling a 6.08 ERA in 52 games, all in relief. He has made 118 appearances over parts of six seasons with the Rockies, Pirates and Brewers.

Extra innings: White Sox hitters are on pace for 1,568 strikeouts, three short of the major-league record set by the Brewers last season. ... Wellington Castillo was 0-for-4 and is 2-for-19 since returning from his 80-game PED suspension. He said he needs more at-bats to get his timing right but understands the time share with Omar Narvaez and Kevan Smith. ... The Sox are 13-22 in one-run games. ... The Sox still have not named a replacement starter for Michael Kopech, who was scheduled to pitch Tuesday in Kansas City. Kopech is getting a second opinion on his diagnosis of a torn ulnar collateral ligament in his elbow.

Series preview: White Sox at Royals

By Phil Rogers / Chicago Tribune / September 9, 2018

All games on WGN-AM 720.

Monday: 7:15 p.m., WGN-9.

RH Lucas Giolito (10-10, 5.85) vs. RH Jakob Junis (8-12, 4.32).

Tuesday: 7:15 p.m., NBCSCH.

TBA vs. TBA.

Wednesday: 7:15 p.m., NBCSCH.

LH Carlos Rodon (6-5, 3.11) vs. RH Brad Keller (7-6, 3.14).

White Sox fall to Angels 1-0 despite stellar outing from Reynaldo Lopez

By Phil Rogers / Chicago Tribune / September 9, 2018

Remember when people wondered whether Reynaldo Lopez could hold up through a full season?

He is answering that question with a resounding "Yes."

The only ones feeling fatigue these days are the hitters facing him. They've got to be getting tired of facing 97 and 98 mph fastballs with elevation and late movement.

Lopez blew through the Angels for six crisp innings Sunday afternoon, striking out 10, allowing two hits and three walks and not allowing a baserunner past first base. He deserved more than a no decision, but that's what he received in a 1-0 loss to the Angels before 24,020 at Guaranteed Rate Field.

“His fastball was really good today,” manager Rick Renteria said. “He was elevating, and when he needed to throw a strike early, off-speed, get a swing, he was working it very well. He just looked really composed today, very calm, very relaxed.”

And very much like a guy who should pitch immediately behind Carlos Rodon in the White Sox’s 2019 rotation.

Lopez would have loved to be the No. 3 starter behind Rodon and Michael Kopech, but he is dealing with the disappointment of knowing Kopech appears headed for Tommy John surgery, which will sideline him until 2020.

“He was doing great,” Lopez said through Sox interpreter Billy Russo. “It was tough news. We were all a little down after the news, but we are supporting him. We know that we have his back. He’s a very talented pitcher and we are very confident he’s going to come back stronger.”

Angels lefty Andrew Heaney (9-9) was even more effective than Lopez. He struck out 12 in seven shutout innings as the White Sox hitters raised their total of strikeouts to 1,384, the most in the majors.

The Sox threatened against the Angels’ bullpen in the eighth and ninth innings but couldn’t get a big hit. They lost their fifth game in a row and were swept in a series for the first time since losing three to the Yankees on Aug. 6-8.

Lopez held hitters other than Mike Trout hitless. Even more impressive, perhaps, he held Trout to two singles in three at-bats.

Trout killed the White Sox this weekend, going 8-for-11 with two home runs, two walks and one hit by pitch.

Lopez maintained his velocity throughout the 105-pitch outing. His first fastball came in to Kole Calhoun at 95 mph; his last to Justin Upton was 98 mph.

Lopez mixed his fastball and his changeup masterfully. He got 16 swinging strikes — 10 on his fastball and six on his change.

“I think that my fastball was stronger today, faster today, because I was using a better angle with my arm,” said Lopez, who is on track to throw 180-plus innings. “I was staying closer with my arm and that’s what created the better angle and more velocity.”

This marked the fourth consecutive impressive start for the 24-year-old Lopez, who is finishing his first full season in the major leagues. He has cut his ERA from 4.72 to 4.22 in this stretch, allowing four runs and 15 hits in 25 2/3 innings while striking out 29 and walking eight.

“I am feeling good,” Lopez said. “I feel strong. My mindset in every outing is to go at least six. If I can go more, that’s even better.”

Reynaldo Lopez strong, but White Sox swept by Angels

By Brian Sandalow / Sun-Times / September 9, 2018

The White Sox are looking for feel-good stories as their season nears its end. And with his recent performances, right-hander Reynaldo Lopez is emerging as one of the positives.

Lopez threw six scoreless innings, struck out 10 and allowed only two hits in the Sox’ 1-0 loss Sunday to the Angels. The Sox were swept and have lost five in a row, but Lopez stood out as a bright spot. He has a 1.43 ERA, 29 strikeouts and a .165 opponents’ batting average in his last four starts and can enter the offseason on an upswing.

That could mean a lot for Lopez.

“You feel confident that you’re leaving the season knowing that you’ve done what you can to put yourself in a better position to give your club an opportunity to win ballgames, and you’re feeling good about it and trusting what you have in your arsenal,” manager Rick Renteria said. “He has continued to work and continues to improve. Good for him, good for us.”

Lopez, 24, who could have up to four starts left, has recovered from a July 6-Aug. 19 stretch in which he had a 7.17 ERA and allowed 49 hits in 42%⁰ innings. Renteria said Lopez recently has looked “at least” as good as he did during his earlier high points, which would be an encouraging development for a young pitcher working through his first full major-league season.

“Today, there was just a really good look about him,” Renteria said. “He was very calm, very focused. He was trusting what he was capable of doing with all the pitches he had.”

Lopez, who had a great fastball against the Angels, credited an angle in which his arm stays closer for the improved heater. If he’s consistent with the angle, it also helps other pitches, such as his changeup.

“That was the case today,” Lopez said. “If you’re able to stick with that arm angle for the whole game, you’re going to be more effective with all your pitches.”

Lopez’s stuff has never been in question, but there were concerns about his focus. Wellington Castillo, who has caught Lopez’s last two starts, hasn’t seen that issue arise.

“We talked before he came out, and he had a really good idea of what he wanted to do,” Castillo said. “I think his focus is there, and I believe in him. I believe in all my pitchers. When he can control his focus, I think he’s going to be good.”

Since the beginning of the year, Castillo has seen other signs of progress.

“The confidence Lopez has on the fastball and on any pitch in any count, that’s big for him,” Castillo said. “Up, downhill, he’s getting more life on the fastball and a better angle on the fastball and the other pitches, too.”

The Sox know they won’t have Michael Kopech until 2020, and Lucas Giolito’s progress has been stunted by control problems, but at least Lopez’s late resurgence gives them something to look forward to for 2019.

“I’m feeling good; I feel strong,” Lopez said. “My mindset in every outing is to go at least six. If I can go more, that’s even better. Go at least six innings and try to finish strong.”

Shohei Ohtani draws praise from White Sox manager Rick Renteria

By Brian Sandalow / Sun-Times / September 9, 2018

Count White Sox manager Rick Renteria among those impressed with the Angels’ Shohei Ohtani.

“I think anybody who’s a fan of baseball likes to see somebody as exciting as he is,” Renteria said. “Once he’s recovered ultimately from whatever they do to correct his arm, it’s interesting to see a guy who can do a lot of different things. He can hit; he can run. Obviously he’s capable of pitching, so it’s a unique skill that he has on both sides of the baseball.”

When healthy, Ohtani has been a dynamic presence as a hitter and pitcher. Ohtani has 19 home runs and a .291 batting average to go along with a 129 ERA+ on the mound. On Sunday, he went 1-for-3 with a double and hasn’t skipped a beat as a hitter since the news that he likely will need reconstructive elbow surgery.

He's not expected to return to the mound until 2020, but Ohtani's success has led some to wonder whether more two-way players are coming in the future. Renteria didn't rule it out.

"I guess if you're that talented, maybe that's an option that a club can take," Renteria said.

As for how a two-way player would work out of the bullpen, Renteria had some logistical questions and used Matt Davidson as an example in a hypothetical situation.

"Matty's playing first base, and I got to get him ready to pick up an inning," Renteria said. "When do I find the time to get him ready to put in that inning? It depends on if they're in the lineup on that particular day, so there are some logistics aspects to it that might be an issue. As a starter, obviously you know he's going to start that day. So that would be the only thing that you would have to consider."

Abreu is close

On the disabled list since Aug. 22 after surgery on his lower-abdominal/groin area, Jose Abreu appears close to a return. Renteria said Abreu is "feeling good" and was hoping he'd be back in the lineup Monday.

"As soon as we are assured that he feels good and our guys in the medical staff feel good about it, then we'll go ahead and proceed," Renteria said.

Closing in

James Shields is 13, innings away from a 200-inning season. Renteria praised Shields for his work ethic, his example to his younger teammates and his ability to take the ball when needed.

"If he can get to 200 innings, we'd be extremely happy for him," Renteria said.

'Tough news'

Reynaldo Lopez had a predictable reaction to the Michael Kopech news.

"As a teammate, you are always rooting for your guys, rooting for your teammates," Lopez said. "He was doing great. It was tough news. We were all a little down after the news, but we are supporting him. We have his back.

"He's a very talented pitcher, and we are very confident that he's going to come back stronger."

The Sox haven't announced who will start Tuesday in Kopech's place.

Lopez gives Chicago White Sox's rotation a needed lift

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / September 9, 2018

Heading into the final month of the regular season, the Chicago White Sox's starting rotation was on an impressive roll and already looking like a formidable unit for 2019.

Carlos Rodon was pitching like an ace, Michael Kopech was as good as advertised after coming up from Class AAA Charlotte, and Lucas Giolito was on track after a rocky first five months.

Much has changed.

Rodon has allowed 8 runs in 11 innings over his last 2 starts, Giolito didn't make it out of the second inning in his last outing, and -- saving the worst news for last -- Kopech is facing Tommy John surgery and not expected to be seen again until the 2020 season.

The Sox were in dire need of some good news with the starting rotation, and Reynaldo Lopez delivered Sunday.

"What a great game he threw for us today," manager Rick Renteria said after the White Sox lost to the Angels 1-0 at Guaranteed Rate Field. "He just looked really composed today. Very calm, very relaxed."

Lopez never unraveled when he was struggling in May (1-2, 5.61 ERA) and July (1-4, 7.39).

He is in his first full major-league season, and the 24-year-old righty admitted a lack of focus proved costly at times.

Lopez is learning as he goes, and Sunday's outing was another step in the right direction. He pitched 6 scoreless innings against Los Angeles and tied his season high with 10 strikeouts.

"I am feeling good," Lopez said through Sox translator Billy Russo. "I feel strong. My mindset in every outing is to go at least 6. If I can go more, that's even better. Go at least 6 innings and try to finish strong."

Now 1-0 with a 1.43 ERA over his last 4 starts, Lopez has been having great success with a changeup Renteria described as "one of the best I've seen."

The off-speed pitch was on display against the Angels, but Lopez's fastball was overpowering.

"He had a really good fastball today," catcher Welington Castillo said. "Really good life on the fastball. Our game plan was to attack those hitters with fastballs, throw a couple good changes. That was the game plan, and he executed well."

While the Kopech news is difficult for the White Sox to digest, Rodon and Giolito are not at all concerned with their recent slides.

Adding Lopez back into the mix is an added bonus.

"You feel confident," Renteria said. "You leave the season knowing that you've done what you can to put yourself in a better position to give your club an opportunity to win ballgames. He's continued to work and continues to improve. Good for him and good for us."

Now a one-way sensation, Ohtani still does damage against Chicago White Sox

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / September 9, 2018

Barring a miraculous reversal when he gets a second opinion, Chicago White Sox rookie starting pitcher Michael Kopech is facing Tommy John surgery that is going to keep him out until the 2020 season.

A somber Kopech discussed his fate Friday, and 30 minutes later Angels two-way star Shohei Ohtani was answering similar questions in the visitors' dugout at Guaranteed Rate Field.

Like Kopech, Ohtani has a damaged ulnar collateral ligament in his pitching (right) elbow and is facing surgery.

In his first major-league season after leaving his native Japan and signing with Los Angeles, Ohtani wouldn't be able to pitch again for a full year. He continues to swing the bat.

Scratched from Sunday's scheduled start after experiencing more elbow discomfort, Ohtani (4-2, 3.31 ERA in 10 starts) still managed to go 4-for-11 with 1 home run and 6 RBI in the Angels' three-game series sweep over the White Sox.

"I think anybody who is a fan of baseball likes to see somebody as exciting as he is," Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "I think once he's recovered ultimately from whatever they do to correct his arm, it's interesting to see a guy that can do a lot of different things."

"He can hit, he can run. Obviously he's capable of pitching. It's a unique skill he has on both sides of the baseball."

Matt Davidson is the White Sox's designated hitter, and he also plays third base and first base.

Davidson has made 3 relief appearances in blowout losses this season. While pitching 3 scoreless innings and flashing an impressive fastball and curve, Davidson has expressed interest in a regular relief-pitching role.

It has been discussed, but not at a serious level.

"There's a logistics aspect to it," Renteria said. "If Matty is playing first base and I have to get him ready to pick up an inning, when do I find the time to get him ready to put in that inning? As a starter, you know he's going to start that day. That would be the only thing you would have to consider."

Something wild:

It was a rough night Saturday for rookie reliever Thyago Vieira.

Not only did the right-hander allow 2 runs on 2 hits and 1 walk in the ninth innings, he threw 3 wild pitches.

While he can run his fastball up to 100 mph, Vieira is 1-1 with a 10.22 ERA in 13 appearances since joining the White Sox's bullpen from Class AAA Charlotte in late July.

"He's got to keep getting the opportunity," manager Rick Renteria said. "He's got to see what he's capable of doing. We are trying to find windows like (Saturday) to continue to allow him an opportunity to work. He's had some good days and bad days. Still a work in progress."

Tim Anderson enjoying his midseason defensive breakout: 'Confidence level is way up'

By James Fegan / The Athletic / September 9, 2018

Coming from an extreme shifted position on the right side of second base, and running down a soft dribbler up the middle from Kole Calhoun, Tim Anderson stooped low to glove the baseball. He whipped an underhanded throw across his body to first base, with just enough arm-side tail to glance off Matt Davidson's glove, giving Anderson his 17th error of the season on Saturday night.

That's the third-highest total at his position — just five of them have come since July 1 — but as you can piece together, with all the difficult things that went right on the play, it's not one that's keeping him awake at night.

"I can take that," Anderson said. "Because I know that I hustled and gave my all to make that play. Most of the errors are from plays that some shortstops can't get to; the errors I'll have to live with because I have a lot of range. I try to make every play and I can't be perfect every play. I'll take those E's and keep working and keep learning."

The slow decrease of Anderson's errors from the glaring issue they were in the opening third of the season to an afterthought, would suggest that his play at shortstop has become as noticeable as a good umpire. This is not the case.

Whether it's been new familiarity with throwing out of the spin move while racing to his glove side, or throwing on the run, across his body while chasing balls deep into the 5.5 hole, Anderson has been grabbing the attention of his starting pitchers, specifically. It's one thing to be steady, but Anderson's athleticism combined with increased comfort with the position has started creating outs on plays where there's no reasonable expectation to be any. Ever since Anderson starred in helping Carlos Rodón keep the Yankees at bay in New York despite four walks in an Aug. 27 victory, he's been referring to Anderson's defense as "solid as hell," and he's not the only hurler to make mention of it.

“Over the last few months he’s drastically changed, I know that,” James Shields said. “He’s been working so hard, all year long. In between games, and before games and during BP, I don’t think he’s taken a day off working on his defense. We as pitchers, especially starting pitchers, when we’re not pitching we’re constantly praising him on how well his defense is and how much it’s improved. He’s done a tremendous job this year of really stepping his game up.”

Anderson said the difference maker is as always more reps in the field. Sunday brought him up to 378 career starts at shortstop as a major leaguer, but it’s as much about the exhaustive side work as anything. As difficult as it would seem to replicate spin moves, glove flips and Derek Jeter-esque over-the-shoulder throws outside of a game, and as much as his decision to trust his arm strength and release the ball while running away from his target feels spur of the moment, Anderson insists any highlight-reel offering you see is something he practiced with bench coach Joe McEwing first.

“We practice that play,” Anderson said. “Even the ones to my right. We practice that play all the time in batting practice with Joe. We get out there. They’ve not become easy but I kind of have a feel for those plays because I get a lot of reps with those plays. We mess around and do all types of things in BP.”

Despite setting a new career-high in home runs at 18, Anderson hasn’t loudly celebrated any of them since he and Salvador Perez had a spirited public debate about it. But the “keep it fun” philosophy is still present in the field. Whereas there’s a certain level of quiet and focus any hitter needs at the plate, Anderson pumps his chest when he releases a throw he knows is good after an athletic play, and soaks up the daps from his teammates once the ball hits the mitt at first.

For longtime White Sox viewers, it might harken to memories of Alexei Ramirez when he came into his own defensively in 2010 and accordingly showed some more personality and belief in his game. When you start believing every difficult play can turn into a highlight, and executing at such a high level, it’s hard not to let it show.

“It’s playing with a lot of confidence, not being afraid to make a mistake,” Anderson said. “Most people read that as cockiness, but it’s not. It’s just the confidence level. Confidence level is way up. When I walk between the lines I feel like I’m the best on the field. That’s how I’m going to play. That’s the way I go about my business. You’re just in the moment. Those things are exciting. You make great plays. Why not be able to pump your chest or pump your fist? It’s fun, man. It’s a heckuva play, so why not?”

Defensive metrics for Anderson are predictably a little scattershot, as they always are. Baseball Prospectus’ Fielding Runs metric (FRAA) already believes he’s been a stalwart in 2018 (+9.2), Defensive Runs Saved (-1 DRS) and Total Zone Rating (0) believe he’s floating around average, and Ultimate Zone Rating (+1.7 UZR) thinks he’s a little above. None of that quite encapsulates, but none of it refutes the belief that he’s made a leap specifically over the last few months, from someone whom the coaching staff thought had potential and was making progress, to someone they now comfortably laud as a defensive asset.

“It’s his work,” manager Rick Renteria said. “He’s really starting to get around the baseball really well, backhanded side he’s been doing very nicely. Obviously glove side has been very good coming in. His idea and his ability now to slow the game down a little bit more, keep everything in front of him, understanding what he’s got to do, trusting his skill set. He’s a very explosive player.”

Anderson’s on-base percentage still starts with a 2, which will serve to obscure that he’s made material offensive improvements across the board (strikeout rate, walks, power production, swinging strike rate). A .249/.292/.420 isn’t what top-of-the-batting-order dreams are made of, even if they build a valuable offensive profile combined with his speed and base-stealing.

But as the year winds to a close, watching Anderson surprisingly hasn’t been defined by pushing a haunting 2017 to the past — he’s long since done that. Nor has it even been about watching him pile up a blizzard of stolen bases — he’ll probably wind up nabbing over 30, which is plenty. It’s been about how he’s unquestionably defined himself a shortstop. In July, it felt like a fun thought experiment to swap his raw athleticism into center field to squeeze Nick Madrigal into a future White Sox infield, but no longer. Anderson

has shown he's the best shortstop in the organization the last few months, and all projections of how he'll help the team going forward should be adjusted accordingly.

"I'm in a different spot as far as who I was then," Anderson said of his progress since Opening Day. "Confidence level is way up, the hands are working, everything's clicking. I've figured it out and I'm learning that position every day. Just got to continue to get better, keep focusing and just keep having fun."
