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### **Covey sharp but White Sox can't solve Kluber**

By Max Gelman / MLB.com / September 24, 2018

CHICAGO -- As he emerged into one of the best pitchers in baseball, Corey Kluber has also dominated the White Sox. Over his past 10 starts against Chicago dating back to May 2016, Cleveland's starter went 8-0 with a sparkling 2.00 ERA.

Monday's series opener was no different.

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The White Sox couldn't solve Kluber through seven scoreless innings, striking out 11 times, as Dylan Covey went tit-for-tat with the Indians' ace and threw up six zeros of his own. Ultimately, a Brandon Guyer leadoff home run in the seventh inning against reliever Ian Hamilton made the difference in Chicago's 4-0 loss to the Tribe at Guaranteed Rate Field.

"Kluber did the same thing he's continued to do," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "He got us quite a few times, and he just did what he does, and then you have Miller come in and Allen, they have a pretty nice setup there."

Kluber's ERA in his past 11 starts against the White Sox fell to 1.81 as a result, and the righty became a 20-game winner for the first time in his career.

The closest Chicago came to making any noise occurred in the second inning. Omar Narvaez led off with a single and advanced to third on Nicky Delmonico's one-out single. But Tim Anderson and Jose Rondon struck out, marking the only time the White Sox reached third base against Kluber.

Covey, meanwhile, has pitched well enough this season to be considered a rotation option for 2019. He owns a 12-inning scoreless streak over his past two outings -- both against the Indians -- and with Michael Kopech sidelined all of next year and the uncertainty surrounding James Shields' return given his \$16 million option, Covey figures to be in the picture.

"I think it's premature for me to tell you where we're gonna be when we go into the offseason," Renteria said, "but sure, does he merit consideration? Absolutely. Has he shown that he's possibly capable of doing it on a more consistent basis? Absolutely."

And even though Monday's Indians lineup was without Francisco Lindor, Jose Ramirez and Michael Brantley, Covey managed to work himself out of several jams. Covey pointed to the Indians' unfamiliarity with his pitches as a key to his success Monday night.

"Some of those guys hadn't seen me, but yeah, definitely a big confidence booster for me," Covey said. "I've known all year that I have the stuff, it's just been trying to find that consistency with it. I think me and [catcher Kevan Smith] have really found a groove with each other, just with pitch-calling and how he's setting up behind the plate for me, giving me a good visual. Things are just working out for me."

"Even last start [in Cleveland], I didn't start that game, but just watching and seeing the swings and how he did, he's got good stuff, man," Guyer said of Covey. "He was pitching really good."

Cleveland tacked on three insurance runs in the ninth off Nate Jones, who made his fifth appearance since coming off the disabled list (pronator strain) on Sept. 11. Monday marked Jones' first runs allowed since his return.

#### SOUND SMART

Covey has had his run of tough luck out of the rotation in terms of run support. In each of his past seven starts, the right-hander has received one or zero runs to back him.

#### YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Indians second baseman Adam Rosales slugged his first home run of the season Monday and stretched the definition of home run "trot" to its extreme. Rosales sprinted around the bases, going from home to home in 16.23 seconds. That's the fastest home-to-home time in MLB this season, and only Rosales' fifth-best home-to-home time.

#### HE SAID IT

"I'll see those swings and those takes when it comes back in on them in there; I can see the uncomfortable at-bat they're having. It's just like it's another weapon to play with for me." -- Covey, on developing his cutter

#### UP NEXT

The White Sox continue their final home series of the year with a 7:10 p.m. CT start against the Indians. Shields (7-16, 4.48 ERA) goes for the hosts, making his last scheduled start of the 2018 season. He'll finish the year with at least 33 starts for the 10th time in the last 11 seasons. Trevor Bauer (12-6, 2.21) starts for Cleveland.

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#### **Madrigal, White Sox know power will come**

*No. 4 prospect aiming to gain strength in offseason, maintain same approach*

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 24, 2018

CHICAGO -- The debut season for Nick Madrigal came to an end with Class A Advanced Winston-Salem's elimination from the 2018 Carolina League playoffs.

His numbers were impressive over stops with the Dash, Class A Kannapolis and the White Sox Arizona Rookie League team, featuring a .303 average with eight stolen bases and a mere five strikeouts in 155 at-bats. Madrigal, who was the team's top Draft pick in 2018 and fourth selection overall, also finished without a home run and seven extra-base hits.

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Featuring a top-of-the-order profile as a hitter, the 5-foot-7, 165-pound middle infielder doesn't have to be a prodigious slugger. But as his career develops, Madrigal and the White Sox believe so will his power.

"I know these next couple of offseasons are going to be big in the weight room. I know I'm going to continue to get stronger," Madrigal told MLB.com during a recent interview. "I do see that being a part of my game."

"There's power in there. We've seen it with our own eyes," White Sox director of amateur scouting Nick Hostetler said. "We know that once he comes back next year that there will be some home runs he's going to hit. But ultimately, the main thing is to jump in that lineup, put the bat on the ball and keep moving."

And there lies the crux of this power discussion. Madrigal, Chicago's No. 4 overall prospect and No. 32 in baseball, should become more of an extra-base hitter with full health, a little rest following this long season and more experience, but neither the player nor the White Sox want it to come at the expense of a change of approach from what made him quite possibly the most elite hit tool in this past Draft class.

With Oregon State, for example, Madrigal hit eight home runs over three seasons with a single-season high of four. He knocked out 40 doubles, but more importantly, batted .361 with a .422 career on-base percentage. Let's not forget his 37 strikeouts over 612 at-bats.

"I'm not going to change my game at all," Madrigal said. "I know that [power] is going to come as time goes on, but I'm focused on more of the line-drive kind of approach rather than hit the ball in the air. I've always kind of known that's my job in the lineup. That's my game, put the ball in play, no matter if it's early in the count or later in the count. My dad has always told me if you put that ball in play, something could happen."

"A player could make an error, it could squeak through the infield. The White Sox drafted me for a reason, for the style of player I am. There are things I can definitely improve as time goes on. Those things I'll be open to, but I'm not going to change my style at all."

Madrigal played almost exclusively at second base during his first season, but he's currently working at shortstop with Omar Vizquel during instructional league action in Arizona. The 21-year-old took a break from that work to visit Guaranteed Rate Field on Monday along with his dad, Mike, his mom, Angie, and one of his brothers, Zack.

Manager Rick Renteria and players such as James Shields and Tim Anderson represented a few of the people Madrigal met Monday. In his chat with the media, Madrigal spoke on everything ranging from developing a first-year work routine to the disappointment of the Dash's playoff elimination.

"I've won at every level I've been at so far, going back to Little League, high school and college," said Madrigal from the White Sox dugout Monday. "That's something I want to continue doing. And it seems like this organization is the perfect fit for me."

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**White Sox instructional league roster, schedule**

MLB.com / September 24, 2018

At the end of each season, Major League clubs hold instructional league play, commonly known as instructs, an extended mini-camp that allows Minor Leaguers -- particularly those just starting their pro

careers at the lower levels of their team's system -- to get some work in before calling it a year. Players work on specific parts of their game and get offseason workout plans while often playing a handful of games against nearby teams to provide low-key competition to put what they are working on into practice.

Here's a look at the White Sox roster, with the players' ranks in the team's Top 30 Prospects list in parentheses:

PITCHERS: Vince Arobio, RHP; Jason Bilous, RHP; Mauricio Cabrera, RHP; Johan Dominguez, RHP; Rigo Fernandez, LHP; Lincoln Hensman, RHP (No. 30); Brayan Herrera, RHP; Codi Heuer, RHP; Will Kincanon, RHP; Luis Ledo, RHP; Cristofer Melendez, RHP; Jose Nin, RHP; Andrew Perez, LHP; Wilber Perez, RHP; Konnor Pilkington, LHP (No. 18); Lane Ransley, RHP; Yordi Rosario, RHP; Hunter Schryver, LHP; Bennett Souza, LHP; Jonathan Stiever, RHP (No. 29); Devan Watts, RHP

CATCHERS: Michael Hickman, Nate Nolan, Evan Skoug, Gunnar Troutwine

INFIELDERS: Bryce Bush, Luis Curbelo (No. 27), Lency Delgado, Nick Madrigal (No. 4), Kelvin Maldonado, Harvin Mendoza, Amado Nunez, Lenyn Sosa, Yeyson Yrizarri, Corey Zangari

OUTFIELDERS: Anderson Comas, Bryan Connell, Tyler Frost, Luis Gonzalez (No. 14), Roman Gonzalez, Luis Mieses, Steele Walker (No. 12), Cabera Weaver

#### SCHEDULE

Thurs., Sept. 20 - Camp day  
Fri., Sept. 21 - Camp day  
Sat. Sept. 22 - Camp day  
Mon., Sept. 24 - Camp day  
Tues., Sept. 25 - vs. Kansas City  
Weds., Sept. 26 - Camp day  
Thurs., Sept. 27 - at Kansas City  
Fri., Sept. 28 - Camp day  
Sat., Sept. 29 - at Los Angeles  
Mon., Oct. 1 - Camp day  
Tues. Oct. 2 - at Los Angeles  
Weds. Oct. 3 - Camp day  
Thurs. Oct. 4 - vs. Texas  
Fri. Oct. 5 - at Oakland  
Sat. Oct. 6 - Camp day  
Mon. Oct. 8 - Camp day  
Tues. Oct. 9 - vs. Oakland  
Weds. Oct. 10 - Camp day  
Thurs. Oct. 11 - vs. Italy  
Fri. Oct. 12 - Camp day  
Sat. Oct. 13 - at Los Angeles  
Mon. Oct. 15 - at Kansas City  
Tues. Oct 16 - Camp day  
Weds. Oct. 17 - vs. Kansas City

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#### **Something of the future: Nick Madrigal has a bright future with White Sox, no matter what position he plays**

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / September 24, 2018

There's a good deal of time before the White Sox need to decide where Nick Madrigal fits in the puzzle that is the team's lineup of the future.

The good news is that he's a piece that can fit into several different spots.

Part of the allure of Madrigal's first-round selection in this summer's draft was that he was a talented defender capable of playing a number of positions on the infield. And though he almost exclusively played second base during his first season as a pro, he's still capable of playing elsewhere on the infield.

Heck, he's even got experience catching. Kind of.

"I've worked on different positions throughout my life in the infield," Madrigal said, meeting with reporters Monday at Guaranteed Rate Field. "When my dad hit me ground balls, I made sure to take them from both sides of the bag, just to make sure I had that in my back pocket. I've played a lot of shortstop my whole life.

"When I was really young I caught, so I feel like I've played almost every position on the field and I feel comfortable doing that."

Madrigal made sure to point out that the last time he played catcher he was 11 years old, so don't expect to see him bring those skills to the majors when he eventually arrives on the South Side. But his versatility means there's a variety of permutations that Rick Renteria could employ when the time comes.

Selecting a middle infielder — and one with three years of collegiate experience, at that — was a bit of a curious decision when the White Sox made the pick back in June. It's not because anyone didn't like the skill set that Madrigal brings; he was considered the best all-around player in college baseball and is already the organization's No. 4 prospect in MLB Pipeline's rankings. But two members of the White Sox young core are currently playing middle infield in the major leagues. Tim Anderson and Yoan Moncada figure to be pretty well entrenched in their positions, with the team talking about them both as if they'll be around for a very long time after things shift from rebuilding mode to contention mode.

Will there be room for all three of those guys on the diamond, should they all live up to expectations? The White Sox certainly would qualify that as a good problem to have. But Madrigal's versatility could help solve it before it starts. To their credit, both Anderson and Moncada have also commented this season about a willingness to play other positions.

Like with many of the other highly touted prospects in the White Sox loaded farm system, Madrigal already has sky-high expectations from the rebuild-loving fan base. He played at three different levels of minor league baseball in his short time since joining the organization, and after a successful collegiate career that included a College World Series win this summer, there's an expectation that he could fly through the system.

Whether or not that ends up happening, the expectations likely won't decrease any time soon: In 43 minor league games, Madrigal slashed .308/.353/.348 with a jaw-droppingly low five strikeouts in 173 plate appearances.

"Throughout my life I've always had expectations," Madrigal said. "I know there's always going to be people talking and social media and all that stuff. I'm really just focused on now and, while I'm in the instructional league, trying to get better, trying help the people around me. Those things don't bother me, but I know they're going to be there my whole life. But I'm not worried about it at all.

"I've won at every level I've been at so far, going back to Little League, high school and college. That's something I want to continue doing. And it seems like this organization is the perfect fit for me."

So how quickly could Madrigal force the issue and reach the big leagues? His bat will likely determine the answer to that question, and we'll see what the results are next season. He's not concerned about it, however. He seems to share the confidence of many of his fellow White Sox prospects. He definitely shares the knowledge that the decision on when he reaches the bigs is not his to make.

Whether at second base, shortstop or third base — or catcher (not really) — Madrigal has a bright future ahead, another reason for fans to be so excited about this team's future. How long will this particular waiting game last? You'll just have to, well, wait.

"It's kind of out of my control at this point," he said. "Whatever the organization needs me to do. I can definitely see this being a home for me sometime soon."

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## **Another dominant effort from Corey Kluber shows rebuilding White Sox will have to solve Indians pitching to become future kings of AL Central**

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / September 24, 2018

The best part of the White Sox final six games of the 2018 season? They won't have to face Corey Kluber again.

Kluber's dominance over the South Siders continued Monday night, the White Sox offense silenced against a Cleveland Indians pitching staff that could enter October as the American League's most fearsome. Four Indians starters have hit the 200-strikeout mark this season, the first time a single staff has ever had that happen in baseball history. And a bullpen that's underachieved statistically after a big-spending offseason still has Andrew Miller and Cody Allen to worry about.

Kluber added to his own big strikeout total with 11 against the White Sox. In four starts against the White Sox this season, Kluber racked up 39 strikeouts and allowed just three earned runs in 28 innings of work. He's got 184 strikeouts against them in his career, more than any other opponent.

"Kluber did the same thing he's continued to do," White Sox skipper Rick Renteria said. "He attacks the strike zone, stays below the zone, ball fades out, works both sides of the plate, runs balls in, catches you locks you up, mixes his pitches well. He got us quite a few times and he just did what he does."

"He's a Cy Young type pitcher. I think with guys like that, when you have certain opportunities — and you don't get very many — you've got to be able to get at least one point across."

This is no surprise, of course, one of the league's top arms — a two-time Cy Young winner, including last year — having so much success against a lineup that's missed the playoffs every season he's been in the major leagues. But it shows how tricky it will be for the rebuilding White Sox to ascend to the top of the division. Not only do all the young hitters on the rise through the farm system need to figure out how to succeed at the big league level, they need to do it against some of the game's best pitchers.

Kluber is under team control for another three seasons, Carlos Carrasco and Trevor Bauer for another two and Mike Clevinger for a whopping five seasons. The White Sox likely aren't tailoring their rebuilding effort to the current kings of the Central. But they'll one day need to overtake the Indians to get to the level they want to reach, and this collection of pitchers isn't going anywhere any time soon.

This season alone, Indians pitchers have turned in eight double-digit strikeout performances against the White Sox.

Of course, the fearsome foursome of Cleveland pitchers should also give the White Sox plenty of hope. There's a crowded list of names angling for spot in the rotation of the future on the South Side, which speaks to the pitching depth Rick Hahn has amassed in the farm system. Perhaps the likes of Michael Kopech, Carlos Rodon, Lucas Giolito, Reynaldo Lopez, Dylan Cease and Dane Dunning can form a similarly talented group down the road.

Cleveland's captured three straight division titles. If the White Sox can form their own dazzling rotation, they'd be in position to attempt the same kind of feat.

But until that day comes, the Indians' stellar starting staff will serve as a constant reminder of who the White Sox will need to pass on their planned journey to the top of the division and perennial contention.

The AL Central goes through Cleveland — for now, and perhaps for a while.

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## **White Sox prospect Nick Madrigal hopes to make Guaranteed Rate Field his home 'sometime soon'**

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / September 24, 2018

Nick Madrigal believes the most important takeaway from his first exposure to the major leagues has been about learning routine.

"Not only on the field but off-the-field routines, the way you get into the mental side of the game," the White Sox prospect said Monday afternoon at Guaranteed Rate Field. "You're playing every single day, there are going to be days when you don't feel your best but you have to go out there and perform. That's something I've adjusted to, figuring out my routine, what's best for me.

"Some days I might not take as many swings in the cage before the game. Even in my pregame routine I started reading a book, just picking up things here and there because it's a long season."

His summer, though, has been anything but routine.

This June's fourth overall draft pick learned he was headed to the White Sox about five minutes before they selected him. About three weeks later, his Oregon State Beavers won the College World Series.

Since then he has bounced between the Arizona Rookie League, Low-A Kannapolis and High-A Winston Salem. He hit .303 with a .701 OPS in 155 at-bats across the three levels.

Madrigal met some of his potential future teammates during a visit to the clubhouse on his first visit to Guaranteed Rate Field.

"I can definitely see this being a home for me hopefully sometime soon," Madrigal said. "I met a lot of great guys. James Shields, Tim Anderson. Everyone was real welcoming to me so it was definitely nice."

Madrigal has been working out at the Sox's instructional league in Arizona.

"I've been there a couple days now," he said. "(Tuesday) I fly back and get straight back into it."

Winston-Salem manager Omar Vizquel, an 11-time Gold Glove shortstop during his playing days, has been teaching Madrigal some of the finer points of the position as well as second base, where Madrigal played at Oregon State.

"I got real close with him. He's been awesome," Madrigal said. "I've worked with him a lot more on the infield stuff in the instructional league the last couple days. He's told me some footwork things. He's watched over me and told me what he likes.

"I've bounced a lot of questions off him, not only baseball stuff but outside of the game."

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## **Kanye West's first pitch came as a surprise — even for the White Sox**

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / September 24, 2018

Fans at the City Series finale Sunday were surprised to see Kanye West throw out the first pitch. It was a bit of a surprise for the White Sox too.

The Sox learned a day earlier that the music icon and South Side native had planned to attend the sellout at Guaranteed Rate Field. Sox corporate development manager Sam Lawson has a connection to West's camp who contacted him.

The team didn't keep the first-pitch details secret for shock value. For all Sox staffers knew, "Chicago P.D." actor and Harvey native LaRoyce Hawkins would be the only one to throw out the ceremonial ball, as planned.

Then West asked the Sox that day if he and son Saint could do it, too.

"It wasn't until a couple of hours before the game that we even knew," said Brooks Boyer, senior vice president of sales and marketing. "That's pretty cool to be able to double down with Kanye" and Hawkins.

Saint and Kanye each took a turn throwing the ball to "catcher" Lucas Giolito, then had a brief chat with Kanye as he handed him the souvenir.

The Twitter response was "off the charts," Boyer said.

"When Sister Mary (Jo Sobieck) threw her first pitch (in August), that went pretty crazy viral because a nun goes out there and bounces it off her elbow and slings a strike. That was a big deal, (but) nothing like this because of who he is and what he means socially to Chicago and to the world."

Sobieck, who had a return engagement Saturday, still tops West on Facebook, Sox officials said.

Sox officials said West stayed and watched the game at least until the third inning, several bodyguards in tow.

After the game, West tweeted a photo of him and his late mother, Donda, both dressed in Sox gear, throwing out the first pitch in 2007, with the words "same field."

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### **Dylan Covey shines, but White Sox can't touch Corey Kluber in 4-0 loss to Indians**

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / September 24, 2018

White Sox manager Rick Renteria says Dylan Covey can't do anything to cement a role in the 2019 starting rotation, but Monday night's effort in a 4-0 loss to the AL Central champion Indians certainly doesn't hurt his cause.

Covey shut out the Indians for six innings. He gave up six hits and a walk but struck out seven and got some help from his defense. It was his second straight strong start and extended his scoreless streak to 12 innings.

Covey called it a big confidence booster.

"I had a pretty good start last time against them," he said. "I don't think my stuff was the same today, but I think I was just able to mix it up. Adding a cutter in there kind of gets them off my fastball a little bit, something moving the other way that's hard. Had to battle it out there in the sixth inning but felt pretty good."

The right-hander looked comfortable and effectively mixed in his cutter and other pitches as the game wore on. And he didn't panic when he allowed two singles to lead off the fourth, striking out Yan Gomes and getting Brandon Guyer to ground into an inning-ending double play. Nor did he waver in the sixth when the Indians fought off a few potential third strikes, including during Edwin Encarnacion's 10-pitch at bat.

Covey's turn as a Sox starter was thought to be over after a July-August stretch when he lost five straight starts while posting an 8.37 ERA. He was sent to the bullpen, where he had a 2.25 ERA in six appearances.

Michael Kopech's elbow injury opened the door for Covey's return to the rotation. He allowed five earned runs in a loss to the Royals on Sept. 11, but rebounded with six shutout innings against the Indians last Wednesday before repeating himself Monday night.

If Covey starts the season finale against the Twins as planned on Sunday, he'll have made four starts to close out the schedule.

"He certainly put himself into a position to be considered for (the 2019 rotation), for sure," Renteria said. "And his last few outings show he's got good enough stuff to do that."



Covey knows the stakes.

“Obviously these last couple starts felt really good. I feel good,” he said. “Got one more start to try to finish off the year strong and we’ll see what happens.”

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**NBC Sports Chicago to showcase retiring director Jim Angio and his 40-year career**

By Phil Rosenthal / Chicago Tribune / September 24, 2018

NBC Sports Chicago, fresh off its farewell for White Sox broadcaster Ken “Hawk” Harrelson, is preparing a send-off for longtime director Jim Angio during Tuesday’s White Sox-Indians telecast.

Angio, 66, who’s officially retiring after 40 years at the end of this season, will be feted with an array of memorable clips featuring Chicago sports teams he has directed as well as interviews with co-workers from over the years.

The third inning will be dedicated to Angio, as fans will be able to hear how he calls cues from the production truck during a game.

A 13-time Chicago/Midwest Emmy Award winner and an inductee in the academy’s Silver Circle, Angio got his start in 1978 working on WSNS-44 White Sox broadcasts with the late Harry Caray and Jimmy Piersall.

“Jim Angio is a true Chicago sports legend who will go down as one of the very best directors in sports broadcasting history,” Greg Bowman, NBC Sports Chicago’s vice president of programming, said.

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**Covey good again, but White Sox fall to Indians, Kluber**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 24, 2018

Opposed by two-time Cy Young winner Corey Kluber, White Sox right-hander Dylan Covey had no margin for error.

He did all he could to win a ballgame but couldn’t.

For a second consecutive start Monday, Covey pitched six scoreless innings against the American League Central champion Indians, same as he did Wednesday in Cleveland.

An outstanding effort, indeed.

But Kluber (20-7) was even better with seven scoreless innings, striking out 11, walking one and allowing four hits in the Indians’ 4-0 victory. Lifted after 96 pitches, Covey fanned seven and allowed one walk and six hits.

Adding a cutter to a mix that features a good sinker has given hitters a different look, and Covey got seven ground-ball outs after getting 14 Wednesday. On this night, he didn’t have to face Francisco Lindor, Michael Brantley or Jose Ramirez.

“Kind of a different lineup today than it was last time, so some of those guys hadn’t seen me,” Covey said. “But, yeah, definitely a big confidence-booster for me. I’ve known all year that I have the stuff; it’s just trying to find that consistency with it.”

As soon as Covey (5.06 ERA) exited, right-hander Ian Hamilton, a closer at Class AAA Charlotte, served up a homer to Brandon Guyer leading off the seventh.

The Indians scored three in the ninth off Nate Jones, who gave up five hits, including Adam Rosales’ home run.

While inconsistent, Covey has had just enough flashes of excellence that “it doesn’t eliminate him from the possibility of being a part of [the rotation in 2019],” manager Rick Renteria said.

“These last couple of starts felt really good,” Covey said. “I got one more start to try to finish off the year strong, and we’ll see what happens.”

Kluber is the Indians’ first 20-game winner since Cliff Lee went 22-3 in 2008, and the first Indian to win 20 games with 200 or more strikeouts since Gaylord Perry in 1974.

The Sox fell to 61-95.

Moncada gets a rest

Second baseman Yoan Moncada, who had the night off, needs two doubles to become the fifth Sox player 23 or younger to have 30-plus doubles, 15-plus homers and 60-plus RBI in a season.

Moncada would join Chet Lemon (1977), Frank Thomas (1991), Paul Konerko (1999) and Carlos Lee (1999).

Moncada (.232/.310/.395), who is winding down his first full season on a higher note, batting .289 in his last 30 games, might get another day off or more before the end of the season.

The Sox have six games left, and that would help Moncada, who with 210 strikeouts is 13 shy of the major-league record, avoid a dubious distinction.

“We’ll put him back in there [Tuesday] maybe,” Renteria said. “He’s swinging the bat well. Just a little bit of a day off for him, let him enjoy what he’s been doing ... and then get back after it.”

League of their own

Where Sox prospects rank in Baseball America’s Top 10 in each full-season minor league: Class AAA International League: No. 1, outfielder Eloy Jimenez; No. 2, right-hander Michael Kopech; Class AA Southern League: No. 1, Jimenez; No. 2, right-hander Dylan Cease; Class A Carolina League: No. 1, Cease; No. 5, outfielder Micker Adolfo; No. 10, outfielder Luis Robert.

Pitchers

Hector Santiago is a possibility, but Renteria hasn’t announced a starter for Wednesday, perhaps waiting to see if his bullpen would get used Monday. Santiago pitched to one batter in the ninth.

James Shields pitches Tuesday, and after a day off Thursday, Reynaldo Lopez and Lucas Giolito will work the day-night doubleheader Friday in Minnesota, followed by Carlos Rodon on Saturday and Covey on Sunday.

Abreu still out

It’s possible Jose Abreu, with an infection in his right thigh, might not play this season.

“He’s still healing,” Renteria said. “He’s got a significant opening there that’s got to close up. We’ll see how he manages it as we move forward here in the next couple of days.”

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### **White Sox will put Madrigal ‘in best position to succeed’**

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 24, 2018

The White Sox want Nick Madrigal to create a good problem.

He was drafted fourth overall as a second baseman with shortstop skills, and they hope he's so good at one spot or both that he forces them to consider moving — or perhaps even trading from strength if it comes to that — second baseman Yoan Moncada and shortstop Tim Anderson. Those are the two position-player building blocks from the big-league roster the Sox' rebuild is centered around.

"It doesn't change our approach," director of player development Chris Getz said. "Regardless of what our major-league team looks like presently, we're going to put him in the best position to succeed. Obviously, when the time comes, you can adjust with Nick. One reason he was attractive is we believe his bat plays anywhere. So although he might profile best at one place, he can play anywhere on the diamond."

Madrigal, a heady infielder with highly regarded hitting skills, took a short break from the Instructional League to visit Guaranteed Rate Field and throw out the first pitch Monday before the Sox played the Indians. It has been all baseball, all the time, all year long for the 5-7, 165-pounder who got almost all of his playing time at second base for College World Series champion Oregon State and in the Arizona League and at both Class A levels this summer.

"We just wanted him to be comfortable this year and get acclimated to professional baseball having played mainly second base this season at Oregon State," Getz said.

But he'll get a good look at shortstop in the Instructional League, where his Winston-Salem coach, 11-time Gold Glove shortstop Omar Vizquel, is already hitting him ground balls.

"I've bounced a lot of questions off him, not only baseball stuff but outside of the game," Madrigal said.

Anderson and Moncada like where they're at but have been open to playing different positions, although the Sox have been pleased overall with their progress of late, especially Anderson's defense. It's too soon to contemplate what the future holds.

In any event, Getz said Madrigal can play shortstop and second base, and he raves about not only his bat but his focus and baseball instincts that rub off on everyone around him.

"He doesn't take a moment off offensively and defensively, and the effect that it has on your team is great," Getz said. "You have a middle-of-the-diamond player who is ready for anything, and it increases everyone's focus: 'If he's doing this, I need to do this.' I truly believe that."

Madrigal met manager Rick Renteria and walked through the clubhouse, meeting Anderson and James Shields, among others.

"Everyone was real welcoming to me, so it was definitely nice," he said.

Madrigal was the shortest guy in the room with boyish looks that would blend in on any high school team. Even his twin brother, a pitcher at Saint Mary's College who was unable to join him and their older brother and parents Monday, is taller.

"I've always been one of the smaller kids on my team throughout my life," he said.

That has never been an issue. He is, after all, an inch taller than Jose Altuve.

"No, no, it's something I've never backed down from," he said. "When I take the field, there's no thought in my mind about my size at all."

Getz, who believes home-run power will manifest itself soon, said he isn't sure where Madrigal will start the 2019 season — at Winston-Salem or Class AA Birmingham. If he continues to progress — he batted .303/.353/.348 with seven doubles, five walks, no homers and only five strikeouts in 173 plate appearances with three teams — a 2020 major-league appearance wouldn't be out of the question.

"Whatever the organization needs me to do," he said. "I can definitely see this being a home for me sometime soon."

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### **Covey making late pitch to start for Chicago White Sox next season**

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / September 24, 2018

With Carlos Rodon, Reynaldo Lopez and Lucas Giolito in and Michael Kopech out until 2020 following last week's Tommy John surgery, the Chicago White Sox still are going to need two starting pitchers to fill out their rotation next season.

Dylan Covey is making a late push to claim one of the spots.

"We've talked about the action he has on his pitches," manager Rick Renteria said. "He's taking advantage of the opportunity to start and see if he can really harness and understand what he's capable of doing out there."

Taking the mound at Cleveland last Wednesday, Covey pitched 6 shutout innings against the AL Central champions.

Covey faced Cleveland again Monday night at Guaranteed Rate Field, and the 27-year-old righty pitched 6 shutout innings again.

The effort wasn't enough in a 4-0 loss to the Indians.

"It's definitely a confidence booster for me," Covey said. "I've known all year I have the stuff. It's just finding the consistency with it. I feel good. Got one more start to try to finish off the year strong and we'll see what happens."

Corey Kluber (20-7) started for Cleveland and showed why he is pushing for his third Cy Young Award. The right-hander scattered 4 hits and had 11 strikeouts over 7 innings.

Kluber finished the season with a 4-0 record against the Sox. He also had a 0.96 ERA and 39 strikeouts in 28 innings.

Striking distance:

Sox second baseman Yoan Moncada leads the major leagues with 210 strikeouts, which is only 13 behind the record Arizona's Mark Reynolds set in 2009.

Moncada didn't play in Monday night's game against Cleveland.

"Just a little bit of a day off for him," manager Rick Renteria said. "Let him enjoy what he's been doing. Let him kind of pay attention to what's going on for the ballgame today and then get back after it."

Despite the high strikeout total, Moncada has reached base safely in 26 of his last 30 games. He also needs 2 doubles to become the fifth player in White Sox history, age 23 or younger, to reach 30 doubles, 15 home runs and 60 RBI in a season.

Done for season?

Jose Abreu missed his seventh straight game Monday with a right-thigh infection. With only six games remaining on the schedule, it's looking more and more like the White Sox's all-star first baseman is done for the season.

"He's still healing," Rick Renteria said. "He's got a significant opening there that's got to close up. We'll see how he manages it and as we move forward here in the next couple days."

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### **Madrigal feeling at home with Chicago White Sox**

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / September 24, 2018

Visiting the Chicago White Sox before Monday night's game against the Cleveland Indians, Nick Madrigal stood on the top step of the dugout and gazed out at Guaranteed Rate Field.

"This is my first time seeing the stadium and everything around," Madrigal said. "I can definitely see this being a home for me sometime soon."

The welcome mat should be put out soon -- most likely early in the 2020 season.

"I think everybody has talked about how well he carries himself, and he certainly does," Sox manager Rick Renteria said after talking with Madrigal on Monday. "I think if you look across the spectrum of people that have seen him play the game, we're hoping to see that same enthusiasm and output as we move forward in the near future.

"He had a nice season with us in the minor leagues, and I think with all things being equal and if everything holds true, he's going to be all right."

The No. 4 overall pick in the June amateur draft this year, Madrigal hit .303/.353/.348 in 43 combined games with the AZL White Sox, low Class A Kannapolis and high A Winston-Salem.

"I met a lot of great people," the 21-year-old infielder said. "I was excited to be in the organization, get in some games, put the White Sox uniform on. It was a great start."

The Sox have no doubt that Madrigal has the bat to be an all-star caliber leadoff hitter once he reaches the major leagues. His position is still up for debate.

Madrigal played second base while helping Oregon State win the College World Series this season, and that was his primary spot when he turned pro.

The 5-foot-7, 165-pounder also plays shortstop, and you get a sense that is his preferred spot.

"I've worked on different positions throughout my life in the infield," Madrigal said. "When my dad (Mike) hit me groundballs, I made sure to take them from both sides of the bag, just to make sure I had that in my back pocket. I've played a lot of shortstop my whole life.

"When I was really young I caught, so I feel like I've played almost every position on the field and I feel comfortable doing that."

Madrigal is the consummate team-first player, so he is going to play wherever it most benefits the White Sox.

"I've won at every level I've been at so far, going back to Little League, high school and college," he said. "That's something I want to continue doing, and it seems like this organization is the perfect fit for me."

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### **TA30: Sending off the rankings with a collection of our favorite stories from the regular season**

By Levi Weaver / The Athletic / September 24, 2018

It's nearly October. In baseball parlance, that means postseason excitement, but for two-thirds of the fanbases in baseball, it means the end of a journey that started back in February.

So before we get into the excitement of the anything-can-happen playoffs, I thought it would be interesting to take a look back at the everything-did-happen regular season. I asked all of our baseball writers to send me a handful of their favorite stories from this season, and what follows is a compendium of The Athletic's baseball journalism from the 2018 season.

Just a suggestion: consider bookmarking this page. There's enough good baseball writing here — 189 stories, in fact — to tide you over for the long, cold, baseball-less months until we all turn our attention again on Florida and Arizona.

## SECTION ONE: HEARTWARMING TALES

Sometimes baseball gives you perfect moments. Like when Dylan Bundy threw a shutout while honoring his late mom, or when Brandon Mann made his long-awaited big-league debut on the Mother's Day after his mother-in-law had passed. Or when Rich Donnelly shared "The Chicken Ran at Midnight." Or when a catcher got a walk-off on Father's Day five years after his dad's passing (but one week after the birth of his own son). Remember Francisco Lindor's perfect moment in Puerto Rico? We were there. Same for when Sean Manaea pitched a no-hitter.

Sometimes those moments happen off the field, whether that's saying goodbye to a player you enjoyed covering, reuniting with a Make-a-Wish kid 30 years after you first met, helping a city recover from a tragedy, or going home when home is in the middle of a crisis. Sometimes the story is about never making it to the field at all, and sometimes it's about honoring a father by drafting his son.

Occasionally, we wrote stories that were only tangentially about the people on the field. Like this story about Max Muncy's family, or this one about Pat Valaika's. There's the one about a fan watching one final game with his mother before she died. There's an oral history of the Jimmy Fund radio telethon and memories of a Little League team. And our own Melissa Lockard penned a beautiful tribute to her late husband.

## SECTION TWO: ON THE FARM

One thing that all big-leaguers have in common: They used to be minor leaguers. So of course, we at The Athletic believe there's value in telling you about the minor leagues, including a breakdown of why Commissioner Manfred's explanation of minor-league pay doesn't hold water.

We've got stories on Peter O'Brien's journey, Ryan Bollinger's even longer journey, the signing of Luis Urías, a player who wants to throw 105 mph, another who doesn't strike out and the story of a draft pick and his late siblings. We have stories about teen phenom Luis Patino, college standout Alex Faedo, the adjustments of Shaun Anderson, Harrison Bader's inner architect and two teammates who compete with each other. We also graded the farm systems.

Parents are featured (more than once), and we wrote about draft picks, whether they be No. 1 picks or late-round hopefuls. We have stories about prospects who are quiet, prospects who chose to stay in school and a prospect who drives a Batmobile.

C. Trent Rosecrans went to the Dominican Republic to get a feel for how those baseball academies work.

Speaking of the Dominican Republic, it's just one of the far-flung places where prospects emerge. We have stories about guys from Australia, Brazil, and Russia, plus a Yankee from Tullahoma, Tennessee.

And it's not only prospects on the farm: Remember Dustin Ackley?

## SECTION THREE: MANAGERS, COACHES AND STAFF

The players make the plays, but it takes a multitude of people to keep things running smoothly.

Chan-Ho Park once gave up two grand slams in one inning to the same guy. Park now works for the organization who traded for that guy's son. Michael Young joined the front office in Arlington not long after being inducted into the Rangers' Hall of Fame. We have stories on coaches who are honest and friendships between coaches. We have stories about the front office, too.

We've also told stories about more behind-the-scenes guys. Like the team at the gym where Matt Kemp and Max Muncy got in shape. Or the two 23-year-olds who helped the Mariners pull off the Denard Span/Alex Colomé trade. Or Roy Silver, who serves as something of a life coach for Rangers players. We've got stories on clubbies, analytics staffers, interpreters, different interpreters, advance scouts and the people whose job it is to take down banners once a player is traded.

And, of course, there are the managers. Some are new, like Mike Shildt. Some were fired, like Jeff Banister. Others make collages and hope to beat their old teams, like Alex Cora. Still others are keeping their teams calm enough to contend, like Bud Black. Some are trying new things and listening to angry fans, like Gabe Kapler, and some sleep in their offices before their team clinches a playoff spot, like Brian Snitker.

#### SECTION FOUR: GOOD OLD-FASHIONED STORIES ABOUT BASEBALL

Of course, our bread and butter was storytelling about baseball itself.

Sometimes that's analysis, like the story on an adjustment that got Adam Cimber to the big leagues, or how a scout's faith in Jaime Barria is paying off. We have stories on swings (Aaron Judge's, Max Muncy's and Kris Davis', among others), and we covered the rise of Alex Bregman, Jameson Taillon's slider, and Ian Happ's slight adjustment.

Want to rebuild the Mets, handle realignment, put a team in Portland, Oregon, get Mookie Betts out, or put the action back in the game? We got you. Want an oral history of how Jake Arrieta landed in Philadelphia? Sure you do.

Sometimes we just find a player who is an especially good subject. That was the case with our profiles of Walker Buehler, Kris Bryant, Christian Yelich, Manny Machado, Freddie Freeman, Shane Greene, and Mookie Betts.

We've got words on rotations, swing augmentations, filled expectations, new maturation, Rockies' frustrations, obliteration, elimin-ace-tion, Bote's aspirations, a tough separation, acceleration, Ed's domination, rejuvenation, dumb regulations, joy hesitations, Cole's reclamation, vituperation, anticipation, preoccupations, head conservation, good imitations, and, uhh ...(other) Cole's reclamation?

#### SECTION FIVE: NUMBERS, DATA, ANALYTICS

Can numbers tell us everything? Of course not. Sometimes the numbers don't tell the whole story. But they can tell us a lot more than they used to. This year, we told you stories about how data applied to things like Max Stassi's swing, the Mariners' bullpen coach, Boston's shifts (and catchers), pine tar/spin rate and tunneling.

It's not just the analytics department: Sometimes players use data to help each other get better.

And sometimes numbers aren't so much analytics as they are the canvas on which Jayson Stark creates art.

## SECTION SIX: A CONVERSATION WITH...

Sometimes the best stories happen when you just sit down with someone and start asking questions. That's why we have a whole section dedicated to conversations that our writers have had with players like Justin Upton, Jackie Bradley Jr., Giancarlo Stanton, Joey Votto, Andrew Miller, Andrew McCutchen, and for good measure, Astros GM Jeff Luhnow.

## SECTION SEVEN: THE JOURNEY

For as long as writers tell stories, we will continue to, at least some of the time, adhere to the literary theme of the hero's journey, whether that journey is to different teams, or through addiction, or self-doubt, injuries (so many injuries) (no, really), personal failures (a common theme), or being traded. Sometimes the journey is just... through baseball.

Some journeys are unlikely. Some you take with friends. Some are more solitary. Others are from youth to maturity. A lot of journeys are like that, actually. Some are from pariah to leader. Some defy the odds. Some journeys seem short, but only because you didn't see the beginning, and other journeys end where they began.

Every journey starts somewhere (which usually means a lot of goodbyes), but not all of them include a hero's welcome at home, and very few land you in the Hall of Fame (but even those Hall of Fame journeys include help along the way). Sometimes your story is part of someone else's journey.

Some journeys are nearing an end, resulting in my favorite piece of baseball writing this year.

## SECTION EIGHT: THE WAY-BACK MACHINE

Some of our coverage wasn't even about this season.

We went back to 2013 to solve the mystery of Jeff Baker's high-five thumb injury. We went back 10 years and un-did a bunch of trades. We threw it back to 1998, when Randy Johnson was traded to the Astros (and the Mariners first threw it forward to 2027). We visited 1993, when Darryl Kile threw a no-hitter and Hal McRae threw an all-time tantrum. We learned about the death of a prospect in 1974. And finally, we went all the way back to 1918 for a big Red Sox wartime victory.

## SECTION NINE: CONTROVERSIES!

Marcus Stroman went off. So did Caleb Joseph. Dexter Fowler wasn't happy. Barry Bonds knows who built that park. The Blue Jays' fate is in the hands of accountants, and in related news, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. should be in the big leagues. A-Rod took a shot at Yu Darvish, prompting a conversation with Joe Maddon. Robinson Canó got suspended.

## SECTION TEN: IT GETS WEIRD

And finally, because the baseball season is so long, we got a little out there from time to time.

Charlie Morton as a wedding singer? Check. Breaking a story because of a hotel mix-up at the Winter Meetings? Of course. What goes through hitters' minds in the on-deck circle? Sure thing. Ever gotten your Twitter account suspended by MLB just before they changed their mind and hired you? He has. What does a writer's craziest day look like? We can tell you that. Sometimes you find yourself asking baseball players



about their favorite baseball movies. Did you know that Billy Butler is crushing it at softball now? Well, he is.

We wrote stories about robes, Mario Kart, chainsaw elves, weird food and bull riding, but frankly, this whole section was mostly created so we'd have a place to put a story about Turk Wendell.

Yes, 2018 was quite a season. We're happy to have added so many great writers to our baseball team this year, and we hope you have enjoyed our coverage. Now kick back, let this page keep you entertained while the weather gets cold, and enjoy the playoffs, which will no doubt provide a lot more stories before they're over.

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### **'How tall are you?' Nick Madrigal takes on the tough questions in introduction to Chicago**

By James Fegan / The Athletic / September 24, 2018

Eventually, enough people will have seen White Sox prospect Nick Madrigal play that he'll get through media scrums without any mention of his height, which is generously listed as 5-foot-7 on the Winston-Salem Dash roster. Fellow Oregon State product Jace Fry caught a couple of the Beavers' games during spring training this past February, and no mention of height made it into Fry's exhaustive scouting report.

"He's good," Fry said.

Alas, with the fourth overall pick in town on Monday to get introduced to the White Sox clubhouse and the most diehard members of its fan base, this was not the day he'd avoid a question about being the shortest guy in the room.

"It's something I've never backed down from," Madrigal said. "I feel like all the preparation before the games, in the offseason, when I take the field, that's not any thought in my mind when I take the field about my size at all."

Size certainly isn't an issue at instructional league, which Madrigal essentially got a one-day break from — one of the few breaks from baseball he's taken all year — to throw out the first pitch at Guaranteed Rate Field Monday before flying back to Glendale on Tuesday. At Camelback Ranch, Madrigal is mimicking the work he did every day as a kid with his father Mike and his twin brother Ty: taking ground balls on each side of the second base bag. It's just that this time his manager at Winston-Salem, Omar Vizquel, is taking Mike's place watching his work. Omar is listed at only 5-foot-9.

"I got real close with him," Madrigal said of Vizquel. "He's been awesome. I've worked with him a lot more on the infield stuff in the instructional league the last couple days. He's told me some footwork things. He's watched over me and told me what he likes. I think the biggest thing I've learned from him is, going back to routines, and what he did in the infield. I'm a guy that likes a lot of reps, lot of fungo during the season. I asked him throughout the season if you're able to get the reps that you need. He told me everyone's here to help you. I've bounced a lot of questions off him, not only baseball stuff but outside of the game and what do you do when you're not playing on the field and things like that, so that's been awesome."

Madrigal's lower grade of raw throwing arm strength has led many to believe second base is his natural spot in the majors, rather than shortstop or third base, and he played all but one game in the field at second in the White Sox's minor league system this year. But the draft day projection from scouting director Nick Hostetler that Madrigal could handle shortstop is getting explored more during his reps in the workshop atmosphere of instructional league.

Ultimately, every team in the league knew that Madrigal had an exceptional hit tool with a Gold Glove ceiling at second base. The White Sox took him fourth overall because they believe he has the ability to hit for better power in games than he might show in batting practice, and that he has the ability to work around any throwing limitations.

“His play clock is really good, man,” said White Sox area scout Mike Gange, who recommended the Sox draft Madrigal. “If there’s a guy who is going to study other players in terms of patterns, of balls on the ground and what area and shifting, Nick will be the type of guy to look at those graphs and charts. If you give this guy the blueprint to learn something, I think he picks it up. I don’t think shortstop is going to be a real issue for him at all. I think he’ll take that on and do a really good job at it.”

Most scouting reports on Madrigal remark on how polished he is in all of his action on the field and that he figures to be on a fast track to the majors. That he recovered to a .306/.355/.347 line in Winston-Salem despite some professional pitchers taking advantage of his aggressiveness in the early going is a testament to his ability to adjust, even if the pop hasn’t come to life yet. But if the eventual, and potential 2020 White Sox infield crunch is a source of anxiety, there was no sign of it on Monday as Madrigal met with Tim Anderson and praised his hospitality.

As someone who has practiced every infield position his entire life and even caught in little league, Madrigal views keeping his shortstop skills sharp as just part of normal upkeep. Discussing unseating anyone would require Madrigal to talk about himself over the team, which is something he doesn’t even do when asked about his own season.

“It would have been a lot better if we had won some games there at the end,” Madrigal said, bemoaning the Dash’s short playoff run. “We got bounced in the first three games. I was only with Winston-Salem half a year, for the guys there for full-season, it was tough for them. I wish we had done better for those guys.”

If comments about prioritizing the team over everything at the expense of personal goals or aspirations read as cliché or safe, gird yourself for the next 15 years of Madrigal. If he’s putting on the best face for the press, he’s also putting on the best face for scouts and teammates, and has been doing so for a while.

“This kid’s a culture-changer, complete culture-changer,” Gange said. “I interviewed more Oregon State kids and kids who played against him about Nick Madrigal then I asked kids about themselves. I think the general consensus I got is that he truly improved everyone around him and it’s like having another coach on the staff. He doesn’t do it in a cocky or conceited way, he does it with an intention to win.”

He’ll make all his teammates look taller too, as even team interpreter Billy Russo was able to see the top of Madrigal’s head. But the next time he’s in this building, he’ll have a bat in his hands, and that should make his height irrelevant quickly.

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### **Gammons: Baseball’s system for developing pitchers is broken, and it’s hurting the game**

By Peter Gammons / The Athletic / September 24, 2018

“There’s no right or wrong, but I’m sure there’s good or bad.” — Pearl Jam

There are the Rays, with their “openers,” and the fact that they had the same record as the Indians on Monday morning. There are Walker Buehler and Jack Flaherty, who, close to the postseason, were referred to by a baseball insider as “potentially the two best starting pitchers in the National League playoffs.”

But what we have is September pennant race baseball with 12 to 15 pitchers in games, and pitcher-hitter matchups that often resemble Bobby Fischer vs. Boris Spassky. Many other nights, we see the soft underbellies of the International and Pacific Coast Leagues determining the Hunt for Red October.

“These September games are killing the game,” one National League manager said recently. Then the Athletics and Angels used 15 pitchers. The Reds and Brewers used 12, in a 3-2 game. The obsolete 40-man roster expansion for the month is one problem, but also, the opener concept helped get the Rays to the same record as the Indians, and the Athletics within days of a wild card play-in.

“Don’t think the fact that so many potential playoff teams are having bullpen problems in the final two weeks doesn’t have something to do with usage,” says one NL GM. Cubs, Braves, Phillies, Rockies, Red Sox, Yankees, Cardinals...

Theo Epstein bemoans the decline in the marquee starting pitcher matchup. Last Tuesday, my DVR was set for Kershaw-Freeland at 10 p.m., and I would check out the rest of the action on QuickPitch on Wednesday morning. It was a little different than walking to Fenway on a September Saturday morning at 7:30 for a matchup of 20-game winners, Ron Guidry and Dennis Eckersley, knowing that if Guidry—the runaway Cy Young—won, the Yankees would have gone from 13 ½ games back to now just one game back, and all that stood between the Yankees and first place was Bobby Sprowl.

Granted, Rays and A's managers Kevin Cash and Bob Melvin, respectively, had no choice but to do what they've done because of the injury plague on their starting rotations. That plague allowed Blake Snell to pitch his way into the Cy Young conversation, and Mike Fiers and Edwin Jackson to pitch so well that Oakland was 19-4 in their starts. Good for them. Hardly Catfish Hunter vs. Tom Seaver in the 1973 World Series, but great work by a couple of guys who battled their way out of fungibility.

Epstein believes something should be done to limit "bullpenning." He suggests a limit of 11 active pitchers; that also might help boost quality bench alternatives for critical extra-innings matchups. He has suggested that relievers should have to face a minimum of three batters, which would cut back on the LOL (left-on-left) Randy Choat-isms.

"Why can't we get back to the place where relievers pitch two or three innings?" asks Epstein. In Earl Weaver's day, he used those roles to transition young pitchers like Mike Flanagan, Dennis Martinez and Scott McGregor from minor leaguers to eventually being able to start in a division in which the Yankees, Orioles, Red Sox and Brewers were all powerhouses. That coincided with the end of the four-man rotation era. "About one out of every five starts you had your good stuff," Flanagan said, "and you had to pitch with what you had. You had to be creative. You had to understand how hitters moved in the box, and their swing paths."

I covered a game in Memorial Stadium in which Jim Palmer hit every speed on the radar gun from 68 to 92 mph, and won. After the game, pitching coach Ray Miller joyfully handed me the pitching chart. A couple of years later I charted a 3-1 changeup to Don Baylor that was the deciding pitch in Seaver's 300th win.

By then, pitching had already begun its transition to stuff. And we all loved it. We loved radar guns, and their impact on games (the Red Sox would flash an occasional 88 on the board to upset a young, flamethrowing Bartolo Colon, and in 2007, when Curt Schilling was winning on IQ rather than the gas he'd had in his Arizona heyday, they would flash a few 90s when he hit 85).

A respected protege of Dr. James Andrews, who asked to remain anonymous, says, "The game now is, get the kids up to the majors, throw as hard as they can for an inning or two, and after two years if they're not already hurt, they let them move on and never have to pay arbitration wages." One general manager likens this process to "cheap sweatshop labor." And with the development system built not on actual pitching games but radar gun readings and programs developed to increase velocity for velocity's sake, the strain on the arms and shoulders of 16-to-21-year-old kids who are not yet fully developed physically heightens the reality of surgical risk.

"There's no question about that," says Dr. Glenn Fleisig of the American Sports Medicine Institute. Just turn to Michael Kopech or Tyler Kolek, two young top prospects who both required Tommy John surgery. In fact, Kolek was the second player chosen in the 2014 draft. First was Brady Aiken. Then Carlos Rodon. All had surgery — and early. Aaron Nola and Kyle Freeland were the fourth and fifth pitchers chosen, not gasmasters, and they both may be in the top three for the 2018 Cy Young Award. "There is no evidence," says Fleisig, "that there is a direct correlation between velocity and career performance, but kids are convinced of it."

All of which raises the question: Where are all the homegrown starting pitchers? Jim Benedict, who has been one of the game's foremost pitching developers from Montreal to Pittsburgh, Miami to the Cubs, thinks it begins with the money. "With the money kids get to sign in the draft, ownership wants production for that money," says Benedict. "They want these kids rushed up the ladder. The idea is simply advancement, up

each rung of the ladder. Then the idea is to load up in the bullpen, so they get the advancement on narrow windows of success, and on velocity, on stuff. Get to the majors with a two-pitch mix and get three or four outs and throw as hard as they can.”

Years ago, young pitchers were left for a season on one level. They learned how their delivery held up over a season. They realized that they were out on an island, and had to fight and pitch for survival. They learned third and fourth pitches, and how the changeup makes their fastball better, and is the easiest on the arm.

There was something about Mike Boddicker that Weaver didn't buy, so it wasn't until he'd thrown nearly 800 minor league innings that he got his first legitimate shot in 1983, at age 25. He went 16-8, 2.77, shut out the White Sox in Game Two of the ALCS, then beat Philadelphia in the World Series and the Orioles had their last championship ring.

“Think of all the adjustments Boddicker had to make each season,” says Benedict. He remembers how in A ball, if a pitcher hit a batter, then recovered and made the pitches to get a double play ball, the manager would give the pitcher a \$25 reward.

Royals General Manager Dayton Moore was one of the pioneers of something close to the opener concept. “We were able to afford to load up our bullpen and close down games,” says Moore. “Since we won (in 2015), the cost of relievers has risen, but we're trying to develop starters. We're trying to let them throw more innings, reasonably, in the minor leagues. (Pitching coach) Cal Eldred has done a marvelous job encouraging and pushing our young starters in the big leagues to throw some innings, and help with the weapons to get there.” How Bud Black pushed Colorado's starters from the opening of spring training has paid dividends in developing innings in a park where innings are difficult to pile up, and even more difficult to recover from.

Look, in the spring Tampa Bay lost three young pitchers to surgery who they planned to have in their rotation. “We didn't plan out what we've done,” says Cash. “It's survival.” Still, says Moore, “all the pitching changes the rhythm of the game, and baseball has a natural rhythm. It changes the way teams play defense. If the defense ends up the field too long, they are affected when they go to offense. It's not all that different from football.”

In some ways, the opener concept is reminiscent of Gene Mauch and Jim Leyland bunting in the first innings of games to try to get a lead. After all, whichever team scores first wins a majority of its games — as of August 1 this season, 59 percent. So if Ryan Stanek shuts down the opposition for two innings and the Rays scratch out a run, the odds are that they will win. Ibid Oakland.

Cash and GM Eric Neander don't claim to know where this is eventually going. They hope Brent Honeywell and Brendan McKay are in the rotation with Snell in the next year and a half. Could they use a couple of days a week of the opener to develop young pitchers in the AL East, a variation on the Weaver theory? “Absolutely,” says Neander. “But we're not smart enough to get ahead of ourselves.”

Does baseball need a generation of reliable starting pitchers like Buehler and Flaherty? Absolutely. There are a lot of nights now when we watch games and feel as if we're stopped at a railway crossing watching a 175-car freight train rumbling past, and we want to scream, I cannot watch the march of the wooden relief pitcher soldiers.

Baseball is entertainment, and true outcomes without doubles and web gems and balls drilled up the alley sometimes feel more like test patterns on an iPhone than an actual sport. Managers, catchers and coaches walking to the mound and pitchers walking in from the bullpen are what we see when we emerge from the D train at Yankee Stadium.

Last week, an executive advancing the Cubs texted high praise for Kyle Hendricks' 8.2. 3 1 1 1 8 line while “throwing 86 to 89.” He threw 53 fastballs and changeups, with 16 whiffs. That same night Jon Gray started for the Rockies in Dodger Stadium, sat 94-96, gave up six runs in two innings and got one swing-and-miss.

It was reminiscent of the day in September 2016 when Dave Dombrowski asked John Farrell how J.A. Happ, throwing 89-90, could beat the Red Sox. Happ was 20-4 that season, and for his career is 48-29 in Yankee Stadium, Fenway, the Rogers Center and Camden Yards, and may open the playoffs for the Yankees. When he first went into the Phillies rotation in 2009, his fastball averaged 89.7 mph.

He was never Brady Aiken or A.J. Puk or Danny Hultzen or Matt Purke. He was always J.A. Happ, a third round guy who threw 89-90. Knew who he is, who he is not, never was a sweatshop candidate and never forgot how incredibly difficult it is that 11 ½ years after making his major league debut he is, by performance and reliability, one of the most important figures in returning the World Series to New York.

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### **Sox is singular: Hawk Harrelson gives White Sox fans a teary goodbye**

By Jim Margalus / The Athletic / September 24, 2018

Whatever you think of Hawk Harrelson, you have to agree that his farewell season could've been far worse.

Take his resolute stubbornness as he approaches his eighth decade in baseball, add the loyalty-to-a-fault of Jerry Reinsdorf, then simulate the scenario 1,000 times. What percentage of the outcomes would end in a forcible removal after community protests?

Instead, Harrelson and the White Sox arranged a relatively graceful exit over the course of a few years, which served the equally important purpose of forging a forgiving introductory period for Jason Benetti. The Benetti of 2018 has an easier rapport with the game than the Benetti of 2016, and those jarred by a 30-something with pop culture interests and an analytical bent could find relief with a more familiar option while waiting out growing pains.

That sunset to the sunrise came to a close during the crosstown series over the weekend, and while the Sox lost two of three, they did give Harrelson some occasions to shine. Friday's game gave the Big Homer a couple of big homers and one more winner for the road. He dropped one more amazing new #HawkSuperlative (the 1970s Baltimore Orioles had the smartest defensive pitching staff). He flipped off Steve Stone on camera. All good things.

Would it have been better if the White Sox won two out of three? Preferably one of them a walk-off? Sure. It also would've been great if Michael Kopech picked up one of the wins with Eloy Jiménez taking José Quintana deep. We can't all get what we want.

True to recent form, the White Sox let him down on the way out Sunday. The Cubs scored all the runs they needed before the Sox even came to the plate, and the Good Guys never mounted a serious threat to get back in it. A.J. Pierzynski dropped by for the first half of the game to keep spirits high, but when the booth was down to Hawk and Stone, the gravity of the situation set in, and Harrelson struggled to keep his composure.

The tone took a turn with two outs in the bottom of the seventh, when Stone asked Harrelson a straightforward question most retirees anticipate.

Stone: So, plans ahead for you.

Hawk: Yeah?

Stone: As you look into the future, what do you want to accomplish?

Hawk: Well, I'm just starting to feel it right now, in that seventh-inning stretch, that this is my last game.

Hawk then choked on whatever he was going to say next, pursing his lips to try to keep it together, and shaking his head to signal the losing battle. After eight seconds of silence, Stone started filling time by talking about Kyle Hendricks' terrific outing. Twenty-eight seconds after Harrelson stopped himself, he finally produced an answer that centered on family.

From that point, the broadcast didn't really recover. The conversation turned sparse and the sniffles abundant. The year of celebration was capped off with something that felt closer to a funeral.

The question shouldn't have shifted the mood, but Jon Greenberg said Harrelson's answers were even stranger before the game. I might've been shocked by Hawk saying, "All I've been doing is watching 'Walker, Texas Ranger' and turning a lot of Smirnoff into urine," except he told Carl Yastrzemski something similar over the phone on air back in May.

Those awkward exchanges about retirement on Sunday took me back to Friday's game, when Harrelson directed a similar inquiry to Jim Lovell, the commander of the Apollo 13 mission. The 90-year-old Lovell, clad in his mustard yellow NASA flight jacket, sat in on the broadcast for a half-inning after being saluted as the Hero of the Game.

Hawk: How are you passing the time today? Watching a lot of TV?

Lovell: [laughs] Yeah, lots of it is watching TV, I guess, but I try to do other things. I'm still doing things like I'm helping a foundation to build a museum for the American sailor up at Great Lakes [Naval Base].

When Stone flipped the question two days later, Harrelson didn't have such a ready reply. Not that I expected one. Harrelson devoted the majority of his Hawk Day speech recapping the last 25 years of White Sox baseball, and he's defined himself by his pursuit of eight decades in baseball, a frame of reference I've never heard used by anybody else. I couldn't imagine him saying, "I'm looking forward to getting back into painting and birding."

But I hoped to be surprised, if only for the sake of his composure and well-being. He's been the sound of White Sox baseball since my brain started remembering things, so he's basically family I've never met.

Nowadays, I understand that Harrelson was the relic of a pre-Internet era, and not just for his disdain of analytics. He was a one-team, non-stone pony who lasted well into the age of MLB TV, and those who didn't follow the Sox struggled to digest his style. He didn't work for them because he didn't work for them. Harrelson only had Sox fans like himself in mind, and even if some of his listeners preferred other voices, they could at the very least relate to the emotions expressed.

Growing up, though, I didn't know anything else besides Harry Caray, who was a brand unto himself with the Cubs. They set the default in my brain for local broadcasts. Didn't every team have their own Hawk or Harry? It turns out I was mistaken, but not sorry. Hawk was a lot of fun if he was on your side. Their loss.

The problem was that Harrelson, unlike his longtime and most successful partner Tom Paciorek, couldn't make his own fun. The Sox excreted more losing over the last 10 years than Harrelson could absorb, so he redirected the run-off onto the audience.

This being the case, it's perfectly fitting that Harrelson's farewell sounded like a dirge, because he could only work with what the White Sox provided. And as his Sox fight to avoid 100 losses this week before heading into an offseason where they'll face a familiar set of questions, it's appropriate that Harrelson couldn't come up with any easy answers himself.

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