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Shields flirts with no-no, but Sox fall late to Twins

Veteran righty carries no-hitter into 7th in series finale

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / May 6, 2018

CHICAGO -- James Shields carried a perfect game into the sixth and a no-hitter into the seventh against the Twins on Sunday afternoon at Guaranteed Rate Field, but the veteran righty finished with a no-decision in the White Sox 5-3 loss during the series finale of a four-game set.

The Twins scored three runs off Shields and reliever Luis Avilan in the seventh, first erasing the no-hitter via Eduardo Escobar's one-out single to right-center, and then taking the lead on Logan Morrison's two-out double to right in a lefty-lefty battle with Avilan. The comeback rally opened with Brian Dozier's leadoff walk.

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"I wasn't thinking about it really until the end there," said Shields of the perfect game and no-hitter possibilities. "At the end of the day, we had a two-run lead and we gave it up. It was a good effort, but we came up short."

"Once it went into the seventh inning, we're trying to pitch to get it. I was pretty excited," White Sox catcher Omar Narvaez said. "But it's only one pitch and all that got out of hand when we're trying to do it."

Shields, who has allowed four runs on four hits over his last 12 2/3 innings, retired the first 16 Minnesota hitters before Ehire Adrianza drew a walk with one out in the sixth. Shields also went to a 3-1 count to Joe Mauer with Adrianza on second and two outs in the frame, but Mauer popped weakly to third baseman Yolmer Sanchez. Shields needed just 46 pitches to get through four and 52 through five, finishing with two walks, five strikeouts and three earned runs in 6 2/3 innings.

Shields' changeup was "filthy," as Narvaez pointed out. According to Statcast™, Shields picked up six swinging strikes and two called strikes off the change.

Minnesota had four hard-hit balls off of Shields through the first six innings, but the two closest to a hit came in the fourth. Mauer opened with a shot to second played by Jose Rondon with a slight dive on a one-hop to his left. Dozier followed with a line drive to Sanchez, who made the catch with a small jump off the ground.

Prior to Shields' effort, Jose Quintana had the longest, most recent no-hit bid for the White Sox, going 6 1/3 innings vs. Boston on May 21, 2013. It was the second-longest no-hit bit of Shields' career, following his seven no-hit innings against the Royals on Aug. 2, 2009.

"Everybody was just watching him do his thing. Obviously cheering him on. He has a lot of respect from the guys in there," said White Sox manager Rick Renteria of Shields. "Just him executing. He doesn't get flustered or out of sorts.

"He was the experienced, long-term Major League pitcher that knows what he's doing, feels confident in what he's got going and executes it. I'm sure they all enjoyed watching it."

Kyle Gibson matched Shields for most of Sunday's contest, allowing single runs in the third, sixth and seventh over 6 2/3 innings. Adam Engel doubled and eventually scored on a two-out wild pitch in the third, while Sanchez doubled and came home on Matt Davidson's sacrifice fly to right in the sixth. Leury Garcia's single to right off of reliever Zach Duke scored Rondon to tie the game in the seventh.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Tricky Nicky: With the Twins threatening to grab control with two outs in the eighth, Escobar came to bat against Aaron Bummer. Escobar has been a thorn in the White Sox side all series, cranking two home runs and driving in four while also breaking up Shields' no-hit attempt. He drove a fly ball to left field, where Nicky Delmonico -- who just started playing outfield last season -- raced back to the warning track. Delmonico made an impressive leaping catch to save at least one run.

Miscues of the eighth: Prior to Delmonico's grab, the Twins took the lead thanks to a couple White Sox mistakes. On a potential double-play ball off the bat of Dozier with one out, Tim Anderson double-clutched while trying to flip to second, allowing Mauer to advance to third on an error charged to Rondon. Then, Max Kepler hit a ground ball to Sanchez, who threw to first and didn't look back Mauer to third base. Mauer scampered home after Sanchez's throw, giving the Twins a lead they would not relinquish.

"I don't think [Anderson] was able to get the ball out as cleanly and as quickly as he wanted to," Renteria said. "He ended up showing both glove and hand, which is very difficult. You're always trying to clear the glove so you can see the ball. He kept trying to get it out and hearing the command, 'Two, two, two,' so he tried to get it out, but obviously Jose couldn't see it."

SOUND SMART

The White Sox are 3-13 at home and have lost five consecutive series at Guaranteed Rate Field to begin the season. That streak is the second longest in franchise history (two-plus games per series) to open a season, with the 1971 White Sox losing their first six home series.

HE SAID IT

"No, not me. I'm pretty chatty in the dugout." -- Shields, on whether teammates stayed away from him while pursuing the perfect game and no-hitter

UP NEXT

The White Sox are off Monday, but return to action with a two-game Interleague set with the Pirates beginning at 7:10 p.m. CT Tuesday at Guaranteed Rate Field. Lucas Giolito (1-4, 7.03 ERA) will start for Chicago in his first career appearance against Pittsburgh. The White Sox are 0-2 in Interleague play thus far, while the Pirates, who send Ivan Nova (2-2, 4.01 ERA), are 6-2.

Jones thrilled by visit to Farquhar: 'He's Danny'

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / May 6, 2018

May 6th, 2018

CHICAGO -- Nate Jones made a promise to Danny Farquhar, his friend and teammate, when he visited Farquhar for two hours Saturday morning at Rush University Medical Center.

That promise centered on Farquhar's No. 43 jersey, hanging with honor daily in the White Sox bullpen.

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"I told him that we are flying it until he walks in here," Jones told MLB.com on Sunday morning.

Jones became the first White Sox team member to visit Farquhar, who has been recovering from surgery for a brain hemorrhage caused by a ruptured aneurysm. This tragedy befell the right-hander in the home dugout at Guaranteed Rate Field after he pitched against the Astros on April 20.

All communication between the White Sox and Farquhar had gone through Farquhar's wife, Lexie, according to Jones, with all involved wanting Farquhar to simply focus on getting better. Friends sent messages to say they're praying for him and willing to do anything he wanted them to do.

When Jones got the word about being able to visit, he was much more excited than nervous.

"It was an awesome experience, a guy we miss dearly. I was thankful and blessed I got to see him," Jones said. "It was an awesome time.

"He was moving around. He was making jokes. He's talking baseball, talking life, talking kids. We both have three. They are all about the same ages. It was a pretty humbling experience, that's for sure."

During the conversation, Farquhar, a seven-year veteran, mentioned wanting to return to pitch for the White Sox and worrying about when he could be back in the action. That wish led to a sweet encounter between Farquhar and his wife.

"Lexie was like, 'Let's make sure you are a functioning human being, and then we will worry about baseball,'" Jones said. "They were kind of poking at each other back and forth. It was pretty awesome.

"None of us in here knew what to expect, and to be where he's at today, it's a miracle. It's pretty awesome to see. He's a moving, functional human being. He's Danny."

As for future visits, Jones said that call of course is up to Farquhar and his family. Jones was thrilled to have Saturday's opportunity.

"We miss him out in the bullpen," Jones said. "We spend a lot of time together throughout the day and out in the bullpen during the game. It's somebody we missed and we are always hanging his jersey out there. We have his number on our hats.

"Like I said, I was blessed and thankful enough that I was able to go and got to sit with him for a couple of hours. It was very, very uplifting."

Avi making progress

Avisail Garcia, sidelined since April 24 by a strained right hamstring, took some swings Saturday and Sunday.

"He's progressing well, feels good," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "We still have to put him on a regimen where we can start doing some more explosive work with him. He's still a little bit away but he's progressing well."

A Minor League rehab assignment is likely for Garcia before he returns.

In six no-hit innings, James Shields showed he still has plenty of value for rebuilding White Sox

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / May 6, 2018

James Shields didn't end up doing anything that'll get him written into White Sox lore Sunday. But his importance to this rebuilding team remains high, even when fans might look at his numbers and think otherwise.

Shields entered Sunday's game on the South Side with a 5.91 ERA in 50 appearances since coming to Chicago in a 2016 trade with the San Diego Padres. His presence on this roster is a reminder of the win-now era before Rick Hahn's front office kickstarted the rebuild after that 2016 season. And plenty of White Sox fans lament the sting of losing Fernando Tatis Jr., now one of the highest-ranked prospects in the game, in that deal.

But Shields flashed some old magic Sunday, no-hitting the visiting Minnesota Twins through 6.1 innings. It made two straight sharp outings for the 36-year-old veteran, who prior to Sunday's game quieted the St. Louis Cardinals to the tune of two hits over six innings.

It's not like two good starts in May of what to this point has been a 9-23 campaign hold great meaning for the rebuild. But Shields' ability to lead by example, to serve as a mentor to young pitchers like Lucas Giolito, Reynaldo Lopez and Carson Fulmer, that's what remains a big deal for those developing players and this rebuilding organization.

"You've been around the block a few times, you understand there are ups and downs," manager Rick Renteria said when asked what Shields is offering those young guys. "It's trying to understand what's leading you to have the successes or failures, and along the way knowing it's such a long season that you can't lay everything on one outing. It's too difficult to move toward a major league season worried about what hasn't gone well. You have to stay focused on what you have to do moving forward."

"These guys, in particular James, has made an adjustment since last season to allow him to give himself a chance to stay out there for an extended period of time, giving us solid innings of work, allowing us to possibly create some runs on the other side of the baseball. Keeping us in ballgames early, it helps."

The White Sox starting staff has undoubtedly struggled this season, as of this writing owning the highest ERA (5.68) and the highest walk total (90) in baseball. But while Giolito, Lopez and Fulmer continue their development at the major league level, they have a guiding force in Shields, who despite the results since coming to the South Side has a pretty excellent major league track record and is a well-liked personality in the clubhouse.

You could do a lot worse than a guy who's been to a pair of World Series as a mentor for your young arms.

Athletes so often talk about leading by example, and so when performance allows a leader to set the tone for younger players, it's potentially a big deal. Shields has done that in his last two outings, and his teammates had a front-row seat to six innings of near-perfect baseball Sunday.

"He was calmed down today and was hitting all his spots. And then he's been pitching pretty good," catcher Omar Narvaez said. "I think one of the of the best outings I've ever seen from him."

For Shields, his proudest accomplishment Sunday — after he lost the no-no, he gave up three runs in what ended as a 5-3 loss for the home team — was working deep into the game. It was his longest outing of the season, and he's now gone at least six innings in the last three starts. That's the example he's hoping to set for the other guys in the rotation.

"Right now, we just need to go as deep as we possibly can as a starting staff," he said. "That's what our goal has been over the last two or three starts. We taxed the bullpen early in the season and we're trying to play catch-up right now as far as the bullpen goes. I think we've done a lot better job as a whole of going deeper into games. I think we need to continue to do that to have success."

There is, of course, another way Shields can help this rebuilding effort and that's by continuing to pitch well and potentially attracting the interest of other teams. That might sound like a stretch at first blush, considering he's only three starts removed from giving up seven runs and watching his ERA balloon to 6.17. But Shields has strung together plenty of good stretches in the past, and if he could again, he could fetch a prospect or a package of prospects from a team looking to upgrade its rotation at the deadline.

That's a good ways down the road, though. For now, Shields remains valuable to this rebuilding effort as a mentor for the pitchers who will make up the rotation of the future. If they can build off the example he set Sunday, then they'll be moving in a very positive direction.

5 thoughts on baseball: Hawk and Wimpy go out with a bang, Max Scherzer fans 15 and more

By Paul Sullivan / Chicago Tribune / May 6, 2018

Five thoughts from the week in baseball:

Bosom buddies

If Sunday really was the final broadcast together for White Sox announcer Ken "Hawk" Harrelson and Tom "Wimpy" Paciorek, at least they went out with a bang.

With Steve Stone off for the weekend, Paciorek joined his old partner for Sunday's Twins-Sox game. The two were as comfortable together as an old pair of shoes.

Harrelson name-checked Ted Williams, Paul Konerko, Frank Thomas and other staples, while Paciorek casually set him up for some vintage storytelling during James Shields' no-hit bid.

A personal favorite was Wimpy asking Hawk about the poor weather early in the season for the Sox, which led to the take of Harrelson being so cold some days he'd just spend them in his pajamas.

As the end of the game, which the Sox bullpen blew for Shields, the two professed their love for each other and signed off with a tease suggesting it might not be their last broadcast together after all.

Hopefully someone in Sox management can convince Paciorek to return a few more times during Harrelson's farewell season.

There's no reason to say goodbye so soon when the season is just getting started.

Mad about Max

If anyone is going to break the single-game strikeout record, it's probably going to be Nationals ace Max Scherzer, who tied it in 2016 with 20 strikeouts against the Tigers.

Pitching on the 20th anniversary of Kerry Wood's 20-strikeout game, Scherzer fanned 15 Phillies in 6 1/3 innings Sunday, striking out seven straight batters in one stretch and getting 12 straight outs by strikeout.

It was the fifth time he has struck out 15 or more, and if Scherzer was pitching in the 1960s, he might have been given an opportunity to get the record with six more strikeouts in a complete-game effort.

Alas, Scherzer was already at 111 pitches (including 71 strikes) when he was removed in the seventh. With stricter pitch counts in the modern era, few pitchers are allowed to throw as many as 120 pitches anymore, and manager Dave Martinez would be crucified if he risked damaging the arm of his best pitcher.

"The stuff, obviously, I've been trying to get everything solidified in terms of all the off-speed pitches and separating them," Scherzer said afterward. "I felt like I was able to do that today. Just needed to get back

into the zone. I need to work on being 0-1 and being 0-2, 1-2. So if I can do that, that's when I know I can be really successful."

Yes, try to be a little more successful, would you Max?

Buehler ... Buehler?

Friday's combined no-hitter by the Dodgers was the 12th in major-league history, but it's probably going to become the norm in the coming decade.

Again, stricter pitch counts will be the death of the single-pitcher no-no.

Walker Buehler threw only six innings before being pulled by Dodgers manager Dave Roberts after 93 pitches. It was the 23-year-old Buehler's third major-league start.

On Sunday, making his first start, Yankees pitcher Domingo German was removed after six no-hit innings and only 84 pitches. The White Sox's Shields had a no-hitter going for 6 1/3 innings against the Twins, but we'll never know if manager Rick Renteria would've let him try to finish it off with a high pitch count.

Nowadays, no manager draws criticism for taking out pitchers with no-hit bids. It's just the way the game is evolving, and we take it for granted.

In Buehler's case, he has been handled carefully since being selected out of Vanderbilt in the first round of the 2015 draft, and for good reason. He underwent Tommy John surgery a few weeks after the draft, which is why he slid to the Dodgers with the 24th pick.

Buehler's Vandy teammate, Carson Fulmer, was chosen by the White Sox with the No. 8 pick, even though most scouts had Buehler with a higher upside.

With a 1.13 ERA in his first three starts, Buehler should help the Dodgers survive the loss of Clayton Kershaw, who went on the disabled list.

All in

After being moved from the Mariners roster to the front office, Ichiro Suzuki was able to enjoy Albert Pujols' 3,000th career hit Friday night.

Suzuki reached the 3,000-hit plateau in 2016, and said it was a "weird moment" for him.

"Everybody kind of celebrates that moment together," he told the Los Angeles Times. "The opposing team and your team really are kind of together."

The Mariners stood along the railing of the dugout to salute Pujols, who joined Hank Aaron, Willie Mays and Alex Rodriguez as the only major leaguers with 3,000 hits and 600 homers.

Accountability 101

Matt Harvey surprised many with his decision not to accept a demotion to the minors, leading the Mets to designate him for assignment.

His agent, Scott Boras, explained to the New York Post why Harvey decided not to go down to Triple A: "Going into a new organization you can map out an approach. Once you are sent to the minors by the Mets, they have total control of how long you are there. There is no forecast. It is, 'We will see how you do.'"

In other words, Harvey may have stayed down there until the Mets saw some improvement.

Imagine that.

James Shields a symbol of hope in White Sox's latest loss

By Phil Rogers / Chicago Tribune / May 6, 2018

When you're squinting to see signs of progress, you probably don't expect the hope to be provided by the oldest player on the White Sox roster.

But there was James Shields on Sunday at Guaranteed Rate Field, standing tall on the mound and in the clubhouse.

The guy who has served as a whipping boy for much of his two-year stay in Chicago took a no-hitter into the seventh inning and said all the right things after it blew up in a 5-3 loss to the Twins marked by untimely walks and misplays.

"At the end of the day, we had a two-run lead and we gave it up," Shields said. "It was a good effort, but we came up short. We tried to tie the series right there and we didn't get our job done."

This marked the second consecutive strong start by Shields, 36, who took a no-decision Tuesday in St. Louis after allowing only two hits. He is learning to pitch successfully with a fastball that only occasionally ticks above 90 mph.

"He was really commanding the strike zone," manager Rick Renteria said. "The velocity variance and the action the ball has now — and he changed it up some — has been very, very effective. ... It's the second outing just like that, with the one in St. Louis. It continues to prove he's still capable of having respect on the diamond and pitching very, very well."

Shields is the clear leader in a shell-shocked rotation — it began the day with a 5.68 ERA, last in the majors — and may yet have some lasting value for the White Sox. His renaissance began quietly last summer when he lowered his arm slot to three-quarters, as he has compiled a serviceable 4.18 ERA in his last 17 starts on regular rest.

Should Shields continue to trend in the right direction, he could become a candidate for a midseason trade to a contender or possibly even for the Sox to re-sign when his current deal ends after next season. That was unthinkable for much of 2016, when he went 4-12 with a 6.77 ERA in 22 starts after being acquired from the Padres.

Shields retired the Twins' first 16 hitters before walking Ehire Adrianza. He took a 2-0 lead and the no-hitter into the seventh but lost it a one-out single by Eduardo Escobar, laced into right field after a leadoff walk to Brian Dozier.

"I felt really good," Shields said. "Just getting ahead of the hitters, pounding the strike zone today. Just getting quick outs early in the game, so it went well."

The Twins scored three in the seventh to take a 3-2 lead, with Logan Morrison's double off reliever Luis Avilan the big hit. They took a 4-3 lead in the eighth, this time after poor plays in the field by shortstop Tim Anderson (a bad pitch that led to an error charged to second baseman Jose Rondon) and third baseman Yolmer Sanchez (who neglected to freeze Joe Mauer at third after fielding a slow grounder).

Renteria, a former shortstop himself, described what happened on those plays afterward, declining to take Sanchez to task for his mental error. The manager was as upbeat as always, perhaps because he knows Shields isn't going anywhere soon.

No-hit bid a thrill for White Sox catcher Omar Narvaez

By Phil Rogers / Chicago Tribune / May 6, 2018

No-hit bids are always shared experiences, as White Sox catcher Omar Narvaez demonstrated with his work behind pitcher James Shields on Sunday.

Narvaez, catching Shields for the fifth time in his seven starts this season, grew more and more excited as Shields held the Twins hitless into the seventh inning.

"I was pretty excited," he said. "I was thinking we could do this, and I was really trying to call some (good) pitches."

Eduardo Escobar broke up the no-hitter with a single to right field on a 1-2 curveball with one out.

Narvaez said Shields' best pitch was his changeup. He threw it 25 times, getting 16 strikes. Six of his 11 swing-and-misses came on the changeup.

"It was filthy today," Narvaez said. "We used it a lot. (It was) one of the best outings I've ever seen from him."

Baby steps back: Avisail Garcia, out since April 23 with a Grade II hamstring strain, is hitting in the cage as he progresses toward a return. Manager Rick Renteria said he may need a rehab stint before rejoining the lineup.

Garcia was off to a slow start before suffering the injury against the Mariners. He's hitting .233 with one home run in 73 at-bats.

As a possible piece for a midseason trade, the Sox need Garcia to hit the ground running when he returns. He was an American League All-Star in 2017, hitting .330 with 18 home runs and 80 RBIs.

Keeping it simple: The White Sox have three off days in an eight-day stretch beginning Monday, giving them a chance to skip struggling starters. But Renteria said he plans to stay in order. That makes Carson Fulmer, Hector Santiago and Shields the likely starters at Wrigley Field over the weekend.

James Shields flirts with no-hitter, but White Sox lose to Twins

By Brian Sandalow / Sun-Times / May 6, 2018

For a while, it looked as though the White Sox would get something historic from veteran right-hander James Shields.

They still lost.

Shields took a no-hitter into the seventh inning Sunday, but the Sox fell to the Twins 5-3. He retired the first 16 batters he faced, but the Sox couldn't hold a 2-0 lead and dropped a season-worst 14 games below .500. They have lost each of their first five home series to start the season.

Shields, whose longest no-hit bid lasted seven innings with the Rays in 2009, said he wasn't thinking about his chance at history until later in the game. Afterward, his mind was on something else.

"At the end of the day, we had a two-run lead and gave it up," said Shields, who ended up allowing three runs and two hits in 6 2/3 innings. "It was a good effort, but we came up short. We tried to tie the series right there, and we didn't get our job done."

Shields was perfect through 5 1/3 innings before walking Ehire Adrianza. Then with one out in the seventh, Eduardo Escobar broke up the no-hitter on a single to right-center. That led to a three-run inning that Logan Morrison capped with a two-run double against Luis Avilan.

The Twins then took the lead for good after a pair of miscues by Sox infielders in the eighth.

The first came when second baseman Jose Rondon let a toss from shortstop Tim Anderson on a would-be force get away, allowing Joe Mauer to reach third. The second came when third baseman Yolmer Sanchez picked up a soft grounder by Max Kepler but didn't look Mauer back to third, allowing him to score and give the Twins a 4-3 lead.

Manager Rick Renteria explained both plays. He said Anderson didn't get the ball out of his glove as cleanly as he wanted to, affecting what Rondon saw when the toss finally was made. On Sanchez's play, Renteria said the first reaction should have been to look at Mauer, something Sanchez didn't do.

"Sanchy, who is as stellar a defender and as astute watching everything and knowing what's going on . . . the one thing that happens on a softer-hit ball or squibbler is you have to check the runner at third," Renteria said.

In general, the eighth inning was another educational moment for the Sox, who are 3-13 at home and have lost 11 games this season after leading.

"You're always learning something," Renteria said.

Shields might have taught his young teammates something in his last two starts. On Tuesday in St. Louis, he threw six innings of one-run, two-hit ball. Then Sunday, thanks to a changeup catcher Omar Narvaez called "filthy," Shields had the Sox' longest no-hit bid since Jose Quintana also went 6 1/3 innings May 21, 2013, in Boston.

"It's been feeling pretty good," Shields said of the changeup. "I've been able to throw it a little bit more. If I get ahead in the count, I'm able to throw it a little bit more. I'm getting a good feel for it right now. Hopefully I can keep building off these last two starts."

Renteria echoed that, saying Shields is commanding the strike zone. His various arm slots, changes in speeds and movement on his pitches are helping Shields produce like he did Sunday.

"He continues to maybe prove that he's still capable, obviously, of commanding respect on the diamond and pitching very, very well," Renteria said.

Renteria wants to see fewer walks in the park from White Sox pitchers

By Briand Sandalow / Sun-Times / May 6, 2018

Hector Santiago's performance Saturday is an outlier for any staff. He walked six in 3½ innings, allowed eight runs and saw his ERA rise to 6.00.

But for the White Sox, it was an exaggerated example of what has gone wrong this season.

Entering the game Sunday against the Twins, the Sox had a 5.12 ERA, which ranked second-to-last in the American League. Their 221 strikeouts were the fewest in the AL, and their 144 walks were the most.

None of that is conducive to success, and the Sox know it. As for the walks, manager Rick Renteria said it could be an issue with pitchers' delivery or their mindset.

"I think we have had a few guys that have worked quite a few walks in some ballgames, but you keep working and try to execute," Renteria said. "That's the bottom line, it's about execution. I think as they continue to work, get more comfortable on the mound, hopefully those walks will start to diminish a little bit."

Stringing along

Avisail Garcia is getting closer. But he still isn't that close to returning.

Garcia, who has been on the 10-day disabled list since April 24 with a strained right hamstring, took swings Saturday and Sunday. But Renteria cautioned that, though Garcia is doing better, there still are some hurdles to overcome before he returns.

"He's progressing well, feels good," Renteria said. "We still have to put him on a regimen where we can start doing some more explosive work with him. He's still a little bit away, but he's progressing well."

Renteria said Garcia might go on a rehab assignment before he returns. Before going on the DL, Garcia was hitting .233 with a homer and four RBI in 18 games.

Ricky the singer?

After his impromptu singing performance Saturday that was spurred on by Renteria, Miguel Gonzalez threatened to make his manager perform sometime.

"Ricky's gonna sing with me next time," Gonzalez said. "I'll be singing with him, but he's gonna definitely have to be out there, for sure."

Renteria wasn't so sure.

"I don't know if he'll be able to get me to do it," Renteria said. "But he has a great voice, and it's nice to hear him sing."

Renteria was impressed with the performance, but he wasn't surprised.

"He's always had a great voice," Renteria said. "We kid with him a lot, but he's always been a good sport and always contributed to the levity in our clubhouse."

Watching the future

Eloy Jimenez hit his sixth homer of the season in Class AA Birmingham's 6-2 loss to Tennessee, tying Matt Rose and Seby Zavala for the Barons' team lead. Jimenez also doubled and is hitting .319.

Michael Kopech didn't have as good of a day at Class AAA Charlotte. He went only three innings, allowed two runs and four walks and hit two batters in the Knights' 4-3 loss to Columbus.

End of the line

Sunday was the last time Ken Harrelson and Tom Paciorek broadcast a game together. They shared the Sox' TV booth from 1990 to '99. This is Harrelson's final year announcing games. Paciorek, meanwhile, was filling in for Steve Stone.

Shields flirts with no-hitter in Chicago White Sox's loss

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / May 6, 2018

Heading into the seventh inning of Sunday's game against the Minnesota Twins, Chicago White Sox catcher Omar Narvaez had a feeling.

"I was thinking we could do this," he said.

"This" was a James Shields no-hitter, a curious thought considering the veteran starter's struggles since joining the Sox in a trade from the San Diego Padres in June 2016.

But there Shields was through 6 innings, baffling the Twins with a lowered arm angle and tantalizing changeup.

"I felt really good," he said.

The 36-year-old veteran walked Brian Dozier leading off the seventh inning, but he responded by striking out Max Kepler.

That brought Eduardo Escobar to the plate and Minnesota's third baseman ended Shields' no-hit bid with a single on a hanging curveball.

Leading 2-0 at the time, the Sox quickly fell apart and lost 5-3 to the Twins at Guaranteed Rate Field.

"Everybody was just watching him do his thing," manager Rick Renteria said. "Obviously, cheering him on. He has a lot of respect from the guys in there. I'm sure they all enjoyed watching it."

The first 6½ innings were enjoyable for the White Sox and the crowd of 17,424, but some leaky infield defense from third baseman Yolmer Sanchez, shortstop Tim Anderson and second baseman Jose Rondon opened the door for the Twins' rally.

Shields, who had a no-hitter through 7 innings against Kansas City on Aug. 3, 2009, while pitching for Tampa Bay, wound up going 6⅔ innings against Minnesota. He allowed 3 runs on 2 hits and 2 walks.

"I wasn't thinking about (a no-hitter) until the end there," Shields said. "At the end of the day, we had a 2-run lead and we gave it up. It was a good effort, but we came up short."

In his last 2 starts, Shields has pitched 12⅔ innings and allowed 4 earned runs on 4 hits. His changeup has been an effective pitch.

"It's been feeling pretty good," Shields said. "If I get ahead in the count I'm able to throw it a little bit more. I'm getting a good feel for it right now. Hopefully I can keep building off these last 2 starts."

Farm report:

For Class AA Birmingham on Sunday, outfielder Eloy Jimenez was 2-for-3 with 2 RBI in a 6-2 loss at Tennessee.

Jimenez homered for the sixth time in only 17 games with the Barons. He missed the first half of April with a strained pectoral muscle.

For Triple-A Charlotte, Michael Kopech started Sunday at Columbus and lasted just 3 innings.

The Sox's top pitching prospect allowed 2 runs on 1 hit and 4 walks. He also had 3 strikeouts, hit a pair of batters and threw 66 pitches (34 strikes).

At high Class A Winston-Salem, Dylan Cease started against Buies Creek and got the win after allowing 1 earned run on 8 hits and 2 walks in 6 innings. The right-hander had 6 strikeouts while lowering his ERA to 1.95.

White Sox waste a day of vintage James Shields in loss to Twins

By James Fegan / The Athletic / May 6, 2018

When the White Sox clubhouse opened up Sunday morning, James Shields was huddled around his locker with pitching coach Don Cooper and catcher Omar Narváez, reviewing the entire Twins lineups, their weakness against certain pitches in certain locations, and every detail in between. But they were disturbed by what was slightly more than the usual level of chatter from Yolmer Sánchez's locker.

"We're trying to have a meeting here!" barked Shields in faux-outrage.

“You don’t need that anyway, you’re too good,” Sánchez countered.

As has been the case for the most of the year, Sánchez was on point, and on Sunday, Shields was too, holding the Twins hitless for 6 1/3 innings despite not even hitting 91 mph, and scrapping together the longest White Sox no-hit bid since José Quintana kept the magic going for an equally long stretch in 2013. For a pitcher whose struggles in 2016 and since have come to be emblematic of a team that was due to turn the page and focus on youth, it was an outing that served as a testament to the 36-year-old’s undying commitment to making adjustments, and working to salvage some effectiveness from a right arm that’s thrown nearly 2,500 big league innings.

“Filthy,” said Narváez of Shields’ changeup, which he threw 25 times. “It was filthy today. We used it a lot and that kind of brings you back to, I mean, he was I think one of the of the best outings I’ve ever seen from him.”

In a more stirring tribute to Quintana, Shields had two of the runners he left on base score on a double Logan Morrison poked down the right field line off Luis Avilán, and got saddled with a no decision in a 5-3 defeat to cap a series loss. Given the troubles he’s battled through, he and the Sox will take a 6 2/3 IP, 2 H, 3 ER, 2 BB, 5 K pitching line, but it fails to capture the magic he had going.

It certainly ran out on the Sox side after Shields departed. For a team built around an emphasis on clean baseball, having the fourth-worst fielding percentage in the majors is already an anathema, and the miscues that undid them in the eighth inning will only further tighten the scrutiny.

With Joe Mauer on first in the eighth inning, Tim Anderson charged a soft bouncer from Brian Dozier. While his feed to José Rondón at second was perfectly on target, that it was delivered after a slight hesitation might explain why Rondón whiffed on it completely. Mauer scampered to third base as Anderson’s feed slowly bounced into right, but the Sox were no better able to track him from there. Mauer wandered from third on a grounder to Sánchez, but between double-clutching and then abandoning a plan to start a double play with a throw to second before settling on just getting one out at first, Sánchez seemed to lose track of Mauer, who scampered home for the go-ahead run.

“The one play, the one by Dozier, I don’t think [Anderson] was able to get the ball out as cleanly and as quickly as he wanted to. He ended up showing both glove and hand which is very difficult. You’re always trying to clear the glove so you can see the ball. He kept trying to get it out and hearing the command, ‘two-two-two,’ so he tried to get it out but obviously José couldn’t see it, which is why it got away from them.

“Sanchy, who is as stellar a defender, as astute as anybody in knowing what’s going on [made a mistake]. The one thing with that happens with a softer-hit ball, a squibber as it was, you have to check the runner at third. The hard-hit ball you’re not checking but a softer one your first reaction is to check the runner, and he never checked the runner. [Mauer] kept getting out, getting out, getting out and before you know it he was across home plate.”

Eddie Rosario’s solo shot off Nate Jones in the top of the ninth served to kill some of the focus on that ugly sequence. Yet on a day that initially promised to be a sort of respite from the most grueling of rebuilding seasons, and where the defense briefly promised to be supporting stars of Shields’ special outing — Rondón snagged a bullet grounder in the fourth to preserve what was then a perfect game, Nicky Delmonico robbed a home run in the eighth — it again became a question of trying to focus on larger themes than dwell on another dismal day-to-day result. Not that the Sox themselves will much be able to.

“No, not early in the game,” said a sullen Shields when asked if he thought about his no-hit bid. “Maybe later in the game. But I wasn’t thinking about it really until the end there. At the end of the day, we had a two-run lead and we gave it up. It was a good effort but we came up short. We tried to tie the series right there and we didn’t get our job done.”

Those themes to carry could be that the feel for Shields' famous changeup has returned, which could give him the framework for sustainable success, or even provide fuel for hopes that he would be coveted to fill the back of someone else's rotation by August. But probably the more longstanding theme is that this young defense is ideally just raw, but currently playing the Sox out of winnable games that could otherwise make the most difficult year of the rebuild a bit less difficult.

Five observations: Is Tim Anderson's big night a sign of things to come?

By James Fegan / The Athletic / May 6, 2018

What can be said about this one?

Genuinely, the angle for Saturday night's deeply undramatic 8-4 loss to the Twins, which dropped the very-rebuilding White Sox to 9-22 on the young season, was a matter of debate in the press box.

On bad nights, the Sox viewing experience can be reduced to prospect watching for the "prospects" who have already arrived in the majors — focusing on the progress of young players who could be part of their core going forward. But with Yoán Moncada on the disabled list, Matt Davidson getting a night off and veteran spot starter Héctor Santiago wrecked by walk troubles, the main takeaway from Saturday's game is that Tim Anderson is out of his mini-slump, and there is another game Sunday.

"It was moving all over the place," Santiago said. "I mean, I tried to run it in to lefties and it was cutting down and away, try to go away to a lefty I was missing in, so I think just trying to make that adjustment on the mound and couldn't figure out. At some point we were just like 'All right, let's just try to throw right down the middle,' and here we set up down the middle, [Wellington] Castillo said let's try to go after these guys and by that time it was already five or six walks deep."

1. White Sox starters continue to walk

A few strong outings from James Shields, Lucas Giolito and Carson Fulmer pulled the Sox's starting corps out of the scary depths of having more walks than strikeouts on the season, but Santiago's six free passes in 3 1/3 rocky innings dragged them back a bit. Sox starters have struck out 101 batters in 161 2/3 innings and have the lowest strikeout rate in baseball. They've allowed 88 walks and have the highest walk rate in baseball. Pitching coach Don Cooper is preaching a long view and patience for the pitching staff, as he should. It will only take a few hot starts in a row for the young arms in August to make the past five weeks easily forgotten, but it certainly burns right now.

Santiago mentioned Saturday that his fastball's unpredictable movement makes him chase a sort of effective wildness, and the downside of that was visible Saturday.

"I felt really good," Santiago said. "The velocity, I went back and looked and the velocity was there, which hasn't been that good in a while. Probably felt too good, I pulled a lot of fastballs, which is weird for me because usually if I miss then I'm missing up and away or up and in to a lefty. So little different kind of scenario there, I was trying to figure out which way to go, trying to make that adjustment, and I just kinda never figured that out."

2. Tim Anderson's improvements start showing up

Anderson's steady drop in strikeouts and gains in contact rate — essentially the most important element of his offensive development — have been covered up by his error issues persisting, the 1-for-21 skid he was riding entering Saturday, and by getting yelled at repeatedly by Salvador Perez. A double to the right-center gap and a pair of thunderous home runs to left should signal that a correction is coming, and that his overall offensive line should soon reflect the real improvements he's made.

"I probably would have been down on myself, I probably would have been in my own head," Anderson said of how he would have handled a slow stretch last year. "It's baseball. You will run into a few home

runs. You have to keep going. You can't get too high or get too low. Just like we've been playing. We ran into a little tough spot. But we are not going to get down."

3. Moncada will not singlehandedly win the Crosstown Cup

The White Sox clearly read the thousands of Moncada tweets you all sent saying "please DL him" and wasted no time giving him the 10-day break that should clear up his lingering left hamstring issue. An MRI of his leg was reportedly clean, but he will not be eligible to return until May 15, when the Sox begin a two-game series in Pittsburgh. Until then, our ongoing series of "James asks Yoán Moncada nerdy questions that he mostly shoots down," will be on hold.

4. Jace Fry pitched well

It came after the game was pretty much decided, but Jace Fry looked good. He threw two perfect innings, wiping out the lefties he faced with his hard cutter and providing a welcome respite in a game in which the Twins had 19 baserunners. Fry struggled after getting called up straight from Double-A last year, but he's still just 24, left-handed and throws 93 mph. He has a chance to get paid major league money to get lefties out on a regular basis.

5. ...

Blake Rutherford hit his first home run in Winston-Salem? Bernardo Flores threw seven strong innings? Eloy Jiménez had a pair of hits? There's not much more to take from this night. Move on from it. It has nothing more to offer.
