



WHITE SOX HEADLINES OF JULY 2, 2018

"White Sox ride 5-run 5th, Lopez to take finale" ... Anthony Andro, MLB.com

"Davidson looking to move past tough June" ... Anthony Andro, MLB.com

"No. 4 pick Madrigal agrees with White Sox" ... Anthony Andro, MLB.com

"Avisail Garcia is hitting like an All-Star again since returning from injury" ... Dan Santormita, NBC Sports Chicago

"Eloy Jimenez leaves Triple-A Charlotte game with injury" ... Dan Santormita, NBC Sports Chicago

"There's been no cooling off Avisail Garcia since his June return" ... Phil Thompson, Chicago Tribune

"White Sox get hot, turn the tables on the Rangers in 10-5 victory" ... Phil Thompson, Chicago Tribune

"Series preview: White Sox at Reds" ... Phil Thompson, Chicago Tribune

"Ricky's boys cause fits: Fielding, baserunning errors evidence of 'sloppiness'" ... Phil Thompson, Chicago Tribune

"Strong outing by Lopez helps White Sox avoid series sweep" ... Daryl Van Schouwen, Sun-Times

"Hearing and doing are different things for struggling White Sox" ... Daryl Van Schouwen, Sun-Times

"Scouting report: White Sox at Cincinnati Reds" ... Scot Gregor, Daily Herald

"Is Madrigal White Sox's leadoff hitter of the future?" ... Scot Gregor, Daily Herald

"Sox is singular: Matt 'Tenacious D' Davidson thrills everyone on the mound" ... Jim Margalus, The Athletic

"Power production is coming slow and in bunches for Gavin Sheets" ... James Fegan, The Athletic

White Sox ride 5-run 5th, Lopez to take finale

Young righty limits Rangers to 2 ER in 6 1/3 IP; Abreu, Davidson, Avi star at the plate

By Anthony Andro / MLB.com / July 1, 2018

ARLINGTON -- The Chicago White Sox put together a big inning of their own Sunday, after being doomed by them in the first two games of their series against the Texas Rangers.

Chicago scored five times in the fifth inning, matching its biggest frame of the season, on its way to a 10-5 victory at Globe Life Park. The win helped the White Sox avoid their first three-game sweep in Texas since 2007.

View Full Game Coverage

With the game tied at 2 after Reynaldo Lopez left the bases loaded in the bottom of the fourth, Chicago batted around against Texas ace Cole Hamels and took the lead for good. The White Sox strung together four straight hits to do their damage, and had 14 total on the day to help end a three-game losing streak.

"Everybody contributed, and it's cool when everybody up and down the lineup is getting hits," said first baseman Matt Davidson, who had a two-run double in the frame and finished with three hits and three RBIs. "We were able to lay off some of the pitches. When [Hamels] is really effective, he's able to get that cutter inside, the changeup down and away and the curveball down in the zone. There were a couple of key at-bats to get those early RBIs and chip away. When he made mistakes, we were able to take advantage of it."

The White Sox got going in the fifth after Adam Engel reached first on a strikeout and wild pitch. Tim Anderson followed with an RBI double to give Chicago a 3-2 lead. Avisail Garcia's single pushed the

margin to 4-2, and two batters later, Davidson hit his two-run double off the wall in left-center field. Catcher Kevan Smith capped the scoring with a bloop single to right.

That outburst proved to be more than enough support for Lopez (4-5), who beat the Rangers in both of his starts against them this year. Lopez scattered seven hits over 6 1/3 innings, allowing just two runs and three walks against six strikeouts. He has now won consecutive starts for the first time this season and had a season-high eight runs of offensive support behind him.

Lopez also saved a tired bullpen by throwing a career-high 114 pitches on a day that had a first-pitch temperature of 97.

"I liked it all," said Lopez. "All my pitches were working very good. I felt good. The weather was hot, but I was focused. I just tried to not pay attention to the weather. It was good. I came back focused in the whole inning and I executed my pitches."

The righty had plenty of help from the offense, with the top of the order doing most of the damage. Jose Abreu went 2-for-3 and added three RBIs to push his season total to 50. He put the White Sox up 1-0 in the first with an RBI grounder, extended the lead to 2-0 with an RBI triple in the third and made it 8-2 in the seventh with a sacrifice fly. Garcia went 4-for-5 with a two doubles, triple and three runs scored. Anderson also had two hits and scored twice.

"The last couple of games before this, [the Rangers] have been able to tack on runs and do everything they needed to do," Chicago manager Rick Renteria said. "Today, we tacked on some runs in situations a little more efficiently. They didn't try to press. I think they stayed within themselves, got pitches they could handle and generated the offense they did."

GARCIA EXITS WITH JAMMED FINGER

Left fielder Leury Garcia exited the game after striking out during Chicago's big fifth inning. Garcia, who was 0-for-3, exited because of a jammed finger on his left hand and he was replaced in left for the next inning by Charlie Tilson. Garcia said he hurt the finger in Saturday's game. He'll be re-evaluated Monday in Cincinnati. Garcia, who has been limited to 48 games this year after missing time because of a sprained left knee, was 0-for-12 in the series.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

With the game tied at 2 and the bases loaded in the bottom of the fourth, Lopez struck out Shin-Soo Choo looking to end the inning. The Rangers had scored twice in the frame and Choo came into the game with a 41 game on-base streak and 12-game hitting streak. He was 0-for-4 against Lopez before extending the streak to 42 with an eighth-inning walk.

SOUND SMART

The White Sox are taking their spot as the American League leaders in triples seriously. Chicago added two more Sunday, with Abreu and Avisail Garcia getting in on the act. Abreu's RBI triple came in the third and Garcia scored following his three-bagger in the seventh. Chicago now has 25 triples, three more than the New York Yankees.

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

The White Sox scored in the first and third innings after their leadoff hitter reached. Leury Garcia briefly gave Chicago another chance in the fourth. He was initially ruled safe in an infield grounder to short. But after a replay, the call was overturned after just 37 seconds and Hamels went on to retire the side in order.

UP NEXT

James Shields and the White Sox will try to get things turned around at Great American Ball Park on Monday at 6:10 p.m. CT against Cincinnati right-hander Luis Castillo. The White Sox have dominated the Reds in Interleague Play, winning 16 of the 20 matchups, including 10 of 12 in Cincinnati. The last time the White Sox were in Cincinnati was 2009, Chicago took two of three.

Davidson looking to move past tough June

Infielder tied career high with 3 hits Saturday; hopes to carry momentum forward

By Anthony Andro / MLB.com / July 1, 2018

ARLINGTON -- Maybe Friday proved to be just what Chicago infielder Matt Davidson needed to turn around a bad June.

Davidson was called on to pitch an inning and was perfect in an 11-3 loss to Texas. He was in a more familiar spot Saturday, batting and going 3-for-4 with a homer and double in the 13-4 loss to the Rangers.

Saturday's game pushed Davidson's average to .228 and capped a month in which he hit just .203 with three homers and five RBIs.

"Seeing the results definitely helped the confidence a little bit," Davidson said. "June wasn't a good month for me at all. I couldn't get anything done. I'm glad it's over and I can move on. You have ups and downs, but that was a pretty long down."

The three-hit game for Davidson matched his career high, which he's now done eight times. His homer Saturday also allowed him to make history. According to STATS, Inc., he's the first White Sox position player since at least 1913 to pitch in a game and then homer in the club's next game.

Davidson is hoping to build off that.

"You've got to stay strong and positive and know you're going to come out the other end," he said. "I maybe tweaked a couple of things, but really it comes down to the timing's off and maybe I was trying to do too much, not focusing. It's about getting the job done. I just need to do that."

That would make manager Rick Renteria happy.

"I wish I had a crystal ball to tell you he's trending in the right direction," Renteria said. "He had some good at-bats. I think he's had some at-bats that he's been working to try and put himself in a better position to strike the ball as consistently as he possibly can. Hopefully, this is something that's trending."

No. 4 pick Madrigal agrees with White Sox

By Anthony Andro / MLB.com / July 1, 2018

ARLINGTON -- Infielder Nick Madrigal, the lone unsigned top-10 Draft pick for the Chicago White Sox, has agreed to a deal, according to MLB Network insider Jon Heyman.

Chicago selected Madrigal with the fourth overall pick. The team said it would have no news on any Draft picks Sunday. The signing bonus slot for the No. 4 pick is \$6,411,400.

Chicago agreed to terms with second-round pick Steele Walker and third-round pick Konnor Pilkington on Friday and was waiting on Madrigal, who wrapped up his career with Oregon State on Thursday as the Beavers won the College World Series. Madrigal was the only player for Chicago in the first 11 rounds who hadn't agreed to terms.

Avisail Garcia is hitting like an All-Star again since returning from injury

By Dan Santormita / NBC Sports Chicago / July 1, 2018

Avisail Garcia had a breakout season in 2017, but hasn't yet had much of a chance to prove it wasn't a fluke yet.

Garcia started 2018 with five multi-hit games in the first eight of the season and was hitting .343. He went 5-for-38 in the next 10 games to drop his batting average to .233 and hit OPS to .565. Then he got injured.

Garcia is trying to prove his long-term worth to the White Sox with a number of high-profile outfield prospects making their way through the minors. Since returning from injury on June 22, the early returns have been good.

In Sunday's 10-5 win against the Rangers, Garcia was 4-for-5 with two doubles and a triple. He went to the plate in the eighth needing a home run for the cycle, but instead collected his second double of the day.

Sunday's big day extended Garcia's hitting streak to eight games. He has hits in nine of his 10 games since he came off the disabled list. During that stretch he is hitting .333/.333/.690. No walks is a bit comical, but the batting average and power make that less relevant.

Garcia's line for the season is .270/.280/.452. Those aren't the All-Star numbers he produced a year ago (.330/.380/.506), but the .732 OPS is currently better than any other season for Garcia other than last year.

In addition to Garcia's four-hit game, Jose Abreu was 2-for-3 with a triple and a walk and Matt Davidson had three hits and three RBIs.

Eloy Jimenez leaves Triple-A Charlotte game with injury

By Dan Santormita / NBC Sports Chicago / July 1, 2018

Eloy Jimenez is becoming a fan favorite for White Sox fans and he hasn't even made it to the bigs yet so when the top prospect leaves a game with an injury, it's news.

Jimenez left Sunday's game for the Triple-A Charlotte Knights after his second at-bat. He appeared to be in some discomfort running after taking a swing that resulted in a fly out.

Jimenez singled and scored in the first inning without any visible issue. In his second trip to the plate he was the final out of the inning and was pulled before the start of the next inning.

For now, there's no word on the severity of the injury.

Jimenez is hitting .293/.383/.463 in 19 games with the Knights since getting promoted from Double-A Birmingham. Impressively, he has struck out just five times in 47 plate appearances in Triple-A.

The 21-year-old was off to a solid start with the Knights, continuing to stay on pace for a 2018 debut with the White Sox. This injury could affect the timetable of his promotion if it keeps him out for a while. It could also be precautionary. White Sox fans will await the news with bated breath.

There's been no cooling off Avisail Garcia since his June return

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / July 1, 2018

It's no secret Avisail Garcia has been on a roll since coming back from a hamstring injury, but he put an exclamation point on his run Sunday against the Rangers.

He had a season-high four hits during the Sox's 10-5 victory and extended his hitting streak to 11 games. Since June 22, he's had 14 hits in the eight games he has played since being activated from the disabled list.

"He's continuing chipping away," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "Some of our righties have been improving against the lefthanded pitchers. Sometimes you need to turn it up a little bit."

Heading in Sunday's game, Garcia was hitting .250 against lefthanders and .244 against righties.

He feasted on Cole Hamels and two other lefthanded Rangers pitchers, Alex Claudio and Matt Moore. In the first inning, he jumped on Hamels' 1-0 fastball and lined it to center field. His double moved Tim Anderson to third and set the table for Jose Abreu's groundout in the next at bat to produce the game's first run.

He raked a triple to right against Claudio in the seventh, diving headfirst toward third base and holding onto the bag by a fingernail.

His two triples in the weekend's Rangers series are his first of the season.

Even during the Sox's three-game losing streak, which they broke Sunday, Garcia had a pair of two-hit games and homered in the other.

White Sox get hot, turn the tables on the Rangers in 10-5 victory

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / July 1, 2018

After two days of wilting in the Texas heat, the White Sox bats woke up in a big way and Reynaldo Lopez turned in another fine performance in the Sox's 10-5 win during their series finale against the Rangers on Sunday at Globe Life Park.

Avisail Garcia had a season-high four hits and Jose Abreu equaled his season-best with three RBIs.

Lopez (4-5) struck out six over 6 1/3 innings. The right-hander was already up to 107 pitches after six innings in the 97-degree heat when manager Rick Renteria asked him to get one more batter: Elvis Andrus. Lopez got him to line out in seven pitches to make it in a career-high 114.

"Ricky approached me and he asked me to put out one more hitter and I said, 'Yeah, I'm ready.' That's excellent for me. I'm always ready for one more hitter," Lopez said through an interpreter. "I came out and I did my job."

Pressed a little, he laughed and admitted, "I didn't feel tired at any moment of the game. But right now, yes. Right now I'm really tired, especially today's game's a day game with the heat."

Lopez's only real trouble came in the fourth, when he gave up an RBI on Rougned Odor's single and issued a bases-loaded walk on four straight balls to Delino DeShields. Lopez stopped the bleeding by striking out Shin-Soo Choo looking.

"What a great outing," Renteria said. "Truly attacked the strike zone (and) minimized damage; made some pitches when he needed to."

Tim Anderson got things rolling in the first inning with a leadoff single and scored on Jose Abreu's groundout. Abreu was the designated hitter while Matt Davidson manned first base.

Davidson doubled in two runners during a five-run fifth inning. Overall, the Sox scored seven runs on nine hits off Cole Hamels (4-7), though the Rangers left-hander struck out seven.

"I think the guys did a nice job of trying to get pitches they can handle — and by the way, they actually hit some tough pitches down in the zone," Renteria said. "I don't think they tried to do too much with them."

The Rangers charged back with a three-run eighth inning, but Joakim Soria came on to put out the fire, getting Andrus to fly out and freezing pinch hitter Adrian Beltre on a called third strike.

Soria pitched the ninth as well, running his scoreless streak to 14 1/3 innings over 14 games. He has converted eight straight save opportunities.

"I don't know when was the last time he's thrown a five-out outing, but he did a great job," Renteria said.

The Sox padded their lead in the ninth.

After Anderson flied out, Avisail Garcia doubled and scored on Davidson's single. And Charlie Tilson's sacrifice bunt drove in Abreu, who had been intentionally walked by Rangers reliever Matt Moore.

"Even though we gave back some runs," Renteria said, "we were still able to continue to chip away and fight and grind out at bats and tack on some more runs."

Series preview: White Sox at Reds

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / July 1, 2018

All games on WGN-AM 720.

Monday: 6:10 p.m., NBCSCH.

RH James Shields (3-9, 4.29) vs. RH Luis Castillo (5-8, 5.85).

Tuesday: 6:10 p.m., WGN-9.

RH Lucas Giolito (5-7, 6.59) vs. RH Anthony DeSclafani (3-1, 4.45).

Wednesday: 6:10 p.m., NBCSCH.

RH Dylan Covey (3-3, 4.82) vs. RH Sal Romano (4-8, 5.30).

Ricky's boys cause fits: Fielding, baserunning errors evidence of 'sloppiness'

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / July 1, 2018

The White Sox received a gut check during Saturday's 13-4 loss to the Rangers on Saturday that featured a slew of fielding gaffes, a bullpen meltdown and at least one halfhearted effort running the bases. Then they got checked by their manager.

"I think we had a good conversation as a club dealing with what we all have to deal with, which is you're competing at the big-league level," Rick Renteria said. "It requires a lot of commitment, concentration (and) focus, which doesn't mean you have to be a stiff. You have to be relaxed, you have to still enjoy the game; it's a very difficult game to play. But there's a focus and a commitment that's required in order to be able to compete from pitch to pitch."

After Saturday's game, Renteria was a bit more direct, calling out several players by name, including reliever Bruce Rondon, second baseman Yoan Moncada, catcher Omar Narvaez and first baseman Jose Abreu.

"So there was some sloppiness today," Renteria said.

Actually, the last few days.

Rondon recorded one out on a sacrifice fly, gave up five earned runs and walked two during a marathon, 41-minute bottom of the eighth that featured two other Sox relievers.

Renteria called out Moncada for his lack of hustle and awareness in the first inning when Elvis Andrus backhanded Abreu's fielder's choice and threw Moncada out at home.

"If you're asking me if he gave it the best effort he possibly could, no he did not. ... I think he took it for granted that the play might be developing at the plate."

Moncada admitted afterward that he thought Andrus would throw to first.

"It didn't happen," he said through an interpreter. Add that miscue to Moncada's two fielding errors in the last four games and eight in June.

Charlie Tilson slipped and fell while pursuing Andrus' triple.

"That was very odd," Renteria said. "We saw a lot of things today that we would rather not have seen. But I'm sure these guys will rebound. You don't like seeing games like that."

Tilson dropped fly balls in each of the previous two games and was tagged out in Wednesday's game trying to steal home an apparent wild pitch.

Narvaez had a passed ball Saturday and was off target on his attempt to catch Delino DeShields stealing third in the seventh inning, allowing DeShields to score.

DeShields was in position in the first place because Abreu failed to glove Juan Minaya's pickoff attempt that was just slightly wide, but Minaya was given the error.

The game "was a hard lesson for them because it wasn't pretty," Renteria said Saturday. "There were a lot of things that went on, and you have to be aware of what's actually costing you ballgames, and what are the things you need to be able to own and be responsible and accountable for to give yourself a chance on a daily basis.

The lesson wasn't over, apparently.

On Sunday, center fielder Adam Engel misplayed the hop on Jurickson Profar's fourth-inning line-drive single and Profar reached third on the error. Two batters later, Ryan Rua's grounder deflected off Yolmer Sanchez's glove for a double.

Then in the eighth, Engel got crossed up on Joey Gallo's two-run triple as Avisail Garcia was also charging in. The ball bounced in front of Engel and got past him.

"I don't know, the ball sticks here (at Globe Life Park) and takes certain hops. (Engel) ended up having to make an adjustment."

Before Sunday's game, Renteria said he emphasized to the team that "the perception of how we go about our business" matters.

"Winning is what this is all about, regardless of where anybody thinks we're at. We don't talk about any of that," Renteria said, referring to the notion that the Sox are a rebuilding team. "We want to win a game every night. When those guys go out there, they've got to go out there to perform, they've got to execute. We know that if we don't somebody's going to get you."

Injury update: Left fielder Leury Garcia left Sunday's game in the sixth inning bothered by a jammed finger on his left hand. He'll be re-evaluated in Cincinnati. He was replaced by Tilson. Garcia's injury happened during a slide to first in Saturday's game. "He took the three at-bats (Sunday), it was bothering him a little bit. We had it checked out, he's fine. It just feels a little sore." ... There's still no timetable for Nate Jones (forearm muscle strain), but he's feeling "a lot better," Renteria said. "I would say right now we're nearing the All-Star break so it's not like I'm trying to get him in any rush to get him back. We'll see where he's at in a couple of days."

Strong outing by Lopez helps White Sox avoid series sweep

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / July 1, 2018

ARLINGTON, Texas — Right-hander Reynaldo Lopez was just what the White Sox needed to salvage a win in what had been a horrendous series against the Texas Rangers.

Lopez, arguably the team's best starter, beat the heat and helped the Sox beat the Rangers 10-5 on a sweltering Sunday afternoon after two night games in which the Sox lost 11-3 and 13-4 at Globe Life Park. With a taxed bullpen craving rest, Lopez even went out to get one more batter in the seventh inning with his pitch count at 107 in 100-degree heat.

"I'm always ready for one more inning," said Lopez, who threw a career-high 114 pitches in 6 1/3 innings of two-run ball and left with an 8-2 lead.

Avisail Garcia singled, doubled twice and tripled, and Jose Abreu, putting a .212/.256/.363 hitting line in June behind him, drove in three runs with a groundout, triple and sacrifice fly while going 2-for-3 with an intentional walk. Matt Davidson was 3-for-5 with three RBI.

Against lefty Cole Hamels in the fourth, the Sox scored five runs with, in succession, an RBI double by leadoff man Tim Anderson, RBI single by Garcia, single by Abreu and two-run double by Matt Davidson. Kevan Smith capped the inning, which started with Adam Engel reaching on a dropped third strike, with an RBI single.

Lopez (4-5) struck out six, walked three and spread around seven hits.

"I liked it all," Lopez said of his performance. "All of my pitches were working. I felt good despite the hot weather, but I was focused throughout."

Closer Joakim Soria, summoned earlier than usual after Jace Fry and Xavier Cedeno allowed the Rangers to bring the tying run to the plate, recorded two outs in the eighth, including a strikeout of Adrian Beltre, then finished up in the ninth with his 14th consecutive scoreless appearance.

The Sox tacked on two runs in the ninth on an RBI single by Davidson and Charlie Tilson's squeeze bunt scoring Abreu.

Robert to DL, Jimenez hurt

White Sox prospects continue to endure bad luck. Class A Winston-Salem center fielder Luis Robert, MLB Pipeline's 25th-ranked prospect in baseball, was put on the seven-day disabled list with a sprained left thumb. Also, Class AAA Charlotte outfielder Eloy Jimenez, the No. 3 prospect, left the game Sunday with an unknown injury after swinging in his second at-bat.

Robert, who sprained the same thumb during spring training and was out two months, apparently jammed it against the outfield wall. The Sox do not believe the injury is significant.

His injury log is filling more lines on his record than the Sox would care to see. He suffered knee and ankle injuries in his first season in the Dominican Summer League in 2016 after signing a \$26 million bonus. Then he was hurt making a feet-first slide into second base in a Cactus League game in March.

Jimenez was playing in his 12th game since being promoted to Charlotte. He's 12-for-41 (.293) with two home runs and four RBI. His OPS is .846.

Leury exits with sore finger

Left fielder Leury Garcia, who jammed the ring finger on his left hand sliding into first base Saturday night, started but left the game in the fifth inning. He was replaced by Tilson. Garcia is day-to-day and will be re-evaluated Monday when the team is in Cincinnati.

Hearing and doing are different things for struggling White Sox

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / July 1, 2018

ARLINGTON, Texas — Maybe things will get better for the White Sox. They can't really get worse.

"I always say something good will be coming down the pike because we're going through a difficult time," pitching coach Don Cooper said. "It's difficult because we come to the park preparing to win, and when we don't there is disappointment. We don't say, 'Oh, crap, we're rebuilding, don't worry about it.' That's why it's difficult."

Cooper has had veteran pitching staffs, young staffs and a World Series staff. On this team, this staff, "we're giving people on-the-job training and seeing if they're going to be part of the future."

It's tough training ground for young pitchers throwing with the American League's worst defense behind them. Shortstop Tim Anderson (12) and second baseman Yoan Moncada (13), two key components in the position-player group getting "on the drive training," lead the way for a unit that leads the AL with 64 errors. Saturday's 13-4 loss featured a comedy of misplays.

That kind of bad show prompted manager Rick Renteria to keep the clubhouse closed longer than usual "to recap the game, telling us what he thinks," Anderson said Sunday.

"He has a right to be upset and [ticked] off," Anderson said. "We're young, things happen, things aren't going how we want them to go, but as players we have to keep pushing each other — and enjoying the game."

The next day, the Sox responded with a much cleaner game. Adam Engel, their best defensive outfielder, misplayed a single into three bases and got crossed up with right fielder Avisail Garcia, and there were anxious moments from an overworked bullpen, but a strong start from one of Cooper's young pitchers, Reynaldo Lopez, and lots of offense from the middle of the order helped the Sox win 10-5 to salvage the finale of their three-game series with the Rangers.

Anderson said he "treasures" what he hears from Renteria "because he's been around and he's not going to tell us something wrong. He's going to tell us things that make us better."

Veteran right-hander James Shields said the message from the manager and coaches is "definitely well received. Everyone gets it."

But hearing and doing have been different things for a team that owns a 29-54 record. Rebuilding teams lose, but the aim is to at least "play the game the right way," win or lose.

"You don't want to have it happen, and it's frustrating as a player when you make those mistakes," Shields said. "We have to just do everything we possibly can to get better. Figure out what's going wrong and address it."

After a 22-22 finish in 2017, an overwhelming embrace of the rebuild at SoxFest from the fan base and some overexuberant predictions in the clubhouse and from isolated media during spring training, the team's 2018 performance has been below everyone's expectations, fans and management included.

It reached a point where Lopez said the team was "playing like clowns, me included," after a series sweep in Cleveland on June 20.

"It's been a struggle all season," Shields said. "When you're winning the game gets a lot easier, when you're losing the game gets harder. We have to slow the game down and focus on what we need to do fundamentally."

On Sunday morning, Renteria talked about the talk from the night before.

"We had a good conversation as a club," he said. "Competing at the big-league level requires a lot of commitment, concentration, focus. Which doesn't mean you have to be a stiff, you have to be relaxed and enjoy the game. But there is a focus and commitment that's required to compete from pitch to pitch."

On Sunday afternoon, after the win, everyone felt a little better about themselves, if only for a day.

"It was an important game for us, especially the way we looked the first two games here," Lopez said. "It was much cleaner. We showed what are capable of, and we executed. That's what we want to do every day."

Scouting report: White Sox at Cincinnati Reds

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / July 1, 2018

TV:

NBC Sports Chicago Monday and Wednesday; WGN Tuesday

Radio:

WGN 720-AM

Pitching matchups:

The Sox's James Shields (3-9) vs. Luis Castillo (5-8) Monday; Lucas Giolito (5-7) vs. Anthony DeSclafani (3-1) Tuesday; Dylan Covey (3-3) vs. Sal Romano (4-8) Wednesday. All games at 6:10 p.m.

At a glance:

The White Sox rolled over the Rangers Sunday to snap a three-game losing streak. Matt Davidson is 6-for-9 with 2 doubles, 1 homer and 4 RBI over his last 2 games. Avisail Garcia went 4-for-5 Sunday, raising his batting average from .245 to .270. Shields pitched 7 scoreless innings in his last start, a 6-1 win over the Twins Wednesday. The White Sox play the Reds in Cincinnati for the first time since 2009. The Reds are last in the NL Central but they've won 11 of 14. Third baseman Eugenio Suarez leads Cincinnati with 16 home runs and 61 RBI.

Next:

Houston Astros at Minute Maid Park, Thursday-Sunday

Is Madrigal White Sox's leadoff hitter of the future?

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / July 1, 2018

While the Chicago White Sox have yet to make an official announcement, top draft pick Nick Madrigal has reportedly agreed on a contract.

What a memorable stretch for the pint-size infielder, who the Sox selected with the No. 4 overall pick on June 4.

On Thursday, Madrigal and Oregon State won the College World Series. Less than a week later, he's banking a signing bonus with a slot value of \$6.4 million.

Even before the draft, there was the inevitable debate about Madrigal's position as a professional baseball player.

The 5-foot-7, 165-pounder played second base for the Beavers this season, but he's a natural shortstop.

Cadyn Grenier, the Baltimore Orioles' first-round draft pick, played shortstop for Oregon State and Madrigal showed he's a team-first guy by shifting to second.

After getting him signed and acclimated to the organization in Arizona for a short period, the White Sox are expected to send Madrigal to high Class A Winston-Salem.

Most top draft picks debut at low A Kannapolis or Advanced Rookie Great Falls, but the Sox believe Madrigal is advanced enough to handle Winston-Salem.

"First and foremost, we got who we felt was the best baseball player in the draft this year," said Nick Hostetler, the White Sox's director of amateur scouting.

As a defensive player, Madrigal would ideally prefer playing shortstop, but he's also up for second base, third base and even said he'd give the outfield a shot.

The feeling here is Madrigal will be a plus defender no matter what position he's playing.

And given his showing at Oregon State -- Madrigal batted .367 this season, .380 in 2017 and .333 as a freshman in 2016 -- another feeling is the right-hander is ready to join the White Sox early in 2020.

When he does arrive in the majors, Madrigal fits the profile as a leadoff hitter.

That's a huge plus for the Sox, who are developing middle of the order hitters like Eloy Jimenez, Zack Collins, Micker Adolfo and even Luis Robert, who might wind up in the No. 2 spot.

The White Sox are going to need a table setter, and Madrigal is looking forward to filling the key role.

"I've always hit toward the top of the order at all levels I've been a part of," Madrigal said. "You're not supposed to strike out if you're hitting toward the top of the order. In batting practice I've always tried to make contact with different pitches whether it's a strike or a ball. It's something I've worked on and hopefully I continue to do. I definitely take pride in that."

This season, Madrigal had a .367/.428/.511 slash line and he struck out only 7 times in 180 at-bats.

According to one scout who watched him through his three years at Oregon State, Madrigal's small stature is actually a big benefit.

"He's got a smaller strike zone than most guys and he uses it to his advantage," the scout said. "Great eye, and very rarely do you see him chase. He waits for strikes and puts really good swings on them."

Sox is singular: Matt 'Tenacious D' Davidson thrills everyone on the mound

By Jim Margalus / The Athletic / July 1, 2018

When a position player pitches, it doesn't take much to make a lasting impression.

Thinking only about the White Sox's more recent forays of this much-loved viral irregularity, Casper Wells struck out Asdrubal Cabrera with an excellent changeup. Alexei Ramirez shook off Josh Phegley just like every White Sox pitcher did that year. Adam Dunn came to the plate in the bottom of the ninth with a "P" next to his name. Adam LaRoche tried to get a strikeout on an eephus pitch in a nod to his father's "LaLob."

So when Matt Davidson took the mound for the White Sox on Friday night in an otherwise dreadful 11-3 loss to the Texas Rangers, he would've stood out for doing any of these things:

Hitting 92 mph with his fastball

Throwing a slow curveball

Throwing a second kind of breaking ball (slider)

Throwing a slow curveball on 3-2

Spearing a line drive hit back through the middle on said 3-2 curveball

Getting a swinging strike on a slow curveball

Getting a swinging strike three on a splitter

Setting up the splitter with a high fastball out of the zone
Jogging back to the dugout like an infielder before finding a Jon Garland-like gait
In fact, Davidson checked off all of these boxes during a 13-pitch masterpiece that elevated the art form of the position player pitching to new heights. He was efficient and enjoyable, which are two words seldom associated with the 2018 White Sox.

Afterward, Baseball America's Kyle Glaser noted that Davidson was a helluva pitcher in high school. Not knowing Davidson's background at the time, I now understand that the ending of "High Fidelity" must be a completely different experience for those who were unaware of Jack Black's Tenacious D career.

The one drawback of Davidson's startling excellence is that it makes subsequent failures by career pitchers a little less forgivable.

One night later, Bruce Rondon was in Davidson's shoes. Rick Renteria tasked him with getting through the ninth of a likely loss just like Davidson, except Rondon had done it hundreds of times before in his professional career. Unlike Davidson, Rondon couldn't get the job done. He threw just 16 of 33 pitches for strikes and retired just one of the seven batters he faced, and Jace Fry had to clean up his mess.

Had Davidson never pitched, Rondon's appearance would've been just another unsatisfactory outing. As it stood, Rondon prompted calls for another Davidson cameo that were only half-joking. The Sox were already on 28-53 at the 81-game mark, putting them on pace to tie the 1970 White Sox for the most losses in franchise history. Losing the 82nd game by nine runs failed to set the desired tone for the second half.

These White Sox have a habit of nullifying pleasant developments with equal, opposite and unwanted reactions. For instance, Avisail Garcia's return was supposed to provide a respite from Daniel Palka's defense. Instead, Charlie Tilson decided to take up a tribute by misplaying balls in three straight games. On Thursday, he dropped a fly ball on the warning track in the 13th inning, turning a third out into the eventual winning run. On Friday, he dropped another third out, but in an even more inexplicable fashion.

On Saturday, he flat-out fell down on his first step, giving him no chance of catching a drive to the gap.

Tilson didn't start on Sunday, and neither did Palka. That just meant it was Adam Engel's turn to disappoint, and sure enough, he played a single into a triple not once, but twice.

Defensive miscues are easier to accept when they're offset by an offensive explosion. Engel gave up a pair of runs on defense, but he scored a pair of runs himself. He acted as the second leadoff man Sunday by going 2-for-4 and setting the table for Tim Anderson, Avisaíl García, José Abreu and Davidson, who combined for 11 hits over the first four spots of the order.

García had the biggest day of the bunch, going 4-for-5 with a triple and two doubles. He's batting .333 with seven extra-base hits over his nine starts since returning from the disabled list.

If there's one quibble with Garcia's performance, he still hasn't drawn a walk in 118 plate appearances. Jeff Keppinger holds the franchise record for the longest season-starting walk drought at 141 plate appearances, and no ballplayer should ever want to duplicate any aspect of Keppinger's White Sox career.

But if there's one thing I've learned while writing about the White Sox rebuild, "flawed-but-professional" always beats the alternative. That's the reason why I figured James Shields would restore some of his reputation this season, and it's also the underlying theme to Carlos Rodón's return. Players who frustrated fans in previous lives can take advantage of the circumstances simply by bringing something, anything to the table.

In this case, the hope is that the 10-run explosion against Cole Hamels on Sunday foreshadows Garcia's presence giving the Sox a backbone against left-handed pitching. What was a strength for the Sox in

2017 (fourth-best OPS) has been a weakness in 2018 (second-worst), and it's one of many reasons why the Sox are on track for historic futility.

Since Garcia's return, though, the White Sox are 4-5. Over 162 games, that's a 72-win pace. Over the next 81 games, that represents a big step in the right direction.

Power production is coming slow and in bunches for Gavin Sheets

By James Fegan / The Athletic / July 1, 2018

It's rare that a player puts his words to action as sharply and immediately as White Sox prospect Gavin Sheets.

"I know there's a zero on the board right now but the biggest thing for me is being a complete hitter and learning how to hit first," Sheets said at the end of May when he was still waiting for his first long ball of 2018. "Once the first one comes it will definitely be a weight off the shoulders but they usually come in bunches, so we'll see what happens from here."

The next day Sheets launched his first home run of the season, a thundering blast that landed suspiciously close to the 427-foot sign above the massive center-field wall at BB&T Ballpark in Winston-Salem. It was the type of blast that only made the 6-foot-4, 230-pound first baseman's lack of homers seem more strange. The next morning, in the first half of a doubleheader, Sheets missed his second home run by a few feet, tripling on a long fly ball deep into the right field corner in the fourth inning.

Two innings later he didn't miss a thing, easily lifting and stroking a line shot into the right field porch, which left the park in just a couple of seconds for his second home run in as many days.

"His swing is too good not to work and he's going to hit home runs and he's going to be doing it for a long time if he stays healthy," Dash hitting coach Charles Poe said. "I've been playing this game and coaching this game a long time. I've seen high round guys, prospects, talented players. If they're very consistent and driving the ball like those guys do, the power is going to show up, it's going to come. Not one bit was I worried about it."

This is not necessarily a happily ever after story for the 2017 second-round pick. Two games after his outburst, Sheets hit the disabled list with a strained left foot. After missing two weeks, he returned with 14 straight homer-less games before it once again came in a bunch, and he launched two in one game last Thursday. These are his four home runs on the season.

Obviously home runs are a very narrow way to evaluate a hitter's worth, but Sheets is a big hulking first baseman whose value is tied almost exclusively to his bat, and homers are the only thing that seems to be missing.

It's hard to be an elite bat without power production, and since White Sox scouting director Nick Hostetler used the word "power," four times in his media session right after Sheets was drafted last June, it's definitely an ingredient that's expected to be part of his profile after he launched 21 bombs in his junior season at Wake Forest.

"I'm not worried about it," Sheets said. "I know the power's there. It's not like I've lost the power since college."

Those 21 homers in his final year at Wake came after he hit just 11 in his first two college seasons, and went through a process he believes he's going through now: building a contact-oriented approach first. Sheets enters this week hitting .287/.370/.414 at High-A Winston-Salem, riding a 15-game hitting streak, and a strikeout rate that's just 15.9 percent, with a 11.1 percent walk rate. At this stage in the 22-year-old's development, he's touting that.

"I've always been a big guy of trying not to strike out and trying to get a lot of walks and having good plate discipline," Sheets said. "I think being a complete hitter is a guy who doesn't like to strike out much and tries to hit for higher average and puts the ball in play is the biggest thing. That's what I've tried to do this year. I'm still working on some things."

As they reiterated when Blake Rutherford was dealing with his power outage last year, the White Sox would much rather see a young hitter, especially someone with Sheets' obvious raw strength, to build out their hit tool and wait for the power to come later.

Not to say that they have been waiting around in the least. He's kind of been trying everything. In instructional league, Sheets was trying to install a leg kick to create more separation in his swing. It didn't really take, and by the end of May he was more focused on tinkering his hand placement for a cleaner path, and made it clear he found himself trying to generate fly balls at points in the season, and found his results to be worse off for it.

"There's been some games this year where for sure having no home runs really affected me," Sheets said. "I've tried to do more. Next thing you know you're looking at 0-for-4 with a couple Ks, and that's not the hitter I want to be. I want to be the guy that's putting the ball in play, putting the ball in play hard and home runs are going to come from that. So no, I don't want to change the hitter I am."

Sheets is certainly not the first big raw power hitting prospect who has struggled to show it in games. Even just in his draft class, two polished college first basemen selected in front of Sheets, Evan White and Pavin Smith, are also having difficulties connecting plus strength and bat-to-ball skills into ball-over-the-wall skills. It's not viewed as a positive for them, either.

At first base, the only safe prospect is one who dominates offensively in every way at every level, and any offensive struggles cast doubt upon Sheets' ability to produce at a high level at the most important offensive position on the diamond. But if he's in a hole, even at this early stage in his career, the White Sox like the tools he has to dig himself out of it.

"It takes a whole lot of at-bats to be able to get comfortable and know your swing and know your approach," Poe said. "The way he's been driving the ball to all parts of the field, that's going to play, and it will produce more power in the near future. He's still a young guy. I know he went to college and all that stuff. This is his first time really using a wooden bat and being able to get behind baseballs and drive them, and he is."

"That's going to come in the next year or two. We'll be having this conversation like 'Oh man, he's got 15-20 home runs just like that.' I can see that for him."
