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Talented prospect Kopech hits first hurdle

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 5, 2018

CHICAGO -- Michael Kopech lasted 3 1/3 innings during the Tigers' 10-2 victory over the White Sox on Wednesday night at Guaranteed Rate Field. And yes, there was rain again, as Kopech made it a perfect 3-for-3 in terms of delayed games within his home starts.

But Kopech actually returned to the mound following the 28-minute delay in the third inning. The No. 2 White Sox prospect per MLB Pipeline simply didn't have his best stuff, or close to his best command.

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"I missed a lot of spots and got taken advantage of, which is going to happen when I'm not throwing the way I need to," said Kopech, who threw 55 of his 82 pitches for strikes. "I was pitching like I was throwing 100 [mph], and I was throwing 93-94.

"Can't miss spots with that kind of velocity, and aside from that, the stuff I had tonight as a whole wasn't great. So I got taken advantage of. I felt fine. I don't think that [rain delay] really had anything to do with it. I just didn't pitch well. That's the gist of it. I've got to get deep into the game and take a load off the bullpen."

Kopech yielded seven runs on nine hits. He struck out six and walked just one, but also allowed the first four home runs of his big league career. Detroit marked the first team he has faced twice, with Kopech picking up his first career victory on Aug. 26 at Comerica Park, and his first career loss Wednesday.

"Today, there was more of a 'hit the fastball' kind of approach," Kopech said. "I feel like that's a lot of people's approach against me in general. Like I said, when I don't have the fastball that I have a lot of the time, and they're coming out hunting fastballs, it's going to be hit."

"[Kopech] felt like he wasn't commanding or executing. Just one of those days," White Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "Gave up a couple of bombs, a couple of homers. Pitches that were elevated. He felt like he wasn't commanding today."

Jeimer Candelario opened the game with a prodigious clout to right that traveled 433 feet per Statcast™. And the Tigers knocked out three homers in the fourth among their seven hits. Mikie Mahtook, Ronny Rodriguez and JaCoby Jones went deep, with Rodriguez and Jones launching back-to-back shots.

Three of Detroit's homers came off Kopech's four-seam fastball, while the fourth came via a poorly located slider, although Kopech was happy with his overall usage of the slider. He also struck out three with the four-seamer, two with a slider and one with a changeup.

"Going into my next start, I'll make sure to get the work in I need to and try to evaluate myself properly," Kopech said. "Just better preparation, and I need to get out there and take care of my stuff, and like I said, take a load off the bullpen, help the team win."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Ruiz makes his debut: Jose Ruiz, a converted catcher whose contract was purchased Tuesday from Double-A Birmingham, made his Major League debut in the loss. The right-hander touched 97.7 mph during his 1 2/3 scoreless innings, struck out two and walked one.

HE SAID IT

"You are not going to always be as sharp every single outing. [Kopech] tried to work through it. Today was one of those days. I told him, 'Hey there are a lot of better days ahead of you, so I wouldn't worry about this one.'"-- Renteria

UP NEXT

Left-hander Carlos Rodon (6-4, 2.89 ERA) is scheduled to make his 16th start of the season, eighth at home and second vs. the Angels in the series opener Friday night at Guaranteed Rate Field. Felix Pena (1-4, 4.19) gets the start for the Angels. Rodon's 2.19 ERA since July 5 is the lowest in the American League and seventh-lowest in MLB behind Trevor Williams (1.42), Jacob deGrom (1.45), Aaron Nola (1.92), Zack Wheeler (1.93), Dereck Rodriguez (1.95) and Clayton Kershaw (1.98). First pitch is set for 7:10 p.m. CT.

Hostetler: Winning now helps in the long run

Garcia nearing return; Fulmer stays in mix; Jones gets nod for Winston-Salem

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com / September 5, 2018

CHICAGO -- The White Sox entered Wednesday's series finale against Detroit with 14 victories in their past 21 games and 19 wins in their past 32.

That uplifting run also has dropped the team from a solid No. 3 in the 2019 Draft order to a tie with Detroit for No. 5 and just three games ahead of the Reds. It's a positive tradeoff with so many key young players at the Chicago rebuild core contributing to the victories.

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"For what we do and as far as our process, how we do it, it's not going to matter for us," said Chicago director of amateur scouting Nick Hostetler, who runs the White Sox draft. "This is the god's honest truth with me, I'm so emotionally invested with the Tim Andersons and the Adam Engels and the Nicky Delmonicos and the Michael Kopechs and the Lucas Giolitos that I don't have it in myself to want us to lose."

"I'm too competitive. For me it's far more important for these guys to develop and get a taste of winning, and the effort our coaching staff is putting in has been terrific. The more these guys win, it's going to ultimately help us in the long run."

Hostetler pointed out a few of the important factors during this second-half streak. Anderson's defense has become a steadying force up the middle. Despite having a Major League high 190 strikeouts, Yoan Moncada has reached base in 15 consecutive games.

Lucas Giolito has made five quality starts in his past seven trips to the mound. Carlos Rodon, the No. 3 overall pick in the 2014 Draft, looks like an ace. Young relievers such as Ian Hamilton, Caleb Frare and Jose Ruiz are getting a chance in high-leverage situations and Michael Kopech, the No. 2 White Sox prospect per MLB Pipeline, is showing his pitchability as much as his electric raw stuff.

Having greater pool money from drafting higher allows the White Sox to make moves such as signing Bryce Bush out of the 33rd round, as they did this year. But Hostetler has no problem looking at the bigger picture.

"We want a ring on our finger. The Draft position is irrelevant," Hostetler said. "If that means we are picking eighth instead of third, then so be it if that helps the development move along and help get us a ring."

Garcia could return soon

Avisail Garcia has not played since leaving Saturday's game with right knee soreness. But White Sox manager Rick Renteria said Garcia is doing better.

"He's been reevaluated. Obviously, he can't injure it any more or damage it anymore," Renteria said. "It's just a matter of him being able to manage maybe some of the discomfort that comes with his knee."

There's no plan to shut down Garcia, who has followed up an All-Star campaign of '17 with an injury-riddled '18 featuring a .236 average, 15 home runs and 38 RBIs.

"I know he wants to be out there every day so I'm sure there's some disappointment to it," Renteria said. "But the other side of it is he's continued to push and to try to get in there regardless of how he's been feeling, which shows a lot of character and a lot of heart for a young man."

Fulmer stays in the mix

Carson Fulmer did not receive a September callup in his new role as a reliever, but it doesn't mean he's off the White Sox future radar.

"We all think Carson has a chance to make a real impact at the big league level from a bullpen, and perhaps in the not-too-distant future," White Sox general manager Rick Hahn said. "But it takes some adjustment, and there were some growing pains for him when he first switched to that role in [Triple-A] Charlotte.

"I'd say though, in the last several outings you're starting to see it click a little bit more. We're by no means ruling him out as playing a role on a championship club in the future."

Fulmer posted a 4.37 ERA in 16 relief appearances for Charlotte against a 5.80 ERA over nine starts. He finished with an 8.07 ERA in nine games (eight starts), for the White Sox.

Over his past four appearances, Fulmer allowed two runs over 8 1/3 innings with six strikeouts and one walk.

Third to first

- Nate Jones started for Class A Winston-Salem in Game 1 of the Carolina League Southern Division Championship Series. Jones is beginning a rehab assignment for a strained pronator muscle sidelining him since June 12.

Tim Anderson loves to eat turkey burgers before every home game

By Jake Mintz and Jordan Shusterman / MLB.com / September 5, 2018

If you saw Tim Anderson in his first two years in high school, you'd probably be pretty excited about his future as a basketball player. Anderson was a star point guard at Hillcrest High School in Tuscaloosa, Ala. and led his team to a state championship as a sophomore. But fate so had it that Anderson would eventually find his way back to the diamond, where he played as a kid, and refocus on baseball -- a decision that, seven years later, is looking pretty good.

After not being drafted out of high school, Anderson burst onto the scene as an amateur player during his sophomore season at East Central Community College, in which he led all junior colleges in batting average (.495), and collected a ridiculous 39 extra-base hits in 53 games. The White Sox selected him 17th overall in the 2013 Draft, and he hasn't looked back since. After a strong rookie campaign in 2016, Anderson signed a six-year extension worth \$25 million before the 2017 season.

So what drives the 25-year-old shortstop? What does he like to do when he's not playing on the south side? And most importantly: What is his go-to pre-game meal? Check out the video at the top of the page to find out.

Forget the continued bad weather luck, it was just a flat-out bad night for Michael Kopech

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / September 5, 2018

If Michael Kopech lives up to all the hype, there are going to be a lot of really good nights — no matter how much it rains.

But rain or shine, Wednesday was going to be a bad night for the 22-year-old flamethrower.

The reason? No flames.

Kopech just didn't have it Wednesday, something that happens to the game's best hurlers, and certainly something that happens to rookies making just their fourth major league start.

Ridiculously, another rain delay accompanied this latest Kopech outing, the third time that's happened in as many starts in front of the home fans at Guaranteed Rate Field. But the rain didn't cut this outing short. Kopech did that himself, giving up seven runs on nine hits, four of which were homers, including a trio of long balls sent out of the park in a four-batter span in a nightmarish fourth inning.

After weather chopped his first two home starts to two and three innings, respectively, this one last just 3.1 innings.

"Obviously I didn't have my best stuff, and aside from that I wasn't locating the ball either," Kopech said after the game, breaking down the recipe for disaster. "I missed a lot of spots and got taken advantage of, which is going to happen when I'm not throwing the way I need to.

"I was pitching like I was throwing 100, and I was throwing 93, 94. Can't miss spots with that kind of velocity, and aside from that, the stuff I had tonight as a whole wasn't great. So I got taken advantage of."

Though we haven't seen much of that much-ballyhooed 100-mph heat that was so often discussed prior to Kopech's major league debut, it's obviously a noteworthy tool in Kopech's toolbox. It wasn't there Wednesday, though, and the Tigers did what Kopech said: They took advantage. Two of the home runs traveled more than 430 feet, a visual representation to the layman of just how easy it was for hitters to do their job against Kopech on this night.

"Today there was more of a 'hit the fastball' kind of approach," he said. "I feel like that's a lot of people's approach against me in general. When I don't have the fastball that I have a lot of the times and they're coming out hunting fastballs, it's going to be hit."

While this is certainly not the kind of start that will help Kopech live up to the incredibly high expectations fans have for him and he has for himself, it's not some horrible omen. Bad nights happen.

"You are not going to always be as sharp every single outing," manager Rick Renteria said. "He tried to work through it. Today was one of those days. I told him, 'Hey there are a lot of better days ahead of you so I wouldn't worry about this one.'"

It won't do wonders for Kopech's numbers in the short term, of course. He entered having allowed just one run in his first 11 big league innings. That 0.82 ERA leapt up to 5.02 by the book closed on him Wednesday.

Kopech chalked the rough evening up, at least partially, to a lack of correct preparation. And while it's difficult to take anything from a shellacking like Wednesday's, there might be one of Renteria's frequently talked about "learning moments" here.

"I just feel like going into the game, there's things that I needed to better that I didn't do. I didn't feel like I prepared myself well for the outing, and it showed. Just better preparation and I need to get out there and take care of my stuff and like I said, take a load off the bullpen, help the team win."

You gotta be bleepin' me: Michael Kopech goes 3-for-3 in home-start rain delays

By Vinnie Duber / NBC Sports Chicago / September 5, 2018

Michael Kopech has some things to work out with Mother Nature.

Unbelievably, Kopech's third straight start at Guaranteed Rate Field suffered the same fate as the first two: delayed by rain in the early innings.

Kopech's major league debut against the Minnesota Twins ended after only two innings thanks to a rain delay. After winning on the road with a six-inning effort against the Detroit Tigers, his return trip home against the Boston Red Sox was also cut short because of inclement weather, lasting just three innings.

And then came Wednesday night's break in the action, with rain dumping on the South Side shortly after Kopech completed his second inning of work.

Unlike the first two games, however, Kopech returned to the mound after the roughly half-hour delay.

Prior to the rain falling Wednesday, Kopech gave up his first major league homer, when Jeimer Candelario launched a leadoff blast 433 feet into the right-field seats. He struck out three batters and walked one in the first two innings.

But after the rain, the Tigers jumped all over Kopech, chasing him from the game with a six-run fourth inning that featured three more homers off the young flamethrower.

Then came a second rain delay in the fifth inning, after Dylan Covey replaced Kopech.

Kopech's next start is scheduled to come on the road, during the team's series against the Kansas City Royals in the Show Me State. So either Kopech will finally have some dry conditions, or the folks in KC will get some rain for their lawns.

Tigers rain homers on Michael Kopech, chasing rookie after rain delay of 10-2 loss

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / September 5, 2018

If Michael Kopech ever does anything worthy of legend on the field, baseball historians will testify about how the pitcher started his White Sox career with a rain delay in each of his first three starts at Guaranteed Rate Field.

They will have to debate among themselves whether he will be called the Rainmaker or the Bringer of Rain.

But for now, Kopech's odds-defying hat trick of rain stoppages falls somewhere between eerily cool and incredibly annoying.

At least Wednesday's 28-minute interruption in the bottom of the second inning didn't end his night like the first two rain delays did.

He may wish it had.

The rookie gave up three home runs in quick succession in the fourth inning, the latter two back-to-back. Add those to the leadoff home run he coughed up to Jeimer Candelario to open the game as the right-hander lived and died with putting his fastball in the upper portion of the strike zone.

He wasn't the only one to blame in the 10-2 loss that officially eliminated the Sox from the division race, but he started the downward spiral.

Down 5-0 with one out in the fourth, Kopech chucked a wild pitch that advanced a runner to third. When Jim Adduci made him pay for that miscue with a run-scoring double, Sox manager Rick Renteria had seen enough. He called in Dylan Covey and the roughest outing of Kopech's young career was in the books.

Covey gave up a single to Nicholas Castellanos that scored Adduci and tacked a seventh earned run on Kopech's tab for the night. Kopech entered the game with a sparkling 0.82 ERA but an off night against the Tigers hiked it to 5.02. He allowed nine hits and a walk while striking out six.

Rain fell again at 9:11 p.m. and play was suspended for a 33 minutes.

The Sox never really threatened Tigers starter Jordan Zimmerman, Daniel Palka led off the second with a single, but after Matt Davidson's flyout, Yoan Moncada ground into an inning-ending double play.

The Sox have keen interest in Caleb Frare's development as a left-hander for their bullpen of the future, but it was a forgettable third of an inning for him in the sixth. He walked Castellanos on four pitches and gave up a two-run single to Victor Martinez before he was replaced by Jose Ruiz, another September call-up who's being closely scrutinized.

Ruiz threw a wild pitch and walked Mikie Mahtook to load the bases, but he limited the damage to James McCann's RBI single before striking out two batters to end the sixth. Still, the two relievers combined to turn a 7-0 rout into a 10-0 pasting.

Avisail Garcia could return 'in the next day or so'

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / September 5, 2018

Avisail Garcia could be available to play as soon as Thursday, but White Sox manager Rick Renteria said the outfielder's right knee soreness might bother him the rest of the season.

"Avi's doing better," Renteria said. "It's basically a situation where the more comfortable he is going out there (the more) we'll use him. But he's being reevaluated. ... It's just a matter of him being able to manage maybe some of the discomfort that comes with his knee.

"But hopefully you'll see him back in there in the next day or so. I'll keep talking to him and see where he's at."

Garcia has landed on the disabled list twice this season because of a strained right hamstring, and his knee also has given him problems.

With little to play for in September except developing young talent, Renteria considered the possibility of shutting down Garcia.

"I think we have to do (so) or I have to just manage getting him in there, getting him at bats, allowing him to play," Renteria said. "I'll have to be the one who puts the stop on him so he can survive it and get through it."

September roster battles key to White Sox future

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune / September 5, 2018

The White Sox's run of eight wins in the last 12 games has not only built confidence, it has created competition.

"When you have depth in the organization and there's competition for roles in your position, you don't have time to let down," manager Rick Renteria said. "There's an edge that you have to develop in order to be able to compete."

Adam Engel's defense has been stellar, but this week the Sox called up fellow centerfielder Ryan Cordell to give him a look.

The Sox have also thrown call-ups Ryan Burr and Jose Ruiz into mix of other young relievers such as Aaron Bummer, Thyago Vieira and Jace Fry.

"It is something incredible," Ruiz said. "I've been playing with all of them in the minors, in Double-A and I know the talent that they have. I think they're going to have ... really good competition between us just to try to see who can do a better job."

Ruiz didn't get into the mix of five relievers who mopped up Tuesday after Lucas Giolito lasted just 1 1/3 innings. Bummer and Burr each struck out two and gave up an earned run — Burr served up Mikie Mahtook's home run in the eighth. Vieira had a scoreless ninth despite giving up two singles.

Engel had an error when he double-clutched the ball on Dawel Lugo's two-run double. Cordell had a couple of shaky moments in right field, one in the second when he had trouble gathering a ricochet off the wall and again in the ninth when Victor Martinez's hard liner bounced off the heel of his glove.

But the Sox can live with a few miscues as they try to get a glimpse of each player's potential. They're also aware the players know the stakes in September.

"It's nice for us as an organization to be having the competition that they're having amongst each other, to show each other what they're capable of doing," Renteria said. "That's really an important piece. Sometimes you can just roll along and not worry about what's happening and not concern yourself too much.

"That sense of urgency beyond just being here and competing against another club and trying to win a ballgame on a daily basis, but knowing that, 'Hey man, if I don't perform there's a chance somebody else is going to be able to do what I need to do,' that's a pretty important piece of the puzzle."

White Sox pitcher James Shields wants to keep on chucking

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 5, 2018

Right-hander James Shields, 36, has felt so good physically this season that he's talking about pitching two or three more.

"As long as my body holds up," said Shields, who has had no injury issues after a tough year physically in 2017.

Shields has made 401 starts, pitched 2,593 innings and struck out 2,221 batters in 13 seasons, which leaves two of his goals within reach if he can pitch two or three more seasons.

“Three thousand innings and 2,500 strikeouts have always been goals of mine,” Shields said.

Shields will make his team-high 30th start Saturday against the Angels.

“I’ve prided myself on going to the post every fifth day,” he said.

Shields, who has been an effective innings-eater despite less velocity because of a lower arm slot, is a disappointing — to him — 6-15 with a 4.39 ERA. It’s safe to say it doesn’t make sense for the Sox to pick up his \$16 million option for 2019, but it’s also reasonable to assume he’ll find another team to pitch for at a lower cost next season.

Abreu a Clemente nominee

First baseman Jose Abreu was honored as the Sox’ nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award before the game. The award recognizes the player who best represents baseball through sportsmanship, community involvement and contributions on and off the field.

“Those are the things that make you feel proud and honored,” Abreu said through a translator.

On the mend

Right-hander Dane Dunning, the No. 6-ranked Sox prospect by MLB Pipeline, hasn’t pitched since June 23 because of a strained right elbow. He’s on a throwing program, but indications are he won’t pitch in the Arizona Fall League.

“Everything on Dane right now is optimistic,” general manager Rick Hahn said. “Knock on wood, I don’t want to say things like that, but everything is very positive, and surgery’s not being discussed at this time.”

Dunning, who was acquired from the Nationals with right-handers Lucas Giolito and Reynaldo Lopez in the trade for outfielder Adam Eaton, has impressed with his four-pitch mix and strike-throwing ability. He had a 2.71 ERA and 100 strikeouts in 86 1/3 innings between Class A Winston-Salem and Class AA Birmingham this season.

Garcia update

Outfielder Avisail Garcia, who hasn’t played since Saturday, had his right knee re-evaluated and is doing better, manager Rick Renteria said.

“It’s just a matter of him being able to manage some of the discomfort that comes with his knee,” Renteria said. “Hopefully you’ll see him back in there in the next day or so.”

Big-league balls different?

Right-hander Ian Hamilton said he has noticed a different feel to the baseballs in his two appearances since being called up from Class AAA Charlotte.

“I’ve just got to get used to how the ball feels,” Hamilton said. “They’re a little different than minor-league balls. Once I get comfortable with it, I’ll be able to do what I do.

“It just feels more perfect, kind of, more circular. Everything’s tighter.”

White Sox’ Michael Kopech roughed up for four homers, seven runs by Tigers

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Sun-Times / September 5, 2018

It rained on White Sox rookie Michael Kopech on Wednesday, as it always does when he pitches at home.

The Tigers also poured it on by roughing up the 22-year-old right-hander for four home runs and seven runs in 3 1/3 innings on their way to a 10-2 victory at Guaranteed Rate Field.

The electric stuff that has made Kopech the Sox' top pitching prospect was absent, and it showed.

"Can't miss stuff with that kind of velocity," Kopech said. "And aside from that, the stuff I had wasn't great, and it got taken advantage of."

After a 28-minute delay in the second inning, Kopech — trailing 1-0 on a leadoff homer by Jeimer Candelario in the first — pitched a scoreless third with two strikeouts before being blitzed for six runs and seven hits in the fourth, including homers by Mikie Mahtook, Ronny Rodriguez and JaCoby Jones. The Tigers also had two doubles in the inning.

When he walked off to supportive applause from some encouraging sorts among the paid crowd of 16,036 at Guaranteed Rate Field, Kopech probably took some comfort in knowing he had struck out six batters without his best stuff. But he was probably also wondering what just hit him.

Entering the game, Kopech was 1-0 with a 0.82 ERA in three starts, two of them abbreviated by rain. In a remarkable run of unfortunate timing, this was the third time in as many starts Kopech got wet at home. His big-league debut Aug. 21 against the Twins was limited to two innings, and his second home start Friday against the Red Sox was limited to three.

Kopech's only dry start came Aug. 26 at Detroit, when he pitched six innings of one-run ball.

Kopech made his mark as the Sox' top pitching prospect by rising through the minor-league ranks with a four-seam fastball that topped 100 mph at times, but he topped out at 96 mph and worked primarily with a 93 mph heater Wednesday. Three of the four homers he allowed came against his fastball, including a 445-footer by Mahtook and a 433-footer by Candelario, and one came on a hanging slider to Rodriguez.

"I kind of knew going into it not everything was going to be there," Kopech said. "Early on, I was going to grind through it; that was the plan. But in the fourth inning, I left a lot of pitches up, and I got hit. It's OK if I'm missing with 96 to 100 [mph]. But with the stuff I had today, I should have been more down in the zone."

On the good side, Kopech flashed a good breaking ball at times and induced 11 swinging strikes. He threw 55 of his 82 pitches for strikes, but his fastball command was a problem. With less velocity than usual, it needed to be sharp.

"You're not going to be sharp every outing, so you just work through it," Sox manager Rick Renteria said. "Today was one of those days. I told him: 'Hey, there are a lot of better days for you. I wouldn't worry about this one.'"

With reliever Dylan Covey pitching for the Sox, a second rain delay of 33 minutes occurred with the Tigers leading 7-0 and two outs in the top of the fifth.

It marked the second consecutive night one of the Sox' young starters got knocked out early. Right-hander Lucas Giolito, who had a 2.84 ERA in his previous four starts, got only four outs in the Sox' 8-3 loss Tuesday against the Tigers.

"I just washed it off in the shower," Giolito said. "Move on to the next one."

Kopech will have to do the same. Maybe it won't rain next time.

"It's frustrating, but you can't do anything about Mother Nature," he said. "I'm eventually going to get a clean one."

Rain, rain won't stay away for White Sox's Kopech

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / September 5, 2018

There's a reason the Chicago White Sox brought up top pitching prospect Michael Kopech from Class AAA Charlotte late this season while leaving top outfield prospect Eloy Jimenez off the roster for more "development."

When he does join the Sox next April, odds are favorable Jimenez is going to be a force with the bat.

Pitchers are different.

"You're seeing with this promotion here, from a baseball standpoint, we felt like it made the most sense to get Michael here, build off that innings base, make his debut in his age-22 season and head into this off-season with a clear focus and understanding of exactly what it takes to get big-league hitters out," general manager Rick Hahn said.

"From a development standpoint, we felt that this was in the best interest of Michael to put him in the ideal position to reach that ceiling of his. Each individual player is similarly judged based upon what is best for them as an individual."

Letting Kopech pitch against the best hitters in the game and evaluating his considerable skills were the White Sox's goals when they brought up the right-hander up on Aug. 21, but there have been some outside factors.

Mainly, the rain.

Kopech's first 2 home starts were abbreviated due to rain delays, and the skies opened up again in Wednesday night's outing against the Detroit Tigers at Guaranteed Rate Field. This time, Kopech was able to come back out after the first of two delays came in the bottom of the second inning and was limited to 28 minutes.

But the prized pitching prospect lacked his big fastball before and after the bad weather hit, and Kopech was tagged for 7 runs on 9 hits and 1 walk in 3½ innings. Detroit defeated the White Sox 10-2.

In the fourth, Kopech was rocked by 5 straight hits to open the inning, 3 of them home runs. His ERA jumped from 0.82 to 5.02.

Kopech didn't blame a third straight rain delay at home for his struggles. "Obviously, I didn't have my best stuff and I wasn't locating, either," he said.

A fastball that regularly reaches 97-98 mph was stuck at 93 for most of the night, forcing Kopech to go with a steady mix of off-speed pitches after the rain delay.

"I was pitching like I was throwing 100, but I was throwing 93, 94," Kopech said. "You can't miss your spots with that velocity. I felt fine. I didn't pitch well, that's the gist of it."

Hamilton off to impressive start out of Chicago White Sox's bullpen

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald / September 5, 2018

Since arriving from Class AAA Charlotte last Friday, Ian Hamilton has made it look pretty easy.

The right-handed relief pitcher made his major-league debut against the Boston Red Sox the day he joined the White Sox's bullpen and retired all three Boston hitters he faced on just 6 pitches.

"You can see he's got some pretty good stuff," Chicago White Sox manager Rick Renteria said.

The 23-year-old Hamilton was good again in his second appearance Monday, pitching 1⅓ scoreless innings against the Detroit Tigers.

Wait until he gets completely adjusted.

"I've just got to get used to how the ball feels," Hamilton said. "They're a little different than minor-league balls. Once I get comfortable with it, I'll be able to do what I do."

Hamilton, a combined 3-2 with a 1.74 ERA and 22 saves in 43 appearances with Charlotte and AA Birmingham before getting the call from the White Sox, expanded on the difference in baseballs.

"It just feels like more perfect, kind of," he said of the major-league ball. "More circular, everything's tighter. Minor-league balls, you get a little give with the leather. But with these, they're wound pretty tight."

A tighter baseball eventually should allow Hamilton to throw better sliders, his signature pitch.

"I think I will," he said. "I haven't thrown one how I wanted to yet, but I think they'll be better."

Garcia update:

Avisail Garcia on Wednesday missed his fourth straight game with a sore right knee, and there has been some talk about shutting the right fielder down for the season.

"He's very much against it," Sox general manager Rick Hahn said. "We feel the treatment he received over the last couple days should put him in a decent position to get back out there, which is what he wants. There's not a risk of doing additional damage, to the knee at least."

Garcia has twice been on the disabled list with hamstring injuries during a frustrating season for the 2017 all-star.

"He's continued to push and to try to get in there regardless of how he's been feeling, which shows a lot of character and a lot of heart for a young man," manager Rick Renteria said. "It's not easy to play this game healthy, let alone with bumps and bruises. It says a lot about Avi."

"I think he's been giving us everything he's got and obviously we're hoping we can manage it enough so he's comfortable enough to go out there and continue to put some at-bats together for us through the rest of the season."

Fan injured:

In the ninth inning of Tuesday's White Sox-Tigers game, a 32-year-old fan was hit in the face by a line drive off the bat of Detroit's Jeimer Candelario. According to the Sox, he suffered a broken nose and has been released from Rush University Medical Center.

The fan was sitting down the right-field line, well beyond the protective netting that runs past each dugout.

"I think he tried to catch it and it's kind of tough, even for a professional, with the way the ball flies," Rick Renteria said. "But I'm glad to hear he's doing fine and recovering."

What to make of Michael Kopech's disastrous fourth inning

By James Fegan / The Athletic / September 5, 2018

What did this mean?

In his third home start, Michael Kopech finally found a rain delay he could outlast, only for his night to end on an open question of whether he should have come back out.

“We were going to give him an hour, to be honest, today to get back out here,” said Rick Renteria, who returned his rookie starter after a 28-minute rain delay in the second inning. “You are not going to always be as sharp every single outing. He tried to work through it. Today was one of those days. I told him, ‘Hey there are a lot of better days ahead of you so I wouldn’t worry about this one.’”

Despite a leadoff home run — the first allowed of his major league career — to a fastball-hunting Jeimer Candelario, despite 58 pitches through three innings, Kopech looked on his way to an outing that could serve as the crowning achievement of his major league career, at least until his next start. His slider — which Candelario’s blast drove him to turn to early — showed fantastic depth and was generating swinging strikes at a rate (11 in 82 pitches on the night) in keeping with his talent. His fastball was only averaging 94 mph, but it was running and darting enough to set up whiffs even for hard, straight 90-mph changeups down the middle. He struck out five through three innings, and if he could keep things together for six innings, he figured to threaten double digits.

“That’s the one good thing I can take from tonight,” Kopech said. “I threw a lot of good off-speed pitches. Obviously I hung one that got hit pretty far. But aside from that I felt pretty comfortable with my off-speed pitches. It’s hard to be effective with off-speed pitches if you can’t command the fastball.”

Then came the fourth inning, Kopech’s second frame of work after returning from a 28-minute rain delay. He fell behind 2-0 to Mikie Mahtook, who wound up looking for a running fastball on the inside corner and launching it 455 feet. Mahtook has hit eight of 31 career home runs off the White Sox and was aided by the count. Which is to say the alarm bells weren’t sent off until he spun a hanger that Ronny Rodriguez — who entered the night with a .311 slugging percentage — blasted into the White Sox bullpen. Rodriguez’s homer was immediately followed by JaCoby Jones — who came into Wednesday with a .341 slugging rate — squaring up 96-mph high and away into the Tigers bullpen. Kopech was pulled after 3 1/3 IP, 9 H, 7 ER, BB, 6 K, 4 HR.

“I kind of knew going into it that not everything was going to be there,” Kopech said. “Early on, I thought I was going to be able to kind of grind through it, and that was the game plan, to get through everything regardless of the kind of stuff I had. Unfortunately in that fourth inning, I left a lot of pitches up, and they got hit.”

Even beyond the merits of the singular mistakes, despite flashing swing-and-miss stuff, Kopech seemed to lose the command to get any outs. He gave up six hits in seven batters, and none of them were cheap. With his normal velocity and carry, that pitch to Jones is something hardly anyone should be able to barrel, let alone a light-hitting backup Tigers outfielder.

“A lot of my misses were up today,” Kopech said. “That’s OK if I’m throwing 96 to 100, whatever the case may be. But with the stuff I had today, I should’ve been more down in the zone. I wasn’t.”

It was a left turn so sharp it can only push the question of what was driving the shift. Kopech went from laboring a bit with command, dealing with another wave of foul balls and high pitch counts, but mostly doing what a top pitching prospect should be able to do against the worst and most home run-starved offense in the American League, to suddenly uncompetitive. But he saw it more as the culmination of struggling to find his best stuff all night.

“I missed a lot of spots and got taken advantage of, which is going to happen when I’m not throwing the way I need to,” Kopech said. “I was pitching like I was throwing 100, and I was throwing 93, 94. Can’t miss spots with that kind of velocity, and aside from that, the stuff I had tonight as a whole wasn’t great. So I got taken advantage of.”

Should he have come back out after the delay? Why was his velocity down? Is a career high in innings and starts beginning to wear on him? Every question that was limited to a small background concern when he was rolling steadily through the first three innings suddenly seems relevant when someone of his abilities struggles like this, against this competition.

"I don't feel tired or anything like that," said Kopech when asked about his season's workload having an effect on his stuff. "I just feel like going into the game, there's things that I needed to better that I didn't do. I didn't feel like I prepared myself well for the outing and it showed. Just better preparation and I need to get out there and take care of my stuff."

The White Sox got annihilated 10-2, the Tigers have third place again and the Sox were eliminated from the AL Central race. But obviously none of that matters, and considering he wasn't injured, bringing Kopech back from the delay doesn't matter that much either outside figuring out what this all means. In five days, he'll have the chance to assert that it means little.
