



Headlines of April 24, 2012

"White Sox Daily Notebook" ... Scott Merkin, WhiteSox.com
"Not quite perfect, but Peavy brilliant in win" ... Scott Merkin, WhiteSox.com
"Obama, Letterman join Humber's whirlwind ride" ... Scott Merkin, WhiteSox.com
"Perfect Humber earns AL Player of the Week" ... Adam Berry, MLB.com
"Pitching-rich A's. White Sox continue set" ... Quinn Roberts, MLB.com
"Konerko hits 399th homer, Peavy fires shutout in Sox victory" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"Peavy seeks improvement even after shutout" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"Humber's Letterman Top-10" ... Chicago Tribune
"Humber enjoying his 15 minutes of fame" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"Phil Rogers' MLB Power Rankings" ... Phil Rogers, Chicago Tribune
"Jake Peavy throws a 3-hitter as Sox blank A's, 4-0" ... Daryl van Schoewen, Chicago Sun-Times
"Philip Humber enjoys prez conference with President Obama" ... Daryl van Schoewen, Chicago Sun-Times
"Jake Peavy spins shutouts as Dunn, Konerko belt homers" ... Scot Gregor, Daily Herald
"Sox set special ticket prices for Humber's return" ... Scot Gregor, Daily Herald
"Complete game latest success for Peavy" ... Scott Powers, ESPNChicago.com
"Rapid Reaction: White Sox 4, A's 0" ... Scott Powers, ESPNChicago.com
"Streaking/Slumping: Rios goes retro" ... Bruce Levine, ESPNChicago.com
"Tim Tebow tweets Philip Humber" ... ESPNChicago.com
"White Sox Morning Roundup" ... JJ Stankevitz, CSNChicago.com
"Peavy spins shutout as Sox drop A's" ... Associated Press, CSNChicago.com
"Sox Drawer: Exceeding Expectations" ... Chuck Garfien, CSNChicago.com
"Chicago White Sox; Team Report" ... Reuters
"After seven years, five teams, how Philip Humber found his way" ... Tom Verducci, Sports Illustrated
"Chicago native John Cusak talks roles, loyalties" ... Sarah Spain, ESPN.com

Ticket specials offered for Humber's next start

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The White Sox are taking a proactive approach to Philip Humber's first start since his perfect game boosting home attendance Thursday.

In recognition of Humber's perfect masterpiece in Seattle, the White Sox are offering fans the opportunity to purchase specially priced tickets for the team's first game back against the Boston Red Sox at 7:10 p.m. CT. Humber will start that night with a streak of 29 straight batters retired.

Fans can purchase tickets for \$9 (number of perfect innings) or \$27 (number of batters retired) for the game on Thursday. All Upper Reserved tickets will be priced at \$9 and all Lower Box, Lower Reserved and Bleacher tickets will be set at \$27, based on availability.

"Hopefully we get some more fans coming out," said Humber, who wasn't aware of the dynamic ticket pricing based on his perfection for Thursday. "We've been playing good baseball and the last homestand, I know it was cold out."

"But it seemed like there wasn't as many people there after the first couple of games. Hopefully we get the fans out there and get them behind us. It makes you feel good when you come home after a road trip to have your fans out there cheering for you."

The White Sox also will provide a commemorative perfect game poster, featuring photos of Humber during the game and after the final out, and an image of the official team scorecard to fans at U.S. Cellular Field on Thursday. Specially priced tickets for Thursday's game are available now at whitesox.com, the U.S. Cellular Field ticket office and at all Ticketmaster locations.

Morel seeks to snap out of hitting slump

OAKLAND -- With just nine hits in 55 at-bats following Monday's 4-0 victory over Oakland, Brent Morel isn't worried about hitting second, eighth or ninth in the starting lineup.

"I'm just more concentrated on getting that feel back and having more results," Morel said. "I'm feeling pretty good the last couple of days. So it doesn't matter where I'm hitting."

Morel was back in the eighth spot for Monday's series opener in Oakland, with Alexei Ramirez hitting No. 2 for a second straight game. Manager Robin Ventura said that Morel will hit eighth until he gets going.

"He's grinding out at-bats. He's still in there," said Ventura of Morel. "It worked well yesterday, and [Ramirez] looks comfortable there. You get a little speed at the top."

"To be honest, I had that little stretch there at the beginning and it was tough to get out of," Morel said. "Hopefully having some success and having some results in Seattle, I can carry that over and go uphill from here."

In 2011, Morel hit just .203 in April with 10 strikeouts, seven RBIs and no walks. So, a slow start is nothing out of the ordinary for the third baseman, buoyed by a 2-for-4 showing in Monday's victory.

"I've done it pretty much every year. This year was a little worse than others," Morel said. "I've never started off good, whether it was at [Class A] Winston-Salem or Double-A or last year.

"So I don't worry too much about it. It helps when we are winning, but when we lose and you go 0-fer, it's kind of tough."

Stewart recalls brush with perfection

OAKLAND -- Philip Humber's perfect game Saturday against the Mariners, the 21st in Major League Baseball history, reminded White Sox reliever Zach Stewart of his own brush with perfection in 2011.

Stewart fired seven perfect innings against the Twins at Target Field on Sept. 5, before Danny Valencia opened the eighth with a double to right. Valencia's extra-base hit was the only baserunner all game against Stewart, and he still remembers the air being let out of the balloon when Valencia's shot fell in safely.

"It was a little letdown, but at the same time I didn't want to give up," said Stewart, who moved from September starter last season to long reliever this year. "I wanted to at least finish the complete game and get the win and everything and the shutout.

"I wanted to do it, but at the same time, just being that deep in a big league ballgame for the first time for me, I was excited as well."

During the course of the perfect game attempt, Stewart remembers trying to keep things as normal as possible and talking with teammates. He never threw a perfect game or a no-hitter at the Minor League level, so he wasn't really sure how to deal with the situation.

"You obviously have to take it one pitch at a time. You can't really explain it because it's something you can't really prepare for," Stewart said. "I'm used to giving up a hit in the first couple of innings because I'm such a contact pitcher."

Third to first

- Paul Konerko started a second straight game at designated hitter after fouling a pitch off of his right foot during Friday's contest in Seattle. Adam Dunn was back at first base, with both men going deep in the 4-0 victory over Oakland.
 - The White Sox are 33-22 playing at Seattle, Anaheim and Oakland since 2008, in contrast to their 24-64 road record vs. those three teams from 2001-07.
 - Dunn has four homers on the road this season. He had three road homers in all of 2011.
 - Alex Rios has back-to-back three-hit games and has hit in 11 straight. He has a .415 average during that stretch.
 - Dayan Viciedo snapped an 0-for-16 skid with a fourth-inning single.
 - The White Sox are 7-2 on the road and 3-4 at home.
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Not quite perfect, but Peavy brilliant in win

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Allow Jake Peavy to present one of the numerous good news morsels to come from Monday's 4-0 whitewash of the A's at The Coliseum, marking Peavy's first shutout since May 18, 2011, against Cleveland.

"I feel like I can get better. I really do," said Peavy, who threw 71 of his 107 pitches for strikes in the White Sox fourth straight victory. "I feel like I've got some room to grow.

"My arm is going to get a little bit stronger, once I can get my legs under me and get after it in the weight room between starts. I feel like I'll get stronger."

That's right, the 2007 National League Cy Young winner and the man who earned the Triple Crown of pitching that season, once again possesses the confidence to think he can get better even after a three-hit shutout. Peavy (3-0) was not perfect in the White Sox series opener against the A's (8-10), but he was pretty darn close.

After setting down the first nine in a row, Peavy yielded Jemile Weeks' single back up the middle and a walk to Coco Crisp to start the fourth. Josh Reddick's double-play grounder immediately snuffed out Oakland's rally, and Peavy yielded Yoenis Cespedes' seventh-inning double and Coco Crisp's single in the ninth the rest of the way.

By the time he finished his five-strikeout, two-walk performance, Peavy had extended his scoreless innings streak to 14 and lowered his ERA to 1.88. And Peavy is finding this success with a little less velocity than his Padres' days but more pitchability and resourcefulness.

"It looked like a little bit of everything -- both sides of the plate, especially fastball away, strike one," said Oakland manager Bob Melvin of what was working for Peavy against his team. "All the stuff that he does when he's pitching well."

"You see him kind of controlling the strike zone and jumping ahead and intensity," said White Sox manager Robin Ventura of his ace. "He's going with everything right now. It's not just a stuff thing. He's not just blowing people away. He's pitching and guys are playing defense."

Two-time former White Sox hurler Bartolo Colon (3-2) pretty much matched Peavy pitch-for-pitch, aside from a fourth-inning blip. Adam Dunn homered on the first pitch, giving him four for the season, and Paul Konerko followed three pitchers later on an 0-2 count with a mammoth blast to center for his third homer.

Dunn moved into a tie with Ralph Kiner for 71st place at 369 homers, but it's Konerko who fast approaches a long-ball milestone. Now sitting at 399 homers for his illustrious career, Konerko is tied with Andres Galarraga and Al Kaline for 48th place.

Konerko's also getting the job done with a sore right foot, pushing him into the designated hitter's role for the last two games.

"Probably going to sit him for a couple of days," said Ventura with a wry smiling, joking about saving Konerko's 400th for the home faithful.

"He's just swinging it, not only with power but he's just consistent," Ventura continued of Konerko. "That's one of the things I watch, a lot of his at-bats, and he has the most consistent at-bats day in and day out -- probably of any guy in the league really. That's how good he has been so far."

Monday's victory raised the White Sox record to 9-6 in their last 15 games at The Coliseum, compared to 6-28 in their previous 34. At 10-6 overall, the White Sox also forged a tie atop the American League Central with idle division-favorite Detroit.

Yes, the mantra of 'It's still early' probably will play out until sometime around June, and the White Sox aren't beating World Series contenders in the Mariners and A's. But if Peavy continues to pitch as he did on Monday and really over his four quality starts this season, that hope gradually should become more of a reality.

Here's another piece of good news from Peavy in regard to his stellar performance. He accomplished the shutout without feeling his best on the mound.

"Tonight I didn't feel as good as I have in the couple of other starts," Peavy said. "I still felt plenty good enough. I just didn't have great stuff tonight. I was able to pitch and compete and keep guys off balance.

"That was nice to keep the streak rolling. We are going to grind it out as a team. I have the same mentality and most guys in here have the same mentality. If we stay healthy, we'll be all right."

Two runs scored by the White Sox in the ninth gave Peavy a little extra cushion to complete the shutout. But Ventura made it clear postgame that this was Peavy's start to complete.

"You're always going to want to finish what you start," Peavy said. "It's a blessing to keep the pitch count in decent enough shape to go out and finish it off. It's a good feeling."

"One of the things is he has to be pretty honest with me about how he's feeling," Ventura said. "I told him there are times where we will let him go like this, pitching like this, to go out and extend it a little bit. But you do kind of look at it. I want to make sure he's there in August and September."

Obama, Letterman join Humber's whirlwind ride

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Add President Barack Obama and Late Show legend David Letterman to the list of people crossing Philip Humber's path to perfection.

The White Sox right-hander, who threw the 21st perfect game in Major League history on Saturday afternoon at Safeco Field, worked through a daylong interview schedule leading up to Monday night's series opener against the A's. Humber's initial appearance came at 7:30 a.m. PT on the Dan Patrick Show and ended with MLB Network Radio.

In between came the reading of the Late Show's Top 10 list, taped at the Coliseum, and a call from the White Sox first fan.

"It definitely is an honor to speak to him," said Humber of his Monday call from President Obama. "He just wanted to congratulate me. He even asked about Kristan and the baby and asked about how that was going.

"He shared some of his experience of being a new father. He's a very nice man, and he represents our country in a good way. He's definitely a great communicator, and I appreciate him talking to me."

This edition of the Top 10 list turned out to be "The Top 10 Thoughts That Went Through Philip Humber's Mind During His Perfect Game." Humber pointed out that some of the list changed from rehearsal to the time Letterman arrived in the studio, and he added with a smile that one of the 10 had to do with a teammate.

As it turned out, it was catcher A.J. Pierzynski, whom Humber poked fun at with thought No. 9.

"Thank goodness for my catcher, A.J. Pierzanky ... Piernoftski ... Pierzonski. ... Whatever," Humber read.

The other thing Humber was thankful for according to Letterman's Top 10 list?

"Thank goodness I drafted myself for my fantasy team," Humber read while trying to hold back a smile for thought No. 7.

Letterman also asked Humber if it was true that he had previously pitched for the Mets, to which Humber responded: "For a little bit." Humber made just five appearances with the Mets from 2006-07, but he made light of his time in New York when Letterman pressed further.

"Well, apparently not too well," Humber said when Letterman asked how it went. "They got rid of me."

The playful banter between Letterman and Humber came to an end when a modest Humber read the No. 1 thought that was going through his head on the mound Saturday -- "Humber? How about Humber!"

Humber seemed to make a positive impression on the comedy legend, as Letterman reached out to the pitcher after the Top 10 list was completed to have him come back on the show for an extended phone interview.

In that segment, the two continued their back and forth, discussing what Humber does while he's watching games he isn't pitching in, whether he prefers to chew sunflower seeds or bubble gum and then ended with a question he had forgot to ask Humber in the initial interview: "In the perfect game, how was your yacker?"

"My yacker," Humber said, alluding to the slang term for a breaking ball, "was tremendous."

Humber enjoyed the experience overall and was hoping that his teammates wouldn't be able to pick on him the way he did Pierzynski once they all saw it on television.

"I think it went good," Humber said. "I can't wait to see it, and hopefully, I didn't embarrass myself too bad. It sounded like I got some laughs. It seemed like he enjoyed himself, so hopefully it goes over good."

"He's funny. He's been on for a long time, and it's definitely an honor to be asked to be on that show," said Humber, who said that he doesn't usually watch any late-night television. "It's probably something I'll never get to do again. So I wanted to enjoy it as much as I could."

Congratulatory Tweets for Humber came in from Detroit ace Justin Verlander, Sports Illustrated swimsuit model Kate Upton and new Jets quarterback Tim Tebow, to name a few. Humber is a fan of what Tebow has accomplished on the field, but also how he carries himself.

During the offseason, Humber tweeted Tebow when he mentioned on his account a hospital he was building in the Philippines. Humber laughed when stating that Tebow gets a lot of Tweets at him, so it was easy to miss his comments.

As to whether President Obama's call trumped Tebow's tweet, the humble Humber went in a different direction when talking about his favorite celebratory interactions.

"Probably my favorite phone calls are the ones from family and friends, the ones that know me best, the ones that are a fan of mine for a long time and not when I threw a perfect game," Humber said. "When I threw a lot of imperfect games, they have been there for the hard times, too. It was nice to share that moment with them."

That moment earned Humber the American League Player of the Week honor. His perfect game came in Major League start No. 30, which according to Elias, is the third-smallest total for any pitcher to achieve perfection (Charles Robertson was

fourth, Lee Richmond was 21st). Humber and Oakland's Dallas Braden (May 9, 2010 vs. the Rays) are the only pitchers whose first career complete game was a perfect game, courtesy of Elias, and Humber and Braden are the only perfect pitchers to go to a three-ball count on the 27th batter, according to the Society for American Baseball Research.

SABR also pointed out that Humber threw the fewest amount of balls in a perfect game, at 29, since David Cone in 1999. But only Mark Buehrle threw more balls in the ninth (seven) than Humber's six.

This accomplishment will live on forever for Humber, regardless of what he achieves through the rest of his career. But Humber simply is focused on getting ready for his next start Thursday night to start a homestand against the Red Sox, throwing his usual bullpen session amidst Monday's hoopla.

"Enjoy the moment and try to remember all of it, but at the same time, our guys have done a good job of getting most of it out of the way," Humber said. "I'm just trying to be myself, and I know it's something that's like your 15 minutes of fame. I really try as much as I can to represent what I believe in and represent the White Sox well. I just want to be appreciative of it. Like I was telling people, throwing a perfect game is not something you do, but it's something that happens to you."

"I'm not surprised at all. He's a great person," said White Sox manager Robin Ventura of how smoothly Humber has handled his sudden burst of fame. "He's a humble guy. I don't see it affecting him in a negative way. I think it's great for him and he's handled it well."

Perfect Humber earns AL Player of the Week

By Adam Berry / MLB.com

After throwing the 21st perfect game in Major League history on Saturday, Philip Humber was named the American League Player of the Week on Monday.

There was little doubt the honor would go to Humber, who needed only 96 pitches to blank the Mariners, 4-0. He struck out nine batters and didn't allow a three-ball count until the ninth inning in the first complete game and the first shutout of his career.

Humber's spectacular performance was the first perfect game in the Majors since Roy Halladay shut down the Marlins on May 29, 2010. The last no-hitter came from Angels right-hander Ervin Santana on July 27, 2011, against Cleveland.

The 29-year-old right-hander took a long journey to his perfect game, undergoing Tommy John surgery before his career really got going and bouncing around the Minor Leagues. He was the third overall pick in the 2004 First-Year Player Draft out of Rice University.

In his other start last week, Humber allowed one earned run while striking out seven over 5 1/3 innings against the Orioles on Monday. Between that and his perfect game, Humber went 1-0 with a 0.63 ERA (fifth best in the AL), walked three and struck out 16 (third most in the Majors) in 14 1/3 innings of work.

Also up for consideration were Rangers catcher Mike Napoli (.440, five homers, 10 RBIs, 1.080 slugging percentage) and outfielder Josh Hamilton (.462, three homers, 11 RBIs), Yankees center fielder Curtis Granderson (.400, four homers, five RBIs and a three-homer game Thursday against Minnesota), Orioles left fielder Nolan Reimold (.467, three homers, six RBIs), Tigers right-hander Justin Verlander (2-0, 1.20 ERA, 17 strikeouts and a complete game last Monday) and Angels righty Jered Weaver (2-0, 1.72 ERA, 11 strikeouts and a complete game Saturday).

Pitching-rich A's, White Sox continue set

By Quinn Roberts / MLB.com

While Tommy Milone may have only eight career starts under his belt, the A's left-hander is quite the good-luck charm.

Between his time with the Nationals last season and his three starts with the A's this season, Milone's teams are 7-1 in his starting assignments.

He'll try and keep up such a pace on Tuesday, when the A's square off against the White Sox at the Coliseum.

Milone allowed seven hits in five innings against the Angels on Thursday, but managed to limit any major damage, allowing only two runs for the win.

"It feels great to come back home and pitch well," Milone, a Saugus, Calif., native said after his last start. "It's important to come back and, first game being able to pitch close to home, to do well and to get a win for the team and for the people that came out to support."

Milone will be up against White Sox right-hander Gavin Floyd, who is coming off a subpar start against the Orioles on Thursday.

Floyd surrendered five runs on six hits in six innings to take the loss, his second of the season.

A bright spot for Floyd so far this season has been his strikeout total, ringing up 16 in 17 2/3 innings. However, he's yet to go past the sixth inning in his three starts and is 12-11 lifetime in April with a 5.54 career ERA.

"Today was what it was," Floyd said after Thursday's game. "I don't even think about that stuff."

White Sox: Humber gets Player of the Week honors

After throwing the 21st perfect game in Major League history on Saturday, Philip Humber was named the American League Player of the Week on Monday.

Humber needed only 96 pitches to blank the Mariners, 4-0. He struck out nine batters and didn't allow a three-ball count until the ninth inning in the first complete game and the first shutout of his career.

A's: Crisp back in lineup

- Having missed five consecutive games because of a head cold that led to an inner-ear problem, Coco Crisp returned to the lineup Monday for the A's.

"It's always nice to have Coco back in the lineup," manager Bob Melvin said. "Even when he's struggling, you feel like he's always going to get a hit. You know he's always prepared. Whenever he's out, you can feel it. It's good to have him back."

- With Luke Hughes joining the A's and getting the start at third base for Monday's game against the White Sox, Josh Donaldson was demoted to Triple-A Sacramento.

"It wasn't for a lack of effort, and he really did handle himself beautifully defensively," Melvin said. "I know he would have liked to have swung the bat better, but at the big league level, to an extent, you have to produce. I don't feel great about the fact he's going down right now, but hopefully this isn't the last time we've seen him because he's a good athlete and has a lot of ability."

Worth Noting

- Oakland is 1-9 this season when trailing after seven innings.
 - The White Sox have gone 9-6 in their last 15 games in Oakland, compared to 6-28 in their previous 34.
 - Gavin Floyd is 3-1 with a 2.35 ERA in seven career starts against Oakland.
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Konerko hits 399th HR, Peavy fires shutout in Sox victory **Dunn belts his 4th homer on the road**

By Mark Gonzalez/Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND, Calif. — Paul Konerko moved closer to an impressive milestone as the White Sox continued to make their own history Monday night.

Konerko hit his 399th home run to support the three-hit, complete-game pitching of Jake Peavy as the Sox coasted to a 4-0 victory over a feeble Athletics offense.

Peavy continued his comeback by winning his third consecutive start. It marked Peavy's first shutout and complete game since May 18, 2011, against the Indians — his third start after returning from a detached latissimus dorsi muscle near his right shoulder.

"I feel very fortunate to finally be healthy," Peavy said.

With the victory, the Sox have won the first four games on this six-game trip while improving to 20-10 against American League West opponents since 2010.

They've also won six consecutive road games to equal their longest road winning streak since July 24-Aug. 9, 2011.

Konerko was relegated to designated-hitter duty for the second consecutive game because of a bruise on the top of his right foot. He said before the game the bruise bothers him only when he runs, but he had no problem jogging around the bases after lining an 0-2 pitch off Bartolo Colon that sailed over the center-field fence.

With the home run, Konerko moved into a tie with Andres Galarraga and Al Kaline for 48th all time. Next up is the late Duke Snider (a former Brooklyn neighbor of Sox Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf), who hit 407.

Konerko's homer came after Adam Dunn led off the fourth with a homer down the right-field line. Dunn's homer was his fourth on the road, exceeding his road total for all of 2011.

Alex Rios extended his hitting streak to 11 games with his second consecutive three-hit game.

The homers by Dunn and Konerko marked the first time the Sox hit consecutive home runs this season, and it provided plenty of support despite some lineup juggling by manager Robin Ventura.

Alexei Ramirez batted in the second spot and Brent Morel in the eighth spot for the second consecutive game. Ventura said he would move Morel to the No. 2 spot once he breaks out of his slump.

Morel took a positive step by leading off the seventh with a single, and he doubled off the left-field wall to start the ninth and scored an insurance run on Gordon Beckham's single.

Peavy successfully attacked a team that was carrying an American League-worst .210 batting average. He retired the first nine batters before Jemile Weeks led off the fourth with a single, and Yoenis Cespedes hit a double with one out in the seventh.

Peavy gave up a one-out single to Coco Crisp in the ninth before finishing off his 10th career complete game while lowering his ERA to 1.88.

"You always want to finish what you start," Peavy said.

Peavy seeks improvement even after shutout

By Mark Gonzales/Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND - Jake Peavy wasn't wildly popular among Chicago White Sox fans after getting knocked around by Oakland in a March 12 exhibition game.

Peavy didn't seem too concerned at the time because he was working on command of his fastball, and his overall improvement continued Monday night when he pitched his first shutout since May 18, 2011.

In winning his third consecutive start, Peavy needed only 107 pitches. He allowed only three hits but still believes he could have performed better.

"I feel I can get better," Peavy said. "I got some room to grow. I think I'm going to get a lot stronger and once I can get my legs under me and get after it in the weight room between starts."

The most remarkable aspect of Peavy's four starts is that he hasn't suffered any lingering soreness that has put any of his starts in jeopardy. That wasn't the case last year, as he didn't throw off a mound between starts and used the four days between to work the soreness out.

"I'm a different guy, probably since you've ever seen me, just as far as feeling OK and just worrying about pitches and not sitting in the training room the whole time between days," Peavy said.

Manager Robin Ventura said he had no concerns about sending Peavy out to pitch the bottom of the ninth after the Sox scored twice in the top of a long half inning.

"You're talking to him, seeing how he's feeling," said Ventura, mindful that Peavy is 21 months removed from surgery to repair a detached latissimus dorsi muscle near his right shoulder. "That's one of the things. I need him to be very honest with me and I've taken him out of the Detroit game and he still wanted to go out.

"There are going to be times when he goes out like this, to extend it like this. But you do look at it. I want to make sure he's there in August and September."

Ventura was just as impressed with Paul Konerko, who hit his 399th home run despite a sore right foot that relegated him to designated hitter duties for the second consecutive game.

"He's just swinging it, not only with power," Ventura said of Konerko, who is 5-for-17 on this trip and currently batting .349. "He's just consistent. That's one of the things you watch in a lot of his at-bats, and he has the most consistent at-bats day in and day out, probably of any guy in the league.

"That's how good he's been so far."

Humber's Letterman Top Ten

By Chicago Tribune

"Thoughts That Went Through Philip Humber's Mind During His Perfect Game," as delivered by the White Sox pitcher on Monday night's "Late Show with David Letterman":

10. "Don't jinx it by thinking about it, don't jinx it by thinking about it — I'm thinking about it."
9. "Thank goodness for my catcher, A.J. Pierzanky ... Piernoftski ... Pierzonski ... whatever."
8. "Go sit in the truck!"
7. "Thank goodness I drafted myself for my fantasy team."
6. "The only thing better than pitching a perfect game is making a perfect meatloaf every time with my new perfect meatloaf pan."

5. "Can Broadway's 'End of the Rainbow' really be like seeing Judy Garland in person?"

4. "Grab some pine, duck lips!"

3. "I see the Red Sox are up 9-0 on the Yanks — that's an easy win."

2. "I wish I could get me one of those dancing horses."

(Videotape rolls of an equestrian rider on a prancing horse)

1. "Humber? How about Humberbest!"

See a video of Humber talking about the perfect game, the Top Ten List and his congratulatory phone call from President Barack Obama at chicagotribune.com/humber.

Humber enjoying his 15 minutes of fame **White Sox right-hander gets phone call from Obama**

By Mark Gonzales/Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND, Calif. — Waking up early to accommodate requests following his perfect game Saturday has prepared White Sox pitcher Philip Humber for one important task.

Humber's wife Kristan is expecting the couple's first child on May 8.

Humber admitted he was tired after handling the media requests but appreciated hearing experiences in a telephone conversation Monday with the Sox's No. 1 fan — President Barack Obama.

"It definitely is an honor to speak to him," said Humber, who was named the American League player of the week for April 16-22. "He just wanted to congratulate me. He even asked about Kristan and the baby and asked about how that was going.

"He shared some of his experience of being a new father. He's a very nice man, and he represents our country in a good way. He's definitely a great communicator, and I appreciate him talking to me."

Monday's activities consisted of several radio interviews, the Sox's lowering ticket prices for Thursday night's game — Humber's next start, against the Red Sox — and reciting the popular Top 10 list on "The Late Show With David Letterman."

"I think it went (well)," Humber said. "I can't wait to see it, and hopefully I didn't embarrass myself too bad. It sounded like I got some laughs."

Despite the price of fame, Humber is content to make the most of it.

"I'm just trying to be myself, and I know it's something that's like your 15 minutes of fame or whatever," he said. "I really try as much as I can to represent what I believe in and represent the White Sox well. I just want to be appreciative of it. It's throwing a perfect game.

"Like I was telling people, it's not something you do, but it's something that happens to you. Enjoy the moment and try to remember all of it. But at the same time, our guys have done a good job of getting most of it out of the way."

Extra innings: Humber and the Athletics' Dallas Braden are the only pitchers who have thrown a perfect game to go to a three-ball count on the 27th batter, according to the Society for American Baseball Research. According to SABR, Humber also threw the fewest balls (29) since David Cone in 1999. ... Despite his productive hitting, A.J. Pierzynski might sit Tuesday night. Manager Robin Ventura indicated he might start Tyler Flowers at catcher against left-hander Tommy Milone.

Phil Rogers' MLB power rankings Rangers hold steady at the top

By Phil Rogers/Chicago Tribune

1. Rangers (1): Josh Hamilton, Mike Napoli, Ian Kinsler and Michael Young all rank in the top 17 in OPS among American League hitters. The pitching and defense held opponents to 2.7 runs per game on a trip to Minnesota, Boston and Detroit.
2. Tigers (3): The lineup hasn't really produced since the first weekend, but only the Rangers and White Sox have taken series from them.
3. Dodgers (2): Pounded by the Astros? Chad Billingsley remains an enigma.
4. Cardinals (4): Carlos Beltran is sixth in the National League with a .964 OPS; Albert Pujols is 70th in the AL at .654. Didn't see that coming.
5. Yankees (5): Sunday's rainout let them get a head start flying to Texas. The series against the Rangers is an early test for two powers.
6. Rays (7): James Shields has gained velocity on his fastball, which has helped him give up only three runs in 241/3 innings in his last three starts. He's the true ace of baseball's deepest rotation.
7. Blue Jays (8): Closer Sergio Santos goes on the disabled list with a sore shoulder. Did the White Sox see problems coming?
8. Nationals (12): Bryce Harper knows he's stuck at Triple-A Syracuse until the end of May, when he won't have the service time to be a Super-2 arbitration player after 2014. Don't read too much into his .234 batting average. He will get hot in a few weeks and make Davey Johnson's team even more interesting this summer.
9. Braves (13): Building a big head of steam to take into next week's series against the Phillies.
10. Angels (9): Here's the bad news about the bad start: With the exception of a series against the Yankees, they've been losing to weak teams. You don't want to spot the Rangers a seven-game advantage. The suspect bullpen has been a problem (1-for-4 in save situations), and the rotation and lineup have been disappointing. The only category they're dominating is long-term contracts, with shortstop Erick Aybar the latest to cash in on \$471 million in deals with five players (Jered Weaver, Pujols, C.J. Wilson, Howie Kendrick and Aybar) since August.
11. Phillies (10): Once-feared lineup produced two home runs in a nine-game stretch through Sunday.
12. Diamondbacks (6): They've been a different team since Chris Young was hurt.
13. White Sox (17): Which is less likely? Philip Humber throwing a perfect game or A.J. Pierzynski ranking third in the AL in slugging? Lot of magic going on for Robin Ventura.
14. Giants (16): Matt Cain has gone nine innings in his last two starts, allowing three hits. He starts Tuesday in Cincinnati.
15. Marlins (18): Mark Buehrle is 3-for-3 in quality starts.
16. Reds (14): Since hitting five homers in the first series, they've hit four in 13 games. Scott Rolen is the biggest question mark. He needs to raise his .170 average soon to stop whispers about losing it at 37.
17. Mets (15): One of April's nice surprises.
18. Rockies (22): The late-blooming Rafael Betancourt looks comfortable as the closer.
19. Orioles (23): Matt Wieters is unquestionably the best all-around catcher in the majors. He's hitting like Buster Posey, which has him headed toward a breakout season. Backup Ronny Paulino can hit, but don't look for him to get much playing time.
20. Indians (24): Three winning series in a row. Could easily be ranked five spots higher.

21. Brewers (21): Nyjer Morgan's "Plushdamentals" added up to a slash line of .119/.119/.119 in the first 16 games. Few players blow as hot and cold.
 22. Red Sox (11): Only the Twins had a worse run differential than Boston's minus-25 through Sunday. Leadership in the clubhouse is badly missing.
 23. Athletics (26): Treading water nicely given the AL-low 3.1 runs per game. Yoenis Cespedes needs the hitters in front of and behind him to step it up.
 24. Mariners (19): **The** Chone Figgins era remains grim. Not a single .300 hitter on the team that Humber threw his perfect game against.
 25. Pirates (25): A.J. Burnett could be a very good addition. His seven shutout innings against the Cardinals in his delayed debut were impressive.
 26. Royals (20): Danny Duffy reportedly has gained 4 mph on his fastball this season, but on Sunday he became the fifth Kansas City starter in a nine-game stretch to last less than five innings.
 27. Padres (30): Strong starts by Cory Luebke and Anthony Bass let Bud Black's team split a four-game series with the Phillies. That's progress.
 28. Twins (29): Hello, Justin Morneau. Good to have you back.
 29. Astros (27): Left fielder J.D. Martinez and second baseman Jose Altuve are taking advantage of their opportunities. Center fielder Jordan Schafer isn't far behind them.
 30. Cubs (28): Michael Bowden should get a long look in a bullpen that badly needs arms. It's a great situation for him as he could survive long-term when Kerry Wood returns from the DL.
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Jake Peavy throws a 3-hitter as Sox blank A's 4-0

By Daryl van Schoewen/Chicago Sun Times

OAKLAND — Jake Peavy, Adam Dunn and Alex Rios question marks? At the rate they're going, they won't be much longer.

Paul Konerko? Never.

Peavy, Dunn and Rios — three-fourths of the White Sox' subpar group of 2011 that's being counted on to bounce back and have the 2012 team playing meaningful games in September — kept their fast-track starts going in the Sox' 4-0 victory over the Oakland A's on Monday night.

The Sox (10-6) have won four in a row on their West Coast trip, six in a row on the road and five of their last six games overall.

Konerko, sore foot and all, continues to hit like he's in the prime of his career. Against former Sox right-hander Bartolo Colon, Dunn and Konerko opened the fourth inning with back-to-back home runs to break a scoreless tie.

But the biggest story of the night — and perhaps the young season — is Peavy, who improved to 3-0 by giving up four hits and two walks while striking out five. His three perfect innings to open the game were more notable than usual because it's been that kind of stretch for the Sox lately.

The A's Jemile Weeks and Coco Crisp dashed Peavy's "Late Night with David Letterman" dreams by opening the fourth with a single and walk, but Peavy got Josh Reddick to rap into a double play and Yoenis Cespedes to hit a foul pop to catcher A.J. Pierzynski.

"With Jake, it's just a stuff thing, where he's blowing people away," manager Robin Ventura said. "It's just pitching."

"That was a good feeling," Peavy said. "I made some good pitches and was aggressive early. Those two homers helped and A.J. did a good job."

Peavy made his fourth quality start in as many outings and was very good — or better — for his third in a row. This one followed two runs in 6²/₃ innings against the Tigers and one run in seven innings against the Orioles. He pitched his first complete game since May 18 of last year against Cleveland.

"I'm just blessed to be healthy," Peavy said. "That's all I can tell you. I go out and just try to compete. I didn't know if I would ever do it again. I feel very fortunate to be finally healthy and be able to help the ballclub."

Dunn's homer, his fourth, was pulled down the right-field line. Konerko's homer, his third this season and 399th of his career, was launched to right-center field.

Dunn has three homers and 11 RBI in his last six games. He played first base for the second straight game while Konerko, nursing a sore right foot from a ball he fouled off in Seattle on Friday, was the DH.

Dunn has 369 career home runs, tying him with Ralph Kiner for 71st all-time. Konerko is tied for 48th with Al Kaline and Andres Galarraga.

Rios, who batted .227 last season, had three hits for the second straight game to extend his hitting streak to 11 games. He's 17-for-40 (.425) in that stretch.

Even struggling Sox Brent Morel and Gordon Beckham contributed. Morel (2-for-4 with a double) reached base three times and scored the third run on Beckham's single in the ninth. Beckham had hit into two double plays before that.

Peavy, as good as he's been, says he hasn't peaked.

"I feel like I can get better," Peavy said. "Like I have some room to grow. My arm is going to get a little bit stronger. I didn't have great stuff tonight but we were able to pitch and compete."

Philip Humber enjoys prez conference with Barack Obama

By Daryl van Schoewen/Chicago Sun Times

OAKLAND, Calif. — Philip Humber's head was still spinning two days after throwing a perfect game in Seattle on Saturday. On Monday, he taped a Top Ten list segment with David Letterman and received a call from President Barack Obama.

"It is an honor to speak to [Obama]," Humber said. "He just wanted to congratulate me. He even asked about [wife] Kristan and the baby [due in two weeks] and asked how that was going. He shared some of his experiences of being a new father and stuff."

When Humber hadn't heard from Obama, a Sox fan, on Sunday, he joked that it could be because he's a registered Republican.

"He's a very nice man, and he represents our country in a good way," Humber said. "He's a great communicator, and I appreciate him talking to me."

After going through the list with Letterman, the TV host got back to Humber on the phone. Texts and tweets continued to stream in Monday, including one from Tim Lincecum.

"I'm a fan of his," said Humber, who has "Colossians 3:23" inscribed on his glove (Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.). "Not just for what he has done on the field, but what kind of person he is and how he carries himself. I hope I can be a little bit of that as far as being an athlete and someone who does the right thing and says the right things."

Proving it

At 35 and 36, A.J. Pierzynski and Paul Konerko have shown no signs of tailing off two weeks into the season. The last holdovers from the 2005 World Series team aren't much into proving they still can do it, but there's something to that. But only to an extent.

"Of course," Pierzynski said, "but it's the same for Chris Sale [21] and Gordon Beckham [25]. Every day in this game, they have to prove they can still do it. There's always people saying he's done and he can't do this. Look at what Beckham is going through right now; people are questioning his ability. But he has all the ability in the world — same with [Brent] Morel. But it's a daily process to prove it to people. From Day 1 you step on this field, you have to do that throughout your career."

Manager Robin Ventura is having a hard time taking Pierzynski's bat out of the lineup, but he said Tyler Flowers likely will catch Gavin Floyd on Tuesday.

Notes

Konerko, who has a sore right foot from a foul ball, was the designated hitter for the second consecutive day.

- ◆ Humber is the first Sox pitcher named American League Player of the Week since Mark Buehrle threw his perfect game in July 2009.
- ◆ Humber was given the pitching rubber and home plate from Safeco Field. He's giving the plate to Pierzynski.
- ◆ The Sox are pricing tickets at \$9 (innings) and \$27 (batters faced) for Humber's start Thursday against the Red Sox.

Jake Peavy spins shutout as Dunn, Konerko belt homers

By Scot Gregor/Daily Herald

Starting pitchers often talk about trying to feed off the performance of successful rotation mates, and White Sox right-hander Philip Humber certainly gave Jake Peavy something to chew on.

Humber pitched the 21st perfect game in major-league history in Saturday's 4-0 win over the Mariners in Seattle.

On Monday, while Humber was busy talking with President Obama, communicating with the Hall of Fame and taping a guest shot for "The Late Show with David Letterman's" popular Top 10 list segment that aired later that night, Peavy was preparing to pitch against the Athletics as the Sox opened a three-game series at Oakland.

Peavy (3-0) pitched complete-game 3-hitter, throwing 107 pitches as the White Sox earned a 4-0 victory. Peavy allowed only a leadoff single to Jemile Weeks in the fourth inning, a double to Yoenis Cespedes in the seventh and a single to Coco Crisp in the ninth.

The 2007 NL Cy Young Award winner walked two and faced only four batters more than the minimum as he recorded his sixth career shutout and 10th complete game. Since drawing a no-decision against Texas in his first start this season, Peavy has a 1.19 ERA over his last 22 innings.

The White Sox moved into a tie for first place with idle Detroit in the AL Central.

Peavy was perfect through the first 3 innings, striking out four Oakland hitters.

But dreams of another perfect game, or even a ho-hum no-hitter, ended when Weeks greeted Peavy with a single to center field leading off the fourth inning.

Adam Dunn, who was 4-for-12 with a double, 2 home runs and 6 RBI in the Sox' three-game sweep at Seattle, gave Peavy the early advantage when he hit a solo homer off Oakland starter Bartolo Colon leading off the fourth inning.

Paul Konerko made it a 2-0 game when he followed Dunn with another solo home run, a rocket line drive that cleared the center-field fence at The Coliseum.

Konerko now has 399 career home runs.

As for Humber, he is still in high demand on the heels of Saturday's gem.

The 29-year-old Texas got a phone call from President Obama, a big Sox fan, before Monday night's game against the A's.

"It definitely is an honor to speak to him," Humber told reporters. "He just wanted to congratulate me. He even asked about (wife) Kristan and the baby and asked about how that was going.

"He shared some of his experience of being a new father. He's a very nice man and he represents our country in a good way. He's definitely a great communicator and I appreciate him talking to me."

On Letterman, the category was the Top 10 Thoughts That Went Through Humber's Mind During the Perfect Game. Topping the list was: "Humber? How about Humberbest?"

Sox set special tickets for Humber's return

By Scot Gregor/Daily Herald

While the White Sox have struggled to draw fans this season at home, team officials have come up with a special rate to entice fans to Philip Humber's start on Thursday.

In recognition of Humber's perfect game Saturday in Seattle, the White Sox are selling specially priced tickets for the team's first game back at U.S. Cellular Field on Thursday against the Boston Red Sox. Humber is scheduled to pitch in the game, which starts at 7:10 p.m.

Fans can purchase tickets for \$9 (number of perfect innings) or \$27 (number of batters retired) for the game on Thursday — with all Upper Reserved tickets priced at \$9 and all Lower Box, Lower Reserved and Bleacher tickets at \$27, based on availability.

The White Sox also will provide all fans in attendance on Thursday night with a commemorative Philip Humber perfect game poster, featuring photos of Humber during the game and after the final out, and an image of the official team score card. Select Philip Humber merchandise is available at The Chicago Sports Depot, located at the ballpark.

Tickets for Thursday's game are available now at whitesox.com, the U.S. Cellular Field ticket office and at all Ticketmaster locations.

Humber is also scheduled to appear Monday on "Late Night with David Letterman" and help with the nightly Top Ten segment, as Scot Gregor reports in his blog. Scot's blog also includes a link to Humber's interview today on WSCR 670-AM with Dan McNeil and Matt Spiegel.

Complete game latest success for Peavy

By Scott Powers/ESPNChicago.com

The Chicago White Sox fans have grown to expect Jake Peavy to be inconsistent and unreliable.

Since Peavy arrived to the White Sox in a trade from the San Diego Padres on July 31, 2009, his Chicago tenure has been as smooth as Friday traffic on the Kennedy Expressway. He's been saddled with injuries and rarely resembled anything near the top form he possessed with the Padres.

Even in the one stretch of games where Peavy began to look a bit like the pitcher who twice led the National League in ERA, fans had their hopes quickly crushed. Peavy strung together five consecutive strong outings in June of 2010, allowing just seven runs in 36 innings, and then suffered a season-ending shoulder injury during his first July start.

Knowing Peavy's history, it's easy to understand why fans have had guarded optimism with his hot start in 2012.

Sure, he looked good pitching six innings, allowing three runs and striking out five, in his season debut, but fans wondered what would happen next.

When he followed that up by going 6 2/3 innings and giving up two hits and two runs and striking out eight, there was still a feeling it was a fluke.

But he continued to diminish the pessimism in his third start by exceeding his first two outings. Peavy went seven innings, allowing one run, four hits and no walks while striking out eight in a win over Baltimore Orioles last week.

And then if there were doubters remaining, Peavy went out Monday and topped all three of his previous starts. He pitched nine innings, giving up three hits, no runs and no walks and recorded five strikeouts in a 4-0 win over the Oakland Athletics.

The complete-game shutout was Peavy's third in a White Sox uniform. He had one last season and another in 2010. It also completed his second best four-game stretch with the White Sox. The only one better was what he did in June of 2010.

Peavy even said Monday this season had a different feeling than any of his previous ones.

"I just feel blessed to be healthy," Peavy said after Monday's game. "That's all I can tell you. I just go out here and try to compete. I just feel so blessed. That's the only word I can come up with because I didn't know if I'd be able to do it again."

"I knew I would be able to pitch. I'm a different guy than since you probably ever seen me, just as far as feeling OK on the mound, being able to worry about making pitches, worrying about game planning not sitting in the trainer room the whole time in between days."

What's impressed White Sox manager Robin Ventura with Peavy's success so far is that he's been dominant without having to throw a dominant fastball.

"It's the whole body of work," Ventura said. "You see him kind of controlling the strike zone, jumping ahead and intensity. He's kind of going with everything right now. It's not just a 'stuff thing'. He's not just blowing people away. He's pitching."

And as much Peavy feels he's blessed to be throwing like he is, he certainly isn't content where he is. He realizes four starts don't make a season.

"I love trying to compete and give my team a chance to win," Peavy said. "To go out and do that here in the first four starts, [I'm happy, but] we have a long way to go, 29 or so more starts. There's going to be a lot more challenges."

There may be obstacles ahead for Peavy, but it's appearing more and more OK for Sox fans to lower their guard when it comes to their optimism for him.

Rapid Reaction: White Sox 4, A's 0

By Scott Powers/ESPNChicago.com

Here's a quick look at the Chicago White Sox's 4-0 win over the Oakland Athletics at O.co Coliseum on Monday night.

How it happened: White Sox starting pitcher Jake Peavy was dominant for the fourth consecutive time this season. Peavy allowed three hits and no runs in nine innings against the Athletics to improve to 3-0 on the season. He lowered his ERA to 1.88 in 28 2/3 innings. Adam Dunn and Paul Konerko made sure Peavy had enough run support as the duo hit back-to-back home runs in fourth inning. Alex Rios also continued swing a hot bat, posting his second consecutive three-hit game. He extended his hitting streak to 11 games and upped his average to .367.

What it means: The White Sox have now won four consecutive games on their West Coast trip. They also moved into a tie with the Detroit Tigers for first place in the AL Central with their win.

Play(s) of the game: Dunn sent Bartolo Colon's first pitch of the fourth inning over the right-field wall. A few pitches later, Konerko directed Colon's delivery over the right-center wall.

Outside the box: Konerko is on the verge of joining an exclusive club. His home run Monday was his 399th of his career and moved him into a tie with Andres Galarraga and Al Kaline for 48th on the major league all-time list. Only 47 players have hit 400 career home runs. Konerko has hit 392 of his home runs with the White Sox. He also hit four home runs for the Los Angeles Dodgers and three for the Cincinnati Reds early in his career.

Up next: Gavin Floyd (1-2, 4.58) will look to bounce back from a loss in his last start when he takes the mound for the White Sox on Tuesday. Tommy Milone (2-1, 2.48) will start for the Athletics.

Streaking/Slumping: Rios going retro

By Bruce Levine/ESPNChicago.com

STREAKING

1. Philip Humber, SP: One of the hottest players in baseball pitches for the White Sox and who can argue with the 21st perfect game in the 136-year history of the game? The most impressive thing about Humber's feat on Saturday was the pitch count (97) and, as the fifth starter, that he had to wait over two weeks to get his second start of the season. Humber, the third overall selection in the 2004 draft by the New York Mets, is the latest miracle delivered by pitching coach Don Cooper, who has worked his magic again in transforming someone else's failed No. 1 pick into a White Sox success story.

2. Alex Rios, OF: The underachieving Rios is off to his best start since 2010 when he played All-Star-caliber baseball the first three months of that season. Rios is batting .333 with a home run and 7 RBIs. He has 10 hits in his last 20 at-bats and has driven in six runs in a span of six games. Rios told ESPNChicago.com he is thrilled to be back in right field which he considers his natural position. Rios' defense has been outstanding, except for a few isolated situations.

SLUMPING

1. Dayan Viciedo, LF: After a decent start to the season Viciedo's hitting has faded over the past week. He is stuck in a 2-for-22 slump with one RBI in the last week of play. To his credit, Viciedo's defense has continued to improve as he gets use to the new outfield position. The coaching staff still believes Viciedo, who is batting .186 with two home runs and 2 RBIs, will be a strong run producer this season.

2. Brent Morel, 3B: Morel makes this list for the second straight week even with some improvement in the past couple of games. He is in a 3-for-25 slump, and 22 strikeouts in 51 at-bats projects to 220 whiffs in 500 at-bats. Hitting coach Jeff Manto has been working with the young infielder to help him drive the ball to right field. Defense has not been an issue, although Morel had a few rough games early on with the glove.

Tim Tebow tweets Philip Humber

By ESPNChicago.com

White Sox pitcher Philip Humber joined "The Waddle & Silvy Show" on ESPN 1000 and discussed the reaction to his perfect game, including a special tweet.

All Humber had to do was throw a perfect game.

"Congrats @Philip_Humber on accomplishing one of the greatest feats in all of sports! #PerfectGame," Tebow tweeted.

Humber fired the 21st perfect game in Major League Baseball history on Saturday against the Seattle Mariners. One tweet stood out among the many congratulating Humber.

"Tim Tebow tweeted me," Humber said Monday on "The Waddle & Silvy Show" on ESPN 1000. "The funny thing about that is I tweeted him this offseason, and of course he's Tim Tebow and I'm Philip Humber ... compared to him I'm a nobody, but I didn't get a response. I was like, 'Aw man,' I was kind of hoping he'd tweet me back or something."

Tebow was soliciting a \$1 donation toward the Tebow Foundation children's hospital in the Philippines. Humber retweeted it on Nov. 29 and replied: "I'm heading to Philippines next week with a group of baseball guys... Making a stop in Mindanao! God bless."

Humber also tweeted about Tebow after the former Denver quarterback led the Broncos to an 18-15 overtime win over the Miami Dolphins on Oct. 23.

"Thoroughly enjoyed watching @TimTebow today. Unfazed by outside opinion. Good to see that attitude rewarded. #Perseverance #GlorifyingGod," Humber tweeted.

Of course, Humber realizes that with Tebow having over 1.5 million followers on Twitter, the quarterback likely did not even see his two tweets about him.

Humber also received a congratulatory tweet from Detroit Tigers pitcher Justin Verlander, who stars with Kate Upton in a commercial for the MLB 2K12 video game \$1 million 'Perfect Game Challenge.' In the commercial, Verlander -- who has two no-hitters and a Cy Young Award -- is denied access into the Perfect Club.

"Congrats to @Philip_Humber! 21st perfect game in history. Guess @KateUpton will let him in the perfect club now. I'm still out! Lol," Verlander tweeted.

Humber also reportedly received a text from Miami Marlins pitcher Mark Buehrle, who fired a perfect game for the White Sox on July 23, 2009. The text, according to the Boston Herald, said: "Welcome to the club."

Part of Humber's celebration will be doing "The Top 10 List" on "Late Show with David Letterman" on Monday.

White Sox morning roundup

By JJ Stankevitz/CSNChicago.com

Jake Peavy shut out the Athletics, scattering three hits and two walks over nine scoreless frames with five strikeouts in a 4-0 win. Adam Dunn hit his fourth home run of the year and now is OPSing at .916, while Paul Konerko followed that blast up with home run No. 399. Brent Morel and Gordon Beckham provided some late insurance, which was nice to see. The Sox have now won four straight.

At 10-6 through just about 10 percent of the season, the Sox have exceeded expectations, writes Chuck Garfien. There's still plenty of season to go, but outside of losing three of four to the Orioles, everything has gone pretty well for the Sox to start

2012.

Gene Honda announced Frank Thomas coming to...shoot the puck at Monday's Blackhawks game. Things didn't go as well as his Hall of Fame baseball career did, though.

Brendan Ryan swung. And let us never debate whether he did or not again.

Philip Humber appeared on Dave Letterman Monday (video coming sometime today), so Chicago Tribune Live honored the perfect pitcher's top 10 appearance with some interesting facts about his perfecto. Humber also called in to the Dan Patrick Show to discuss his feat.

I have the White Sox at No. 11 in my latest power rankings with Cubs Talk's Tony Andracki -- and if they keep this up, they may crack my top 10 next week.

Alex Rios had another three hits Monday, helping Jim's argument that his success is sustainable. James also checked in on the outfield as a whole.

Around the division: Kansas City lost its 11th game in a row, Minnesota dropped a tough one to Boston and Derek Lowe had his World Series ring stolen.

Peavy spins shutout as Sox drop A's

By Associated Press (via CSNChicago.com)

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) The Chicago White Sox have been getting some stellar pitching on their West Coast road trip.

Two days after White Sox teammate Phil Humber pitched the 21st perfect game in major league history, Jake Peavy followed with his own gem.

Peavy pitched a three-hitter, Adam Dunn and Paul Konerko hit back-to-back homers and Chicago beat the Oakland Athletics 4-0 on Monday night for its fourth straight victory.

Peavy allowed only a leadoff single to Jemile Weeks in the fourth inning, a double to Yoenis Cespedes in the seventh and a single to Coco Crisp in the ninth. The 2007 NL Cy Young Award winner walked two and faced only four batters more than the minimum.

"I kind of expect it," White Sox manager Robin Ventura said. "It might be unfair to say stuff like that but he's that good."

Peavy (3-0) needed 107 pitches to handcuff the A's, the lowest-scoring team in the American League. Since drawing a no-decision against Texas in his first start this season, Peavy has a 1.19 ERA over his last 22 2-3 innings.

"You always want to finish what you start," said Peavy of his sixth career shutout. "I felt good tonight. Other than the fourth I didn't have any crazy, stressful innings."

The only time Peavy ran into trouble came after Weeks' single in the fourth. He walked the next batter, Crisp, but got Josh Reddick to hit into a double play and then retired Cespedes on a foul pop to the catcher.

The shutout extended Peavy's scoreless streak to 14 innings and helped the White Sox move into a first-place tie with idle Detroit in the AL Central.

"(Peavy) was establishing the zone away," Weeks said. "Once you do that it's hard to take care of the whole plate."

Alex Rios added three hits for Chicago, while Brent Morel had two hits and scored a run.

Oakland starter Bartolo Colon (3-2) scattered seven hits over seven innings and fell short in his bid to become the first four-game winner in the majors.

Dunn homered on the first pitch from Colon leading off the fourth, a towering shot to left. Konerko followed with a drive to center, the 399th home run of his career.

That ended Colon's shutout streak of 18 1-3 innings and gave Peavy more than enough room to work with.

Colon, who threw 38 consecutive strikes in his previous start against the Angels, put together another streak of 20 straight during one stretch and got the White Sox to ground into three double plays.

With no run support, though, it didn't matter.

"It was similar to what we've seen, a lot of strikes," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "To give up just two to that team, you're giving your team a chance to win."

Oakland has been shut out a league-leading four times already this season and has scored just 52 runs through 18 games. That's the second-fewest in the majors behind Pittsburgh, which has 30 runs in 15 games.

Chicago added a pair of insurance runs in the ninth on RBI singles by Gordon Beckham and A.J. Pierzynski.

The loss spoiled the A's debut of third baseman Luke Hughes.

Hughes, claimed off waivers from Minnesota a day earlier, arrived in Oakland about two hours before the first pitch and was immediately put into the starting lineup. He got off to a shaky start with his new team, committing a pair of throwing errors.

NOTES: Konerko started at DH rather than first base because of the expansive foul ground in Oakland. He's also still nursing a sore right foot after taking a foul ball off it during the Seattle series. ... Oakland manager Bob Melvin said the A's plan to call up Jarrod Parker from the minors to start Wednesday's series finale. ... To make room for Hughes, the A's optioned INF Josh Donaldson to Triple-A Sacramento. Donaldson entered spring training as a backup catcher but was moved to third base after Scott Sizemore's season-ending knee injury during the team's first full-squad workout. ... RHP Gavin Floyd (1-2), who has won three of his four starts against Oakland, pitches for Chicago on Tuesday. Tommy Milone (2-1) goes for the A's.

Sox Drawer: Exceeding expectations

By Chuck Garfien/CSNChicago.com

After two weeks of baseball, who are these Chicago White Sox and what in the name of Philip Humber is going on here?

This early in the season I normally stay away from such questions, mainly because you can never expect what's transpired in the first 15 games to actually play out for the final 147.

If that holds true, AJ Pierzynski will be an MVP candidate, Jake Peavy will be gunning for a Cy Young Award, Humber will throw 15 perfect games, and the White Sox will shatter a major league record by striking out 4,872,299,513 times.

Still, there are some interesting developments and intriguing story lines taking shape that deserve immediate attention. We'll begin with this:

Humber almost didn't survive his perfect game

After the final out on Saturday, Humber was mobbed on the field by his teammates. Jake Peavy was the first to arrive, and basically tackled him.

What was the first thing Humber said to his overjoyed compadres?

"I can't breathe guys, you've got to get off of me!" Humber recalled in an interview Sunday on White Sox Pregame Live.

The game, as well as the next few hours, was an out-of-body experience for Humber, who did his best to be as present and in-the-moment as possible.

"After the game I was trying to soak up as much of it as I could. Someone compared it to the reception after your wedding. It's all kind of a blur. You just don't remember any of it," Humber said. "I really just tried to slow down and just remember as much of it as I could. Just take mental pictures of everything and savor the experience because chances are I'm never going to come down this road again."

Before the White Sox claimed him off waivers from Oakland on Jan. 18, 2011, Humber had been an unwanted man at every stop in his career. The A's, Royals, Mets and Twins all had him and yet decided they could go on without him.

What are they thinking now after Humber threw a perfect game?

"They're probably thinking, 'I wish he had figured it out a little earlier.' Maybe they would have had a good pitcher on their hands," Humber said. "I don't think any of them are regretting their decisions. At that time, I wasn't the pitcher that I am now. I'm thankful for where I'm at. I wouldn't trade any of the experiences, the ups and downs for anything. It's all been worth it. It's made me the person that I am."

As for his sudden fame, the humble Humber still sees the same guy when he looks in the mirror. Just like Mark Buehrle, he's about as real and down-to-earth as you can get. In that way, the two make for quite a perfect combo in White Sox history.

"For a little while I think people are going to recognize me a little bit more, but I'm still just who I am," Humber said. "I've got 12 major league wins to my name, and one of them happens to be a perfect game, which is kind of cool. I don't think I'll have to fight off the paparazzi or anything. I'll just continue being me."

Adam Dunn is raking. And I told you so.

Well, actually I didn't predict this. I just reported what Dunn said during the winter and spring training about how he was promising a comeback season. He even went as far as guaranteeing he'll win the AL Comeback Player of the Year Award. "It's mine. I've already claimed it," Dunn said in a February interview.

Very few White Sox fans believed him. The reactions I received on Twitter were scathing about Dunn. The wounds from watching him in 2011 apparently didn't heal.

Feeling better now?

Friday, Dunn had his first two-homer game as a member of the White Sox. He has three homers, 13 RBIs, and six doubles. Last year, he had 16 doubles for the whole season. He's finally looking like the guy Kenny Williams thought he was getting when he signed him two winters ago.

The lesson here is this: Going from the National League to the American League is not as easy as it looks -- especially for power hitters. Just ask Albert Pujols. In his first 16 games with the Angels, he's batting .246 and has yet to hit a home run.

Why has it been so tough? There's one huge reason that's been overlooked.

Pitchers don't hit in the American League. Yep, that's it. Here's why:

In the National League, most starters are reluctant to consistently pound the inside because they know that three or four times during the game, they themselves are going to be standing in that batter's box, a sitting duck if a team wants to retaliate.

You can almost hear them say, "Don't hit the hands! Don't plunk my knee!" Pitchers are a delicate piece of china.

Therefore, it's almost like there's a code in the NL: "Be nice to our power hitters, and we won't put your star pitcher on the 15-day disabled list."

Not so in the American League.

Justin Verlander, Jared Weaver, etc. can stand comfortably on the pitcher's mound, sizzle the inside and then escape to the dugout after every inning, where a warm windbreaker is waiting for them.

Prince Fielder has adapted better to the AL than Pujols so far. He's batting .317 with two homers and eight RBIs. But did you see how the White Sox pitched to Fielder when the Tigers came to town? They kept jamming him inside, making life much more difficult than it was in the cozy National League.

If you watched closely, Prince was pissed.

Dunn struggled to adapt to this last season, which led to his dismal start. Pretty soon, the scouting report on Dunn likely said 'THROW INSIDE' in bold, capital letters. It often set the tone for many of his at-bats. Eventually, pitchers threw all sorts of junk at Dunn and he would chase it. He just never got comfortable.

Not this year.

Who is AJ Pierzynski?

Frankly, I don't know this man anymore. In his 14-year career, he has never exceeded 18 home runs and 77 RBIs in a season. Right now he's on a pace for 43 homers and 151 RBIs. Last week he belted his fourth homer of the season. Last year he didn't hit his fourth until July 25th!

Again, it's April. Most statistics get distorted this early in the year. Eventually his numbers will come back down to earth (I assume), and he'll likely go back to his career averages. However, there is one new wrinkle to his game that truly has me baffled.

Pierzynski is throwing out baserunners.

He's 2-4. Meanwhile, Tyler Flowers is a perfect 4-4, meaning White Sox catchers have thrown out 75 percent of attempted stealers. That's the best percentage in the major leagues. Last year, the Sox were dead last at 14 percent.

It's the little things that count. So far, they're paying big dividends. And A.J.? Don't know him.

Other quick observations:

* The Royals have lost 10 in a row. They're 0-9 at home. They're not hitting. They're not pitching. They're not winning. All those people who picked them to finish second in the AL Central, they're not talking.

* Alex Rios has a 10-game hitting streak. During that time, he has raised his batting average from .111 to .333.

* Third base coach Joe McEwing is a human windmill. Watch how he waves baserunners home. It's a work of art and can probably provide enough energy for the entire South Side of Chicago.

* Matt Thornton, Addison Reed and Nate Jones have combined to throw 20.1 innings. Their combined ERA: Zero.

* Jake Peavy is healthy. Cross your fingers and hope he stays that way all season. If he does, well, let's not go there yet.

Chicago White Sox - TeamReport

By Reuters

The White Sox are no stranger to seeing outstanding pitching performances over the past five years, thanks to a 2007 no-hitter and a 2009 perfect game by longtime ace Mark Buehrle. But in the wake of those two performances, the Sox watched the momentum soon die and each season end in underachieving fashion.

The hope is that Philip Humber's perfect game Saturday against Seattle, the 21st thrown in major league history, will continue to bring the team together and push it forward into doing more than anyone thought it would this season.

A 7-4 win over Seattle on Sunday was a good start, as the Sox completed the three-game sweep and improved to 9-6 on the year. As for Humber, he was still trying to put his arms around his performance that made him a household name overnight.

"I didn't get to call as many people as I would've liked to, but I got to text most everybody," Humber said, 24 hours after the outing. "At least let them know I got their messages and I appreciated it.

"It's just really neat, there's a lot of people I hadn't heard from in a long time, and a lot of people I wanted to hear from, maybe didn't have their number, stuff like that. But somehow they got in touch with me and were able to be a part of it. It was just fun to be able to share it with some people that had impacted my life and my career to this point."

One of the texts he did get was from Buehrle, now with the Marlins. Buehrle sent him a text that read, "welcome to the club."

"Actually, I probably need to ask him, there are some things that I don't know exactly how I'm going to handle," Humber said. "He's been through it before, and so I want to definitely use him."

Humber was already trying to figure out what to send to the Hall of Fame. He also said he would be on "The Late Show with David Letterman" on Monday night, taping a segment.

Manager Robin Ventura said that it was great to see how excited his teammates were for Humber, and was hoping the momentum from the gem would keep going for the entire team.

MLB Team Report - Chicago White Sox - NOTES, QUOTES

--C A.J. Pierzynski continued to put his name down in the record books, as he became the ninth catcher in league history to have caught at least two no-hitters. Not only was Pierzynski behind the plate for Humber's perfect game, but caught the no-hitter for LHP Mark Buehrle back in 2007. "It's as nervous as you can be as a player," Pierzynski said of his latest experience. "I'd say I was more nervous than in the World Series because there's no buildup for this. It just happens. You want it so bad for the guy on the mound, and you want him to have that achievement forever and want him to be remembered for that forever. It's a special thing, and Phil did it."

--RHP Philip Humber was still the talk of baseball on Sunday, one day after the 29-year-old became the 21st pitcher in league history to throw a perfect game. But now that it's over, Humber has to deal with all that's left in the wake of it, including sending mementos to the Hall of Fame, as well as also scheduled to appear on The Late Show with David Letterman to tape a "Top 10" segment. "Hopefully I get to keep as much of it as I can," Humber said. "I doubt I'll throw one again, so it would be nice to have as much stuff to remember it as I can." As far as the next time he takes the mound, it couldn't work out any better, as Humber is scheduled to start the first home game back after this road trip on the West Coast.

--3B Brent Morel was given 14 games to try and show he could handle the No. 2 spot of the order, but that ended for the time being on Sunday, as manager Robin Ventura dropped Morel to the eighth spot and used Alexei Ramirez in the two-hole. Morel was hitting just .128, and had fanned 20 times in 47 at-bats. Ramirez has hit in the No. 2 spot before when the Sox have needed him to, and Ventura made it evident that he was still looking for the right mix for his offense. Morel did go 1-for-4 in the win over Seattle, while Ramirez was 1-for-5, scoring a run and adding an RBI.

--CF Alejandro De Aza was on the bench for the first time this season on Sunday, as Ventura decided it was time to give him a rest. De Aza entered the day hitting .268 with 13 runs scored and three homers, and Ventura said he was thrilled with the work De Aza was giving them in the leadoff spot. "Not only getting on, but he works counts, does everything you want your leadoff hitter to do," Ventura said. "I'm very happy with what he's done. I think to start the game he's kind of like your regular leadoff hitter, where he's working counts and doing things, but once it turns over, he's just another hitter. It's not like he's a gimmick at the top, he's a quality hitter."

--C Tyler Flowers could be getting some extra work this week, especially with Pierzynski starting all three games in the Seattle series, as well as the emotional perfect game on Saturday. Flowers last started against Baltimore before the Sox went out West, and Ventura has made it a point to keep Pierzynski fresh, as well as get Flowers more experience.

BY THE NUMBERS: 30 -- The number of starts it took Philip Humber to throw a perfect game. Only Charlie Robertson (fourth) and Lee Richmond (21st) took fewer starts to achieve perfection.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "It's hard to put into words. He's got good stuff, he commanded the heck out of it and everything fell into place. I was calm in Buehrle's game, and I was calm in this one. Get up on the rail and watch Phil. His command was very good. It's wonderful to see the joy and emotion of a guy who gets to achieve that. No. 21 on the planet." -- Pitching coach Don Cooper on watching both Mark Buehrle and Philip Humber throwing perfect games in his tenure.

After Seven Years, Five Teams, How Philip Humber found his way

By Tom Verducci/Sports Illustrated

The Chicago White Sox hit the jackpot with Philip Humber. He is every general manager's dream: find a legitimate major league starting pitcher off the waiver wire, having waited for other organizations to live through the pains of the expense of signing him (the Mets coughed up \$3.7 million) and the inevitable arm trouble (Tommy John surgery in 2005) without getting the payoff.

Humber gave the White Sox 26 solid starts last season (3.75 ERA) for just \$500,000. This season, after earning just a \$30,000 raise, he has allowed one run in two starts, the last one the 21st perfect game in baseball history, a 3-0 win against the Mariners on Saturday in Seattle.

White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper deserves credit for bringing out the best in Humber by tweaking his mechanics and scrapping his cutter and replacing it with a slider. Like former Cardinals pitching guru Dave Duncan, Cooper has a long track record of reviving careers.

"It's awful nice to get a guy back on track and have the kind of career he was looking for," Cooper said. "I'm sure with other organizations it's not like they weren't trying. Sometimes a guy just isn't ready to give what you ask."

A manager once told me a long time ago that coaching on the big league level is as much about timing as it is intellect. Most coaches carry and pass on the same knowledge. It's the coach who gets the player when he's ready to learn who will wind up getting credit for that player's success. Humber is a great example.

In 2005, Mets pitching coach Rick Peterson tried to change Humber's mechanics. Peterson was concerned that Humber collapsed his back leg during his delivery, causing him to tilt his shoulders and push the ball uphill rather than driving it downhill. Peterson also wanted Humber not to take the ball over his head at the start of his windup. Peterson advised Humber to adopt a long toss program, but Humber wasn't sold on any of those suggestions.

Frustrated, Humber told GM Omar Minaya and assistant GM Tony Bernazard he wasn't comfortable with the changes. The front office told Humber to throw the way he wanted to throw. After all, Humber had been a major talent in college at Rice and was drafted third overall by the Mets in 2004, ahead of Jered Weaver. In other words, he had been a success with those mechanics, so why change?

Shortly thereafter, Humber blew out his elbow and needed surgery. The medical professionals told the Mets that Humber had the elbow of a 40-year-old man. It was the equivalent of running down the tread of a tire to the point of a blowout. Humber threw an average of 118 innings a year at Rice -- and that's just the spring season, not including summers spent pitching in international competitions and the Cape Cod League.

The Mets later traded him to the Twins to get Johan Santana. Minnesota gave up on him after only two years. They designated him for assignment, upon which Kansas City claimed him on waivers. The Royals gave up on him after one year. The Athletics claimed him on waivers. The Athletics put him on waivers one month later to make room on the roster for free agent reliever Grant Balfour. That's when the White Sox became the fifth team to take a chance on a player who had become a most unremarkable pitcher.

"I saw him with Minnesota," Cooper said. "My thought was that he was not over the ball. He was collapsing on the back side. He was getting underneath the baseball. I saw him in Kansas City in a couple of good outings. I thought he was over the ball a little bit better. Then we picked him up.

"What we tried to do was tap into his best asset: his stuff. When you get a guy like that, usually one of two things is happening: it's either that he is so talented that nobody is saying anything out of fear they might screw him up, or they're trying to help and the computer gets overloaded."

Cooper didn't know the back story: that the Mets and Humber, believing in his talent and track record, didn't buy into Peterson's changes. And so this is what Cooper did with Humber: he stressed standing taller in his delivery with a firmer back leg, creating more power behind the baseball and a better downward angle. Sound familiar?

"The first thing we did with him was to have him drive all of his stuff," Cooper said. "We got him taller and using his back leg: tall and stay back. That's the only thing we did mechanically. That kind of happened quick."

It was the same thing Peterson advised. This time, at age 28, with his fifth organization and a scar on his pitching elbow, Humber bought in. Cooper made one other significant change. He began working with Humber on a cutter, the unofficial life preserver of choice for all foundering pitchers.

"We played with a cutter," Cooper said. "We did that with two or three starts and three sidelines. Say he threw 10 cutters. Only two of them would do what they're supposed to do. It was just spinning. It wasn't showing enough promise."

So Cooper went to Plan B. Encouraged by Humber's natural ability to spin a curveball, he told Humber to try a slider. Humber threw a very good slider immediately. The pitch elevated his game, giving him an out pitch at a speed in between his fastball and curveball. The slider spins so tightly it disguises itself as a fastball two-thirds of the way to the plate before breaking sharply.

"I do like cases like that," Cooper said of rebuilding a career. "I think [GM] Kenny Williams and [assistant GM] Rick Hahn always try to get us some."

There are no shortages of teams trying to find the next Philip Humber. It's the baseball equivalent of bringing a metal detector to the beach and looking for a diamond ring underneath all those grains of sand. The Red Sox found one in 2003 with Bronson Arroyo, a former third-round pick waived by the Pirates. Among the waiver-claim pitching projects this year are John Gaub (Tampa Bay), Alfredo Simon (Cincinnati), Jeremy Hefner (New York Mets), Rick Vandenhurk (Cleveland), Jeff Gray (Minnesota) and Lucas Harrell (Houston).

None of them have the pedigree of Humber, the college phenom who needed five organizations and seven years to find his way. It's a credit to Humber's tenacity and hard work. It's a credit to Williams' eye for talent. It's a credit to Cooper's teaching skills. But it's also a story about the mysterious craft of pitching. Every year teams take dozens upon dozens of chances on castaway pitchers, believing each one is just one pitch or one tweak away from breaking out.

The rest of Humber's career begins Thursday with a start against Boston. He has entered select company, but his task is only beginning.

"Another strong season," Cooper said, "puts him on the path he always wanted to be. He wants to be real good. He doesn't want to be just a fifth starter."

Chicago native John Cusack talks roles, loyalties

By Sarah Spain/ESPN.com

John Cusack is trying to figure out whether famed mystery author Edgar Allan Poe would be a fan of the Chicago Cubs or Chicago White Sox.

"Oh, well I think he'd have to like the endless suffering and misery of the Cubs," he begins. "But the Sox wear all black and are sort of the darker, more mysterious team. You know, I think maybe he'd like both."

That's one commonality between Cusack and Poe, whom the actor plays in the new film "The Raven." A native of the Chicago suburbs, Cusack grew up cheering for Jose Cardenal and Larry Biittner on the Northside, but also rooted for Southsiders like Chet Lemon and Carlton Fisk.

Cusack knows he'll always get flack for supporting both of Chicago's baseball teams, but he believes he deserves at least a little credit for admitting his split allegiance.

"There's another Chicago guy, Craig Robinson, who I did 'Hot Tub Time Machine' with; he likes both teams, too," Cusack said. "When we were filming, we would watch a lot of baseball. There would always be either a Cubs or Sox game on. A lot of people like both, they just won't admit it."

Cusack has always been outspoken about his love for Chicago teams, but admits today's Bulls don't have quite the same cache as the Jordan-era teams.

"It's hard to really re-engage after Michael," he said. "I think the NBA isn't the same these days; they don't play with the same fundamentals. I think maybe you could take some of those old Cleveland teams that never could beat the Bulls and they might beat some of the best teams now because of their good fundamental play."

You might not see Cusack courtside at a Bulls game, but he did hit up The Cell during the White Sox's World Series run in 2005. He was also spotted sitting along the glass during the Blackhawks' 2010 Stanley Cup run and has led the seventh-inning stretch at Wrigley Field on a number of occasions. Cusack even played former Sox infielder Buck Weaver in "Eight Men Out," a film about the 1919 Black Sox scandal.

Cusack has spent more years playing characters than he has just being himself. In the movies since 1983, the 45-year-old has played a lovesick high school kid, a mercenary, a record store owner, a U.S. Marshal and, now, a legendary literary figure.

Part fact, part fantasy, "The Raven" (which hits theatres April 27) finds Cusack's Poe tasked with hunting down a serial killer who uses Poe's stories as inspiration for his murders. Cusack spent three months shooting in Serbia, and dropped 25 pounds to play the skeletal, impoverished author, whose works did not receive much acclaim until after his death. Because the film combines facts and quotes from Poe's letters and novels with a fictional story line, Cusack isn't worried about literature buffs taking the film to task for authenticity.

"The movie isn't meant to be a historical account," he said. "There's never going to be an exact, true telling of Poe, because there weren't tape recorders, video cameras or anything."

Cusack isn't worried about his legacy as an actor, either. He is only concerned with doing work that interests him. (He claims he signed on for "The Raven," in part, so he could read a whole lot of Poe.) He won't be bothered much if the film doesn't enjoy a great deal of success right off the bat. He's used to starring in the kind of cult classics that grow more popular over time.

"I don't listen to what people say [about my movies] right away," he recently told New York Magazine, "because later the people either like or hate them more."

If it sounds like Cusack is living some sort of worry-free, Zen existence, that's not entirely true. He'll always enjoy a certain terrible agony unique to Cubs fans. And you can be sure if Poe were alive today, he'd find a macabre beauty within more than a century of sadness.
