



Headlines of April 25, 2012

"White Sox Daily Notebook" ... Scott Merkin, WhiteSox.com
"Promising young hurlers square off in finale" ... Jon Star, MLB.com
"Williams: White Sox 'focusing on their focus'" ... Scott Merkin, MLB.com
"Floyd comes up on short end of pitchers' duel" ... Scott Merkin, MLB.com
"Chicago White Sox – TeamReport" ... Reuters, Chicago Tribune
"A's pitcher Parker grew up Sox fan" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"Your Morning Phil: Peavy, Sveum, Pudge" ... Phil Rogers, Chicago Tribune
"Williams: Extensions not in current focus for Sox" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"Rios on board with Ventura's 9th-inning move" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"Sox winning streak snapped at 4" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"Adam Dunn doesn't start with lefty on mound" ... Daryl van Schouwen, Chicago Sun-Times
"White Sox continue to find positives despite tough loss to A's" ... Daryl van Schouwen, Chicago Sun-Times
"White Sox struggle against Milone, Athletics" ... Associated Press, Chicago Daily Herald
"Floyd keeps up trend with quality start" ... Scot Gregor, Chicago Daily Herald
"With wife expecting, Humber leaves Sox" ... Associated Press, ESPNChicago.com
"Rapid Reaction: A's 2, White Sox 0" ... Brendan Murphy, ESPNChicago.com
"Checking in on Dylan Axelrod" ... JJ Stankevitz, CSN Chicago
"Sox offense sputters in loss" ... Associated Press, CSN Chicago
"White Sox morning roundup" ... JJ Stankevitz, CSN Chicago
"Phillip Humber pulled off unlikely perfecto" ... Jayson Stark, ESPN.com
"Ventura keeping Dunn away from lefties" ... Staff Writers, USA Today
"Mariners' manager Eric Wedge impressed by White Sox's pitching" ... John Lowe, Detroit Free Press
"Perfect game comes at perfect time" ... Chris Sosa, RedEye
"White Sox offer ticket special for Thursday to honor Humber" ... Staff Writers, CBS Chicago

Father-to-be Humber returns to Chicago

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Philip Humber has temporarily transformed from perfect-game media sensation back to expectant father.

The right-hander, who threw the 21st perfect game in Major League Baseball history on Saturday against Seattle, returned to Chicago on Tuesday afternoon to join his wife, Kristan, for the birth of their first child. Humber still is scheduled to start Thursday night's series opener against Boston at U.S. Cellular Field, when tickets will be discounted in honor of and in conjunction with Humber's perfecto.

"He's fine. He was [going to be] flying home [on Wednesday] anyway," said White Sox manager Robin Ventura of Humber. "He's no good to us today, so he can go home."

Peavy's spring struggles a distant memory

OAKLAND -- Remember when Jake Peavy was getting knocked around during Spring Training, allowing 13 runs on 19 hits over 13 1/3 innings?

Well, the right-hander certainly recalls the concern over his Arizona struggles. But he could only offer up a resigned smile when talking about the importance of Spring Training to a veteran hurler after his dominant Monday night showing against the A's.

"I tried to tell you guys the only question that should be asked in Spring Training is, 'How do you feel?'" Peavy said. "That should be asked all around the clubhouse with guys who have been in the Major Leagues.

"Spring Training is an absolute non-factor, non-issue. You use it to get your arm in shape. This same A's team in Spring Training beat me around the ballpark. I do laugh about that, and I hope now people understand Spring Training numbers really, really mean nothing all around the board."

Peavy put those Cactus League struggles further behind him with a three-hit shutout against the A's. The effort dropped Peavy's ERA to 1.88 and reduced his opponents' average against to .172. He leads the White Sox with 26 strikeouts and 28 2/3 innings pitched.

Of greatest importance is that Peavy felt great the day after throwing a complete game. He played a little long toss, did his shoulder work and added in cardio.

"Hopefully, those days of worrying how I'm going to feel the next day are over," Peavy said. "I really feel as normal as I should. I'm excited for Saturday and the ... big challenge ahead of us coming back home."

At 21 months removed from surgery to reattach his lat muscle, Peavy feels he's returned to the needed level of mound normalcy. It's not a quick process, though, as Peavy illustrated by mentioning early-season struggles by Josh Johnson and Adam Wainwright after surgery.

"Those guys are great. And as time goes by and the longer removed they are from surgery, they will grow their way back into [being] that guy," Peavy said. "It has been here for me for the first few starts. It's fun to be the guy that [White Sox general manager] Kenny [Williams] traded for me to be.

"I'm really not feeling like I owe it to anybody, but I want to give that to Kenny because he stepped out on a limb and got me over [here], and has taken some scrutiny in taking me and Alex [Rios]. But Kenny wants to win, and he scouted me and knew what I used to do. And now I'm excited that I'm able to give a little back and help."

Williams caught end of Humber's perfect

OAKLAND -- Although White Sox general manager Ken Williams was taking part in an amateur scouting trip this past weekend, he still managed to watch the end of Philip Humber's perfect game after getting word of the pitcher's brush with greatness on Saturday.

"Boy, did I get word of it," Williams said. "I knew someone either, there was something really, really bad happening or something really good happened. My phone started blowing up.

"So, I saw the tail end of it. It was exciting. I'm glad I didn't have to agonize over the whole 27 outs."

White Sox have no definitive ace? No problem

OAKLAND -- White Sox starting pitchers lead the American League in strikeouts (105), shutouts (two), complete games (two) and opponents average (.202). They rank third in ERA (3.09) and are third with 11 quality starts.

Those numbers aren't too bad after 17 games for a front five entering the season without a clear ace-hurler. That ace absence certainly doesn't bother general manager Ken Williams.

"I think I said that in Spring Training that I've never looked, well, I don't currently look at this group anyway as a one through five," Williams said. "They are all capable on a given day of pitching against anyone's No. 1. If they are on their 'A' game, they can pitch like a No. 1.

"You have a bunch of guys that can just go out there and grind it out and shut down a team on a given day. I think, overall, it sets you up well for the grind."

Third to first

- Dayan Viciedo finished 0-for-3 during Tuesday's 2-0 loss to the A's, giving him just 1 hit in his last 22 at-bats. Viciedo is hitting .180 overall.
 - Alex Rios' 11-game hitting streak, which was snapped by a 0-for-3 effort on Tuesday, was the second-longest active streak in the American League behind Derek Jeter. Rios batted .415 during the streak.
 - Paul Konerko has reached base safely in 16 of his 17 games played after being hit by a pitch in the seventh inning.
-

Promising young hurlers square off in finale

By Jon Star / MLB.com

Dealing established big leaguers for blue-chip prospects has been a trademark of general manager Billy Beane's tenure in Oakland. The A's will get a look at one of their newest chips on Wednesday, when Jarrod Parker -- Oakland's No. 1 prospect according to MLB.com -- takes the ball for his second Major League start.

Acquired in the offseason deal that sent Trevor Cahill to Arizona, Parker joins the big league club after starting the year 1-0 with a 2.18 ERA and 21 strikeouts in four starts with Triple-A Sacramento. Parker, who made one start with Arizona in 2011, grabbed the attention of manager Bob Melvin during an impressive showing in Spring Training.

"He's got great stuff," Melvin said. "Of all the guys we've acquired, we feel like he has as high of a ceiling as [anyone]. He's got three, and potentially four, plus pitches. It's all about throwing the ball over the plate for him. He's done that in all of his starts in Sacramento and has earned the promotion up here."

Parker's Oakland debut comes with further significance, as he faces the team he rooted for while growing up in Fort Wayne, Ind.

"I think it was kind of a blessing to be able to go to Sacramento and work with those guys," said Parker. "They've been great to me. ... [I've been] able to hone in on some things and [get as] ready as I [could] when I got the call. It was just about repeating my delivery.

"I'm pretty excited. Obviously, it's something I've been looking forward to all year. So I'm just going to do what I've been doing."

Parker will share the rubber with Chris Sale, who will be making only his fourth career big league start. So far, starting has agreed with the third-year southpaw, after he spent the bulk of 2010 and all of '11 in the White Sox bullpen.

Sale (2-1, 3.50 ERA) picked up the victory in his previous outing by limiting the Mariners to three runs over 6 1/3 innings with 11 strikeouts. Sale hasn't allowed more than three runs in any of his three starts, racking up 21 strikeouts along the way.

Sale will look to continue the White Sox early-season momentum. Though their four-game winning streak was snapped on Tuesday, Chicago has so far shown a chemistry on the mound and in the field -- despite some noteworthy turnover during the offseason.

"Early on in Spring Training, we were all getting used to each other -- a new year and everything else. Toward the latter part of the spring, they started feeling it," said White Sox manager Robin Ventura. "It's just something that happens. It's how they care about it, each other, and the work they do and what they feel during a game. You hope it can always be like that, and you try to ride that out as long as you can -- because it's a long season."

White Sox: Rios' hitting streak snapped

Alex Rios saw his 11-game hitting streak come to an end on Tuesday. The right fielder had possessed the second-longest hit streak in the American League, behind Derek Jeter's 14-game streak. Rios had recorded back-to-back three-hit games and 10 hits in his previous five games before he was blanked on Tuesday. Rios is hitting .340 in April.

Athletics: Leaning on their pitching

Oakland has scored an AL-worst 54 runs this season. The lack of production has forced the A's pitching to pick up the slack, which it has. Oakland's staff possesses a 2.83 ERA, despite striking out just 99 batters so far this season. The starters have kept pace with the bullpen, allowing just 40 earned runs over 131 innings, good for a 2.74 ERA.

Worth noting

- Coco Crisp has stolen 25 consecutive bases without being thrown out. It is the longest streak of his career and matches the fourth-longest streak in A's history.
 - Paul Konerko has homered in two of his last four games, and remains one roundtripper away from 400 career home runs. With 392 home runs with the White Sox, he trails only Frank Thomas (448) for the club record.
-

Williams: White Sox 'focusing on their focus'

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- "Appreciate the Game" stands as the official slogan for the 2012 White Sox.

Prior to the White Sox second contest in a three-game series with the A's on Tuesday at the Coliseum, general manager Ken Williams might have put forth a secondary marketing campaign.

Williams came up with a good T-shirt slogan, at the very least, if the White Sox build off their excellent start.

Questions for Williams dealt with everything from possible extensions for pre-arbitration guys like Chris Sale and Philip Humber to the chances of the White Sox being buyers on the trade market as the season progresses. Williams stopped all ancillary conversations with the following sentence:

"Well, the only thing we are focusing on is our focus," said Williams with a smile.

So, what is the meaning behind the latest White Sox buzzword, potentially joining Winnin' Ugly and The Carlos Quentin? It's basically representative of Robin Ventura's managerial style, keeping the attention on nothing more than the game at hand.

But Williams went on to explain his specific comment.

"That means keeping distractions of any sort to a minimum. I would consider [contract discussions] right now a distraction," Williams said. "So I like the way that this club has adopted the personality of the coaching staff.

"It's really their own personalities, too. ... As we scouted all of them and as we made personnel [decisions], that's in their DNA as it is. It's a positive environment and, obviously, it's a club that's doing a lot of the things, the little things, to help [itself] win. It's nice to see."

This focusing on the White Sox focus has not become a concept reserved solely for Williams, Ventura and their respective staffs. Even potential free agents on the roster simply want to focus on doing right by this team.

Take Jake Peavy, as an example. The White Sox hold a \$22 million contract option for 2013, but are far more likely to use a \$4 million buyout -- even if Peavy continues to build on his amazing 3-0 start with a 1.88 ERA and 26 strikeouts over 28 2/3 innings.

Could that buyout be the start of a new deal between the White Sox and Peavy, assuming the tenacious right-hander goes through a healthy 2012 campaign? Even if it's a potential idea, Peavy doesn't let it enter his mind.

"[My focus is] start to start, and I'll be that way all the way through September," Peavy said. "I want to be healthy, and I feel so blessed to be able to be healthy."

"I hope that the fans do finally see that I'm healthy and I'm giving them everything [I've] got. I can promise you this: My effort level, energy, work in between starts, it has been no different. It's just I've been hurt."

Considering long-term deals for Sale or Humber, or looking at a new contract for Peavy or catcher A.J. Pierzynski could be revisited at some point, although Williams didn't mention any specific names or any timeframes. Right now is not the time for such conversations in Williams' mind, nor is it the time to talk about July plans if the team remains in contention.

Keep focusing on the focus, keep winning games and turn a good start into a good season.

"[Tuesday] is Game 2 of the Oakland series, and we're focused on that right now," Williams said. "I refuse to allow anybody's mindset to get ahead of today's job at hand. ... There will be a time for us to internally think about those [kinds] of things. But it's not a prudent thing to do right now, while we are trying to establish our identity. It's, 'How can we win today?'"

Floyd comes up on short end of pitchers' duel

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The White Sox four-game winning streak and six-game run overall on the road came to an end on Tuesday night with Oakland's 2-0 victory at the Coliseum, marking the second time the South Siders were shut out this season.

Grant Balfour (fifth save) officially finished off this potentially perfect West Coast road trip when he struck out pinch-hitter Adam Dunn with Kosuke Fukudome on third base. But the game really might have turned in the eighth inning, when White Sox starter Gavin Floyd (1-3) returned to the mound at 110 pitches and promptly walked Daric Barton on five pitches.

It was just one of two walks issued by Floyd, who was otherwise unhittable over 7 1/3 innings. But it was a free pass that eventually led to the winning run scoring for Oakland (9-10).

"I'm just trying to continue what I've been doing, what I've been working on," said Floyd, who threw 71 of his 119 pitches for strikes. "Just focus in on each pitch. I was trying to keep the team in the game, and I felt like I did that until I walked the last guy."

After Floyd fanned Luke Hughes, who couldn't get down a sacrifice bunt, left-handed-hitting Kila Ka'aihue was summoned to pinch-hit for Anthony Recker. White Sox manager Robin Ventura went to left-handed reliever Matt Thornton, who had not been scored upon in nine previous appearances this season.

Kurt Suzuki proceeded to pinch-hit for Ka'aihue with a southpaw now on the mound, and Suzuki deposited a 1-0 fastball just fair down the left-field line for a double to score Barton from first. Eric Sogard singled home Suzuki with two outs for an insurance run.

"Both staffs have been pitching well. And you look down not only at their starters, but they've got some real good young arms in the bullpen. So it was a battle," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "In those games, one run seems like more -- and really Sogard's hit made it feel like it was 5-0, with Dunn sitting on the bench, Konerko lurking and [A.J.] Pierzynski sitting on the bench, as well."

That extra run truly loomed large in the ninth, even after Balfour sat down Gordon Beckham and Alejandro De Aza without much trouble to start the frame. Fukudome grounded a single up the middle in a pinch-hit role for Brent Lillibridge, at which point Ventura went to his bench for Dunn as the power-hitting, potential tying run.

Dunn, who didn't start against Oakland left-hander Tommy Milone, hit for Alex Rios -- although Rios entered the night with an 11-game hitting streak. Rios also had a 2-for-12 career ledger against Balfour, with five strikeouts. Despite Rios' two hits leading to a homer and three RBIs, those previous head-to-head matchups had nothing to do with Ventura's decision.

"You are looking to tie it up," said Ventura of calling upon Dunn. "He's probably our best shot at tying it up. That was the only reason."

Rios had no complaints postgame about the manager's call, focusing solely on the good of the team after Dunn swung and missed at a 3-2 fastball from Balfour with Konerko on-deck.

"I thought I was going to hit," said Rios of the ninth. "But if he thought that Adam had a better chance, let's go for it. We are here to win games. That's what matters right now."

There will be plenty of wins down the road for the White Sox (10-7) if Floyd pitches as he did on Tuesday.

He didn't make history like Philip Humber on Saturday or throw a complete-game shutout like Jake Peavy on Monday, which marked the first time the White Sox had two complete-game shutouts in three days since Jack McDowell and Alex Fernandez went back-to-back on July 1-2, 1994.

Instead, Floyd put aside his career-long April struggles, featuring a 5.60 ERA lifetime during the month, and fanned six while allowing a single to Jemile Weeks leading off the fourth and Barton's double with two outs in the fifth. On this night, Milone (3-1) was every bit as good on the mound for Oakland, with two of his three singles erased by Dayan Viciedo's double-play grounder in the fifth and Brent Morel's caught stealing to end the eighth.

"Yeah, [Floyd] pitched great," said Ventura of the pitching matchup. "Their guy pitched a little better."

"He had it all working well for him," said Rios of Milone, who struck out five over eight scoreless innings and 98 pitches. "He kept us off balance and everything was located where he wanted it."

Oakland's narrow escape forged a three-way tie atop the American League Central between the White Sox, Tigers (10-7) and the Indians (9-6), albeit very early in the season. A win on Wednesday afternoon would send the White Sox home with a highly successful 5-1 road trip before taking on Boston for four games.

Thoughts of a nearly-flawless road trip didn't give Ventura a happy feeling on Tuesday night. He was thinking about the one that could have made this AL West excursion a flawless 6-0.

"Tonight, this one stings -- because you know you had a guy pitch a good game and couldn't get much out of it on the offensive side," Ventura said. "You don't like to see anybody pitch like that and be on the wrong side of it."

"It's baseball," Floyd said. "You feel like you pitched a great game and you end up losing the game. It stinks, but you just move on and try to get going the next start for me. And we have to win a ballgame [on Wednesday] and try to take the series."

Chicago White Sox – TeamReport

By Reuters / Chicago Tribune

MLB Team Report - Chicago White Sox - INSIDE PITCH

It was the bats of Paul Konerko and Adam Dunn that helped the White Sox continue their hot streak, as they beat Oakland 4-0 Monday, winning their fourth consecutive game on their West Coast swing.

But it was Alex Rios who continued to be one of the team's more consistent hitters, as the veteran's on-again, off-again career seems to have hit the on-again this year.

Rios went 3-for-5 against Oakland, bringing his average up to .360. He's also been stellar in his return to right field. When the White Sox acquired Rios in 2009, they immediately stuck him in center field because they were so thin there.

Rios' .227 average from 2011 now seems like a long time ago these days.

"He's been doing that for the last four or five days, staying in the middle of the field," manager Robin Ventura said. "He looks good at the plate, and he's covering a lot of different things. He's not just hitting fastballs but off-speed pitches, kind of doing everything. He's pulling the inside pitch and going the other way.

"He looks really comfortable in right field. That's where it starts."

As for how Rios is attacking this season, he said it's simple.

"I'm just focusing on swinging at good pitches and having a good approach," Rios said.

The Sox came into the year with a checklist of players they needed to get on track, and Rios was right near the top, along with Dunn, Gordon Beckham and Jake Peavy.

Beckham might be the only one they are still looking for improvement, as Peavy has been the ace, improving to 3-0 with a 1.88 ERA after throwing a three-hit shutout Monday in Oakland.

Even better news for the Sox? Afterward, Peavy said, "I think I can still get better."

MLB Team Report - Chicago White Sox - NOTES, QUOTES

--RHP Philip Humber continued to have a week to remember after throwing the 21st perfect game in major league history Saturday. He got a call from President Obama. "It is an honor to speak to him," 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." Humber is a Republican, by the way.

--3B Brent Morel was again in the lineup Monday, but again he wasn't in the No. 2 hole, as manager Robin Ventura has temporarily pulled the plug on hitting the second-year player there. That meant SS Alexei Ramirez was the latest candidate to try to have some success in that spot, getting his second consecutive start there. Ramirez went a combined 1-for-10 in the two games. Morel finished 2-for-4 as the No. 8 hitter.

--LHP Chris Sale has shown he has the stuff to make the jump from reliever to starter, entering his next start 2-1 with a 3.50 ERA. What the White Sox would now like to see from the southpaw is more efficiency with his pitches. Sale's longest start this season is 6 2/3 innings, and he's made at least 100 pitches in every one of his three outing. So the Sox moved his bullpen day back a day to Monday, hoping it would help his command. Most starters throw their bullpen session two days after their last start, but some, like LHP John Danks, throw on the third day. Sale will now try that routine.

--DH/1B Adam Dunn continued to put the nightmare of last season behind him, homering again Monday in Oakland, which gives him three homers and 10 RBI over his past six games. The stretch includes his first multi-homer game with the Sox, as well as a five-RBI game Friday against Seattle. So what is Dunn doing differently this year than last season, when he struggled from start to finish? Call it unconventional drills from new hitting coach Jeff Manto. Manto had Dunn place a medicine ball between his legs during a drill, and that led to the two-homer game. "Jeff is always

thinking about new drills," Dunn said. "He came up with another drill I thought was kind of crazy. We started doing it, and I felt like I was getting my balance back. He's still on the ball."

--LHP Hector Santiago is still searching for his screwball, despite the fact that the closer has been getting it done in the ninth inning, relying mostly on fastballs through the first few weeks of the season. The White Sox had their video coordinator dig up video of former left-handed screwballers like Fernando Valenzuela and Willie Hernandez. Santiago has converted four of his first five save opportunities, but the team is trying to get him back to the guy he was in spring training, where his screwball had everyone off-balance. "I'm kind of a fastball guy now," Santiago said. "Usually I'm a changeup guy trying to sneak a fastball in, but right now I'm just going after guys."

BY THE NUMBERS: 2009 -- The last time a White Sox pitcher was selected the American League Pitcher of the Week until RHP Philip Humber won the award this week. The previous White Sox recipient was LHP Mark Buehrle, after he threw a perfect game.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "He's a very nice man, and he represents our country in a good way. He's a great communicator, and I appreciate him talking to me." -- RHP Philip Humber, on talking on the phone to President Obama after recording the 21st perfect game in major league history Saturday.

A's pitcher Parker grew up Sox fan

A's starter grew up in Indiana rooting for Sox

By Mark Gonzales / Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND — Four years ago at SoxFest, the boyfriend of **Jarrold Parker's** aunt asked White Sox general manager **Ken Williams** to trade for the Diamondbacks' first-round pick in the 2007 draft.

Instead, it was the A's who eventually acquired Parker, who is excited to face the team he has been familiar with since his childhood in Wednesday's series finale.

"I'm excited," said Parker, who starred at Norwell High School in Ossian, Ind. "I grew up a White Sox fan, so that will be cool."

Parker, 23, was promoted after posting a 1-0 record with a 2.18 ERA in four games for Triple-A Sacramento. He made his major league debut Sept. 27 for the Diamondbacks and made one relief appearance in the National League Division Series last October.

"I'm pretty excited," Parker said. "It's obviously something I've been working for all year and in the spring and offseason, so I'm just going to be doing what I've been doing."

Leaning on lefties: Despite batting 4-for-15 with three home runs on this trip, **Adam Dunn** didn't start Tuesday night. Dunn is 1-for-18 against left-handers this season, while the A's crafty left-hander **Tommy Milone** has held left-handed batters hitless in nine at-bats.

"Apparently it's something I'm doing against them that's not working," said Dunn, who struck out looking Monday night against left-handed reliever Jerry Blevins. "I feel fine in the box and everything else. But when I do get a pitch to hit, I miss it. And I think I'm pulling off a little bit against lefties, so that's about it."

"I feel normal, other than the lefty thing."

Although the Nationals drafted Milone, he and Dunn never crossed paths during their time in the Washington organization.

"I've been putting up with that for a year now, facing guys I haven't seen," Dunn said.

Extra innings: **Philip Humber** left for Chicago to attend to his expectant wife **Kristan**. Humber, who threw a perfect game Saturday, remains on schedule to start Thursday night against the Red Sox. ... **Jake Peavy** reported no

abnormal soreness, one day after throwing his first complete game since May 18, 2011. "I went through my whole shoulder program with **Herm Schneider** and the trainers, played long toss and did all my running," Peavy said. "Last year after a start, I really did nothing but treatment to try to see if I could get my arm ready to throw in five days."

Your Morning Phil: Peavy, Sveum, Pudge

By Phil Rogers / Chicago Tribune

Talking baseball while standing in the crowded checkout line at the Stanley Cup playoffs:

1. No one knew what to expect from **Jake Peavy** this season, including Peavy and the staff supporting him.

"I'm optimistic and hopeful, as I'm optimistic and hopeful in all areas," pitching coach **Don Cooper** told me the final week of spring training. "If he's healthy and strong, he will be able to go out and pitch effectively. He's done that before even when he's (lost) his strength."

Peavy is a season and a half away from his 2010 surgery for a detached lat, and long ago came to grips with the fact that he's not the young buck who won the NL Cy Young in 2007. He was excited for this season because he figured he would be as ready to compete as he'd been since the White Sox traded for him, and he's quickly established that he's still a factor.

A big factor.

His three-hit shutout of the Oakland Athletics on Monday night was his fourth consecutive quality start, making him 3-0 with a 1.88 ERA. He's pitched against strong lineups (Texas and Detroit), a so-so lineup (Baltimore) and a weak lineup (Oakland), and he's been a big part of why the Sox are one of the most pleasant surprises in the majors.

He's been durable -- ranking behind only **Justin Verlander**, **Jered Weaver**, **Felix Hernandez** and **James Shields** in innings pitched through four starts -- and staggeringly effective in keeping hitters off balance.

Peavy's strikeout total -- five -- was down on Monday, when he got only seven swings-and-misses in his 107 pitches. His velocity was down a tick from his start against the Orioles five days earlier, and after using a 92-mph fastball to get a swinging strikeout on the first batter of his night, **Jemile Weeks**, he did throw a fastball past another hitter. But he had terrific command on all his pitches, and the 89-91 mph fastballs were weapon enough to keep hitters from sitting on off-speed pitches.

When it was over, A's manager **Bob Melvin** and his hitters didn't gush about Peavy's stuff, as they do when teams are prone to do when they're shut down by an elite pitcher. But Peavy got all the affirmation he needed by watching hitters return to the dugout, continuing a trend that started against the Tigers in the U.S. Cellular home opener. Peavy beat **Max Scherzer**, holding the Tigers' vaunted lineup to two hits and two walks in 6 2-3 innings.

He's built off that success the last two starts, and look at these numbers:

Peavy's 0.73 WHIP (walks + hits divided by innings pitched) is the best in the AL, just ahead of Weaver (0.78) and Verlander (0.80). His .172 opponents' batting average ranks behind Verlander (.157), **C.J. Wilson** (.159) and **Neftali Feliz** (.171).

All of these guys are in their primes, not digging deep to get past three consecutive seasons ruined by injuries.

Will Peavy hold up? No one knows. He'll face a major test on Saturday against the Red Sox at the Cell but then gets an extra day's rest before a May 4 start in Detroit.

The guess here is he'll be ready for the extra day's rest. Along with **Philip "Humb, baby" Humber** and **Chris Sale**, he found away to hit stride in a hurry after escaping Arizona.

You couldn't have seen this coming watching Peavy's final outing of the spring, when White Sox minor-league hitters

collected 12 hits in seven innings against him. But Peavy did go seven and he did throw strikes. He was getting ready for his man-on-a-mission crusade, and the opening chapter has been a doozy. Hard to imagine how satisfied he feels today.

2. **Dale Sveum's** lineups and substitutions have drawn a lot of criticism on message boards in the early season, with Cubs fans wondering if the new manager knows what he's doing. The 3-2 victory over the Cardinals, the product of a lineup that had **Joe Mather** at third base and **Jeff Baker** at first base, should quiet that down for a little bit. Believe me, unless you've crunched numbers for an afternoon, you probably shouldn't second-guess a Sveum lineup. The players who start, and the way guys are used off the bench, are as much (probably more) the result of the **Theo Epstein/Jed Hoyer** statistical analysis as they are the manager's instincts.

Conventional wisdom does not apply, and you're wasting your time trying to make it fit. There are situations in life where the usual logic does not apply, and the 2012 Cubs are one of those. One other thing to understand -- these guys are in it for the long haul more than that day's game. So when they let the struggling **Geo Soto** hit in a big spot when **Steve Clevenger** -- you may love him now, but had you heard of him a year ago? -- is available, they are thinking beyond the probable outcomes of the upcoming at-bat. They know that they have to give Soto time to work his way through the fog so they can decide how best to utilize Soto as an asset -- either by pledging allegiance to him with a contract extension (unlikely) or trading him at some point between now and next January.

3. I'll leave you with two quick **Ivan Rodriguez** tales and one thought on the morning after his formal retirement as a Texas Ranger. There's no question that Rodriguez, in his prime, was just as valuable as, say, **Albert Pujols** or **Jose Bautista**, because he was a two-way weapon at a vitally important position.

The 1999 MVP was a feared hitter -- a tough out even when he got to the big leagues as a 19-year-old, and in '99 he hit 35 homers, the most ever by an AL catcher -- and had one of the best arms ever behind the plate (I think it was the best, but I saw **Johnny Bench** only on TV). When **Larry Parrish** managed the Tigers, he told me that Rodriguez saved the Rangers one run per game with his arm, not just by stopping runners from stealing bases but because the threat of a pickoff kept runners anchored within a few feet of first or second base, which regularly allowed them to advance only one base, not two. A run a game sounds like a lot but Parrish was on to something. Because of Rodriguez, **Jorge Posada** was one conversation away from becoming a Ranger in 1997. Rodriguez's contract was up at the end of that season and the Rangers were going to trade him if they hadn't signed him to an extension. **Doug Melvin** had worked out a Posada deal with the Yankees and was about to pull the trigger when Rodriguez walked into his office on July 31 to see if they could compromise. They did, agreeing to a deal before agent **Jeff Moorad** could arrive from California, and the Posada trade was off. Sadly, in large part because of the **Jose Canseco** tell-all, Rodriguez will be lumped into the group of suspected steroid cheats when he reaches the Hall of Fame ballot.

Michael Weiner, the stubbornly logical executive director of the Players Association, said last week that the steroid guys should be in the Hall, despite taking advantage of the rules. I don't disagree but I can't vote for them as long as the ballot I'm given by the Hall says that I am to consider the character, sportsmanship and integrity of players. Steroids were an assault on the integrity of the game, and players knew they were playing fast and loose when they used them. As a voter, I can't get around those conclusions. Rodriguez will be a difficult case for me to decide because he was never identified as having tested positive, but the changes in his body -- both up and down -- make a lot of people wonder if something was up. Hopefully the Hall's board of directors will have provided some directions to voters on how to handle the outdated voting rules. But there has been no indication of that, as the majority of my peers don't feel they need clarification.

Williams: Extensions not in current focus for Sox

By Mark Gonzales / Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND - There has been a recent development in Major League Baseball for teams to give long and lucrative contract extensions, even for players that are not arbitration eligible.

The latter list includes Madison Bumgarner of San Francisco and Matt Moore of Tampa Bay. But Chicago White Sox pitchers Philip Humber and Chris Sale won't fit into that category yet, according to general manager Ken Williams.

"Well, the only thing we are focusing on is our focus," Williams said. "That means keeping distractions of any sort to a minimum. I would consider that right now a distraction. So I like the way that this club has adopted the personality of the coaching staff. It's really their own personalities, too, as players as we scouted all of them and as we made personnel decision, that's in their DNA as it is.

"It's a positive environment, and obviously it's a club that's doing a lot of the things, to help themselves win. It's nice to see."

Humber is arbitration eligible and Sale falls into that category after the 2013 season.

Williams hasn't completely ruled out giving extensions but emphasized this is not the time.

"Yes, that doesn't mean it's not good business practice to consider such things and at some point and time maybe do that," Williams said. "But I don't think right now while we are trying to establish our identity and we are trying to keep the focus on the focus, I don't think it's a prudent thing to do."

Rios on board with Ventura's 9th-inning move

By Mark Gonzales / Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND -- There were several interesting twists to the Chicago White Sox's 2-0 loss at Oakland that ended their four-game winning streak.

Perhaps the strangest development involved Alex Rios, whose 11-game hitting streak ended with two out in the ninth inning when he was lifted for pinch-hitter Adam Dunn.

Rios was 0-for-3 against crafty left-hander Tommy Milone. But Rios was only 2-for-12 with five strikeouts against closer Grant Balfour, while Dunn was 1-for-4.

Kosuke Fukudome kept the Sox's alive with a pinch-hit single and moved all the way to third on defensive indifference. Dunn worked the count to 3-2 before striking out to end the game.

"I thought I was going to hit, but he (Ventura) thought that Adam had a better chance," Rios said. "Let's go for it. We're here to win games, and that's what matters right now."

Ventura insinuated that Dunn represented the Sox's best chance to tie the game at that time.

"You're looking to tie it up," said Ventura, who also had A.J. Pierzynski on the bench. "That was probably our best shot at tying it up, and that was the only reason for that."

Gavin Floyd had only a loss to show for his best pitched game of the season. Floyd allowed only two hits, and didn't walk a batter until two out in the seventh.

But he was allowed to start the eighth at 110 pitches, and he walked Daric Barton to start the eighth. Floyd struck out Luke Hughes, but was lifted in favor of left-handed Matt Thornton, who hadn't allowed a run in his first nine appearances.

Floyd was saddled with the loss when Kurt Suzuki hit an RBI double, and Thornton's streak was snapped after Eric Sogard hit a two-out RBI single.

"I just try to continue what I've been working on," Floyd said. "Just focus in on each pitch, try to keep the team in the game, and felt like I did that until I walked the last guy and unfortunately they scored a couple runs out of it."

Milone was more dominant than was Texas' Matt Harrison, who was involved in the other shutout over the Sox on April 8.

Milone, acquired from Washington last winter, allowed only three hits while walking none and striking out five in a 98-pitch outing over eight innings.

"He was coming in hard and staying away soft," Rios said. "He kept us off balance. I was off balance. He threw a pretty good game, and he had it all working for him."

Sox winning streak snapped at 4

RBI double off Thornton in 8th enough to help A's to 2-0 victory

By Mark Gonzales / Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND, Calif. — The White Sox might be the exception to a current trend throughout Major League Baseball when it comes to players receiving long and lucrative extensions before they become arbitration eligible.

Despite the impressive starts of pitchers Philip Humber and Chris Sale, giving extensions to players with less than three years of service time isn't on general manager Ken Williams' short list.

"Well, the only thing we are focusing on is our focus," Williams said Tuesday night before Sox's four-game winning streak ended with a 2-0 loss at Oakland.

"That means keeping distractions of any sort to a minimum. I would consider that right now a distraction."

The Sox's biggest issue Tuesday A's left-hander Tommy Milone, who held them to three hits through eight innings. The Sox didn't get a baserunner past first base against Milone (3-1), who threw 98 pitches and has pitched at least eight innings in two of his four starts.

In the eighth, Brent Morel had a two-out single but was thrown out on a steal attempt to end the rally.

The lack of run support saddled Gavin Floyd (1-3) with a tough loss. Floyd limited the Athletics to two hits through the first 7 1/3 innings but walked Daric Barton to start the eighth.

Reliever Matt Thornton, who hadn't allowed a run in his first nine appearances, surrendered an RBI double to pinch-hitter Kurt Suzuki that snapped the A's 16-inning scoreless streak, and Eric Sogard added a two-out RBI single.

"This one stinks because you know you had a guy (Floyd) pitch a good game but we couldn't get much out of it on the offensive side," Sox manager Robin Ventura said.

Meanwhile, some of the pitchers who have received healthy extensions despite not being eligible for arbitration soon are Matt Moore of Rays and Madison Bumgarner of the Giants.

Humber, 29, pitched a perfect game Saturday and enjoyed a breakout season in 2011. He is not eligible for arbitration until after 2012 .

Williams didn't completely rule out entertaining extensions for young players.

"Yes, that doesn't mean it's not good business practice to consider such things and at some point maybe do that," said Williams, who is in the midst of an amateur scouting mission. "But I don't think right now while we are trying to establish our identity and we are trying to keep the focus on the focus, I don't think it's a prudent thing to do."

Williams wouldn't even speculate if the Sox could be a buyer in July if they were leading the American League Central.

"(Tuesday night) is Game 2 of the Oakland series, and we're focused on that right now," Williams said. "I refuse to allow anybody's mindset to get ahead of today's job at hand and there will be a time for us to think internally about

those kind of things. But it's not right now. It's 'How can we win today?'"

Adam Dunn doesn't start with lefty on mound

By Daryl van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times

OAKLAND, Calif. — Adam Dunn, 1-for-18 against lefties, was given the night off Tuesday against Athletics left-hander Tommy Milone.

Milone was a double-edged sword for Dunn, who never had seen or heard of him. Facing a lot of pitchers he never had faced last year was one of many factors that contributed to his forgettable season.

Dunn was batting .333 with four home runs and 11 RBI against right-handed pitchers. He has three RBI against lefties but 10 strikeouts.

"Obviously I'm doing something against them that's not working," Dunn said. "I feel fine in the box, but when I do get a pitch to hit, I miss it. Probably pulling off a little bit against the lefty."

Brent Lillibridge played first base while Paul Konerko, still showing a slight limp from a sore right foot, was the designated hitter.

Peavy feeling it

Bullpen coach Juan Nieves marveled at Jake Peavy's "great feel" for pitching after the right-hander's three-hit shutout Monday against the A's. It doesn't mean that Peavy, who threw his fastball around 90-91, is a finesse pitcher, even though he doesn't have the mid-90s fastball he once possessed.

"Feel is two things," Peavy said Tuesday. "It's having a sense of being able to feel your way around pitches, working with what you've got. Feel is also a feel of the game, what you need to do. Everybody tries to have that. I guess it's a compliment. I guess I'm a pitcher."

Peavy (3-0, 1.88 ERA) has allowed nine hits in his last three starts.

There are power pitchers, such as Justin Verlander, who have a great feel for pitching. "Felix Hernandez, he has it," Peavy said. "It's acquired."

Peavy threw 107 pitches Monday and had to labor through the last inning after sitting through a lengthy Sox ninth that caused him to stiffen up a bit. He threw long toss at 150 feet Tuesday, another good sign in his recovery process from his detached lat. He did, however, skip his bullpen session last week, although he threw under pitching coach Don Cooper's watch. So he's still feeling his way through his recovery.

"I'm not giving up on completely coming all the way back," Peavy said.

Not now

General manager Ken Williams steered clear of discussing the possibility of offering contract extensions to pre-arbitration players such as Philip Humber and Chris Sale.

"The only thing we are focusing on is our focus," Williams said. "That means keeping distractions of any sort to a minimum. I would consider that right now a distraction."

Asked if the Sox will be in a position to add if they're in contention in July, Williams had a similar response.

Notes

Sox pitchers led the American League in opponents average (.213), complete games (two) and strikeout-to-walk ratio and were second in ERA (2.96) and strikeouts (143) through Monday.

◆ Humber, who would have flown back to Chicago on Wednesday, a day in advance of his start Thursday against the Red Sox at U.S. Cellular Field, was given permission to go home a day early. His wife is expecting their first child May 8.

White Sox continue to find positives despite tough loss to A's

By Daryl van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times

OAKLAND, Calif. — Aside from a few more tickets sold, what more could the White Sox ask for 18 days into the season?

Jake Peavy is throwing shutouts, Paul Konerko and A.J. Pierzynski are hitting like they're in the prime of their careers and Adam Dunn is hitting home runs again — although he couldn't get one when asked to Tuesday night.

Alex Rios, who didn't get booed as much as Dunn did last year but probably could have, also has joined Dunn and Peavy in the Sox' crowded bounce-back room.

Oh, yeah, and the Sox' fifth starter pitched a perfect game Saturday.

What else could go right? Gavin Floyd, despite being on the losing end of a 2-0 decision to the Oakland Athletics, lowered the staff's ERA to 2.58 in the last 12 games. Rookies Nate Jones and Addison Reed haven't given up a run, and Hector Santiago has saved four games in five opportunities.

The Sox fell to 10-7 but not before taking it to the final out. Dunn, pinch-hitting for Rios, struck out against closer Grant Balfour (five saves) with Kosuke Fukudome on third.

"We were looking to tie it up," manager Robin Ventura said of his decision to pull Rios, whose 11-game hitting streak came to an end. "That was probably our best shot at tying it."

Floyd (1-3) and A's lefty Tommy Milone (3-1) were locked in a scoreless matchup into the eighth inning. Floyd walked Daric Barton to open the inning, and Barton scored on Kurt Suzuki's double down the left-field line against reliever Matt Thornton. Suzuki scored on Eric Sogard's single for the first run against Thornton this season.

Ventura took no solace in knowing Floyd pitched well enough to win after two shaky starts.

"This stings because he pitched a good game," Ventura said. "You don't like to see anybody pitch like that and not win."

The Sox close their road trip Wednesday afternoon with a chance to win five of six out West. Focus on the task at hand — today's game — is what Ventura is selling and what the players have bought into.

"I've got so much confidence in [Ventura and his staff's] ability to communicate the message to the players as to how we want to go about our business in a professional way," general manager Ken Williams said before the game. "Have a little fun along the way ... as well as having conversations amongst themselves about the little things that can make you a better team and win games."

"I've seen a lot of little things that have made the difference, whether it would be holding runners to a greater degree, giving catchers a chance to throw people out. I've seen double plays turned because now some runners are taking a step back and a step closer to the base. I've seen a variety of bunt plays ... and good solid jumps in the field. There are a lot of positives, and the attention to detail that I told you guys about at the start of spring training is starting to result in better overall consistent play that's nice to see."

Williams is pleased that his surprise managerial hire — the previously inexperienced Ventura — is working out.

Ventura couldn't be more pleased with the way his players are approaching their jobs.

"Early on in spring training we were all getting used to each other. Toward the latter part of the spring they started feeling it. It's just something that happens. It's how they care about it each other, and the work they do and what they feel during a game. You hope it can always be like that and you try to ride that out as long as you can because it's a long season."

White Sox struggle against Milone, Athletics

By Associated Press / Chicago Daily Herald

OAKLAND, Calif. — Pinch-hitter Kurt Suzuki doubled in the go-ahead run in the eighth inning, Tommy Milone outdueled Gavin Floyd and the Oakland Athletics beat the Chicago White Sox 2-0 on Tuesday night.

Daric Barton drew a leadoff walk in the eighth and Luke Hughes struck out before Matt Thornton relieved Floyd (1-3). Suzuki doubled to left and Barton scored easily, then Eric Sogard added an RBI single as the A's ended a 16-inning scoreless stretch going back to Sunday's 5-1 victory against Cleveland.

Chicago's stellar pitching produced yet another strong outing on a road trip full of them, but the White Sox had their four-game winning streak snapped along with a six-game road winning streak.

A night after Jake Peavy pitched a three-hitter in a 4-0 White Sox win Monday — Oakland's fourth time being blanked — Floyd did his part. On Saturday in Seattle, Phil Humber pitched a perfect game in a 4-0 win over the Mariners.

Milone (3-1) matched Floyd all night until Oakland's offense finally capitalized. The A's did plenty on defense to back Floyd, turning double plays and throwing out Chicago's Brent Morel on a steal attempt in the eighth after he hit a two-out single.

Milone, acquired in the winter trade that sent All-Star Gio Gonzalez to Washington, allowed three hits over eight efficient innings, struck out five and didn't walk a batter in a 98-pitch outing. Grant Balfour finished the four-hit shutout, Oakland's fourth, for his fifth save in as many tries in a game that went 2 hours, 27 minutes.

Floyd, who came in with a 3-1 record and 2.35 ERA with 35 strikeouts in his previous seven career starts against the A's, allowed two hits and one run, struck out six and walked two in 7 1-3 innings.

The White Sox were trying for their longest road winning streak since a seven-gamer from Aug. 30 to Sept. 6, 2010. Still, Chicago's 7-2 start away from home was the club's best since winning 10 of its first 12 on the road in 2005.

Chicago's Alex Rios went 0 for 3 and had his 11-game hitting streak snapped, with Adam Dunn pinch-hitting for him in the ninth. Dunn struck out swinging to end it.

A's left fielder Coco Crisp was held out of the lineup after he still experienced symptoms of his recent illness after playing all nine innings Monday following five games out because of a bug and inner ear issue.

Notes: Humber, who pitched the 21st perfect game in major league history Saturday at Seattle, flew home Tuesday morning to be with his wife before the birth of their first child. Humber — claimed off waivers from the A's on Jan. 18, 2011, is set to pitch Thursday at home vs. Boston. ... Jarrod Parker, who grew up in Indiana as a Chicago fan, makes his A's debut in Wednesday afternoon's series finale. "I grew up a White Sox fan, so it's going to be cool," he said. ... Oakland SS Cliff Pennington and C Suzuki each had the night off, before Suzuki entered to pinch hit in the eighth and stayed in behind the plate. ... A's owner Lew Wolff watched batting practice from the field and confirmed Barry Bonds' trial lawyer, Allen Ruby, is now on the legal team for the club's efforts to build a new ballpark in San Jose.

Floyd keeps up trend with quality start

By Scot Gregor / Chicago Daily Herald

The White Sox got a little taste of their own medicine Tuesday night against the Athletics in Oakland.

The Sox have been getting quality start after quality start, including gems such as Philip Humber's perfect game at Seattle on Saturday and Jake Peavy's 3-hit shutout against the A's in Monday night's series opener.

Heading into Tuesday's middle game at Oakland, the White Sox' pitching staff led the American League in opposing batting average (.213), complete games (2) and shutouts (2) while ranking second in ERA (2.96) and strikeouts (143).

Gavin Floyd was on the mound for the Sox on Tuesday, and the right-handed starter continued the trend of strong pitching.

Matching the Sox' strong pitching has been a challenge for opposing teams, especially on the West Coast trip, but A's left-hander Tom Milone was up to the task against Floyd.

The Athletics finally broke through with a pair of runs off Floyd and reliever Matt Thornton in the eighth inning to defeat the White Sox 2-0.

Milone, a soft-throwing lefty acquired from the Washington Nationals in the Gio Gonzalez trade, was working on a no-hitter until Alexei Ramirez led off the fifth inning with a single. Gordon Beckham reached on a bloop single with one out in the sixth.

Floyd was just as good, allowing a leadoff single to Jemile Weeks in the fourth inning and a two-out double to Daric Barton in the fifth.

•White Sox general manager Kenny Williams met with reporters before Tuesday's game and was asked about the possibility of extending the contracts of promising players such as Humber and left-handed starter Chris Sale.

"Well, the only thing we are focusing on is our focus," Williams said. "That means keeping distractions of any sort to a minimum. I would consider (contract extensions) right now a distraction."

Williams prefers to keep his eyes on the present and focus on a team that has really come together under new manager Robin Ventura since the White Sox left Chicago last Thursday after losing three of four to Baltimore.

"I like the way that this club has adopted the personality of the coaching staff," Williams said. "It's really their own personalities, too. As we scouted all of them and as we made personnel (decisions), that's in their DNA as it is.

"It's a positive environment and obviously it's a club that's doing a lot of the things, the little things, to help itself win. It's nice to see."

•Humber flew back to Chicago on Tuesday to be with his wife, Kristan, who is expecting the couple's first child.

Humber still is scheduled to make his next start, on Thursday night when the White Sox open a four-game series against the Boston Red Sox at U.S. Cellular Field.

With wife expecting, Humber leaves Sox

By Associated Press / ESPNChicago.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- White Sox pitcher Philip Humber has flown home to Chicago to be with his wife as they prepare for the birth of their first child.

The team says Humber, who pitched the 21st perfect game in major league history Saturday at Seattle, will maintain his workouts ahead of his next scheduled start on Thursday at home against Boston. Manager Robin Ventura still expects Humber to make his start, joking, "He's no good to us today so he can go home."

Humber, claimed off waivers from Oakland on Jan. 18, 2011, struck out nine in his 4-0 perfect game against the Mariners -- the third in White Sox franchise history.

Rapid Reaction: A's 2, White Sox 0

By Brendan Murphy / ESPNChicago.com

Here's a quick look at the White Sox's loss in Oakland on Tuesday night.

How it happened: The White Sox managed just three hits off Oakland lefty Tommy Milone, who stymied Chicago for eight innings. Gavin Floyd gave up two hits and two walks in 7 1/3 innings, but a seventh inning walk to Daric Barton turned into the game-winning run. Kurt Suzuki doubled Barton home off Matt Thornton who came in to relieve Floyd. Oakland added an insurance run -- the first earned run Thornton has surrendered all year -- later in the eighth inning.

What it means: The White Sox's winning streak stopped at four games. Chicago's struggles with left-handed starters continued; the White Sox made Millone look unhittable for much of Tuesday's contest. Floyd's quality start makes it three in four games for Chicago's starter.

Outside the box: Philip Humber's magical week continued on Tuesday. Fresh off the 21st perfect game in big league history, the White Sox hurler left the team to be with his wife as she prepares to give birth to the couple's child.

Up next: Chris Sale (2-1) takes on Oakland rookie Jarrod Parker on Tuesday afternoon.

Checking in on Dylan Axelrod

By JJ Stankevitz / CSN Chicago

Dylan Axelrod is pulling a Jake Peavy, albeit at Triple-A. Both pitchers have had fantastic starts to the 2012 season, with Peavy sporting a 1.88 ERA and 6.50 strikeout-to-walk ratio in four outings. Axelrod, in four starts with Charlotte, has a 1.08 ERA and 6.50 strikeout-to-walk ratio.

From Baseball Prospectus' Kevin Goldstein:

"He pounds the strike zone with an 88-91 mph fastball, has a decent slider, and a somewhat-less-than-decent curve. He has no changeup, but he hits his spots and keeps hitters off balance; while that's the kind of pitcher who should hit a wall, he just hasn't yet...He's already a great scouting find for the White Sox, and has to upgrade that status by becoming a usable arm as a No. 5 starter or middle reliever, which exceeds any expectation ever put on him."

It's only four starts, but they're encouraging for Axelrod's current status as the guy that'll get called up if a starter goes on the disabled list. He'd probably slide into the rotation, as Zach Stewart wouldn't have enough time to get stretched out as a starter.

Axelrod and Peavy are intertwined, as no matter how healthy Peavy says he is, his recent history means he's an injury risk. There's no doubt Peavy can pitch -- just ask the Rangers, Tigers, Orioles and A's -- but, his ability to stay healthy will be questioned all season, especially after a nine-inning outing.

That's why Axelrod's success at Triple-A is encouraging. If something does happen to Peavy, or John Danks runs into a blister, or Philip Humber gets hit with a line drive, or Chris Sale needs a start or two skipped, or Gavin Floyd drinks too much brain and nerve tonic, Axelrod has to be ready.

And as things stand, Axelrod certainly looks ready.

Sox offense sputters in loss

By Associated Press / CSN Chicago

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) Tommy Milone's changeup felt the best it has yet. His cut fastball kept Chicago's hitters off balance all night.

He just wishes he could have finished what he started with a complete game - yet there's plenty of time for that.

"It's still early, definitely," Milone said.

Pinch-hitter Kurt Suzuki doubled in the go-ahead run in the eighth inning, Milone outdueled Gavin Floyd and the Oakland Athletics beat the Chicago White Sox 2-0 on Tuesday night.

"Probably the best my arm has felt so far this year," Milone said. "Just being able to make pitches and starting hitters off with a strike and then working from there and keeping the off-speed pitches low."

Daric Barton drew a leadoff walk in the eighth and Luke Hughes struck out before Matt Thornton relieved Floyd (1-3). Suzuki doubled to left and Barton scored easily, then Eric Sogard added an RBI single as the A's ended a 16-inning scoreless stretch going back to Sunday's 5-1 victory against Cleveland.

"I don't know how many innings it was we didn't score. It felt like 100," A's manager Bob Melvin said.

Chicago's stellar pitching produced yet another strong outing on a road trip full of them, but the White Sox had their four-game winning streak snapped along with a six-game road winning streak.

A night after Jake Peavy pitched a three-hitter in a 4-0 White Sox win Monday - Oakland's fourth time being blanked - Floyd did his part. On Saturday in Seattle, Phil Humber pitched a perfect game in a 4-0 win over the Mariners.

Milone (3-1) matched Floyd all night until Oakland's offense finally capitalized. The A's did plenty on defense to back Floyd, turning double plays and throwing out Chicago's Brent Morel on a steal attempt in the eighth after he hit a two-out single.

"Against that lineup, pretty spectacular," Melvin said of Milone.

Milone, acquired in the winter trade that sent All-Star Gio Gonzalez to Washington, allowed three hits over eight efficient innings, struck out five and didn't walk a batter in a 98-pitch outing. Grant Balfour finished the four-hit shutout, Oakland's fourth, for his fifth save in as many tries in a game that went 2 hours, 27 minutes.

"It's obviously something I want to do. I want to finish the game," Milone said. "There's not any rush to get me out there and pitch over the pitch count."

Floyd, who came in with a 3-1 record and 2.35 ERA with 35 strikeouts in his previous seven career starts against the A's, allowed two hits and one run, struck out six and walked two in 7 1-3 innings.

"He pitched great. It's tough to pitch like that and get a loss. This one stings because your guy pitches such a good game and we couldn't do much on the offensive side," White Sox manager Robin Ventura said. "Their guy pitched a little better. He kept us off balance and we couldn't get anything going off him."

The White Sox were trying for their longest road winning streak since a seven-gamer from Aug. 30 to Sept. 6, 2010. Still, Chicago's 7-2 start away from home was the club's best since winning 10 of its first 12 on the road in 2005.

Chicago's Alex Rios went 0 for 3 and had his 11-game hitting streak snapped, with Adam Dunn pinch-hitting for him in the ninth. Dunn struck out swinging to end it.

"I thought I was going to hit but if he thinks Adam is better there, let's go for it. We're trying to win ball games," Rios said.

A's left fielder Coco Crisp was held out of the lineup after he still experienced symptoms of his recent illness after playing all nine innings Monday following five games out because of a bug and inner ear issue. Melvin said Crisp will rest through Thursday's off day and perhaps be ready Friday at Baltimore.

Notes:

Humber, who pitched the 21st perfect game in major league history Saturday at Seattle, flew home Tuesday morning to be with his wife before the birth of their first child. Humber - claimed off waivers from the A's on Jan. 18, 2011, is set to pitch Thursday at home vs. Boston. ... Jarrod Parker, who grew up in Indiana as a Chicago fan, makes his A's debut in Wednesday afternoon's series finale. "I grew up a White Sox fan, so it's going to be cool," he said. ... Oakland SS Cliff Pennington and C Suzuki each had the night off, before Suzuki entered to pinch hit in the eighth and stayed in behind the plate. ... A's owner Lew Wolff watched batting practice from the field and confirmed Barry Bonds' trial lawyer, Allen Ruby, is now on the legal team for the club's efforts to build a new ballpark in San Jose.

White Sox morning roundup

By JJ Stankevitz / CSN Chicago

Gavin Floyd was outstanding, allowing just one run in 7 2/3 innings with six strikeouts and two walks. But it wasn't good enough, as he was shouldered with the loss as the White Sox fell to Oakland 2-0 (still think pitcher win-loss records mean anything?). The Sox offense couldn't solve Tommy Milone, who allowed just three hits and no walks with five strikeouts over eight shutout innings. Gordon Beckham and Brent Morel accounted for half of the White Sox four hits.

Don Cooper joined Chicago Tribune Live to discuss Jake Peavy, as well as a few other topics regarding the success of the team's pitching staff. Cooper also added that Robin Ventura has given him "a lot of freedom to be myself." Cooper mentioned that keeping Jake Peavy healthy was key, although if he does need to hit the disabled list at some point this year, Dylan Axelrod could be able to fill in aptly. It's just four starts in Triple-A for Axelrod, but he does look pretty good.

If you missed it from earlier this week, he's Philip Humber hawking the Perfect Meatloaf Maker on David Letterman. Also, he's been excused from the White Sox for the birth of his child. Talk about a great week.

Around the division: First things first, and this has nothing to do with the AL Central -- Jose Canseco is back on twitter. Those were a scary couple of hours. The Twins will skip Francisco Liriano's turn in their rotation, Rany Jazayerli has a scathing missive on the Royals (who now have lost a dozen games in a row) and Seattle miraculously scored seven runs to beat Detroit.

Philip Humber pulled off unlikely perfect

By Jayson Stark / ESPN.com

As loyal reader Ed Burmila once reminded us, only 21 men have walked on the moon. So that means, thanks to Philip Humber, we've seen as many perfect games in history as moonwalks. And it's been, like, three decades since we could say THAT.

But Humber's perfecto wasn't the only memorable event of the weekend. So Three Strikes looks back at the craziness that was.

Strike One: Mr. Perfect Dept.

- How unlikely was Philip Humber's perfect game? Not only had this man never thrown a shutout in the major leagues before he went 27-up, 27-down in Seattle on Saturday, he'd only thrown one shutout in seven seasons in the MINOR leagues.

- How unlikely was Philip Humber's perfect game? There are 14 active Cy Young Award winners hanging out on pitchers' mounds from coast to coast. Of those 14, 13 (i.e., everybody but Roy Halladay) have never thrown a perfecto -- but Philip Humber has.

- And of the last 50 Cy Young Award winners, only three (Halladay, Randy Johnson and David Cone) have thrown a perfect game -- but Philip Humber has.

- How unlikely was Philip Humber's perfect game? As ESPN's awesome Stats & Info department has told us, his 11 career wins before this game were the second-fewest in modern history by a pitcher who threw a perfect game -- behind only Charlie Robertson, who owned exactly one win when he tossed his perfect game in 1922.

- But then again, Robertson was in only his second big league season. Humber had 11 wins in SEVEN big league seasons before this start. The next-fewest wins by a perfect-game author who had been in the major leagues for parts of seven seasons or more? That would be 110, by David Wells (in 12 seasons).

- On the other hand ... Humber was once taken with the third pick in the entire 2004 draft. And that's the highest any perfect-game pitcher was ever drafted. The previous highest was No. 17 overall, by Halladay -- who was, ohbytheway, the only perfect-game twirler besides Humber in history to be a first-round draft pick.

- Speaking of Halladay ... the last two American League pitchers to throw perfect games were the long- hot tag team of Humber (with 11 career wins) and Dallas Braden (with 17 career wins). On the other hand, the last two National League pitchers to toss perfect games were slightly more accomplished: Halladay (154) and Johnson (233). We probably ought to mention that those two owned a combined six Cy Young trophies at the time, too.

- How rare is it to rip through a perfect game in only 96 pitches? We have pitch-count data, luckily, for the last 18 perfect games, and only six pitchers threw fewer pitches in their perfectos than Humber. But Humber threw the fewest since Cone needed only 88 to rip through the Expos in 1999.

- Loyal reader Trent McCotter has pitch-by-pitch info on all but one perfect game in the last 48 seasons. And he reports Humber was just the second pitcher to run a full count on the final hitter in his gem. The other: Catfish Hunter, against Rich Reese on May 8, 1968. Reese also struck out.

- More from McCotter: The only pitcher in that span to throw more balls in the ninth inning of his perfect game than Humber (six) was his former teammate Mark Buehrle (seven). And the only other pitcher to run a three-ball count on the final hitter was Braden.

- I know this is the goofiest Humber nugget you'll run across, but I can't help myself. Thanks to Humber's nine strikeouts, this was the first Palindrome Perfecto in history (9-0-0-0-0-9).

- Finally, it's mandatory at times like this to do the regularly scheduled ex-Met no-hitter note, so here goes. Humber was the seventh man to throw a no-hitter AFTER leaving a Mets team that still has never thrown any no-hitters. The other six ex-Mets: Nolan Ryan, Tom Seaver, Dwight Gooden, Cone, Mike Scott and (lest we forget) Hideo Nomo. As loyal tweeter @rcandy observed Saturday as he tried to digest this note, "Who's next -- Oliver Perez?"

Strike Two: Centennial Hell Dept.

It would have been an awesome weekend at Fenway Park -- if they'd never played a game. Unfortunately, once the 100th-anniversary festivities were done, the baseball began. And that part didn't go so hot for the home team. So fasten your seat belts. Let's take a look at that Yankees-Red Sox madness:

- We'll start with Friday, when Clay Buchholz became the second Red Sox pitcher to serve up five home runs in a game this year. You won't be shocked to learn that made him and Josh Beckett (who did it 13 days earlier) the first pair of teammates who have EVER allowed at least five bombs in a game in the same month.
- Then again, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, only twice before in history had two teammates ever even had five-gopher ball games in the same season. One of those pairs was Cory Lidle and Vicente Padilla of the 2005 Phillies. The other? Two guys named Beckett and Buchholz, for the 2009 Red Sox. Who knew?
- Despite that last note, I'm still not sure what the odds were of two Red Sox pitchers giving up five homers in a game within two weeks of each other -- considering, according to ESPN Stats & Info, only five Red Sox had done it in the previous 90 years.
- OK, now let's move along to Saturday, when the Red Sox held a 9-0 lead in the sixth inning -- and lost ... by SIX runs (15-9). According to Elias, this was only the second game in modern baseball history (since 1900) in which ANY team found itself at least nine runs behind and wound up winning by six. Don't wait for the "Baseball Tonight" video montage on the other game. It happened 74 years ago, on June 12, 1938 -- when Boots Poffenberger (box score line that day: 3-8-11-11-4-0) buried his Tigers in an 11-1 hole to the Washington Senators, but the Tigers charged back to win, 18-12.
- This was only the third time in the last 60 seasons that the Yankees came from nine runs behind to beat any team by any margin. The others: May 16, 2006, against Texas, and June 26, 1987, against Roger Clemens and the Red Sox.
- Even more incredibly, this was just the second time in the history of the Yankees franchise in which they trailed by nine runs or more this late in a game and came back to win. The other: Opening Day 1950 -- at Fenway Park.
- The Pirates still haven't scored six runs in any game this season. The Yankees scored seven runs in this game in back-to-back INNINGS.
- Finally, the Mariners haven't scored 14 runs in any of their last 299 games (dating back to May 21, 2010). The Yankees scored 14 runs in a span of 18 BATTERS, in the seventh and eighth innings, of this game. Hey, of course they did!

Strike Three: Useless Info Dept.

In other news ...

- Box score line of the weekend: Rick Porcello on Saturday against those relentless Rangers: 1 IP, 10 H, 9 R, 8 ER, 1 BB, 1 K, 1 double, 1 triple, 1 homer, 51 pitches to get three outs. You should know Porcello was just the ninth pitcher in the last 95 seasons to give up 10 hits or more in a game in which he got no more than three outs. But if it makes him feel better, four of them (Porcello, Brian Bannister, Bronson Arroyo and Chan Ho Park) have done it in the past seven years.
- Roy Halladay did something Saturday he'd never done in any game in his career: He walked three hitters IN A ROW. I made the mistake of thinking, "I wonder how many times Oliver Perez did that?" A half-hour of looking at the most agonizing play-by-plays in cyberspace later, I can tell you. Ollie walked at least three in a row 12 times. Twelve.
- Adam Dunn finally had his first multihomer game with the White Sox on Friday -- and his first anywhere since Sept. 24, 2010. In between multihomer games, he had 62 multi-strikeout games.
- More gigantic Adam Dunn news, courtesy of Elias: He whiffed for the 15th straight game Sunday -- making him the first player to strike out at least one time in every one of his team's first 15 games of the season since baseball began

keeping track of strikeouts for hitters, in 1910. The old record holder: Hackin' Howie Gross, with 14 in a row for the powerhouse 1963 Houston Colt-45s.

• Finally, Friday's games had it all -- including two inside-the-park homers (by Norichika Aoki and Alex Presley) and a triple play (the first turned by the Blue Jays since Sept. 7, 1979). Our favorite Kernel collector, ESPN Stats & Info genius Doug Kern, reports that, according to Elias, it was the first day to feature two inside-the-parkers and a triple play since May 31, 1980. Those noted speedsters, Gary Carter and John Wathan, bopped the inside-the-park homers, Cleveland's Toby Harrah lined into the triple play (against the Mariners). Bet you didn't think you'd read all those names in the same sentence, huh?

Ventura keeping Dunn away from lefties

By Staff Writers / USA Today

First-year manager Robin Ventura has made it a point to do whatever he can to protect certain players from themselves, and that started in the spring with Jake Peavy, and making sure the often injured pitcher was brought along slowly, no matter what Peavy told them.

That also included Adam Dunn, and was on further display in Tuesday's 2-0 loss to Oakland. Yes, Dunn struck out to end the game against the Athletics, but did so as a pinch-hitter, brought off the bench in the ninth.

The reason Dunn was sitting? Ventura doesn't want the left-handed hitter to be exposed by left-handed pitchers like he was last season, and with Oakland starter Tommy Milone on the hill, it meant Dunn was on the bench until late in the game.

"Obviously I'm doing something against them that's not working," Dunn said. "I feel fine in the box, but when I do get a pitch to hit, I miss it. Probably pulling off a little bit against the lefty."

"A little bit," might be an understatement, considering Dunn was 1-for-18 against southpaws entering the night. Add to the fact that Dunn hadn't seen the change-up/fastball lefty in Milone, and Ventura made sure to keep the veteran as far away from the pitcher as he could.

What the Sox don't want to see is a repeat performance from Dunn last season, where he seemed to lose his confidence and it snowballed.

Dunn was batting .333 with four home runs and 11 RBI against right-handed pitchers before being fanned by Grant Balfour. He had just three RBI against lefties but 10 strikeouts.

What that meant for the Sox lineup was Paul Konerko getting a bit of a breather by getting the nod in Dunn's DH spot, while Brent Lillibridge started at first base and hit second.

NOTES, QUOTES

--General manager Ken Williams has made it a habit of keeping his comments about his team and the players to an almost hush this season, as the Sox were an open book under former manager Ozzie Guillen, and a book that has now closed. Williams was asked about extensions for pre-arbitration players such as Philip Humber and Chris Sale, and he wouldn't even go down that road. "The only thing we are focusing on is our focus," Williams said. "That means keeping distractions of any sort to a minimum. I would consider that right now a distraction." He also would not respond to the idea of adding to the roster come July if need be.

--RHP Philip Humber continued to go through the text messages and tweets left on his phone in the wake of throwing the 21st perfect game in league history on Saturday, and even in talking to President Obama on the phone, the message he received from Jets quarterback Tim Tebow might have been the biggest surprise for the Sox pitcher. "I'm a fan of his," Humber, who is very religious, said of Tebow. "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."

Meanwhile, the Sox announced they are pricing tickets for Humber's next start on Thursday at \$9 (innings pitched in the perfect game) and \$27 (the number of batters he faced).

--C A.J. Pierzynski has been hitting so well (.340 entering Tuesday) that manager Robin Ventura has been finding it hard to take the veteran out of the starting lineup and giving some playing time to C Tyler Flowers. Pierzynski and team captain Paul Konerko are the only two holdovers from the 2005 World Series team, and Pierzynski said there is some pride involved in still showing that he has it. "Of course (there is), but it's the same for Chris Sale and Gordon Beckham," Pierzynski said. "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."

--RHP Jake Peavy said the key to his 3-0 start this season, including Monday night's complete-game shutout? The idea that when he tore his right lat off the bone in 2010, he had no idea if he would ever make it back from the injury. "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."

--1B/DH Paul Konerko was hit by a pitch in the left elbow, but said after the loss on Tuesday that he was fine and didn't expect to miss any time. Konerko got a breather on Tuesday, starting in the DH spot, as Robin Ventura really can't afford sitting the veteran and his bat, despite the fact that he might need a rest. After the series with Oakland ends Wednesday, the Sox have a four-game series with Boston.

BY THE NUMBERS: 9-7 -- Record for the Sox in Oakland over their last 16 games. They had been just 6-28 in their previous 34 games.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "So I like the way that this club has adopted the personality of the coaching staff. It's really their own personalities, too. ... As we scouted all of them and as we made personnel (decisions), that's in their DNA as it is. It's a positive environment and, obviously, it's a club that's doing a lot of the things, the little things, to help (itself) win. It's nice to see." -- GM Ken Williams, on what he has seen from his players and coaches so far this season.

Mariners' manager Eric Wedge impressed by White Sox's pitching

By John Lowe / Detroit Free Press

The most interesting story in the American League Central has been the Chicago White Sox's pitching staff.

The White Sox entered Tuesday with a 2.96 team ERA, which ranked second in the league behind Texas (2.75).

Jake Peavy looks revived. He pitched a three-hit shutout at Oakland on Monday night to raise his record to 3-0 and put the White Sox in a first-place tie with the Tigers.

White Sox right-hander Phil Humber threw a perfect game against Seattle on Saturday. But Seattle manager Eric Wedge also was impressed Chicago's pitching in the late innings of the other two games of that three-game sweep.

In those two games, the White Sox's bullpen pitched 5 2/3 innings and didn't allow a run.

"They've got quality starters, but you look at the young, strong arms they throw at you out of the bullpen -- it's the real deal," Wedge said Tuesday.

Perfect game comes at perfect time

By Chris Sosa /RedEye

Thank the stars for Philip Humber.

If the baseball season in Chicago truly is going to be as coma-inducing as the prognosticators say it might be, we'll need to live off the White Sox pitcher's perfect game for a while.

I won't even mention how desperately we need a distraction from the Blackhawks' implosion. (Ugh, my bad!)

Not that it's difficult to bask in Humber's masterpiece. The perfect game—and the no-hitter to a slightly diminished degree—is unmatched in individual, single-game achievement. Including Humber, only 21 players have set down all 27 hitters they've faced in one game.

The tension becomes more excruciating with each inning, and as the final out nears, the crowd can taste history. That goes for opposing fans, too. Humber worked his magic on Seattle's home field, and Mariners fans—as is customary in baseball—were on their feet in the ninth inning. There's no chance they'll forget what Humber did Saturday.

Also consider that because of the way other sports are structured, they can't duplicate that kind of table-turning drama. What would it take for Bears fans to cheer Aaron Rodgers? Or for Boston Celtics die-hards to root for Kobe Bryant?

Such scenarios are barely conceivable. Even if they could be manufactured, they would fail to match the coup de gras: automatic Hall of Fame recognition. Yep, just like that, Humber goes from a hiccup on history's radar to quasi-immortal.

Save for a Bulls breakthrough, it could be a long sports summer in Chicago. And while you can oversell a lot of things—the Sox flirting with first in the AL Central, Jake Peavy pitching like a Cy Young front-runner or the Cubs being only a handful of games out of first—you cannot overhype a perfect game.

So if you haven't seen Humber's performance, find a way. Track down a friend who's got it on DVR. Beg the MLB Network to show a replay. Have co-workers re-enact the game with Legos (fast-forwarding through the commercials, of course).

White Sox offer ticket special for Thursday to honor Humber

By Staff Writers / CBS Chicago

CHICAGO (CBS) — The White Sox are offering specially-priced tickets for their game against the Boston Red Sox Thursday, as Philip Humber returns for the mound after pitching a perfect game this past weekend.

The Sox say fans can buy tickets for \$9 – representing the number of perfect innings – for all upper reserved seats at U.S. Cellular Field. Fans can also buy tickets for \$27 – representing the number of batters retired – for lower box, lower reserved and bleacher tickets.

Everyone at the game Thursday night will also receive a commemorative Philip Humber perfect game poster, with photos of Humber during the game and after the final out, as well as the official team scorecard.

The White Sox are selling the specially-priced tickets now online, at the U.S. Cellular Field ticket office, and at all Ticketmaster locations.

Humber was named the American League Player of the Week on Monday, after pitching the 21st perfect game in Major League Baseball history on Saturday as the Sox beat the Seattle Mariners 4-0.

The game was Humber's first complete game and shutout of his career. He needed just 98 pitches to go through the 27 Mariners' batters and he didn't allow a three-ball count until the ninth inning.

The perfect game was the third in White Sox history, tying the franchise with the Yankees for the most all-time.