



Headlines of June 1, 2013

"Axelrod saddled with loss despite gem" ... Jeff Kirshman, MLB.com
"Crain setting up White Sox to be successful" ... Jeff Kirshman, MLB.com
"Dunn references his strikeout total as 'terrible'" ... Jeff Kirshman, MLB.com
"'Hawk' back in television booth" ... Jeff Kirshman, MLB.com
"Quintana eyes rebound opposite Straily, A's" ... Ethan Asofsky, MLB.com
"Marginal May improvement for Sox" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"Colon blanks Sox 3-0" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"Sox inconsistency troubles Ventura" ... Mark Gonzales, Chicago Tribune
"White Sox waste Dylan Axelrod's gem in loss to A's" ... Daryl Van Schouwen, Chicago Sun-Times
"White Sox' hitting slump takes the cake, Dewayne Wise says" ... Daryl Van Schouwen, Chicago Sun-Times
"Sox waste strong effort by Axelrod in 3-0 loss" ... Associated Press
"Offensive woes have taken hold of Sox" ... Eric Gilmore, ESPNChicago.com
"Axelrod stellar but ends up with a loss" ... Eric Gilmore, ESPNChicago.com
"Rapid Reaction: Athletics 3, White Sox 0" ... Eric Gilmore, ESPNChicago.com
"Colon stymies White Sox, Axelrod" ... Dan Hayes, CSNChicago.com
"Pain tolerance biggest factor for Beckham" ... Dan Hayes, CSNChicago.com
"White Sox won't dwell on Cubs series" ... Dan Hayes, CSNChicago.com
"White Sox-Athletics Preview" ... Jeff Mezydlo (STATS), Associated Press

Axelrod saddled with loss despite tossing gem

Right-hander works seven shutout innings before allowing run

Jeff Kirshman | MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Baseball is a game often marked by cruel irony, and such was the case for the White Sox on Friday night against the A's at the O.co Coliseum.

Starter Dylan Axelrod entered the game the beneficiary the sixth-highest run support in the American League since May 10, receiving 7.94 runs and going 3-1 in his last four starts.

But Chicago's offense took the night off in arguably his best outing of the year, reaching base just five times off A's starter Bartolo Colon and failing to advance past first base in a five-hit shutout.

Chicago fell 3-0 to Oakland for its fifth straight road loss and fourth overall to match its longest losing streak of the season, despite Axelrod striking out seven in seven-plus innings of four-hit ball in which he allowed no walks.

"It was fun," Axelrod said of his duel with Colon. "Both of us didn't have much rest on the bench. I can't ask for anything more. It's just one of those things."

White Sox manager Robin Ventura wasn't as kind to the offense, which prior to the game was batting .294 with 47 runs scored in its last 10 road contests.

"We have to be better offensively," Ventura said. "Right now we stink."

Three of Chicago's hits against Colon, a former White Sox hurler, came with two outs, with the other two runners eventually double-upped in subsequent at-bats.

The 40-year-old kept the White Sox off balance all night, predominantly throwing fastballs while mixing in sinkers that Ventura described as a "medicine ball" and designated hitter Adam Dunn called "one of the best in the game."

"When it moves like that, it's tough," said Dunn, who collected one of the two infield hits. "It's tough to get in the air. He did what he's done his whole career."

Axelrod was equally impressive despite getting the loss. He made it through seven innings unscathed before back-to-back doubles in the eighth by John Jaso and Josh Reddick, who pounced on Axelrod's backdoor cutter to break the tie.

"I threw it where I wanted to, so I tip my cap to him," Axelrod said. "I was surprised he hit that ball to the opposite field, so I tip my hat to him on that one."

"For a guy that was throwing mostly offspeed, that's pretty much what I was waiting for," said Reddick, who delivered in his first start since returning from the 15-day disabled list. "I had a feeling that if he didn't leave something up that he was going to put me on and deal with the guy behind me for a double play. Fortunately for us, he put something up."

Axelrod was later charged with a second run when Coco Crisp singled in two against reliever Jesse Crain later in the inning before Colon shut the door in the ninth for his first nine-inning complete game since 2011.

Axelrod and the defense was on point. Colon was just better.

"You put so much stress on the pitching anyway because of the way we've been hitting that the one time we don't pitch it's magnified," Ventura said before the game.

Crain setting up White Sox to be successful

Jeff Kirshman | MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The chances of the White Sox returning to their winning ways Friday after losing three straight games in a rain-shortened intracity series against the Cubs will increase if they're able to reach the seventh inning with a lead.

The back end of Chicago's bullpen has been dominant as of late behind the play of setup man Jesse Crain and closer Addison Reed, who is tied for second in the American League with 17 saves and ranks fourth in save percentage at 94.1.

But it's Crain, just two-thirds of an inning away from matching his career-best 20 straight scoreless innings, who really has the White Sox buzzing.

"He's the best reliever in baseball right now, no contest," fellow reliever Matt Thornton said. "He's striking out the side, it seems, every single outing. He's coming out in huge situations, getting out of jams every time he goes out there. The numbers speak for themselves."

Crain began Friday's action tied for first in the American League with 15 holds, striking out 31 batters in 23 innings, allowing just two runs and eight walks.

"You almost get surprised when someone gets on base against Jesse right now, and it's not gonna matter because he's not going anywhere," Thornton said. "It seems like when we get to the eighth and ninth inning right now with those guys it's pretty much locked down."

Referencing normal rhetoric, Crain said the key to maintaining success is to not look too far ahead in the future and taking one game at a time.

"It's fun to have a chance to throw every day, but it's a grind," Crain said. "Even when we don't throw, we have to be prepared to throw. So you have to keep a routine every single day throughout the season."

Crain did allow a two-run single to Coco Crisp in the eighth inning of Oakland's 3-0 win over the White Sox on Friday, but one run was charged to Dylan Axelrod and the second to Matt Thornton.

Dunn references his strikeout total as 'terrible'

OAKLAND -- Designated hitter Adam Dunn only needed one word to describe his play leading up to Friday's series opener against the A's.

"Terrible," Dunn said bluntly in front of his locker in Oakland. "I haven't played good all year. I know if I start swinging the bat like I'm capable, everything will be fine."

Along with shaky defense that has seen the White Sox commit errors in three straight games, strikeouts have also plagued Chicago's lineup, which entered Friday tied for seventh in the American League in whiffs.

The main proprietors of Chicago's strikeouts are Dunn, who's third in the Major Leagues with 69 strikeouts (Houston's Chris Carter leads all batters with 77), and Alejandro De Aza -- baseball's strikeout leader among leadoff hitters with 57.

Dunn struck out five times in seven plate appearances in two games against Cubs. And while he's never been shy about striking out, leading the Major Leagues in strikeouts on four separate occasions, including last season, he says he's ready to break out of his particularly horrid stretch.

"When I go bat, I don't put the ball in play," Dunn said. "That's what's happening. You've got to swing at good pitches and when you get one, don't miss it."

Dunn went 1-for-3 with no strikeouts in Friday's loss; De Aza whiffed once and finished 1-for-4.

'Hawk' back in the television booth

OAKLAND -- White Sox play-by-play man Ken "Hawk" Harrelson made his return to the television booth Friday after missing two games at Wrigley Field because of a sore throat. Steve Stone and Mike Huff filled in during Harrelson's absence.

Harrelson's return to the booth against the Moneyball-minded A's is fitting after he took to MLB Network in April to renounce the importance of advanced statistics in evaluating players.

Harrelson, who has been quoted in the past as calling sabermetrics "the most overrated thing to come into baseball," told "MLB Now" his preferred metric is "TWTW," or "The Will To Win."

Quintana eyes rebound opposite Straily, A's

White Sox mired in four-game slide; Oakland has won 12 of 14

Ethan Asofsky | MLB.com

The Crosstown Cup wasn't kind to White Sox starter Jose Quintana.

A start after carrying a no-hitter into the sixth inning against the Red Sox, Quintana allowed the White Sox neighbors to the north to jump all over him in the series opener against the Cubs.

Quintana will have a chance to rebound against the A's at O.co Colliseum on Saturday, when he'll start the second game of a three-game set against Oakland.

The left-hander's outing didn't start the White Sox out on the right foot in the battle for the Cup, as they dropped all three games against the Cubs. Heading into Oakland on Friday, the White Sox were riding their first losing streak since winning nine of 12 before the intracity series. The White Sox continued that losing streak on Friday, when they dropped a 3-0 decision to the A's, despite a strong effort from Dylan Axelrod.

Chicago's offense has come around as of late. Entering Friday's contest, the White Sox were hitting .294 with 47 runs scored in their last 10 road games. Oakland manager Bob Melvin said he was puzzled it took the White Sox lineup this long into the season to produce, but it couldn't produce on Friday.

"They do have a nice lineup," Melvin said. "That's why you do have to play your best baseball against them. But pitching is probably a little better than they are offensively. Every one of their starters to an extent gets your attention, and they've got some guys in the back end of their bullpen that are very good, so it's probably just a matter of time before they break out offensively."

Oakland will start right-hander Dan Straily on Saturday following Bartolo Colon's five-hit shutout Friday. The 24-year-old has seemingly turned his season around. Over his past two starts, he's 2-0 with a 0.69 ERA and is holding opponents to a .136 batting average after starting the year with a 7.27 ERA in his first five starts. Straily had a problem finding his control during his rough patch, walking 12 batters in 26 innings. He's only walked one batter in his last 13 innings.

Straily will be tasked with slowing down the White Sox offense yet again after both teams failed to swing the bats well on Friday.

"You can see, early innings, you can tell he's got a lot more confidence, the way he's carrying himself," Melvin said after Straily's last start. "He's throwing a lot of strikes, which is key for him to get ahead to set up his slider and his changeup. His fastball has been really good. You see a lot of late swings on his fastball, and that all starts by getting ahead."

Athletics: Reddick returns

Oakland outfielder Josh Reddick returned to the lineup on Friday and had the game-winning double to drive in John Jaso from second in the bottom of the eighth.

Reddick was playing in his first game in three weeks after a sprained right wrist held him on the disabled list since May 8. He was hitting just .152 when he sustained the injury, and the A's are hoping he'll return as a more productive hitter now that he's healthy.

White Sox: Dunn struggling with strikeouts

White Sox designated hitter Adam Dunn called his struggles with the strikeout "terrible." He currently leads all White Sox hitters with 69 strikeouts. The next closest is Alejandro De Aza, who leads all Major League leadoff hitters with 57 strikeouts.

The White Sox entered Friday's contest tied for seventh in the American League in whiffs. Dunn struck out five times in seven plate appearances against the Cubs, but he didn't strike out in three at-bats on Friday.

Worth noting

- Twenty of the South Siders' last 25 games have been decided by three runs or fewer.
 - The White Sox are 9-10 over their last 19 games in Oakland since 2008.
 - The A's lead the American League in walks with 224 but have the fourth-lowest batting average in the league at .246.
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Marginal May improvement for Sox

Mark Gonzales | Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND -- An 0-4 finish put a damper on what would have looked as a promising May for the Chicago White Sox.

Despite their late skid, the Sox still managed a 14-13 record in May. The offense, despite its recent skid, raised its batting average by eight points to .238, while the pitching staff lowered its ERA from 3.87 to 3.82.

Here's a look at some of the individual comparisons:

Batter	April 30	May 31
De Aza	.229, 31 strikeouts	.246, 57 strikeouts
Dunn	.148, 6 HRs, 32 strikeouts	.156, 6 HRs, 69 strikeouts
Flowers	.177, 25 strikeouts	.205, 45 strikeouts
Keppinger	.202	.225
Konerko	.233, 4 HR, 15 RBIs	.243, 5 HR, 21 RBIs
Ramirez	.281, 4 RBIs	.276, 10 RBIs
Rios	.277, 6 HRs, 12 RBIs	.279, 10 HRs, 28 RBIs

Viciedo .229, 2 HRs, 5 RBIs .252, 4 HRs, 13 RBIs

Pitcher April 30

May 31

Crain 1.74 ERA

0.75 ERA

Jones 6.17 ERA

6.58 ERA

Lindstrom 4.91 ERA

3.80 ERA

Peavy 3-1, 3.38 ERA

6-3, 3.62 ERA

Quintana 2-0, 3.58 ERA

3-2, 3.75 ERA

Reed 1.64 ERA, 8 saves

1.96 ERA, 17 saves

Sale 2-2, 4.09 ERA

5-2, 2.53 ERA

Thornton 3.86 ERA

3.94 ERA

Colon blanks Sox 3-0

Offense gets only 5 hits and no runners past 1st base as A's hand club 4th straight loss

Mark Gonzales | Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND — Dylan Axelrod brought some much-welcomed stability Friday night to the White Sox's rotation.

Unfortunately for Axelrod, his performance wasn't enough to cure an offense that reached another low in a 3-0 loss to the Athletics.

The Sox's fourth consecutive loss occurred despite Axelrod's seven-plus innings of four-hit ball. Axelrod's last two hits allowed were consecutive doubles to John Jaso and recently activated Josh Reddick that snapped a scoreless tie and ended Axelrod's night.

The A's added two more runs on a Coco Crisp single that provided more than enough support for Bartolo Colon, who pitched a complete game.

The Sox collected five singles off Colon but no runner advanced past first base. This marked the seventh time in the last nine games the Sox scored three runs or fewer as they were blanked for the fifth time this season.

"It stinks," manager Robin Ventura said of the offense. "It needs to get better. If you're not scoring runs, it looks a lot worse. It just needs to get better. I don't think it's approach. When you go over offensive stuff and give them the information, it's sound stuff. It's just a stretch that stinks."

Before Friday's game, Sox starters had allowed 16 earned runs in 191/3 innings in their previous four games. Axelrod retired 12 consecutive batters at one juncture. Alex Rios made a catch just below the top of the right field fence to rob Jed Lowrie of an extra base hit to start the seventh.

Colon (6-2) also was the beneficiary of exceptional defense when Reddick, who returned from a wrist injury, made a running catch near the right-field line to take away a potential hit from Dayan Viciedo.

Axelrod, making his first appearances against the A's, retired the first eight batters before Eric Sogard pulled a single to right.

Axelrod was supported by exceptional defensive plays by second baseman Jeff Keppinger and first baseman Paul Konerko. Keppinger ranged to his right before making a diving stop and quickly throwing to first to retire Jed Lowrie for the first out of the fourth.

Konerko also dove to his right before making a quick throw to Axelrod at first to retire John Jaso for the second out in the fifth.

As he has done in the past, Axelrod mixed his pitches effectively. After barely missing on a 2-2 pitch on the outside corner, Axelrod sank an 80 mph pitch that Yoenis Cespedes swung at and missed for the second out of the fourth.

"It seemed like both of us didn't have much rest on the benches," Axelrod said. "I can't ask for anything more. It was just one of those things at the end there."

But the Sox were kept in check by Colon, 40, who had allowed seven earned runs in his last four starts and was 3-0 with a 3.00 ERA in his five previous starts at night.

Alejandro De Aza, who reached base four times Thursday after Ventura raised the possibility of changing the leadoff spot in the future, led off the game with a single but was erased quickly on Alexei Ramirez's double-play grounder.

The Sox's next three hits — from Conor Gillaspie, Adam Dunn and Keppinger — all occurred with two out and nobody on base.

Dunn, who didn't play Thursday because the Sox played at a National League park, returned to his designated hitter duties and legged out an infield hit to snap a 1-for-26 rut.

The streak of two-out hits ended in the seventh when Konerko smacked a single to left. Gillaspie hit a potential single up the middle, but Sogard made a diving spot behind second and started an inning-ending double play.

"Seems like it has been a theme this year," Dunn said. "Our pitching kept us in pretty much every game except a few all year, but we're just not able to get anything going offensively. (Colon) went out and shoved it. But we have to find a way to get on base, some way and start creating things."

Sox inconsistency troubles Ventura

Losing 3 straight to Cubs bothers manager after winning of 9 of 12 as offense continues to sputter

Mark Gonzales | Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND, Calif. — With 111 games left entering Friday night's action, the inconsistency of his White Sox has been a challenge for manager Robin Ventura.

"You go through a good stretch, and then you run into kind of the last three games that we've had," Ventura said before the Sox attempted to recover against the A's after losing three consecutive games to the Cubs.

"The last three games, we didn't pitch as well as we had been, and that just compounds everything."

Before the Cubs' debacle, the Sox had won nine of 12 to reach .500. But only eight of their 24 victories entering Friday had occurred against teams with winning records.

Ventura hopes the struggling offense eventually will take the load off a starting rotation that finally buckled against the Cubs.

"You go through periods where you put so much stress on the pitching, anyway," he said. "Because of the way we've been hitting, when you don't pitch, it's magnified. It looks like you can't pitch. It's a stretch where you put it behind and go from there."

A return to American League play brought a sense of normalcy to the Sox with **Adam Dunn** returning to the lineup as the designated hitter and **Paul Konerko** at first base.

Ventura essentially submitted his regular lineup against the A's, with the exception of **Dayan Viciedo** dropping to the seventh spot. Ventura also warned of the danger of moving **Alexei Ramirez** out of the second spot, from where he has helped the offense.

"You have to make sure they're comfortable doing it, and nobody overreacts to it," Ventura said.

Beckham's battle: **Gordon Beckham** started at second base for the second consecutive game for Triple-A Charlotte since returning from a sore left hand during his minor league rehabilitation assignment.

"Baseball stuff, he's probably ready to go," Ventura said of Beckham, who is recovering from a left hamate bone fracture. "Pain-wise, he's still feeling something in his wrist. It's nothing that's going to break or hurt him more. It's kind of sensitive.

"I don't know if it's the nerves, but something in there is moving around and causing discomfort. It's more on his level of pain tolerance, really, just going through it. But baseball-wise, he's ready to go."

Beckham went 1-for-5 Friday night, singling in the winning run in the ninth inning after collecting three hits in his first game back.

Crain's challenge: Reliever **Jesse Crain** needs one appearance and 12/3 innings to match his career highs of 21 games and 20 innings for scoreless streaks.

Crain hasn't pitched since Sunday and is aware he must keep his arm loose. He warmed up in the eighth inning of Wednesday's 9-3 loss to the Cubs.

"Sometimes you have too much time off, your arm tightens," Crain said. "I threw off a mound Wednesday just to keep my arm loose. I've learned that over the years, and right now I feel good."

Crain has learned to trust his body, especially after suffering a right adductor strain that limited him to one spring appearance until the final four days of spring training.

"You always want to get in games, test batters and get that adrenaline going because in spring training it's hard to get that adrenaline," Crain said. "But I can tell by playing catch if I'm there or not and how I feel. When I'm out there, I go all out and need to feel right. And for a while, I wasn't able to do that until the very end. You learn that over the years."

Proud brother: **Conor Gillaspie** is taking a special interest in the NCAA Division I tournament. His younger brother **Casey**, who plays first base for Wichita State, went 1-for-4 with a double and three RBIs in the Shockers' first round loss at Kansas State.

"Eventually he's either going to be at this level, the minor leagues or somewhere I'll probably run into him," said Gillaspie, who excelled at Wichita State five years ago. "He's on his way. He'll be playing pro ball, somewhere."

The younger Gillaspie, a 6-foot-4, 238-pound sophomore, is batting .297 with 10 home runs and 48 RBIs.

White Sox waste Dylan Axelrod's gem in loss to A's

Daryl Van Schouwen | Chicago Sun-Times

OAKLAND, Calif. — Dylan Axelrod, the survivor who does more with less, couldn't have done much more in his 11th and best start in a game that seemed to reach a new height of frustration for White Sox manager Robin Ventura.

Axelrod, the former Windy City Thunderbolt from the Independent League, stood toe-to-toe with Athletics veteran Bartolo Colon on Friday night, retiring 21 of 23 A's before John Jaso and Josh Reddick finally got to him with back-to-back doubles to open the eighth inning, breaking a scoreless tie and sending the Sox to a 3-0 defeat.

The loss was the Sox' fourth in a row after three against the Cubs and dropped them to four games below .500.

While giving a tip of the cap to the 40-year-old Colon (6-2), who handcuffed his team on five hits in a complete-game performance, Ventura had no defense for his team's offense.

"It's one of those where [Axelrod] felt like if he gives up one hit, he's going to end up losing," Ventura said. "We have to be better offensively. Right now we stink."

There was little blame for Axelrod (3-4), who lowered his ERA to 4.04 while watching his personal three-game winning streak halted. Axelrod allowed four hits in seven-plus innings, striking out a season-high seven and walking none.

"It's tough," Axelrod said. "[Colon is]. It seemed like both of us didn't have much rest on the benches."

Coco Crisp's two-run single in the eighth against Jesse Crain made it 3-0. One of those runs was charged to Axelrod, the other to Matt Thornton.

The Sox had five singles against Colon. Two preceded double plays, two were infield hits and one was a harmless two-out hit.

"It stinks," Ventura said of his team's offense that ranks last in runs. "It needs to get better. I don't think it's approach. When you go over offensive stuff and give them information, it's sound stuff. It's just a stretch that stinks."

Axelrod, who has been anything but odorous, takes issue with the notion that his stuff is just average.

"I feel like my stuff is pretty good, actually," he said. "A lot of movement ... I just don't throw 95 [mph], so people say I don't have good stuff. I'm not going to strike out 10 guys a game. I'm not going to be [Jeff] Samardzija. It's a combination of knowing my strengths and how to attack hitters and not trying to be anybody I'm not.

"Being able to throw any pitch at any time is a big key. I feel like hitters can't sit fastball on me at any time, really."

"He's a command guy, not a guy who is going to be noticed for his velocity or any of his single pitches but for putting all of his pitches together," pitching coach Don Cooper said. "His work ethic and preparation and game plan, it's a nice package. And he can pitch. He can locate and change speeds.

"When he puts it together, he can execute any plan against any guy coming up. He can go soft, he can pitch in, he has a good cutter. All of it together is what makes him who he is."

Axelrod is the kind of pitcher, as Cooper puts it, who is "easy to root for."

"You can consider him the dark horse, the underdog," Cooper said.

With no offense behind him, Axelrod was a huge underdog Friday.

"Wins and losses are a funny thing," he said. "Baseball is tough."

White Sox' hitting slump takes the cake, Dewayne Wise says

Daryl Van Schouwen | Chicago Sun-Times

SOX AT A'S

The facts: 3:07 p.m., CSN, 670-AM, 97.5-FM.

The starters: Jose Quintana (3-2, 3.75 ERA) vs. Dan Straily (3-2, 5.08).

OAKLAND, Calif. — It's June, and the time is now for the White Sox to get this derailed train back on track.

In fact, it has been time for a long, long time.

"We've been saying that for a while now," veteran outfielder **Dewayne Wise** said Friday. "We have a spurt here and there where it looks like we're the team we should be, but we hit the wall again. We've had a couple of series where we just look terrible. We know we're better than we showed against the Cubs. We have to keep fighting."

Wise, 35, has seen team hitting slumps in his day, but the Sox' first 34 games, in which they hit .227 and averaged 3.4 runs, takes the cake.

"I've been around," Wise said, "but I don't think I've ever seen anything like that first month. That was rough. I know it was rough to watch."

There are signs of life, but nothing overwhelming. The Sox were averaging 3.9 runs in their last 17 games, batting .265 during that stretch.

"We just have to go out and play hard, and if you can look yourself in the mirror and say you gave it 110 percent that night, that's cool," Wise said. "We just have to pick it up on the offensive side. We're still close. We're still in this thing."

Magnified

Sox starting pitching, their strong suit, wilted against the Cubs after holding the team together for so long.

"You go through periods where you put so much stress on the pitching anyway," manager **Robin Ventura** said. "Because of the way we've been hitting, when you don't pitch, it's magnified. It looks like you can't pitch."

Before Friday's game, Ventura characterized his team's first two months as inconsistent.

"You go through a good [9-3] stretch and then you run into the last three games that we've had," Ventura said.

"The last three games, you didn't pitch as well as you have been, and that just compounds everything."

Lineup stands pat

Ventura used his normal lineup and doesn't figure to make wholesale changes soon. He again hinted that **Alexei Ramirez** could move up to the leadoff spot, though.

"You have to make sure they're comfortable doing it and nobody overreacts to it," he said.

Beckham update

Gordon Beckham went 1-for-5 with an RBI single for Class AAA Charlotte on Friday. Beckham, who played second base, is batting .344.

The only thing extending his rehab stint from hamate bone surgery is the soreness around his left wrist.

"Pain-wise, he's still feeling something in his wrist when he's playing," Ventura said. "It's nothing that's going to break or hurt him more. It's more on his level of pain tolerance, really. But, baseball-wise, he's ready to go."

Sox waste strong effort by Axelrod in 3-0 loss

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Bartolo Colon tossed a five-hitter a week after turning 40, and the Oakland Athletics beat the Chicago White Sox 3-0 on Friday night in a game that took only 2 hours, 14 minutes.

Colon (6-2) struck out three and walked none for his 11th career shutout. He has 34 complete games, third-most among active pitchers behind Roy Halladay (67) and CC Sabathia (35).

Jed Lowrie was the first baserunner for either team to reach second when he doubled against Dylan Axelrod (3-4) leading off the eighth inning. Axelrod had shutdown the A's through seven innings, surrendering only three harmless singles before Lowrie's double. Josh Reddick, in his first game since coming off the disabled list, followed with an RBI double off Matt Thornton, and Coco Crisp added a two-run single off reliever Jesse Crain to back Colon's stellar start.

It was Colon's first nine-inning shutout since leading the Yankees past the A's 5-0 on May 30, 2011. He also pitched a rain-shortened three-hitter over seven innings against Boston on April 23.

Colon, who received a 50-game suspension for a positive testosterone test last August and missed the playoffs for the AL West champions, looked as spry as ever on the mound at the Oakland Coliseum.

While the A's struggled at the plate, Colon continued to pound the strike zone and challenge hitters. He hasn't walked a batter in eight of his 11 starts this season.

For a while, it appeared the A's might not give him any support.

Axelrod retired his first eight batters until Eric Sogard's single to right. Then he set down the next 12 he faced before Seth Smith's two-out single in the seventh.

Axelrod and Colon each relied on their defense, too, for several spectacular plays.

Sogard backhanded a hard-hit grounder up the middle in the seventh and tossed the ball to shortstop Lowrie, who fired it to first to complete a double play. Lowrie led off the top of the inning with a deep fly to right field, where Alex Rios ran underneath the ball for a catch near the top of the wall.

Reddick showed off the defensive skills that won him a Gold Glove last year when he made a running basket catch near the foul line for the first out of the eighth. Then he followed with his first hit since coming back, easily the biggest of the night.

Axelrod, who had won his last three starts, was replaced by Matt Thornton following Reddick's double. He gave up four hits and struck out seven in seven-plus innings, walking slowly to the White Sox dugout afterward, sitting on the bench and putting his hands over his head.

- White Sox second baseman Gordon Beckham made his second consecutive rehab start for Triple-A Charlotte. He went 1 for 5 and singled home the winning run in the ninth inning for a 3-2 win over Rochester.

Offensive woes have taken hold of Sox

Eric Gilmore | Special to ESPNChicago.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- To Chicago White Sox manager Robin Ventura, something didn't smell right Friday night at the O.co Coliseum when his team was shut out 3-0 by 40-year-old Oakland Athletics right-hander Bartolo Colon.

"Yeah, it stinks," Ventura said.

Ventura was talking about his slumbering offense.

"It needs to get better," he said. "If you're not scoring runs, it looks a lot worse. It just needs to get better. I don't think it's approach. When you go over offensive stuff and give them information, it's sound stuff. It's just a stretch that stinks."

The White Sox opened a three-game series against the A's after losing three straight to the Chicago Cubs. They scored a combined six runs against the Cubs before being shut out Friday for the second time in four games.

Entering the game, the White Sox were hitting .243 as a team, next to last in the American League. Now they're hitting .238.

As has happened so often this season, the White Sox wasted a strong pitching effort. Right-hander Dylan Axelrod blanked the A's for seven innings on two hits before giving up a run in the eighth on back-to-back doubles by John Jaso and Josh Reddick.

"It seems like it's kind of been a theme this year," White Sox designated hitter Adam Dunn said. "Our pitching's kept us in pretty much every ballgame except a few all year, and we're just not able to get anything going offensively. ... But we've got to find a way to get on base somehow, some way, and start creating things."

The White Sox had five singles off Colon, who won his second straight start since turning 40 on May 24. Not a single White Sox baserunner got past first. Alejandro De Aza lined an opposite-field single to left to lead off the game, but Colon got Alexei Ramirez to hit into a double play.

Conor Gillaspie lined a single in the third, Dunn reached on an infield single in the fourth, Jeff Keppinger had an infield single in the fifth and Paul Konerko hit a sharp single in the seventh. That was it for the White Sox attack.

"That's what he's been doing his whole career," Dunn said of Colon. "He's got two different types of fastballs. His sinker, it's one of the best in the game. When it moves like that it's tough. It's tough to get the ball in the air. He did what he's done his whole career."

Ventura gave credit where it was due.

"He's a smart pitcher," Ventura said. "If you're trying to be patient and work him, he's a strike-thrower. He gets ahead early. He has more of a medicine ball-type sinker. Guys just couldn't get underneath it and do anything with it. Even when you get a hit there's not much to it."

"The way we're swinging it offensively might have helped him out a little bit, but he's still a good pitcher and pitched a great game. I just think, right now, especially after the last three games ... a pitcher can't give up a run just the way we're playing offensively."

Axelrod stellar but ends up with a loss

Eric Gilmore | Special to ESPNChicago.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- For seven innings Friday night, Chicago White Sox right-hander Dylan Axelrod was locked in a scoreless pitching duel with Oakland Athletics righty Bartolo Colon.

Then the eighth inning arrived, and Axelrod allowed back-to-back doubles to A's catcher John Jaso and right fielder Josh Reddick. Goodbye shutout, and goodbye three-game winning streak, as the A's rolled to a 3-0 victory at the O.co Coliseum.

Axelrod came away with nothing but a loss to show for what had the makings of the game of his life. Actually, nothing but a loss and the thrill of matching zeroes with the 40-year-old Colon, a former American League Cy Young Award winner and an ex-White Sox pitcher.

Colon pitched a five-hit shutout, struck out three and walked none. Axelrod allowed four hits and two runs over seven innings, striking out seven and walking none.

"He's a good one," Axelrod, 27, said of Colon. "It was fun. It seemed like both of us didn't have much rest on the bench. It was fun. He was out there for a few and I was out there. I can't ask for anything more. It was just one of those things at the end there."

Jaso hit a good pitch, a cutter that started off the plate and came back over the corner, for an opposite-field double that one-hopped off the left-field fence. Reddick hit a mistake, a breaking ball that hung, pulling it to deep right and bouncing it off the wall.

"I threw it where I wanted to," Axelrod said of his pitch to Jaso. "So tip my cap to him. It was a good job. Surprised he hit that well to the opposite field. So tip my cap to him on that one. It was a backdoor cutter. It was off and came

back to the corner, and he stayed on it real well."

For most of the night, Axelrod kept the A's off balance, mixing his pitches well and baffling them with a big, slow curveball.

"I kept them off balance and moved it around," Axelrod said. "Pretty efficient with my pitches. I'm definitely happy about that. Tough in the end. It's just one of those days where you've got to be precise the whole time. I made a mistake to Reddick at the end."

Axelrod had strung together three straight wins before Friday, beating Minnesota, Boston and Miami. He pitched well enough Friday to win on most nights.

"He was good. He just wasn't as good as theirs," White Sox manager Robin Ventura said. "That's probably one of the better games Ax pitched until he gave up a couple of hits. Bartolo was throwing great."

Rapid Reaction: Athletics 3, White Sox 0

Eric Gilmore | Special to ESPNChicago.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Chicago White Sox suffered a 3-0 loss Friday night in the opener of their three-game series against the Oakland Athletics at the O.co Coliseum.

How it happened: White Sox right-hander Dylan Axelrod pitched a gem, but A's right-hander Bartolo Colon was even better, throwing a shutout. Axelrod held the A's scoreless for seven innings, but he gave up back-to-back doubles to catcher John Jaso and right fielder Josh Reddick in the eighth as Oakland took a 1-0 lead and ended his night. The A's went on to score two more runs in the inning with Coco Crisp lining a two-run single to center off Jesse Crain. Colon gave up only five hits. He struck out three and walked none. Axelrod gave up four hits over seven innings, struck out seven and walked none.

What it means: The White Sox lost their fourth straight game, their longest skid since losing four in a row April 18-22. The team's pitching got back on track, but the bats remained quiet, a bad sign with two more games left against the A's.

Outside the box: Adam Dunn got a day off Thursday to rest his sore lower back but returned to the lineup as the designated hitter Friday night. He entered the game with one hit in his past 25 at-bats over seven games and continued slumping. Dunn went 1-for-3 with a rare infield single for the power hitter. Dunn beat the A's shift to reach safely. Going the other way, Dunn hit a ground ball to the hole at shortstop and beat third baseman Josh Donaldson's throw.

Off beat: It's not often a team "gets" to face a 40-year-old starting pitcher in the major leagues. Colon made his second start Friday against the White Sox since turning 40 on May 24, and the former American League Cy Young winner was in vintage form. He hit as high as 95 mph on the radar gun and spent most of the night pumping sliders and fastballs at the White Sox. In his first start as a 40-year-old, Colon struck out nine, walked none and gave up no runs over seven innings in a 6-2 A's win at Houston.

Up next: The White Sox will send left-hander Jose Quintana (3-2, 3.75 ERA) to the mound Saturday in the second game of their three-game series against the A's. Right-hander Dan Straily (3-2, 5.08 ERA) will start for the A's in a 3:05 p.m. CT start at the O.co Coliseum.

Colon stymies White Sox, Axelrod

Dan Hayes | CSNChicago.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- **Robin Ventura** doesn't go on long, curse-filled tirades like his predecessor. He's rather reserved when it comes to criticism of his team.

Although Friday's heartiest rip lasted all of a few words, believe it: Ventura is not pleased with the White Sox performance. Shortly after he watched his team waste a gem of a performance by starter Dylan Axelrod in a 3-0 loss to the Oakland A's, the second-year manager offered up this summation.

"We stink," Ventura said.

Ventura isn't lying. An already struggling offense continued to slump on its way to a fourth straight loss Friday in front of 16,416 at the Oakland Coliseum as **Bartolo Colon** outpitched Axelrod, twirling a five-hit shutout.

It's the fifth time in 52 games the White Sox -- a team that finished last season fourth in the **American League** in runs scored -- have been blanked by the opposition and the 26th time they have scored three runs or fewer. Colon also became the first 40-year-old pitcher to throw a shutout in the majors since Curt Schilling on June 7, 2007.

"Seems like it's been a theme this year," said cleanup man **Adam Dunn**, who went 1-for-3. "Our pitching kept us in pretty much every game except a few all year, but we're just not able to get anything going offensively. A lot of it has to do with tonight. (Colon) went out and shoved it. But we got to find a way to get on base, some way and start creating things."

Oakland didn't create anything until the eighth inning against Axelrod.

Up until that point he had retired 21 of 23 batters and needed just 90 pitches to do so.

But consecutive doubles by John Jaso and Josh Reddick to start the inning broke a scoreless tie. Jaso stayed back on a 2-2 backdoor cutter and lined it the opposite way into left-center for a leadoff double and Reddick yanked a 1-0 curveball to the wall in right for a 1-0 lead, ending Axelrod's night. **Coco Crisp** provided Oakland insurance with a two-run single off reliever **Jesse Crain**.

That was plenty for Colon, who threw strikes on 77 of 106 pitches, including 21 of 30 first pitches to hitters.

Eleven years to the day since he last shutout the White Sox, Colon stymied them again. The White Sox hit two early balls hard off Colon, who earlier this season was reinstated after a 50-game suspension for the use of performance-enhancing drugs, but not much after.

He struck out three and the White Sox never had a man reach scoring position.

"Bartolo was throwing great," Ventura said. "The way we're swinging it offensively might have helped him out a little bit, but he's still a good pitcher and pitched a great game. I just think right now, especially after the last three games to come and get this, a pitcher can't give up a run just the way we're playing offensively."

Axelrod -- who gave up four hits and two runs over seven-plus innings -- retired the first eight men he faced as he baffled Oakland hitters with an assortment of breaking balls and a well-located fastball.

The right-hander also used an effective changeup to induce all kinds of ugly swings from an A's offense that ranks fifth in the **American League** in runs scored.

Axelrod had at least one strikeout in each of his first six innings and rarely allowed any hard-hit balls early. When he did, Axelrod, who finished with seven strikeouts, was aided by his defense as Jeff Keppinger made a **nice** stop in the fourth inning and **Alex Rios** had a **nice** grab in the seventh.

It was the ninth time in 11 starts this season where Axelrod allowed three runs or fewer.

"It seemed like both of us didn't have much rest on the benches," Axelrod said. "It was fun. (Colon) was out there for a few and then I was out there. I can't ask for anything more. It was just one of those things at the end there. ... Wins and losses are a funny thing. Baseball's tough, you know."

Especially when the offense stinks.

Pain tolerance biggest factor for Beckham

Dan Hayes | CSNChicago.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- **Gordon Beckham** was 1-for-5 in a rehab appearance at Triple-A Charlotte on Friday but his manager isn't worried about the results.

White Sox manager **Robin Ventura** said the bigger concern is how Beckham's surgically repair wrist feels on Saturday. Beckham returned to the lineup on Thursday and Friday after he sat out a week with soreness in his left wrist. Beckham had surgery to remove a broken hamate bone on April 16 and had progressed quickly until this recent setback.

"It's more his pain tolerance," Ventura said. "Most of it has been pretty good. Baseball stuff, he's probably ready to go. Pain-wise he's still feeling something when he's playing, in his wrist. It's nothing in his wrist that's going to break or hurt him more. It's kind of sensitive. Don't know if it's the nerves, but something in there is moving around and causing discomfort. It's more on his level of pain tolerance, really, just going through it. But baseball-wise, he's ready to go."

Beckham had three hits on Thursday night at Triple-A Charlotte. Afterward, Beckham said his hand felt good after batting practice and didn't hurt too much in the game, either.

"It feels good," Beckham said. "It felt better. I had a good BP in terms of it not hurting as bad as it had. The game kind of fortified what I felt before the game, it didn't get much worse. That's a real positive thing and definitely on track now."

Beckham remains hopeful he can return to the White Sox soon. He hasn't appeared in game with them since he broke his hamate bone fouling off a pitch on April 9.

"Hopefully it doesn't get worse, it just continues to stay where it is and if it does it probably won't be too long before I'm back," Beckham said in an interview on Thursday.

White Sox won't dwell on Cubs series

Dan Hayes | CSNChicago.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The White Sox have done well over the last season-plus under **Robin Ventura** at maintaining a one-game-at-a-time approach.

They rarely bask in the glow of one victory for too long. They rarely dwell on their rough losses. Part of the approach includes avoiding looking at the big picture, focusing on short or long stretches of games.

But even veteran **Matt Thornton** admits he's surprised how poorly the White Sox played against the Cubs this week. "You don't expect that from us," Thornton said. "We have a veteran-laden team and a good mix of younger guys and we expect to go out there and play well and do the little things right. Crazy things happen -- that ball that started out

over the tarp and ended up by shortstop. There's nothing you can do about that kind of stuff. But to have a stretch of that many games in a row where you play that poorly just doesn't seem like us."

Through 51 games the White Sox continue to be a quandary.

They haven't hit at all and rank at the bottom of the **American League** in runs, hits and several other offensive categories. Although they have improved, they have committed the most errors in the AL (36) and have the lowest team fielding percentage (.981). What made matters worse against the Cubs is the way the pitching staff was knocked around. The Cubs outscored the White Sox 24-6 in the series.

Three days after they reached the .500-mark with a sweep of the Miami Marlins, the White Sox have to once again dig themselves out of a hole.

"It's been inconsistent," Ventura said. "You go through a good stretch and then you run into kind of the last three games that we've had. It's not the norm of seeing the trend that it was starting to become. The last three games, you didn't pitch as well as have been and that just compounds everything. You go through periods where you put so much stress on the pitching anyway. Because of the way we've been hitting, when you don't pitch it's magnified. It looks like you can't pitch."

Still, Ventura doesn't want his players to dwell on a series in which team captain **Paul Konerko** said the White Sox were "beaten soundly."

"You put it behind and go from there," Ventura said.

Adam Dunn said that's exactly what the White Sox have done. Though they haven't found a groove offensively, Dunn and many players in the clubhouse believe their best days are still ahead of them in 2013. Whether or not that happens remains to be seen.

"We've been swept before," Dunn said. "Obviously it's magnified because of who we played. But that's not the last game of the season. We have a whole bunch left. ... I still have a lot of high expectations for this team. I don't feel at all this first two months is any indication of what kind of team we are."

Thornton understands why the team's poor play against the Cubs might be blown out of proportion. He has been around long enough to know White Sox fans hate losing to their Cubs counterparts. He also thinks those three days aren't an indication of the team's capability even with as bad the White Sox looked.

"You want to play well in that series no matter what," Thornton said. "It's the crosstown rivals and our fans care about it a ton because it's the Cubs. They want bragging rights against their fellow employees and their friends and family. I get that and I'm glad they care. But at the same time, we played three bad games. You can swallow that loss a little better when you play good baseball and lose, but it's hard to swallow that pill. We think we're a good team and it's just a matter of getting in a groove here."

White Sox-Athletics Preview

JEFF MEZYDLO (STATS Senior Writer) | The Associated Press

While the Oakland Athletics continue to surge, the Chicago White Sox have not won since moving back to .500 last weekend.

The A's look to extend their home winning streak to seven games while trying to hand the White Sox a fifth consecutive defeat Saturday.

Bartolo Colon tossed a five-hitter and Josh Reddick came off the disabled list to deliver a tiebreaking double as Oakland (32-24) scored all its runs in the eighth inning for a 3-0 win over Chicago on Friday. Coco Crisp added a two-run single to help the A's win for the 12th time in 14 games.

Oakland has not won seven straight at home since a 10-game run Aug. 11-Sept. 1, 2006.

Reddick, on the DL since May 8 with a sprained wrist, hit the second of consecutive doubles in the eighth inning. The A's managed two hits through seven before recording three in the eighth.

After setting career highs with 32 homers and 85 RBIs for the A's last season, Reddick was batting .158 with a home run and 15 RBIs in 30 games this year. He simply wants to contribute as much as he can and help Oakland continue its current success.

"I just hope I don't screw anything up," he said. "Those guys have done a heck of a job without me, on the DL and with me not playing and producing. I just hope I can come in here and jump on this train and keep it going. Not necessarily driving it, just jump on the back cart and keep it going."

Crisp, meanwhile, has hit .349 (15 for 43) with eight RBIs in 11 games to raise his average from .257 to .283.

Scheduled Oakland starter Dan Straily (3-2, 5.08 ERA) was 0-2 with an 8.84 ERA in his first previous four starts, but has allowed a run and six hits over 13 innings to win two in a row. He gave up that run and four hits over six in Monday's 4-1 victory over San Francisco.

"I worked a lot quicker. Really, that's the pitcher I am," he said. "I was finally able to break through that and be myself - work quick, fill up the strike zone.

"I've always said I'm a strike thrower and not a strikeout pitcher. That's what I truly believe."

This will be the right-hander's first appearance against the White Sox (24-28), who have been outscored 27-6 and shut out twice while dropping four straight since reaching .500 for the first time since April 10.

"It seems like it's kind of been a theme this year - our pitching's kept us in pretty much every ballgame except a few all year, and we're just not able to get anything going offensively," Adam Dunn said. "We've got to find a way to get on base somehow, someway and start creating things."

Right fielder Alex Rios is 2 for 23 in six contests since he batted .375 during an 18-game hitting streak.

Chicago's Jose Quintana (3-2, 3.75) takes the mound after he allowed four runs for the second time in three starts. On Monday, he lasted six innings as his teammates managed two hits during a 7-0 loss to the Cubs.

The left-hander gave up six hits and struck out 14 over 13 2-3 scoreless innings to go 1-0 in his first two road starts of 2013, but has yielded 11 runs and 20 hits over 16 2-3 frames while not factoring in the decision of his last three away from home.

Quintana has never faced Oakland, which has won eight of 12 at home from the White Sox.
