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Sox spring late rally, but comeback bid falls short

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- White Sox manager Robin Ventura wanted to see more energy out of his club heading into Monday's series opener against the A's.

While the team showed some late life with a ninth-inning rally, Chicago ultimately fell short in a 5-4 Oakland victory that was marked by another solid start from A's righty Jesse Chavez.

It was just the latest display of the White Sox finding some magic in the final stages of games. Even though the end result wasn't desired, veteran Adam Dunn said he's been encouraged by his team's ability to respond to late deficits.

"If we have one good thing we've done all year," Dunn said, "it seems like no matter what the score is, we continue to battle. No matter how bad it might look for seven, eight innings, we know we're capable of putting some runs together late."

Before the contest started, Ventura held court with reporters, using the word "flat" repeatedly to describe his team's effort in a 5-1 loss on Sunday to Arizona.

Trailing by four runs heading into the final frame on Monday, the White Sox could have rolled over, but they didn't.

Jose Abreu hit a home run to right field for his MLB-leading 14th homer of the year to lead off the ninth and chase Chavez from the mound. Then Alexei Ramirez hit an RBI single to score pinch-runner Moises Sierra and Paul Konerko hit a pinch-hit RBI sacrifice fly, but A's lefty Sean Doolittle was finally able to shut the door.

"It was there," Ventura said of his team's effort. "It wasn't a lack of trying. Sometimes you hit it and it's right at people. Just because you don't score doesn't mean to don't have energy and things like that."

While the White Sox were able to get early baserunners on against Chavez, trying to rally against him was a whole different issue. Chavez never faced more than four batters in any frame, en route to finishing eight-plus innings of two-run ball. He retired 10 of the final 11 batters he faced, giving up four hits and two walks while striking out seven, moving his record to 3-1 and ERA to 2.44.

"That's probably the best I've felt all year," Chavez said, "just staying focused and ahead of the count and mixing everything."

The 30-year-old only needed 93 pitches to get through his outing against a White Sox squad that was swinging early and often.

"I don't know if we were too aggressive, but he throws a lot of strikes," Ventura said. "Either you're going to have to swing at them or it's probably going to be strike three really quick. You can't always plan on fouling stuff off. But I think guys were up there grinding it out and it just didn't happen."

Dayan Viciedo's solo shot in the second stood as Chicago's only offense on the evening until the ninth-inning rally. The White Sox (19-21) have now lost four of their last five contests, while the A's (24-15) have won five straight.

White Sox starter John Danks turned in a quality start, but his offense couldn't pick him up in time. Danks (3-3) finished six innings, allowing three earned runs on six hits and two walks while striking out five, slightly lowering his ERA to 4.88.

Oakland right fielder Josh Reddick nearly hit a two-run homer in the second but it bounced off the top of the wall, as he settled for a standup triple, scoring Nick Punto to make it 1-1. Then the A's took a 3-1 lead in the fifth when Josh Donaldson drilled one to left field for his eighth dinger of the year.

"The thing I'm fighting the most now is pitch selection to Donaldson on that homer," Danks said. "Obviously, don't want to fall behind 2-0, but tried to throw a fastball hoping he'd roll over on it but didn't quite get it out there. That's a good hitter, did what he was supposed to do."

Oakland's offense was able to put more runs on the board against the White Sox bullpen as well. In the seventh, Reddick singled and Craig Gentry walked before Jed Lowrie laced a two-run double to left field to make it 5-1.

Reliever Daniel Webb had a tough outing, giving up two earned runs on two hits and four walks in an inning of work while striking out one. Even though Oakland was able to score its crucial insurance runs off Webb, it was Danks who shouldered the blame of the loss.

"Just tried to go out there and eat as many innings as I could and give our offense a chance to come back," Danks said. "They did tonight what they always do -- didn't give up. It's just unfortunate that I made the mistake I did to really cost us the ballgame."

A's aim to keep momentum going behind Pomeranz

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

The A's newest rotation member, Drew Pomeranz, gets the nod for Tuesday's middle matchup of a three-game set with the visiting White Sox, who will have righty Scott Carroll on the mound for his first start at the Coliseum. The A's, winners of five straight, took the series opener on Monday night.

Pomeranz began the year in Oakland's bullpen and allowed just three earned runs in 13 2/3 innings for a 1.98 ERA before firing five scoreless innings the nightcap of Wednesday's doubleheader against the Mariners in a spot start -- his first since July 2013 with the Rockies.

The lefty allowed just two hits with five strikeouts and no walks in the outing, and his performance was enough to convince the A's to try him out in the rotation on a permanent basis in place of the demoted Dan Straily.

Pomeranz utilized 68 pitches in his last start and is expected to be able to reach close to 85 or 90 on Tuesday.

"We'll kick him up a few more pitches," said manager Bob Melvin. "We've been seeing a pretty consistent performer since before Spring Training to this point. Pitching in a long role can be difficult, in that you don't get regular reps out there to keep yourself sharp. But he has, and in his first start I don't know that we could have expected much more than that."

"I tried to keep my same approach out there, really," said Pomeranz. "Just come into the game and attack hitters. I was trying to stay ahead of guys and was throwing my curveball for strikes, locating my fastball pretty well, and I threw some good changeups."

It was the first time this year Pomeranz had used his changeup in a game, having kept it in his back pocket as a reliever.

"He just needs to go out there and throw strikes," said Melvin. "Get ahead of guys."

For Carroll, this will mark just his fourth career start. He has a 5.40 ERA in his last two, most recently allowing the Cubs six runs on 11 hits over four innings.

The A's pose an even greater challenge, ranking near the top of the Major League standings in runs scored with the White Sox.

"They're been swinging it well," said Carroll. "They're definitely grinders, and they're going to make you work, but my key is to just throw strikes and just let my defense work behind me. Just got to compete and give my team the best chance to win.

"It's my first time out here, so I'm looking forward to it. When I walked out there, that was definitely one of the things that I noticed was how much foul ground there is. It's pretty spacious. But the key is to keep the ball down. Especially at this level, if you keep the ball up, they're going to make you pay for it. Key is to make consistent strikes."

White Sox: Steverson returns to old stomping grounds

This might mark Chicago's first and only trip to Oakland in 2014, but it's a ballpark that White Sox hitting coach Todd Steverson knows well. He spent the 2009-10 campaigns as a first-base coach for A's manager Bob Geren, as part of his 10-year coaching stint in the Oakland organization that included eight seasons in the Minor Leagues.

Chicago manager Robin Ventura tabbed Steverson to help the team's offense this past offseason, and it's clear he's enjoyed Steverson's teaching style. Through 39 games, the White Sox ranked second in the American League with 5.05 runs per game and a .264 team batting average.

"Everybody has a unique way of delivering a message and doing things," Ventura said. "He can be mellow and very polite, and he can be up front and kind of a jerk at the same time. Hitting coaches kind of have to walk that line sometimes of being direct and uncomfortable, all those things."

A's: Crisp remains sidelined with neck strain

There's a good chance A's outfielder Coco Crisp is held out of action through Thursday's off-day while he continues to recover from a neck strain he sustained last week.

Crisp took batting practice for the first time Monday afternoon, but only from the right side, as the injury is giving him too much discomfort while swinging left-handed.

"It really is a day-to-day proposition," said Melvin.

Worth noting

- Thirteen of the last 14 games between the White Sox and A's have been decided by three runs or less.
- Chicago leads the Majors with 38 ninth-inning runs this season.
- The A's are 16-2 when scoring first, which is the best record in the American League.

Sale scheduled for rehab outing Thursday

By Alex Espinoza / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- White Sox ace Chris Sale is scheduled to return to the mound Thursday for his first rehab start since going on the 15-day disabled list with a left flexor muscle strain in his elbow. Manager Robin Ventura said Sale is slated to throw a "short one" for Triple-A Charlotte before the team plots out his next move.

"We'll reassess that and see how he's feeling after that," Ventura said.

Big things are expected from the 25-year-old southpaw this season and he flashed his ability in his first four starts, the last of which came on April 17. Sale has a 3-0 record, 2.30 ERA and 0.84 WHIP in four starts this year, throwing at least 105 pitches each time out.

Chicago has had to do a lot of mixing and matching in recent weeks to put together a rotation without Sale and rehabbing righty Felipe Paulino (rotator cuff inflammation). The club has recently promoted Andre Rienzo (3-0, 4.56 ERA) and Scott Carroll (1-2, 3.63 ERA) from Charlotte while claiming Hector Noesi (0-2, 4.50 ERA) off waivers from the Texas Rangers.

Garcia gets start as Ventura seeks spark

OAKLAND -- After his team's slow offensive afternoon in Sunday's 5-1 loss to the D-backs, White Sox manager Robin Ventura hinted he might be making some lineup changes in an effort to spark his club.

For Monday's series opener against the A's, switch-hitting Leury Garcia received his first start of the year as the leadoff man against Oakland righty Jesse Chavez.

"He can make stuff happen and that's just part of having him up there," Ventura said. "Hopefully he can get something going, steal some bases and kind of create situations that other guys can't."

Garcia earned the starting nod in center field, where he only played one inning this year entering Monday's contest. Ventura said he wants to get more at-bats from the 23-year-old, even if it means moving some players around in the outfield and benching Moses Sierra, who has batted .364 (8-for-22) in his first six contests with Chicago.

Sierra was picked up off waivers from the Blue Jays on May 3, the same day center fielder Adam Eaton (strained right hamstring) was placed on the 15-day disabled list. After going 4-for-4 with a double against the Cubs on May 6, Sierra started the next five games in right field.

"He's athletic," Ventura said of Sierra. "We got him over here and we're hurting when things are going down and you're trying to find someone. His first game, I think he had four hits or something like that. He's filled in and done a good job."

Abreu faces off vs. fellow Cuban slugger Cespedes

OAKLAND -- Two of the most prolific Cuban sluggers in the game are going head-to-head this week, as Jose Abreu and the White Sox play Yoenis Cespedes and the A's.

Abreu entered the three-game set as the MLB leader in home runs (13) and extra-base hits (25), while ranking second in RBIs (37) and toting a .273/.325/.610 slash line. Though Cespedes isn't putting up such monster numbers (.258/.340/.516, seven homers, 21 RBIs), the reigning Home Run Derby champ remains a dangerous threat in Oakland's lineup.

"We competed in a few home run derbys," Abreu said in Spanish. "I know him very well and we have a good relationship. I'm sure I'll enjoy the opportunity to get together with him."

Abreu and Cespedes were foes in Cuba's Serie Nacional before defecting and coming to the United States, and the two players have formed a friendship. They're just two of the top Cuban players to emerge out of the country in recent years, along with others like Jose Fernandez, Yasiel Puig and White Sox shortstop Alexei Ramirez.

"I don't only feel happy for him, but for every Cuban ballplayer that plays in the Majors," Abreu said. "This is the best baseball in the world. I have a great deal of admiration for all them, and the most important thing is to stay healthy and keep working hard to have success. ... I'm proud to add myself to that list now."

Upon hearing about Fernandez's elbow injury on Monday, which landed him on the Miami disabled list, Abreu said he's confident that the talented right-hander will work hard to come back strong.

"He's an incredible pitcher, I admire him a lot," Abreu said.

As for his own ankle injury which popped up in recent days, Abreu said it was more of a foot issue. Because he has flat feet, Abreu was issued special soles for his shoes during Spring Training, but they actually gave him more discomfort. Still, Abreu said he doesn't want to take any days off.

"I keep working hard through it because in the Majors you need to play every day," Abreu said, "because if you don't play every day, you lose your rhythm."

Ventura seeks urgency after 'flat' baseball

OAKLAND -- A day after his team looked hapless in a 5-1 loss, manager Robin Ventura repeatedly used the word "flat" to describe his team's performance.

Considering that offensive sparkplug Adam Eaton (right hamstring strain) and ace Chris Sale (flexor muscle strain) are still on the 15-day disabled list with respective injuries, and outfielder Avisail Garcia (torn labrum) will miss the season, Ventura said his team can't afford to play uninspired ball.

"It was just flat the whole time," Ventura said. "In the position that we're in with as many guys hurt, and the way we're trying to get through this period right now, you just can't come out flat. You don't want to see it happen any time, but I think there's exceptions to it. But right now, you can't play that way."

As good as D-backs starter Chase Anderson looked in giving up one run on two hits over 5 1/3 innings Sunday, Ventura said it was a matter of his team executing.

"It has nothing to do with that," Ventura said. "I can tell the way we are by the way it is in our dugout. I can tell and know what it's like. It's not like I haven't had a day where I felt flat. But you can either give into it or you can try to change it, and I don't think anybody tried to change it."

Worth noting

- Outfielder Adam Eaton (right hamstring strain) joined the team in Oakland to work out before heading out on a scheduled Minor League rehab assignment, as he is hoping to be return from the DL when eligible Sunday.

"He's getting closer and closer to 100 [percent] every day apparently," Ventura said. "He's doing better and I think that's part of it so we can have him out here and see him."

White Sox rally, but lose to A's 5-4

By Colleen Kane / Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND, Calif. – The White Sox began their nine-game road trip Sunday night with flight delays that pushed their trip to California for their series with the Athletics to nearly eight hours.

It wasn't the best way to start a turnaround from what manager Robin Ventura called a "flat" effort against the Diamondbacks over the weekend.

The Sox finally were able to find the offensive surge they needed in the ninth inning Monday night, but it was too late in a 5-4 loss to the A's, the first of three games at O.co Coliseum.

Afterward, Ventura said the effort was better than in a 5-1 loss to the Diamondbacks on Sunday.

"It wasn't a lack of trying," Ventura said. "Sometimes you hit it, and it's right at people. Just because you don't score doesn't mean you don't have energy and things like that. (Sunday) was a different deal."

The Sox mustered only two earned runs and five hits and struck out seven times in eight innings off A's right-hander Jesse Chavez. The runs both came on solo homers, the first from Sox right fielder Dayan Viciedo to right field to put the Sox ahead 1-0 in the second inning.

Jose Abreu added the second homer in the ninth inning, ending Chavez's bid for his first career complete game.

Abreu's 14th home run of the season sparked a Sox rally against A's relievers Fernando Abad and Jim Johnson. Adam Dunn walked, Viciedo hit a double and Alexei Ramirez hit an RBI single to cut into the A's lead. Paul Konerko's sacrifice fly brought the Sox within 5-4. But Tyler Flowers and Leury Garcia struck out to end it.

"We don't ever think we're out of it," Dunn said. "We have an offense now that we have proven it doesn't matter what the score is. For the most part late in games we bear down, have good at-bats and we usually make it pretty interesting."

After Viciedo's homer in the second, A's right fielder Josh Reddick hit an RBI triple to the center-field wall off Sox left-hander John Danks in the bottom of the second to tie the game at 1-1.

A's third baseman Josh Donaldson added a two-run homer to left field in the fifth inning. Danks had walked Reddick and then struck out the next two A's batters before Donaldson hit his eighth homer of the season for a 3-1 lead.

Danks lasted six innings, allowing three earned runs on six hits, striking out five and walking two.

"The thing I'm fighting the most now is pitch selection to Donaldson on that homer," Danks said. "I obviously don't want to fall behind 2-0. I tried to throw a fastball away hoping he'd maybe roll over on it,

and I didn't quite get it out there. He's a good hitter. He did what he's supposed to do and cost us the game.

"I was a little bit chapped after the homer, so I just tried to go out there and eat as many innings as I could, give our offense a chance to come back. They obviously did tonight what they always do, didn't give up. It's just unfortunate that I made the mistake I did to really cost us the ballgame."

Reliever Daniel Webb entered in the seventh and allowed a single, a walk and a two-run double from Jed Lowrie for a 5-1 A's lead.

Before Monday's game, Ventura expressed concern about the lackluster performance Sunday.

"It's not like I haven't had a day when I felt flat," Ventura said. "You can either give in to it or you can try and change it. And I didn't think anybody tried to change it. They knew what I was thinking during the game. ... There are times when you try to help them by not having batting practice on a day game but we seem to, as a group, have a day like that when you give them some rope to let them rest, and it ends up going too far."

Sox's Sale expected to make rehab start Thursday

By Colleen Kane / Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Chicago White Sox left-hander Chris Sale is set to make a rehab start Thursday with Triple-A Charlotte at Durham, the Sox announced in their team notes Monday.

Sale was placed on the disabled list on April 22 (retroactive to April 18) with a left flexor muscle strain. He was eligible to return from the DL on May 3, but the Sox have been cautious with their top pitcher.

Sale threw a four-inning simulated game Saturday at U.S. Cellular Field after two bullpen sessions earlier in his recovery.

His next move after the rehab start is yet to be determined. Sale said Saturday that he would like to return after just one rehab start but knows that the team might decide he needs more.

Todd Steverson's philosophy a hit so far

After years with A's organization, hitting coach getting message across with White Sox

By Colleen Kane / Chicago Tribune

OAKLAND, Calif. — The White Sox have many new players this year, so third baseman Conor Gillaspie said it is hard to quantify the impact new hitting coach Todd Steverson has had on the team.

Gillaspie instead measures the impact in traits that have helped Steverson fit in with his new team after 10 seasons in the Athletics organization, which he visited with the Sox on Monday to start a three-game series at O.co Coliseum. It starts with Steverson's ability to convey his message effectively and simply

and also involves maintaining a fun and laid-back atmosphere for the hitters, a big plus for Gillaspie, who was often overly hard on himself last season.

"I think it was a great move getting him here. He's done a really good job," Gillaspie said. "We listen to music while we're hitting, not overthinking it, not overdoing it. If something's not working out or he gets the sense we're frustrated with something, we'll switch mindsets or do something different the next day."

Aside from some lackluster efforts, like the one Sunday against the Diamondbacks that drew anger from manager Robin Ventura, the Sox offense has thus far made strides from the one that finished last in the American League with 598 runs scored last season. Entering Monday, the Sox were second in the AL with 5.05 runs per game. The additions of Jose Abreu and Adam Eaton have a lot to do with that, but so do the early successes of players such as Dayan Viedo and Tyler Flowers.

Sox manager Robin Ventura said Steverson has been able to explain his philosophy to players differently than others have, and it has worked in several cases.

"There's just a unique way he has of saying it that guys buy into it," Ventura said. "He can be mellow and very polite, and he can be upfront and kind of a jerk at the same time. Hitting coaches have to walk that line sometimes of being direct and uncomfortable and all those things to get your message (across)."

Steverson spent the previous decade as a minor league instructor and manager and big-league coach with the A's. He said he was hired by A's director of player development Keith Lieppman in part because he understood the philosophy of the system, some of which he is trying to implement with the Sox.

"This whole (A's) system, and we're trying to do the same thing with our system, is to get them to understand the thought process of having discipline and taking quality at-bats," Steverson said. "A lot of people put a lot of credence on the 'Moneyball' theory, and if you break it down to the simplest form, why wouldn't you want people on base? Why wouldn't you want people that are disciplined enough at the plate to swing at a ball that they can hit?"

"The basis of it is developing players who — because not everybody's a superstar — have the ability to contribute to a big-league team in some sort of way offensively, and a lot of that boils down to the ability to get on base."

Steverson said he was happy to return to greet some of the coaches he worked with and players he developed in the recent past.

"That doesn't take away the fact that I'd still like to walk away with a smile on my face at the end of the day," Steverson said. "We've got to get more runs than they do. But other than that, it's good to see them."

Extra innings: Sox left-hander Chris Sale is set to make a rehab start Thursday with Triple-A Charlotte at Durham in his recovery from a flexor muscle strain. Sale threw a four-inning simulated game Saturday at U.S. Cellular Field after two bullpen sessions. His next move after the rehab start is yet to be determined. ... The Sox released left-handed reliever David Purcey and infielder Alex Liddi from Charlotte on Monday. Right-handed reliever Maikel Cleto was outrighted to Charlotte after he was designated for assignment Saturday. ... A day after misplaying a fly ball to allow a triple to start Sunday's game, Alejandro De Aza was moved to start in left field, while Leury Garcia led off and started in center field.

White Sox' rally falls short in 5-4 loss to Athletics

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times

OAKLAND, Calif. — Josh Donaldson hit a tiebreaking two-run homer, Josh Reddick tripled in a run and Jed Lowrie doubled in two more Monday night as the Oakland Athletics held on to defeat the White Sox 5-4.

The loss was the third in a row for the Sox (19-21), who — until they scored three runs in the ninth inning — opened a nine-game road trip on a flat note a day after manager Robin Ventura questioned his team's energy and enthusiasm during a 5-1 home loss to the Arizona Diamondbacks.

The Sox had four hits Sunday and five against A's starter Jesse Chavez (3-1), two of them home runs by Dayan Viciedo in the second inning and Jose Abreu in the ninth.

After Abreu's homer, his 14th, the Sox made it interesting. Viciedo doubled Adam Dunn to third, and Ramirez drove in a run with a single. Then Paul Konerko hit a pinch-hit sacrifice fly to make it 5-4. After Ramirez stole second, pinch hitter Tyler Flowers and Leury Garcia struck out against lefty Sean Doolittle.

Ventura started Garcia in center field, moving Alejandro De Aza to left. Garcia, who batted in the leadoff spot, was 0-for-5.

Sox starter John Danks (3-3) needed 116 pitches to get through six innings. He gave up three runs, six hits and two walks and struck out five. Danks was 6-1 with a 2.12 ERA in nine career starts against the A's going into the game.

NOTES: Jose Abreu is the first player in White Sox history, and sixth in MLB history, to hit at least 14 home runs in his first 40 career games (last Albert Pujols, 14 in 2001).

◆ His 38 RBI through 40 career games are the second most in franchise history (Zeke Bonura, 43 in 1941).

◆ His 26 extra-base hits are the most by a White Sox through 40 games of a season since Frank Thomas in 1994 (27)

Robin Ventura still miffed by White Sox' effort Sunday

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times

OAKLAND, Calif. — When Robin Ventura calls out his team in public, you take notes. You even go back the next day to see if the manager had calmed down yet.

On Monday, Ventura wasn't backing down an inch.

A day after watching his team look sleepy in a loss to the struggling Arizona Diamondbacks and rookie pitcher Chase Anderson, Ventura expanded on his curt and even surly postgame session with media when he said "we stunk."

"It was just flat," Ventura reiterated Monday before the Sox opened a nine-game road trip with a 5-4 loss to Jesse Chavez and the A's. "I could tell right when I walked in [Sunday]. You're trying to get them going, and it was flat the whole time."

Ventura, who had been away to attend his daughter's college graduation, had already seen too many runners picked off or thrown out at third base on grounders to the shortstop during the week, and then arrived just in time to see center fielder Alejandro De Aza misplay Gerardo Parra's fly ball into a triple to start the game.

"The first play kind of set me off from there," Ventura said. "It was just flat the whole time, and the position we're in with as many guys hurt and the way we're trying to get through this period right now, you can't come out flat."

Sox hitters tipped caps to
D-backs pitching but Ventura had a thought of his own.

"It has nothing to do with that. I can tell the way we are by the way it is in our dugout; I can tell," Ventura said. "You can either give in to it or you can try and change it. And I didn't think anybody tried to change it."

On Monday, the Sox scratched out five hits against Chavez, including homers by Dayan Viciedo (his third) and Jose Abreu (14th). John Danks (3-3) gave up three runs over six innings, including two-run homer by Josh Donaldson.

Ventura seldom goes public with such issues. Handling things behind closed doors is a trait general manager Rick Hahn prefers. But this was an exception.

The Sox are 5-6 since May 2 when center fielder and leadoff man Adam Eaton went out with a hamstring injury.

"We need [Eaton] back," said first-base coach Daryl Boston. "When he's in there we don't have those moments. He makes everybody else better just with his effort alone. We sorely miss him."

"You want those guys to be in there and it's different when he's in there," Ventura said. "We've also been playing this way for a while and it's been there. So whoever is in the lineup, it's their responsibility to do it. That's where I'm at.

"It's your responsibility of showing up every day and what it's supposed to be like every day. And that wasn't there [Sunday]."

NOTES: **Chris Sale** (left flexor muscle strain) will pitch in a game for the first time in 28 days when he makes an injury rehabilitation start for Class AAA Charlotte in Durham on Thursday. Sale's next scheduled throw day and location will be determined after Thursday's start.

◆ **Adam Eaton** (right hamstring) is expected to begin a rehab assignment with Charlotte on Wednesday.

◆ Right-hander **Maikel Cleto**, who was designated for assignment on Saturday, cleared waivers and was outrighted to Charlotte.

◆ **Jose Abreu** was still favoring his sore left ankle during his home-run trot in the ninth inning.

White Sox show some fight in ninth but fall short

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald

White Sox manager Robin Ventura weighed in big after Sunday's lethargic 5-1 loss to the last-place Diamondbacks at U.S. Cellular Field.

During his first two years in the dugout, Ventura would often get angry but stay composed in front of the media. Not Sunday, when he somewhat shockingly dropped two "stunk," an "uninspired" and accused every player expect fill-in starting pitcher Hector Noesi of failing to show up.

It was a very brief postgame press session, but Ventura's curt words spoke volumes. And the Sox' manager had a little more to say on the topic before Monday night's game at Oakland.

As for the game itself, the White Sox looked flat again through eight innings and trailed 5-1.

But the bats finally came to life in the ninth, with Jose Abreu hitting a solo home run, Alexei Ramirez delivering an RBI single and pinch hitter Paul Konerko adding a sacrifice fly.

That was a good sign, but not enough in a 5-4 loss.

With Ramirez on second base, pinch hitter Tyler Flowers and Leury Garcia struck out to end it, running the Sox' losing streak to three.

On Sunday, Arizona starter Chase Anderson made his major-league debut and, along with four relievers, managed to shut the Sox down on 4 hits.

The lethargic loss also featured more poor defensive play in the outfield, this time by Alejandro De Aza in center, and another baserunning error, this time when Abreu and his bad left ankle paid the predictable price trying to stretch a single into a double.

Flowers and Konerko (who only appeared as a pinch hitter) gave credit to Anderson for pitching a good first game, but Ventura was sticking to his guns the next day.

"It has nothing to do with that," Ventura told reporters in Oakland. "I can tell the way we are by the way it is in our dugout. You can either give in to it or you can try and change it. And I didn't think anybody tried to change it."

Clearly, Ventura was trying to slam the brakes on another extended slide that occurred so frequently in 2013.

Worth noting:

On the disabled list since April 18 with a strained flexor muscle, Chris Sale officially has been cleared to make a rehab start with Class AAA Charlotte. He pitches Thursday in Durham.

Sale is likely to make 2 minor-league starts before returning to the rotation when the Sox are back at U.S. Cellular Field on May 22 to play the Yankees.

Center fielder Adam Eaton (hamstring) is set to start his rehab assignment with Charlotte on Wednesday. Eaton hopes to be back in the White Sox' lineup Sunday, at Houston.

Erratic relief pitcher Maikel Cleto, who was designated for assignment Saturday, cleared waivers and is heading to Charlotte. The Knights released left-handed reliever David Purcey and infielder Alex Liddi, and there is speculation that standout second baseman Micah Johnson is going to be promoted from AA Birmingham to Charlotte.

Stock watch: Beckham making his move

By Doug Padilla / ESPN Chicago

RISING

Gordon Beckham, 2B: After an oblique injury this spring and a slow start upon his return, Beckham is hot at the plate now. He had two more hits Sunday and has hit safely in 11 of his past 12 games. He is batting .393 (11-for-28) with two home runs and five RBIs over his past seven games. Beckham's batting average is up to .250 overall this season with a .292 on-base percentage.

Alexei Ramirez, SS: After a hitless afternoon Sunday (0-for-3), Ramirez is still batting .421 (8-for-19) over his past five games. He also has a triple, home run and five RBIs over that span. Ramirez also has six stolen bases to lead the team, although he did commit three errors in a span of two games this past

weekend.

Paul Konerko, PH/DH/1B: The captain has started to figure out the nuances of his part-time role with a .391 batting average (9-for-23) since April 22. In the month of May alone, his five RBIs are tied for second best on the club behind only Ramirez's seven. Konerko is 4-for-4 lifetime against A's starter Jesse Chavez, so there is an outside chance he could be in the lineup Monday. But with A's lefties Drew Pomeranz and Tommy Milone starting Tuesday and Wednesday respectively, Konerko figures to get plenty of playing time in the upcoming series.

FALLING

Dayan Viciedo, OF: After an impressive March/April when Viciedo batted .348 with a .938 OPS, the slugger has cooled off considerably in the early part of May. The right-handed hitter is batting just .179 (7-for-39) this month with just one extra-base hit. There is a sign that he has become more anxious at the plate, an issue that has plagued his career. Viciedo has just two walks in 10 games this month, compared to 10 walks in the 23 games he started last month.

Adam Dunn, DH, 1B: Over the opening month of the season, Dunn looked free and easy at the plate, possibly the product of not having to be the main run producer. Lately, though, that free-and-easy style seems to be missing as Dunn is just 5-for-27 (.185) in nine games this month. Dunn has two doubles in May, but he hasn't hit a home run since April 24 at Detroit.

Marcus Semien, INF: It's impossible to deny Semien's ability to hit in the clutch, but his overall production at the plate has hit a snag. He has just four hits in his 21 at-bats this month (.190). Now comes the issue of sporadic playing time since second baseman Gordon Beckham and third baseman Conor Gillaspie are healthy. Semien could be looking at a trip back to Triple-A Charlotte once Adam Eaton comes off the disabled list. The first day Eaton is eligible to return is Sunday at Houston.

White Sox bats wake up too late in loss to Oakland

By Dan Hayes / CSN Chicago

OAKLAND — The White Sox finally broke through late Monday night.

Unfortunately for them the hole they were in was a tad too steep.

Mostly shut down for eight innings, the White Sox rallied for three ninth-inning runs but stranded the tying run in scoring position in a 5-4 loss to the Oakland A's at O.co Coliseum.

Oakland starting pitcher Jesse Chavez worked into the ninth inning as he outpitched John Danks and the White Sox lost their third in a row. Lost in the defeat were solo homers by Dayan Viciedo and Jose Abreu, who clubbed his major-league leading 14th. Abreu's homer to lead off the ninth sparked the White Sox

rally but Oakland reliever Sean Doolittle struck out Tyler Flowers and Leury Garcia with the tying run on second base.

"We don't ever think we're out of it," first baseman Adam Dunn said. "We have an offense now that we have proven it doesn't matter what the score is. For the most part late in games we bear down, have good at-bats and we usually make it pretty interesting."

The White Sox didn't have any energy in Sunday's loss prompting manager Robin Ventura to call them out in his postgame press conference.

But energy wasn't the issue on Monday.

Chavez was.

He served up a second-inning solo homer to Vicedo to give the White Sox a 1-0 lead. Then he minimized the damage and got out of trouble in the fifth inning when Conor Gillaspie lined out to center with two outs and runners on second and third.

From there, Chavez retired 10 in a row until Abreu homered in the ninth inning. Abreu became the sixth player in major league history to hit 14 homers through the first 40 games of his career, including the first in White Sox history.

"We swung it all right," Ventura said. "We had guys on base, Conor squared it up a couple times just right at people. Stuff like that happens. (Chavez) was good tonight, throwing strikes and getting ahead. We didn't foul too many off. He pitched a good game. We had a chance there in the ninth, it just didn't happen."

After Abreu homered, Oakland went to one of three relievers it used in the ninth.

Adam Dunn walked, Vicedo doubled and Alexei Ramirez singled in a run to make it 5-3. Paul Konerko's sacrifice fly cut the deficit to a run but Doolittle got Flowers and Garcia.

Two batters after Danks walked leadoff hitter Josh Reddick, Oakland jumped ahead 3-1. Josh Donaldson ripped a 2-0 fastball from Danks (3-3) into the bleachers in left for a two-run homer with two outs in the fifth inning.

Danks allowed three earned runs and six hits over six innings. He struck out five and walked two.

"It's been a focus, just making them earn their way on," Danks said. "The thing I'm fighting the most now is pitch selection to Donaldson on that homer. I obviously don't want to fall behind 2-0. I tried to throw a fastball away hoping he'd maybe roll over on it, and I didn't quite get it out there. He's a good hitter. He did what he's supposed to do and cost us the game."

The A's broke the game open in the seventh inning against reliever Daniel Webb, who walked four batters in one-plus innings. Lowrie's one-out double to left-center field drove in two to give Oakland a 5-1 lead.

Ventura was happy with what he saw from the White Sox even though the offense didn't produce until late.

"(Energy) was there," Ventura said. "It wasn't a lack of trying. Sometimes you hit it and it's right at people. Just because you don't score doesn't mean you don't have energy and things like that. Yesterday was a different deal. So was today."

Robin Ventura sends White Sox strong message

By Dan Hayes / CSN Chicago

OAKLAND — Robin Ventura is secure in his decision to rip his team.

On Monday the manager passionately expanded upon why he was so upset with his White Sox players following Sunday's loss to the Arizona Diamondbacks.

That he could become that angry after returning from his daughter's college graduation — and that he would rehash it again Monday at length — gives you an idea how upset Ventura was with his players and what he doesn't want to see from them again.

"I could tell right when I walked in," Ventura said. "I got there from airport and you could kind of tell it was flat. You're trying to get them going and it was flat the whole time. The first play kind of set me off from there. It was just flat the whole time, and the position we're in with as many guys hurt and the way we're trying to get through this period right now, you can't come out flat. You don't want to see it any time, but there are exceptions to it. Right now, you can't play that way."

Teams often get accused of looking flat when they don't hit, as the White Sox often were in 2013.

Lack of offense and lack of energy go hand in hand.

Though Ventura got upset with his players on the same day that Arizona rookie Chase Anderson and four relievers **combined on a four-hitter**, the manager said it was much more than just getting shut down by the opposition.

"It has nothing to do with that," Ventura said. "I can tell the way we are by the way it is in our dugout. I can tell. And I know what it's like. It's not like I haven't had a day when I felt flat. You can either give in to it or you can try and change it. And I didn't think anybody tried to change it. They knew what I was thinking during the game. They knew exactly what I was thinking during the game. That's what comes out.

"There are times when you try to help them by not having batting practice on a day game but we seem to, as a group, have a day like that when you give them some rope to let them rest and it ends up going too far. And you can say it's lethargic or, whatever, but I know what it feels like I've been on a team that it happens like that. It's not like I don't know from experience or know what it looks like."

Catcher Tyler Flowers said he thought the White Sox looked flat in large part because of Anderson. But he also said he's so focused on working with the pitcher that he doesn't have time to take stock of the clubhouse and dugout as Ventura would.

"He gets to oversee everything," Flowers said. "He can take in everybody's energy or their lack thereof. Kind of easy for him to see all that. ... It seemed like he wasn't pleased with that."

Flowers said the White Sox have played with good energy this season, that it has consistently been good. While Ventura agrees for the most part he doesn't want any lapses and chose Sunday to send a message.

"It's your responsibility of showing up every day and what it's supposed to be like every day," Ventura said. "And that wasn't there yesterday."

Chris Sale to start rehab assignment on Thursday

By Dan Hayes / CSN Chicago

OAKLAND — Chris Sale didn't accompany the White Sox to California as he's set to begin a rehab assignment on Thursday.

Sale will start for Triple-A Charlotte at Durham on Thursday, manager Robin Ventura announced. The outing would be Sale's first appearance since he threw 127 pitches against the Boston Red Sox on April 17.

Sale is on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to April 18 with a left flexor muscle strain. He threw a 60-pitch simulated game at U.S. Cellular Field on Saturday and said he felt "brand new."

The White Sox have hinted Sale could make two rehab starts and possibly return to the mound on May 25 against the New York Yankees.

White Sox hope Leury Garcia can 'make stuff happen'

By Dan Hayes / CSN Chicago

OAKLAND — In search of energy and a change of pace, the White Sox inserted Leury Garcia into the leadoff spot in centerfield on Monday.

The utility infielder is excited about the chance, one he learned about after he arrived at O.co Coliseum. Garcia has seven outfield appearances in his major league career, 10 more in the minors and a handful in winter ball.

"As I soon as I got here I saw the lineup and I was like 'Ah Oh,' " Garcia said with a laugh. "I like it. I love it. It's fun. They asked me if I wanted to play, if I would like it and I'm like 'Why not.' ...

"It's a little different between infield and outfield. It's a little different, but still it's not difficult. It's not a big difference."

Ventura hopes Garcia can spark a team that struggled with energy Sunday enough for the manager to speak out. Garcia has impacted the team even with limited opportunities. His four stolen bases are second on the team.

"He can make stuff happen," Ventura said. "Hopefully that's part of having him up there. Hopefully he can get something going and steal some bases and create situations other guys can't."

Cleto to Charlotte

The White Sox outrighted reliever Maikel Cleto to Triple-A Charlotte on Monday. Cleto, who had a 5.14 ERA in 13 games, was designated for assignment on Saturday, cleared waivers and accepted an assignment to Charlotte. The franchise also released infielder Alex Liddi and relief pitcher David Purcey.

Long flight

The White Sox were on board their charter plane for more than seven hours on Sunday, including roughly two hours as they waited for severe weather. The team arrived in San Francisco shortly after midnight (PST).

"That's just part of playing," Ventura said. "Everybody knows you're traveling. Yesterday, it just took us a long time to come out here. It's a new day. You deal with it when you come out here and you get a better feeling when you get out there and start running around."

White Sox's Chris Sale set to begin rehab assignment on Thursday

By Brad Rowland / SI.com

It has been more than three weeks since Chicago White Sox left-hander Chris Sale was placed on the disabled list as a result of a strained flexor muscle, but according to a report, the 25-year-old will begin a rehab assignment on Thursday.

Daryl Van Schouwen of the *Chicago Sun-Times* reports that Sale will appear in an outing for Triple-A Charlotte on Thursday. At this point, it is believed that Sale will need at least one additional outing after Thursday, but if his timetable stays on course, the talented left-hander could be back in the Chicago rotation by the end of the month. So far, Sale's return has been going as well as expected, with bullpen sessions and a simulated game last week that revealed no problems with his elbow.

Before heading to the disabled list, Sale excelled in four starts, compiling a 2.30 ERA while striking out more than a batter per inning in just over 27 innings of work. Without Sale available, the White Sox have managed to stay afloat to the tune of a 19-21 record, but they are currently last in the American League in runs allowed (201). Sale's immediate replacement in the rotation, Andre Rienzo, hasn't been terrible, but his 4.56 ERA through four starts and 22 2/3 innings is nothing to write home about. His peripherals suggest that he could have been even worse, with a 12/12 strikeout-to-walk ratio and four homers allowed in that span.

When Sale returns, Chicago will have a few options to be demoted either to the minors or to the bullpen, as the trio of Rienzo, Scott Carroll and Hector Noesi each possess limited track records and pedigrees at this level.
