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Rollins, Frazier power White Sox past A's

By Scott Merkin and Jane Lee / MLB.com | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND -- Shortstop Jimmy Rollins hit a tiebreaking homer off A's closer Sean Doolittle with two outs in the ninth inning to give the White Sox their second win in as many tries against Oakland, 5-4, at the Coliseum on Tuesday night.

"You have to keep calm and fight through the excitement," Rollins said. "You understand you are on their home ground and every time they do something, it's going to be great and the crowd is going to get behind them.

"Players start feeling it, and they get into it, too. You fight your way through it. You find a way to go ahead and fight back."

Third baseman Todd Frazier also hit a home run, his first in a White Sox uniform coming in the form of a three-run shot in the fifth off A's starter Chris Bassitt, who allowed four runs on eight hits in 5 1/3 innings against his former team.

"He's one of the best bad-ball hitters in the game, and I have to make a lot worse pitch than I did there," Bassitt said. "He makes a living off of it."

Chicago lefty Jose Quintana lasted 5 2/3 innings, limiting the A's to two runs -- shortstop Jed Lowrie being responsible for both, giving him four RBIs in the series -- while striking out seven. That's all the A's would get until the eighth inning, when they tied the game on a two-out, two-run single from first baseman Yonder Alonso against right-hander Nate Jones.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Leading the way: Adam Eaton has a stretch of 24 consecutive games in which he has reached base, dating back to Sept. 9. He has reached base six times total in the first two games, with five hits and a hit by pitch on Rich Hill's first delivery of the season on Monday.

Fielder's (wrong) choice: There's a scenario in which Frazier's home run could've been avoided altogether: Lowrie, fielding a routine ground ball to second base off the bat of Rollins with one out in the inning, would've easily completed the second out had he thrown the ball to first rather than try for a play at second, where Eaton -- running on the play -- beat the throw. Bassitt struck out the next batter, Jose Abreu, to bring Frazier to the plate. But after the game, A's manager Bob Melvin said he had no problem with Lowrie throwing to second.

"You're always trying to get that lead runner," Melvin said, "and whether it's a shovel or whether it's a step to your side and throw it a little bit harder ... first, we're trying to get an out. Certainly he felt like that was the play, and Eaton just beat it."

Steady as always: Quintana didn't seem to have the usual rhythm and cadence he's displayed over most of his starts, especially in the last few innings. But the White Sox left-hander once again pitched well enough to win and got rare run support in this instance. Quintana fanned seven and didn't issue a walk, meaning White Sox starters have fanned 15 and walked one over 12 2/3 innings this season, but he still finished with a Major League-high 53rd no-decision since 2012.

"That's a lot of no-decisions," Quintana said. "But hopefully this year that changes and every time I think the next one."

One-run blues: The A's dropped 35 one-run games in 2015, and each of their two losses in 2016 have been of the one-run variety. Defensive lapses cost them in both games, but Tuesday's ending was largely reminiscent of last year's bullpen struggles. That's not expected to be the norm, though. Before Doolittle's

offering to Rollins in the ninth, A's relievers had strung together 9 2/3 scoreless innings to begin the season.

"I felt really good. I had swing-and-miss stuff tonight, and when I had to make a pitch with two outs and two strikes in a tie ballgame in the ninth, I didn't do it," Doolittle said. "It's really tough to come back in here, one-run loss again, at home, looking to get a win after a tough loss last night and the guys rallied to come back. I'm disgusted with myself."

QUOTABLE

"I've had a couple of big games here in high school. Found a way to win those also. So hopefully we keep that up for a couple of more days before we get out of town." -- Rollins, who delivered the game-winner in his Oakland homecoming

MILESTONE NEXT FOR VENTURA

Tuesday's victory gives Robin Ventura 299 wins in his fifth season as White Sox manager. Ventura has managed 650 games with the South Siders, which is the 10th-most in franchise history.

WHAT'S NEXT

White Sox: Carlos Rodon gets the call on Wednesday as the White Sox seek their third straight win over the A's at 9:05 p.m. CT. After making 23 starts among his 26 appearances in 2015, the lefty begins the current campaign as a full-fledged member of the starting rotation. Rodon's 139 strikeouts last season placed him second in franchise history among rookie strikeout totals.

A's: Ace Sonny Gray will make his much-anticipated season debut on Wednesday at 7:05 p.m. PT against the White Sox, after being scratched from his scheduled Opening Day start because of a flu bug. The right-hander went 14-7 with a 2.73 ERA in 2015, finishing third in American League Cy Young voting.

New-look White Sox quick to find cohesion

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND -- Headlines from the White Sox 5-4 victory over the A's on Tuesday night at the Coliseum will center on Jimmy Rollins launching the game-winning home run off of A's closer Sean Doolittle with two outs in the ninth.

Rollins went deep in front of family members numbering around 10, as the Alameda native continued a happy homecoming. There also was Todd Frazier's first home run as a member of the White Sox, a three-run blast coming in the fifth on an 0-2 curveball from former White Sox hurler Chris Bassitt.

Add in the White Sox losing a 4-2 lead in the eighth and still coming back to start the season 2-0 for the third time in the last four years and what do you have? Try an important team win above anything else.

"I don't know if that's the way you draw it up," said White Sox manager Robin Ventura, who picked up career victory No. 299. "But it seemed like everybody got to be a part of it one way or another. Guys checked in for the year."

"We've got something special, man," Frazier said. "It's a good team. We're coming together as a nucleus."

It's certainly a frenetic, excitable nucleus, based on the dugout reaction to Frazier's blast and the game-deciding shot from Rollins, marking the switch-hitter's first homer off a left-handed pitcher since July 8 against the Phillies. It's a group composed of some weathered veterans, salty in a good way, as Ventura pointed out postgame.

They know how to handle in-game adversity and stay focused on the end result. Rollins hit into an inning-ending double play in the sixth, erasing a bases-loaded, one-out rally, but that at-bat wasn't on his mind the next time he grabbed a bat.

His first attempt on a 94-mph fastball from Doolittle was fouled away. The veteran didn't miss on the second shot four pitches later, succeeding on his quest to make solid contact while looking for a pitch to drive.

"With this thick air, you just never know what's going to happen," Rollins said. "I know it's a high wall out there. I was going around the bases making sure I got to second. If they bobbed it, I was getting to third. I got a good amount of backspin on it and it stayed up just long enough.

"That one was a pitch out over the plate and down, and I got just enough of it. I hit it good."

As a high school player, Rollins remembers hitting another game-winning homer at the Coliseum. That one, though, was a two-run shot. Although the White Sox couldn't prevent Jose Quintana's 53rd no-decision since 2012, they did exhibit a team fight that figures to be there all season.

"It worked out for the good guys tonight," a smiling Rollins said.

"Bottom line is when something goes wrong, somebody's there to pick you up," Frazier said. "And so far, even though it's a small sample size, it's nice to see."

Eaton's primary goal: Put the ball in play

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND -- White Sox hitting coach Todd Steverson considers Adam Eaton "a contact guy."

That characterization might surprise a few people when looking at the leadoff man's 139 strikeouts over 689 plate appearances last season.

"I'll take him at the plate, runner at third, less than two outs and the game on the line," Steverson said. "I know he can put the ball in play and use the whole field and still hit a home run. He's at the top of the list to get up with guys in scoring position."

Eaton backed up that point during Monday's 4-3 season-opening victory over the A's at the Coliseum, driving in Austin Jackson with the team's first run of the 2016 season via his triple, the team's first hit. Jackson drew a one-out walk from Oakland lefty Rich Hill and raced around to third on an errant pickoff throw.

On a 2-1 curve, Eaton laced a shot over the head of center fielder Billy Burns. He scored on Jimmy Rollins' single to right, as the lefty-lefty solid connection sparked a four-run outburst.

Making contact in those situations stands as a basic '16 goal for Eaton, who was upset about his previous strikeout total.

"As a leadoff hitter, I want to put the ball in play as much as I can and put pressure on people," Eaton said. "Even if I tip it or hit a one-hopper over the pitcher, those are hits there. There are forced errors or what not there.

"If I can put the ball in play more often, good things happen. I've learned from that. I've learned what those holes are and how I can improve."

Even with the swings and misses, Eaton proved to be a potent run producer. He finished with a career-high 14 home runs, 56 RBIs and 51 extra-base hits after not driving in a run until May 11, along with a

.269 average and 37 RBIs with runners in scoring position and a .319 mark with 47 RBIs with men on base.

"I love situational hitting. I love to succeed in it. It bugs me when I don't," Eaton said. "I understand how to go about that in certain situations, outs, counts, whose behind me, in front of me. Putting the ball in play needs to be one of my strengths."

Abreu has lofty goals for his defense

By Scott Merkin / MLB.com | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND -- There's a goal in mind for Jose Abreu when it comes to his defense at first base.

"I want to be perfect," said Abreu through White Sox Spanish communications manager Billy Russo. "I know that nobody is going to be perfect, but I want to have that mind-set."

Abreu certainly isn't relying on a mind-set to find success in the field, coming off of a 2015 season in which he was bothered by the 11 errors he committed. During the past six weeks in Arizona, the 29-year-old placed special focus on becoming an asset with his glove, as well as with the bat he wields in the middle of the White Sox order.

That Spring Training work came under the guidance of bench coach Rick Renteria and third-base coach Joe McEwing.

"We just worked on normal drills, but working with Super Joe and Renteria, they noticed that I have been doing something wrong with some ground balls to my right hand," the right-handed-throwing Abreu said.

"Then they let me know and then we worked together to fix it. It was just with my upper body, with my arms movement."

There were a couple of solid plays turned in from Abreu during Monday's 4-3 victory over the A's to go with his double as part of four-run third. His most important effort was a sliding stop of Stephen Vogt's grounder down the first-base line to open the seventh against Chris Sale, turning a potential double into the first out.

White Sox manager Robin Ventura believes Abreu has improved his footwork.

"He had a lot of glove action, and I think that's just the way he learned to catch a ground ball," Ventura said. "It's just gotten better. He's slowed down a little bit. You don't have to be quite as fast as he was trying to be before. The calmer he gets, the better he is. It's easier to catch, easier to pick the balls.

"Everybody has their own limits and things like that, but even for him, turning two, he tries to make it all happen himself. Really, just get it smoothly enough where you can get it and give the guy a good feed at second base and let him worry about returning it.

"Sometimes he tries to go too fast, or he tries to make it all happen himself, so it's an easier throw for that guy. Especially now with the new rules [regarding] sliding into second, you don't really have to hurry as much as maybe you did before."

White Sox excited about improvements to U.S. Cellular Field

By Sarah Trotto / MLB.com | April 5th, 2016

CHICAGO -- Three new video boards grace the inside of U.S. Cellular Field, and the Chicago White Sox already like what they see.

Senior vice president of sales and marketing Brooks Boyer shared footage of the fresh technology with a player.

"Hey, look, a big league ballpark," the player told Boyer.

Starting with Friday's home opener, fans will be able get a glimpse of the video boards installed in left, center and right field. Originally budgeted for about \$11.4 million, the project cost less than \$7.4 million after a competitive bidding process, Illinois Sports Facilities Authority executive director Lou Bertuca said.

The boards in left field and right field are about 2,500 square feet, while the center-field board covers about 8,000 square feet, four times bigger than the board used from 2003-15.

"We're excited to show what it looks like to go from having the smallest video board in baseball to one of the best displays we'd be able to have," Boyer said.

Issues with the previous video boards included flickering and missing display sections. Boyer was concerned the right-field board would stop operating before the end of last season.

"A 100-degree day, the battery packs, they don't make them anymore," Boyer said. "You're connecting all sorts of things to just make them work. They wouldn't have worked this year. I was very pleased we got through last year with them still functioning."

The new boards' 10-millimeter pixel resolution will display game highlights, stats and social media posts from fans.

On the center-field board, the White Sox displayed a new video during a media tour on Tuesday. Narrated by Chicago native Chance the Rapper, the video will debut for fans at the home opener. The video features game footage, city scenes and 2005 World Series memories.

"You couldn't find a brighter day [than] today, and it handled the sun perfectly," Bertuca said. "Imagine it at nighttime, especially after [first baseman Jose] Abreu's hitting a couple dingers and the fireworks are going off. It's really going to be great for the fan experience."

The video boards are just one of the ballpark's new attractions. Others include:

- Food, including "tater tachos" (tater tots covered in nacho cheese and jalapenos), bacon cheddar pretzel dogs, cheesy beef sandwiches and Italian beef pizza.
- Giveaways, including Abreu "plush bleacher creatures" on April 23, Chris Sale "K-Counter" bobbleheads on May 7 and White Sox Hawaiian shirts on June 11.
- A multiyear Coca-Cola partnership.
- The Xfinity Fundamentals section has a new "garage area" where fans can watch the action and see new products.

"Our goal with our 81 games and hopefully more is to 'wow' somebody every single time they come into the ballpark," Boyer said.

Jimmy Rollins' blast lifts White Sox past A's 5-4

By Dan Hayes / CSN Chicago | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. — Jimmy Rollins did something at the Oakland Coliseum on Tuesday night that he hadn't done for 20 years.

Similar to then, Rollins and his team walked away victorious.

The Oakland native blasted a game-winning home run in the ninth inning off Oakland A's reliever Sean Doolittle and the White Sox overcame a blown save for a 5-4 victory in front of 10,478. The White Sox are 2-0 for the fourth time in five seasons courtesy of the 386-foot drive by Rollins, who was a second-round pick out Encinal High School (Alameda, Calif.) in the 1996 amateur draft.

"I've had a couple of big games here in high school," Rollins said. "Found a way to win those also. So hopefully we keep that up for a couple of more days before we get out of town."

The White Sox were mere minutes removed from their first big downer of 2016.

Yonder Alonso's two-run single with two outs in the eighth inning made it a 4-all contest and produced the 53rd career no-decision for Jose Quintana, who struck out seven and allowed two runs in 5 2/3 innings.

But Rollins fired up the dugout, Quintana included, when he ripped into a 94-mph fastball from Doolittle.

"The thing that is most important here is that we take the W," Quintana said. "We got the W is the most important.

"Real excited."

Rollins' fourth trip to the Coliseum as a player has been the most fruitful. He grew up rooting for the A's and all-time leadoff great Rickey Henderson, who attended Monday's season opener. After Sunday's workout, Rollins said he always tries to make sure to get a big hit out of the way early. He did that on Monday with an RBI single in the team's four-run, third-inning rally.

Perhaps the season-opening hit (though it was more likely his early work in the cage on Tuesday) allowed Rollins to look for something to drive against Doolittle. He fouled off Doolittle's first pitch, a 94-mph fastball, and swung and missed at another to even the count at 2-2 before the homer.

"(Rollins) took some swings earlier in the at-bat," White Sox manager Robin Ventura said. "He doesn't always do it, but a veteran guy can kind of lay in the weeds a little and get something."

Rollins' previous heroics at the Coliseum came against Cal High School (San Ramon, Calif.).

In that instance, Rollins crushed a two-run, game-winning homer on a 3-0 pitch.

Rollins said fouling off the first pitch against Doolittle had him in the right frame of mind as he was confident in his timing. The homer was Rollins' first against a left-handed pitcher since last July 8.

"I felt pretty good earlier during batting practice," Rollins said. "And I was able to execute the move I was working for and I got a good pitch to hit. I hit it pretty good."

Rollins wasn't the only new player to get into one for the White Sox on Tuesday.

Todd Frazier appeared to have the White Sox in position for a nice victory when he went low and got out in front of an 0-2 curveball from Chris Bassitt and crushed it for a three-run homer in the fifth inning.

The 399-foot drive gave the White Sox a 3-1 lead and also snapped a 10-inning scoreless streak for the offense.

An inning later, the White Sox added some cushion with three straight singles from the bottom of the lineup. Brett Lawrie, Alex Avila and Austin Jackson all singled to make it a 4-2 game. Adam Eaton, who went 3-for-5, also singled to load the bases. But Rollins grounded into an inning-ending double play.

The offense's late production appeared to have Quintana in line for a hard-earned victory. He wasn't great, but Quintana was plenty effective. He and Matt Albers pitched out of a sixth-inning jam to preserve a 3-2 lead.

Albers pitched 1 1/3 scoreless and handed the ball to Zach Duke and Jones. Duke gave up an infield single to Josh Reddick and Jones hits Khris Davis and Stephen Vogt to load the bases with two outs. Jones stranded a pair with a strikeout of pinch-hitter Chris Coghlan after Alonso's first-pitch single to right.

But Rollins made up for the hiccup with his piercing drive.

"We've got something special, man," Frazier said. "It's a good team. We're coming together as a nucleus. You see Jimmy ground into a double play, next thing you know, he doesn't think about nothing, goes up and hits a home run. That's just the way baseball is. He's been doing it for a long time, and it's real fun to see a guy of his caliber still dominating the game."

Brett Lawrie on second base: 'Ease up and just chill'

By Dan Hayes / CSN Chicago | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. — He plays with an intense energy, but Brett Lawrie said he had no difficulty making the final play of Monday's White Sox victory.

A converted second baseman, Lawrie was in the correct position and looked smooth as he scooped Yonder Alonso's grounder in shallow right field and easily fired to first base for the final out of a 4-3 victory over the Oakland A's.

Lawrie, who has been confident he could make the move back over from third base if he got enough quality repetitions in spring training, said he didn't notice the roar from the sellout crowd of 35,067 at Oakland Coliseum when Alonso's grounder got past the dive of Jose Abreu, who had ranged to his right.

"Time to slow it down, ease up and just chill," Lawrie said.

The White Sox have to feel pretty relaxed about how Lawrie, who played second base in the minor leagues, has looked in making the switch back. He has more than enough athleticism to make the conversion.

It's just a matter of getting enough opportunities, manager Robin Ventura said. Lawrie had plenty in spring and delivered a clean brand of baseball. He committed no errors among his 53 chances and was involved in 12 double plays in 106 innings.

"He doesn't necessarily look like a third baseman trying to switch over," Ventura said. "He's looked fine.

"He's going to have good range. That's not necessarily the issue. It's getting used to it over there and getting as many reps as you can. As far as athletic stuff, he's very athletic and has plenty of range."

Lawrie's range helped him produce 35 Defensive Runs Saved at third base over his first three seasons. And he's seemed to have no trouble going to his left on grounders throughout the spring and the first game. Lawrie also made a nice leading throw on the final play to pitcher David Robertson, who was covering first on the play.

"Once I saw Brett catch it I knew we were going to get him out," Robertson said. "If it gets in the hole it's a hit. But he was right there positioned for it and it turned into an easy out."

Though Abreu's diving attempt briefly brought the crowd to life, Lawrie said the play was made easier by the first baseman's presence. He credited Abreu for the way he attacks the ball — "some first baseman will bail ... he wants the ball," Lawrie said.

Lawrie spent last season playing for the A's and knew Monday's crowd was louder than most. Though the stadium featured a raucous atmosphere, Lawrie said it didn't faze him — especially by that point in the game.

That made it all the easier for Lawrie to chill.

"It's not like it was the first inning or anything," Lawrie said.

Robin Ventura: Nate Jones is 'really important' for White Sox

By Dan Hayes / CSN Chicago | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. — Don't be surprised if you see Nate Jones get a few save opportunities this season.

White Sox manager Robin Ventura said Tuesday he's very impressed with how the tall right-hander has performed over the last month and that he could use him in a variety of roles, including closer.

Jones — who struck out 13 in 8 2/3 scoreless spring innings — entered in the eighth inning of Monday's game with one out and the tying run on second base. He made quick work of the two batters he faced, including an inning-ending strikeout of Khris Davis. Ventura said Jones, who had reconstructive elbow surgery in July 2014, doesn't have any restrictions in terms of innings pitched.

"The feeling of having him new is over," Ventura said. "We knew what he was like before he got hurt. But to have him back and have him able to come in and do that is really important for us. The confidence level of bringing him in being able to throw like that, whether it's righty, lefty, whoever, we're going to rely on him quite a bit."

Jones, who signed a three-year extension worth \$8 million with options through 2021, is expected to be the team's setup man. He earned his first hold Monday when he took over with a man on second (Jake Petricka issued a leadoff walk) and kept the White Sox in the lead.

Ventura has suggested that Jones, who had a 3.32 ERA in 19 games last season, could sub in for closer David Robertson when necessary.

"I see Nate being able to do a ninth inning if we need to," Ventura said. "He has that kind of stuff if you need to give Robby a day, Nate can do that."

White Sox: Jason Benetti's come-from-behind story

By Staff / CSN Chicago | April 5th, 2016

Jason Benetti's come-from-behind story was featured recently on NBC Nightly News.

The new White Sox broadcaster is now living his dream, as he once wrote a letter as a boy stating his ideal job would be announcing for the South Siders.

"You almost lose that visceral, emotional feeling of getting a job like this before you get it because you know logically, there's not much of a chance at all," Benetti said.

The 32-year-old has Cerebral Palsy, but Benetti won't let that define him.

"He is the ultimate broadcaster at a very young age," said Steve Stone, Benetti's White Sox broadcaster partner.

Benetti has already accomplished so much at such a young age, even earning a law degree to boot.

"I used to think people were discounting my IQ when I walked into a room," Benetti said. "At the beginning of my career, I used to force things and make sure people knew that I knew what I was doing."

Tuesday's recap: White Sox 5, Athletics 4

By Colleen Kane / Chicago Tribune | April 5th, 2016

Jimmy Rollins hit a solo home run to left field off Athletics reliever Sean Doolittle in the ninth inning to lift the White Sox to a 5-4 victory on Tuesday night at Oakland Coliseum. Rollins' shot came with two outs after the A's had tied the game in the eighth.

At the plate

Todd Frazier's second hit as a member of the Sox was a three-run homer to left field off A's right-hander Chris Bassitt that gave the club a 3-2 lead in the fifth inning.

On the mound

Sox left-hander Jose Quintana gave up two earned runs on seven hits with no walks and seven strikeouts over 5 2/3 innings.

In relief

Yonder Alonso's bases-loaded, two-run single off Sox reliever Nate Jones in the eighth inning tied the game at 4-4. Jones hit two batters with pitches to load the bases.

Key number

2 – Saves by Sox closer David Robertson in the first two games of the season.

Up next

At Athletics, 9:05 p.m. Wednesday. LH Carlos Rodon vs. RH Sonny Gray.

Newcomers Todd Frazier, Jimmy Rollins lift White Sox to 5-4 win over A's

By Colleen Kane / Chicago Tribune | April 5th, 2016

Todd Frazier ran down the first-base line Tuesday night at the Oakland Coliseum, he looked toward the White Sox dugout and directed a leaping fist pump toward his new teammates.

Frazier's second hit as a member of the Sox was a three-run homer to left field off Athletics right-hander Chris Bassitt that provided a needed fifth-inning boost and a lead.

But that wasn't even the biggest homer by a Sox newcomer Tuesday night.

With two outs in the ninth inning of a tie game, Jimmy Rollins launched a solo shot to left field to lift the Sox to a 5-4 victory and a 2-0 record.

Rollins, an Oakland-area native who said he had a couple of big games at the Coliseum when he was in high school, drew noticeable cheers from his home crowd.

"I wanted to look up but that would have been too predictable, so I came in and gave Melky (Cabrera) a high-five and just enjoyed it with my team," Rollins said. "We still had work to do."

David Robertson finished it off with his second save in two nights, a high note despite a rocky night for the Sox bullpen.

Sox reliever Nate Jones gave up a two-out, two-run single to Yonder Alonso in the eighth inning to forfeit a Sox lead. Jones had hit two batters with pitches to load the bases.

"Even though it's only two, it's character-building wins," Frazier said. "That's what we do. We pick each other up. Bottom line is when something goes wrong, somebody's there to pick you up. And so far, even though it's a small sample size, it's nice to see."

Manager Robin Ventura said he thought many players were overeager in the team's opening victory Monday in front of a sellout crowd, and he thought they could calm down starting Tuesday.

Frazier, who joined the Sox in a three-team trade from the Reds in December, went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts Monday. His first hit Tuesday was a single to right in the fourth.

"Opening day gets a little overplayed as far as the importance of it, and you want to win," Ventura said. "Today it kind of levels back out and guys get in a groove a little bit more. You probably had some guys overswinging and guys throwing really hard (Monday)."

The players weren't the only ones eager to see what the season might hold.

General manager Rick Hahn said Monday the front office has also been on edge waiting to see if a winning team can unfold from new additions such as Frazier, Rollins, Brett Lawrie and Austin Jackson, who had a sixth-inning RBI single.

"Antsy is probably a decent way of describing most all of us around the club the last few years," Hahn said. "We've been going through a process here that began midway through 2013 in terms of retooling this club and getting ourselves back in a position to contend."

"None of us really have the best patient streak in us, and Jerry (Reinsdorf) is certainly no exception. We still realize this was going to be a process, one which hopefully here in the coming months is coming to an end as we take that next step."

Left-hander Jose Quintana gave up two earned runs on seven hits with no walks and seven strikeouts in 5 2/3 innings.

Jed Lowrie had RBI singles in the third and fifth to keep the A's within striking distance. Quintana left a runner on second in the sixth, but reliever Matt Albers prompted Stephen Vogt to ground out to finish the inning.

"He looked great," Ventura said of Quintana. "You'd like to keep him in there, and let him get through that, but we have a long way to go, so you trust these (bullpen) guys out there. You always feel bad -- the guy always pitches good and something unlucky happens."

The Sox could have pulled to a more significant lead but faltered on a couple of big opportunities.

They loaded the bases in the fourth on Frazier's first hit and walks by Cabrera and Lawrie. But Alex Avila flied out to center to end the threat.

After Jackson's RBI in the sixth, Rollins hit into a bases-loaded double play to end the inning, but he made up for it with the ninth-inning shot off A's reliever Sean Doolittle. It was his first home run off a left-hander since July.

"I hit it good, but with this thick air, you just never know what's going to happen," Rollins said. "I know it's a high wall out there. ... I got a good amount of backspin on it, and it stayed up just long enough."

Nate Jones key part of deep White Sox belief system – in themselves

By David Haugh / Chicago Tribune | April 5th, 2016

Not the overly demonstrative type, White Sox reliever Nate Jones pumped his fist Monday night after striking out A's outfielder Khris Davis to end the eighth.

Jones' rare show of emotion suggested this was no ordinary opening day for the right-handed fireballer, who began his first full season since undergoing elbow surgery and a microdiscectomy on his back two months apart in the summer of 2014.

The messages Jones received postgame confirmed it.

"A special night," Jones said Tuesday.

It was as if everybody back in his hometown of Butler, Ky. — pop. 600 — had stayed up past midnight to watch the Sox on the West Coast and passed along their pride in Jones' perfect two-thirds of an inning. Imagine how full of praise his wife Lacy's Facebook page was.

"The best was I got a text from Mom (Debbie) saying she was proud of me and my dad (Bill) left a voicemail," Jones said. "The last thing my dad said was, 'Nice job, but it's 1 in the morning here so I'm going to bed.'"

Don't sleep on the Sox, not if Jones stays healthy enough to bolster the back end of the bullpen along with closer David Robertson. The Sox, now 2-0 after beating the A's 5-4, still likely will go only as far as their starting pitching takes them. They showed in spring training a surprising ability to score runs with long balls like the big three-run homer Todd Frazier hit Tuesday night, but can they protect a lead once they get it? The Royals won the World Series on the strength of their bullpen. The Sox hope theirs — led by Robertson, Jones, Zach Duke and Matt Albers — can help make them contenders again.

"We have the guys to do it," Jones said. "That's exactly the situation we want to be in. As relievers we try to get the ball to D-Rob with a lead."

Jones found himself in the same situation Tuesday night but fared much differently, failing to protect a 4-2 lead in the eighth and giving up two runs. Pitching coach Don Cooper believes Jones will emerge as a major reason the Sox surprise people if he can consistently get ahead in counts and elevate his fastball to right-handed hitters — which he didn't do in his shaky second outing.

"He has a chance to put himself among the elite," Cooper said.

The Sox invested \$8 million on the idea Jones will continue to blossom, signing the 6-foot-5, 220-pounder to a three-year contract extension in December. It could turn into the smartest money the Sox spent all winter. Jones, 30, returned at the end of last season to pitch 19 games but the new deal gave him a truer sense of where he stood in the organization. Calling the extension a "humongous Christmas present," Jones also considered it validation that all the agony of rehabilitation was worthwhile.

"It was a tough process but you have to keep faith," said Jones, a father of two who leaned on his family through rehab. "The word I'd use is blessed. We didn't really know too much with my back. Then the 'Tommy John' came about (in July 2014) and (we) gave both a whole lot of time to heal. That confidence the Sox showed in me with the contract gave me confidence."

Quietly and confidently, the Sox fly under the radar just as manager Robin Ventura prefers — and in stark contrast to the Cubs. If the Cubs clubhouse resembled an office party Monday at Angel Stadium, the Sox's inside the Oakland Coliseum felt like a library a day later. When Ventura met the media, nine

reporters surrounded him with nary a television camera in sight. This was a tree falling in the middle of a baseball forest.

In fairness, the Warriors were playing across the parking lot at Oracle Arena in pursuit of the Bulls' NBA-record 72-victory season while an announced crowd of 10,478 — did they count by two? — attended the A's-White Sox game. You really can't blame sports fans in the area; the Warriors might wind up winning more games than the incomplete A's this season.

That reality represented an opening-series opportunity for the Sox, who have recovered nicely from their bout of immaturity in the aftermath of the Drake LaRoche debacle. Whatever happened as a result of Chris Sale's outburst or Adam Eaton's admiration of a 14-year-old team leader, the experience unified the Sox. Ventura warned not to underestimate his plucky, professional bunch.

"I like where we are," Ventura said. "We have more veteran guys. There are a lot of guys who are comfortable in their own skin and realize what it takes to go through a season, how to be a teammate, pick somebody up. That was noticed early in spring that this group had the potential to do that. I like the feeling. And I think they do too."

As Ventura suggested, Sox players sense similar momentum.

"All the work we've done in the spring, to see the results, it builds your belief," Jones said. "We don't want to get too high on the highs or too low on the lows. Keep a level head."

But every now and then, a fist pump is allowed.

White Sox catchers will be on guard as they split duties this season

By Colleen Kane / Chicago Tribune | April 5th, 2016

Dioner Navarro woke up to a text message Monday that he would start at catcher for the White Sox that night because of the Athletics' late pitching change.

Navarro and Alex Avila, who joined the Sox on one-year contracts in the offseason, will split time this year based on matchups and health, so Navarro said it's important to be ready at any time.

"I just come ready every day," Navarro said. "That's what my mentality has been my whole career. ... You never know when your name is going to be called, and you have to be ready when it is."

Navarro and Avila each caught all of the Sox pitchers during spring training, so manager Robin Ventura said he doesn't have to stick to specific pitcher-catcher combinations. Navarro caught Chris Sale only twice in the spring, but Sale said the pairing went well Monday, when he gave up three earned runs in seven innings with one walk and eight strikeouts.

"He actually got me doing some things that I maybe wouldn't do otherwise," Sale said. "Kind of stepping outside of the box ... throwing two-seamers in to righties. I don't know if I've ever done that. Really focusing on getting the ball down too."

"He was trying to calm me down as well out there. We tried not to get too hot when things started rolling for the other team a little bit. I think we have something good going."

Ventura said it helps that both catchers are veterans and accepting of split duties. Navarro is in his 13th season in the majors, while Avila began his eighth season Tuesday night against A's right-hander Chris Bassitt.

"There's not the older guy and the younger guy and the ego that goes with that," Ventura said. "Both of these guys know they're going to be switching in and out of there."

Extra innings: Jimmy Rollins started his second straight game at shortstop, but Ventura said Tyler Saladino would start one of the remaining two games in Oakland. ... After playing just one night game during spring training — on a split-squad day — Ventura said it was "weird" to have a night opener Monday. "It was weird sitting around all day waiting for it," he said. "I can remember only one other time having a night game for opening day. ... Day games have a little more fanfare to it."

White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu on his defense: 'I want to be perfect'

By Colleen Kane / Chicago Tribune | April 5th, 2016

Anybody who has watched White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu spend hours in the batting cage during the last two seasons knows he doesn't take self-improvement lightly.

That work extended to his defense this spring.

"I want to be perfect," Abreu said through a team interpreter Tuesday before the second game of the year against the Athletics.

"I know that nobody is going to be perfect, but I want to have that mindset that I can be perfect, and that's a part of my mentality and my preparation with my defense at first base."

The Sox's overall defense was often troubling the last few seasons, and they took steps to try to improve with the offseason additions of third baseman Todd Frazier and center fielder Austin Jackson.

Without the backup first-base defense of Adam LaRoche this season, Abreu's improvement is another important factor.

Abreu committed 11 errors last season, was good for one defensive run saved — 13th among first baseman — and had an Ultimate Zone Rating of minus-1.8, according to FanGraphs' defensive metrics. But manager Robin Ventura saw him moving better on defense this spring and in the season opener against the A's on Monday.

"He's gotten better footwork-wise," Ventura said. "He's gotten a little lower. He had a lot of glove action, and I think that's just the way he learned to catch a ground ball."

"He has slowed down a little bit. You don't have to be quite as fast as he was trying to be before. The calmer he gets, the better he is. It's easier to catch, easier to pick the balls."

Abreu, who has made known he prefers to play in the field over being the designated hitter, said he worked with coaches Joe McEwing and Rick Renteria this spring to make corrections, including on balls to his non-glove hand.

"I'm not that kind of first baseman that can make too many mistakes or errors like I did last year," Abreu said. "I wasn't happy with that. During spring training, I put a lot of effort to try to make adjustments, to try to improve my defense. And I feel pride about my defense."

The Sox have other defensive keys this season: whether shortstop Jimmy Rollins can stay up to speed at 37, how Adam Eaton fares in the corner outfield spots after offseason shoulder surgery and how Brett Lawrie adjusts to a move to second base.

"He's going to have good range," Ventura said of Lawrie. "That's not necessarily the issue. It's getting used to it over there and getting as many reps as you can. As far as athletic stuff, he's very athletic and has plenty of range."

The Sox already witnessed the effects of shoddy defense when they capitalized on two A's errors in the third inning of their victory Monday.

Ventura said he thought many players were overeager in the season opener in front of a sellout crowd, and he said they now can calm down. Then the Sox can start to see what they really have.

"Opening day gets a little overplayed as far as the importance of it, and you want to win," Ventura said. "Today it kind of levels back out and guys get in a groove a little bit more. You probably had some guys overswinging and guys throwing really hard (Monday)."

White Sox unveil massive new video board

By Paul Skrbina / Chicago Tribune | April 5th, 2016

A man whispered into a microphone late Tuesday morning while standing in front of the visitors dugout at U.S. Cellular Field.

"Four, three, two, one ... "

The White Sox went out and got themselves a few bigger-than-big big-screen TVs during the offseason.

The countdown to the unveiling of the centerpiece of that collection, the park's new 8,000-square-foot, video board planted in center field, culminated with the voice of Chicago native Chance the Rapper explaining how the city rose from the ashes as White Sox highlights played.

"When I showed a video to one of our players it was, 'Hey, look, a big-league ballpark,'" said Brooks Boyer, senior vice president of sales and marketing Brooks. "We're going from one of the smallest boards in baseball to one of the best."

One of the five biggest in baseball, in Boyer's estimation.

According to Lou Bertuca, CEO and executive director of the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority, the project cost around \$7.3 million and includes a pair of 2,400-square foot boards flanking the main attraction. ISFA, a government entity and the owner and developer of U.S. Cellular Field, also funded the recent renovations to Soldier Field.

Bertuca said the U.S. Cellular Field project, which originally was budgeted for \$11.4 million, was paid for through a capital construction fund, which is funded in part by the rent the White Sox pay and a 2 percent levy on city hotels.

"I think you're going to be hard-pressed to find the quality of boards we have for the price we got them for," Bertuca said.

Fans also will be able to connect with the boards through social media, using the hashtag #soxgameday.

"One of the things that's been big on our fans' radar is the video-board experience," Boyer said.

In another video, White Sox ace Chris Sale's body unfolded in 10-millimeter pixel clarity high above center field on the 60-foot-tall, 134-foot-wide screen as he struck out one of his club-record 274 last season.

In video board space race, Cubs near bottom, White Sox near top (compare all 30 teams)

Sox players haven't seen the boards operate in real time, but outfielder Adam Eaton said he did notice last season they needed some updating, though he was a bit conflicted about how he'd miss the "old-school" feel.

"I don't want to be a Debbie Downer," Eaton said, "but I don't look up there too often."

Eaton will have a hard time missing these when he and his teammates lay eyes on them for the first time.

"Fans are really going to appreciate it because there is a lot of downtime in baseball between innings and pitches," he said. "It's going to be a little more enjoyable to see some nice pictures and probably some more animation than just the old-school boards."

White Sox food truck dishing out free samples Wednesday

By Phil Thompson / Chicago Tribune | April 5th, 2016

The White Sox will give fans an early taste of their ballpark fare ahead of Friday's home opener when a team-branded food truck patrols downtown Chicago on Wednesday.

The "Bite Sox" food truck will offer complimentary sample-size helpings of bratwurst, beef hot dogs, bacon on a stick and in-shell peanuts. The samples are first-come first-serve while they last.

Mascot Southpaw and Pride Crew members will help serve the eats from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the following locations.

- Michigan and Lake at 11 a.m.
- Michigan and Monroe at 12:10 p.m.
- Clark and Monroe at 2:30 p.m.
- Wacker and Adams at 4 p.m.

The times are subject to change, and fans can updates by following the Twitter hashtags #BiteSox and #CWSHomeOpener.

White Sox aren't playing videoboard small ball anymore

By Chris Sosa / RedEye | April 5th, 2016

At 6 feet 6 inches, Chris Sale is tall even for a baseball player.

Now the White Sox ace—and all his teammates, for that matter—looks that much larger than life on the new center-field video board at U.S. Cellular Field.

The team unveiled the stadium's latest pride and joy Tuesday, also rolling out a new intro video narrated by Chicago's own Chance the Rapper. Another video featured a Sale strikeout montage.

The five-sided board in center field, complete with 10-millimeter pixel resolution and digital pinwheels replacing the old-school versions, is flanked by a pair of smaller but equally dazzling display boards in right and left fields.

"When I showed a video to one of our players, it was, 'Hey, look, a big-league ballpark,' " said Brooks Boyer, the Sox's senior vice president of sales and marketing. "We're going from one of the smallest boards in baseball to one of the best."

According to Tribune data, the new main video board vaults the Sox from second-to-last in terms of size (the old one was 1,484 square feet and installed in 2003) to No. 7, with a size of around 8,000 square

feet. For comparison, the left-field board installed by the Cubs at Wrigley Field last year is nearly 4,000 square feet. The two smaller boards at U.S. Cellular cover 2,400 square feet each.

According to Lou Bertuca, CEO and executive director of the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority, the project cost around \$7.3 million.

However, Boyer wouldn't be baited into a battle of one-upmanship with the Cubs, who are in the midst of a \$500 million Wrigley renovation.

"We take care of what we need to take care of here," Boyer said. "They're two different fan bases, two different fan experiences. Chicago's lucky to have two great baseball experiences.

Check that, he did find an opportunity to take a lighthearted jab.

"As we like to say [the Cubs] can copy us; we find it flattering," Boyer said, laughing.

Ahem, lest either Chicago team get too boastful, both teams' biggest boards combined are smaller than Cleveland's, the major league leader at more than 13,000 square feet. Not that such things matter on the field.

Fans should get a rush out of the video featuring Chance the Rapper, a huge Sox fan. His monologue tells of the city's rise and being "built upon the muscles of broad shoulders and strong backs."

The speech is set against a backdrop of Sox highlights and snippets of Chicagoans going about their everyday work lives.

"To make it in Chicago, there's one thing we'd better be able to do: step up."

The Sox can check the box that says "install drool-worthy TV screens" when it comes to that mission.

Rollins homer in ninth gives White Sox 5-4 win over A's

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. — Jimmy Rollins homered against Oakland Athletics closer Sean Doolittle with two outs in the ninth inning Tuesday, giving the White Sox a 5-4 victory after their bullpen failed to hold a two-run lead in the eighth.

The 37-year-old Rollins, batting right against the left-handed Doolittle, connected on a 2-2 pitch and drove it over the 362-foot sign in left field. David Robertson pitched a perfect ninth for his second save in as many nights as the Sox improved to 2-0.

The Sox looked like they would ride Todd Frazier's first homer to victory before the A's tied the game in the eighth inning with two runs against Zach Duke, who allowed a leadoff infield single to Josh Reddick, and Nate Jones, who hit two batters and allowed a two-run single to Yonder Alonso.

But the 5-6 Rollins, a former MVP with the Phillies who signed a minor league deal during spring training, became the bigger hero with his first Sox homer. Rollins wasn't necessarily thinking home run but he was looking for a pitch to drive in that situation and got a fastball he could handle.

"I felt pretty good earlier during batting practice," Rollins said, "and I was able to execute the move I was working and I got a good pitch to hit. I hit it pretty good."

Frazier connected on the Sox' first home run of the season, a three-run shot against right-hander Chris Bassitt in the fifth to give the Sox a 3-1 lead.

Frazier, who also singled in the fourth, pumped his fist toward the Sox dugout before rounding first after connecting against Bassitt. When the Sox scored in the sixth on Austin Jackson's RBI single, they led 4-2.

"Even though it's only two, it's character-building wins," Frazier said, "and nobody is really talking about that one run Austin Jackson got for us. That was a big run. And then Jimmy coming through. That's what we do. We pick each other up. Bottom line is when something goes wrong, somebody's there to pick you up. And so far, even though it's a small sample size, it's nice to see."

Bassitt might have been out of the fifth if Rollins had not been safe on a fielder's choice when second baseman Jed Lowrie flipped to Semien, who was already across the bag at second. Lowrie had an easier play at first. After Bassitt struck out Jose Abreu (three strikeouts) Frazier hit one deep to left.

Chicago White Sox's Todd Frazier, right, celebrates with Brett Lawrie (15) after hitting a three-run home run off Oakland Athletics' Chris Bassitt during the fifth inning of a baseball game Tuesday, April 5, 2016, in Oakland, Calif.

"You get your foot down early and you see the pitch," Frazier said. "He got us on that curve a lot during the game, and one just got away from him there. I got my hands extended and away it went. It was nice."

The A's got a run back against Sox left-hander Jose Quintana in the bottom of the inning on Lowrie's RBI single, Lowrie's second of the game for his fourth RBI of the series. Right-hander Matt Albers got four outs in relief of Quintana to protect the Sox' lead.

The Sox, who got three more hits from Adam Eaton — the leadoff man has five in the first two games — have won six straight games in Oakland for the first time since 1990. They have two games left here before opening against the Indians at home on Friday.

"The whole game, everybody is into it, from the guys on the bench to the guys in the game," Frazier said. "We've got something special, man. It's a good team. We're coming together."

"You see Jimmy ground into a double play, next thing you know, he doesn't think about nothing, goes up and hits a home run. That's just the way baseball is. He's been doing it for a long time, and it's real fun to see a guy of his caliber still dominating the game."

Rollins grew up in Oakland, so he had family and friends in attendance.

"Everybody is excited for him, you know he's at home," manager Robin Ventura said. "As many years as he's played he still gets a kick out of it. That's fun team stuff to win the way we did."

Let's get it started: White Sox emphasize getting out of blocks

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. — You can debate all you want the importance of a good start in a marathon 162-game baseball season, but in the case of the 2016 White Sox, getting off on the right foot seems to be an especially big deal.

For one thing, the American League Central appears full of contenders, namely four — the defending World Series champion Royals, the Tigers, the Indians and the Sox — with enough on paper to consider themselves as such. Good luck having to climb over two or three teams down the stretch of the season to make the postseason, so it's imperative to be at or near the top by the All-Star break.

For another thing, the Sox — who improved to 2-0 thanks to Jimmy Rollins' home run in the ninth inning that gave them a 5-4 victory Tuesday against the Athletics — have a recent history of struggling early, including the 8-14 dud last season that killed a near-euphoric vibe that had been humming since the

offseason. The Sox cobbled together one winning month in 2015, July, which only created misguided hope right before the trade deadline.

Every team wants to get out of the gate quickly, but the Sox made spring training, even to the extent of trying to win meaningless games to set a tone, a point of emphasis. The idea was to let it carry over into now.

After taking the opener from the A's on Monday, the Sox grabbed a 3-1 lead when Todd Frazier hit an 0-2 pitch from former Sox right-hander Chris Bassitt for his first home run with the Sox with two outs in the fifth. Frazier, who had singled in his previous at-bat after going hitless in his first five at-bats, pumped his fist and shouted at the Sox' dugout before rounding first.

"Everybody wants a good start," Frazier said. "It's not going to kill us if we don't, but at the same time, let's get some wins on the road and show them we're going to do just as good on the road as at home."

Bassitt probably shouldn't have had to face Frazier, who made the A's pay for a mistake. Rollins was safe on a routine grounder when second baseman Jed Lowrie went to second instead of first, his throw arriving after shortstop Marcus Semien crossed the bag. Bassitt then struck out Jose Abreu before Frazier hit one deep to left field.

The A's got a run back against left-hander Jose Quintana in the fifth on Lowrie's fourth RBI of the series. The Sox made it 4-2 in the sixth on consecutive singles from the bottom third of the lineup —former Athletic Brett Lawrie, Alex Avila and Austin Jackson (for the RBI). The Sox' dugout was jumping again after Jackson's hit.

Manager Robin Ventura pulled Quintana (5th innings, two runs, seven hits, no walks, seven strikeouts) after 99 pitches in favor of Matt Albers when former Sox catcher Josh Phegley (single, double) came up with a runner on second and two outs. Albers got pinch hitter Stephen Vogt on a groundout.

Yonder Alonso tied the game at 4 with a two-run single in the eighth.

With only 10 games at home in April, the Sox will have to get it started on the road, where they were 95-148 over the last three seasons under Ventura. They are built to win now and need to get past that scar from a poor spring, poor start and poor season in 2015, when expectations were maybe even higher.

They did come out of spring training feeling pretty good about themselves, so that was a start.

"We're already in that flow," Frazier said. "In spring training, Robin set up a good plan for everybody."

White Sox notes: Abreu's defense, Jones, bench, A's flu

By Daryl Van Schouwen / Chicago Sun-Times | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. – Jose Abreu could continue to cash checks from the biggest contract in White Sox history without lifting a finger to improve his defense, which pales in comparison to his bat. So give the slugging first baseman credit for wanting to be a more complete player. And for putting in the time to work at being better with the glove.

"I put a lot of effort in spring training to improve my defense," Abreu said through translator Billy Russo Tuesday. "I'm not that kind of first baseman that can make too much mistakes or errors like I did last year. I wasn't happy with that."

Coaches Joe McEwing and Rick Renteria worked with Abreu on his hand action moving to his right. Manager Robin Ventura, a former third and first baseman, wants to see Abreu slow things down a bit.

"He's gotten a little lower," Ventura said. "He had a lot of glove action, and I think that's just the way he learned to catch a groundball. It's just gotten better. You don't have to be quite as fast as he was trying to be before. The calmer he gets, the better he is. It's easier to catch, easier to pick the balls."

Abreu has made clear his disdain for designated hitter duty, in part because he wants to contribute on the field. He says it's a pride thing, and he doesn't want to settle for being ordinary or less.

"I want to be perfect," he said. "I know that nobody is going to be perfect, but I want to have that mindset that I can be perfect. That's part of my mentality and preparation with my defense at first base."

Nate Jones factor

If Nate Jones continues to be the guy who stranded the tying run on second in the eighth inning Monday, the Sox bullpen will have key component in place.

"To have him come in and do that is really important for us," Ventura said.

Ventura, who used Jake Petricka and Zach Duke before Jones in the eighth, isn't opposed to giving Jones clean innings.

"I see Nate being able to do a ninth inning if we need to," Ventura said. "He has that kind of stuff if you need to give Robby [closer David Robertson] a day. Nate can do that."

Jones, the hardest thrower in the Sox pen, came back from Tommy John surgery late last season and struck out 27 in 19 innings. He didn't allow a run in spring training.

A good clubhouse vibe

Ventura, on his team coming out of spring training: "I like where they're at. We have more veteran guys. There are a lot of guys who are more comfortable in their own skin and understand what it takes to go through and how to be a teammate and pick somebody else up.

"I've been around teams that are kind of like this. You might have Jose and then a bunch of good players and it could play well together. And that was noticed early in spring that it could play well together.

"But I like the feeling that they have right now. And I think they do, too."

This and that

Ventura said Tyler Saladino will start at shortstop Wednesday or Thursday and that he wanted to get his other bench guys – Jerry Sands and J.B. Shuck – in a game before the team opens at home Friday.

*Wednesday starter Carlos Rodon, 3-3 with a 3.24 ERA in 12 career road starts, allowed five runs on five hits and six walks over four innings in Oakland on May 15.

*A's ace Sonny Gray, scratched Monday because of food poisoning, is good to start Wednesday. A flu bug has been making its way through the A's clubhouse, leaving Gray to wonder if flu was his issue. A's right-hander Kendall Graveman has also been ill but should be OK to make his scheduled start Thursday against Sox righty Mat Latos.

Baseball fans advised to arrive early for security check

By Maudlyne Ihejirika / Chicago Sun-Times | April 5th, 2016

Security in the age of terrorism will mean longer waits for fans at metal-detector lines to enjoy America's pastime, Chicago officials warned Tuesday.

With season openings approaching at the city's two ballparks, representatives from the Office of Emergency Management and Communications, the Chicago Police Department and the Chicago Cubs and White Sox management are urging fans to change game-day habits and arrive at parks much earlier.

"We are asking all fans attending the games to arrive early to allow sufficient time for the security checks in place at both ballparks," OEMC Chief Gary Schenkel said. "Although security screening was part of the entry at U.S. Cellular last year, this will be the first year Wrigley has added metal detectors at all gates as part of a Major League Baseball initiative to standardize entrance and security at ballparks."

The Cubs have invested half a million dollars in new security training and staff, along with the new metal detectors, team officials said.

"We believe we're ready as we can be, but we'll be ready to pivot as circumstances warrant," said Julian Green, Cubs vice president of communications and community affairs.

The White Sox season home opener is Friday at 3:10 p.m. against the Cleveland Indians. The Cubs take on the Cincinnati Reds at their home opener Monday at 7:05 p.m. Both parks will open gates 2 1/2 hours early, officials said at a press conference at OEMC headquarters.

Besides the usual warnings of parking restrictions, avoiding traffic congestion and using public transportation — or remote parking and a free bicycle check service at Wrigley — officials are asking fans to be vigilant.

"In terms of what's going on in the world and recent events, we can't do this alone," Deputy Police Chief Steve Georgas said of fighting terrorism.

"We strongly encourage everybody, if you see something, say something. If you see something suspicious, an unattended package, a suspicious vehicle, please call 911," he said. "You never know, that might be a missing piece to a puzzle that we're working on at that time."

Officials reminded residents living near both the South Side and North Side ballparks to obtain street parking permits from local aldermen's offices. And they warned of crackdowns on every seasonal issue — from sale of the permits to fraudulent ticket sales and public intoxication.

"As in years past, we continue to remind those in the area on game days to respect the surrounding communities," Schenkel said.

Fans can expect to see plenty of uniformed police officers this year, Georgas said.

"We are extremely grateful for the adding of metal detectors to these ballparks. The Department will also use all tools in our arsenal — everything from explosives detection K-9 teams, to undercover police officers to the city's vast camera network to do our best to ensure safety and security," he said.

Construction remains an ongoing issue at Wrigley, the Cubs and Ald. Tom Tunney (44th) also warned. That includes reconstruction of the Budweiser bleachers; replacement of 7,000 seats on the terrace section; restoration of the historic Wrigley Field marquee being unveiled Wednesday; reconstruction of the main gate and the park's western facade; a new clubhouse; and a new exterior event plaza, Green said.

"As we arrive at opening night 2016, the restoration of Wrigley Field and the Ricketts family development of the areas around the friendly confines is nearly one-third complete," Green said. "We still have a ways to go. We understand the impact all this construction has had on the community, and appreciate our neighbor's patience and understanding as we work through this."

Tunney pointed out that besides the Wrigley construction, another large development is scheduled to begin demolition soon at Addison and Sheffield, and that all the construction has resulted in a loss of 200 to 300 parking spaces in the area surrounding the park.

"It's always been a problem to park, but this year parking is in even less abundance around Wrigley Field. So we really need our fans to not bring their vehicles to the neighborhood," Tunney said. "It's an exciting time, but we anticipate that as the excitement continues to accelerate, restrictions around Wrigley are going to accelerate also."

Green emphasized that fans who don't arrive early enough to get through the metal-detector lines could end up missing some of the game.

"We believe we're going to have a tremendous Cubs season this year," he said. "But as we enter into this new era of security screening, we want fans to basically change their habits, meaning, whatever time that you leave for the game, whether it from the suburbs or that favorite restaurant that you might go to across the street, change it so that you don't miss a minute of an inning of Cubs baseball in 2016."

Quintana consistent, White Sox top A's 5-4

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Having faced Jose Quintana when he was playing for the Detroit Tigers and having caught the left-handed starter several times in spring training, White Sox catcher Alex Avila knew what to expect Tuesday night.

"He's got an easy delivery and easy mechanics," Avila said before making his first start for the Sox. "The ball jumps out of his hand. He has very good command and is normally right around the spot he wants to be. What's made him really good over the years is kind of that easy explosiveness out of his hand and being able to command both sides of the plate."

Taking the mound in the second game of the season Tuesday night against the A's at Oakland Coliseum, Quintana looked a little rusty while pitching 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings and allowing 2 runs on 7 hits.

But the offense picked Quintana up for a change, as Todd Frazier's 3-run homer off Oakland starter and former White Sox prospect Chris Bassitt in the fifth inning put the White Sox in front.

It was Frazier's first home run in a Sox uniform. The third baseman hit 35 homers for the Reds last year, the fourth-highest total in the National League.

The A's tied the game at 4-4 with two outs in the eighth on Yonder Alonso's 2-run single off Sox reliever Nate Jones.

In the ninth inning, Jimmy Rollins lifted the White Sox to a 5-4 victory with a two-out home run against Sean Doolittle.

Since 2012, Quintana has received just 3.9 runs per start, the second-lowest total in the American League. Never one to complain, Quintana simply takes the ball every fifth game and does his job.

"He's just consistent," Sox manager Robin Ventura said. "I don't think he gets credit for that as far as his temperament, his pitches. He's had that since Day 1. I think his maturity has always been an important thing for him. He's a consistent guy. Coming in, preparation, attitude, any of that stuff that you want to put on him, he has always had it. I think that's what makes him good."

On the defensive:

Jose Abreu is the White Sox' best hitter. He doesn't want to be their worst defensive player.

Abreu said he put a lot of work with third-base coach Joe McEwing and flew bench coach Rick Renteria to improve his play at first base.

"I'm not that kind of first baseman that can make too many mistakes or errors like I did last year," Abreu said through a translator. "I wasn't happy with that. During spring training, I put a lot of effort to try to make adjustments, to try to improve my defense. And I feel pride about my defense. I feel like I help the team to win games, and that's why I work hard during spring training to improve my defense"

Abreu, who made two nice plays in Monday's season opening win over the A's, said his footwork is fine, but he specifically focused on one area.

"Working with (McEwing) and Renteria, they noticed that I have been doing something wrong with some groundballs to my right hand," Abreu said. "They noticed that and then they let me know and then we worked together to fix it."

Jones to close?

After an impressive debut in Monday night's opener, Sox relief pitcher Nate Jones might be in line to lose some games this season if David Robertson needs a break.

Jones, who has a 100-mph fastball, pitched the eighth inning Monday. He was back on the mound in the eighth Tuesday and allowed 2 runs.

"I see Nate being able to do a ninth inning if we need to," manager Robin Ventura said. "He has that kind of stuff if you need to give Robby a day. Nate can do that."

Jones missed the first four months of last season recovering from Tommy John surgery.

"We knew what he was like before he got hurt," Ventura said. "But to have him back and have him able to come in and do that is really important for us. The confidence level of bringing him in being able to throw like that, whether it's righty, lefty, whoever, we're going to rely on him quite a bit."

Rodon looking to change for the better for Chicago White Sox

Scot Gregor / Daily Herald | April 4th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. -- In most major-league rotations, Carlos Rodon already would be the top lefty.

He's that good, and as a rookie last season Rodon showed why he was the No. 3 overall pick out of North Carolina State in the 2014 draft while going 9-6 with a 3.75 ERA overall and 5-2 with a 1.81 ERA and 49 strikeouts in 54 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings over his final 8 starts.

Following Chris Sale and Jose Quintana -- the Chicago White Sox's top two left-handed starters -- Rodon makes his 2016 debut Wednesday night against the Athletics and ace starter Sonny Gray, who was scratched from Monday's season opener with food poisoning.

"He can be a top line left-handed pitcher," said Sox pitching coach Don Cooper of the 23-year-old Rodon. "A top-flight, left-handed pitcher with the physical stuff he has. But physical's not enough. You've got to be able to focus and execute, throw more strikes. In a nutshell that's what he needs, more strikes."

Even with all the hype that surrounded Rodon's arrival to the White Sox's starting rotation last May, the 6-foot-3, 235-pounder was a rookie and he was erratic.

But Rodon learned while taking his lumps and closed the season with a strong finishing kick.

Starting with his outing against Oakland on Wednesday night, look for Rodon to take the next step toward stardom. This season, he still has the plus fastball and devastating slider, and Rodon finally has a feel for the changeup.

"That's all we really worked on during spring training," Rodon said. "I threw it a little last season, but not as much as I should have. It's definitely a feel pitch and I'm comfortable throwing it now. I wouldn't say it's locked in yet, but it's getting there."

According to Brooks Baseball, less than 10 percent of Rodon's pitches were change-ups last year.

With a fastball that routinely registers 96-97 mph and a hard, biting slider, Rodon needs a softer pitch to keep hitters off balance.

"We certainly hope it (changeup) is going to become a weapon," Cooper said. "He didn't have to throw change-ups in college because he basically got everybody out with his fastball and slider. Now, a left-hander without a changeup, it's a crime, really. It's a pitch we put an awful lot of time in during spring training, and he's used it more and more."

When Rodon throws the change, or fastball, or slider, hitting the strike zone is critical. Last season, especially early, he frequently was burned by walks and high pitch counts.

"The key for him is getting ahead in the count with his first three pitches," Cooper said. "Getting them to hit the first three pitches, because the biggest column he has to improve on is the walk column. If we make them hit the first, second or third pitch, or if they don't and we're ahead in the count, there's a pretty good chance we're going to get that guy."

Rodon said he's much more comfortable and knows what to expect as he enters his second season. Now, it's time to continue making opposing hitters uncomfortable, starting with the A's.

"Pick up where we left off and try to keep going," Cooper said. "You know, he's only 139 innings into the process. He's by far not a finished product. He has much to do, much to get better at, for him to continue to grow and be the guy he sees himself being and we see himself being."

Sox start loose, strong in Oakland

By Scot Gregor / Daily Herald | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. -- We'll see how the Chicago White Sox are holding up at various check points this season.

Will they survive a brutal April, which inexplicably features 26 games in 27 days?

What about May, when they play five series against teams that made the playoffs last year?

What about June, July, August and September?

Time will obviously tell, but for one day, the Sox were a loose, solid bunch.

Before battering Rich Hill and knocking out the Athletics' fill-in starting pitcher in the third inning during Monday night's season-opening 4-3 victory at Oakland Coliseum, the White Sox looked like a pretty nice blend of old and new.

Before taking batting practice, new second baseman Brett Lawrie was blasting a wide range of music in the clubhouse, from Michael Jackson to rap to a teenager playing a pretty incredible national anthem guitar solo.

As Lawrie bobbed and wove his head at a clubhouse table while switching tunes, holdover Avisail Garcia and new catcher Dioner Navarro did a little dancing.

Baseball is a competitive game, and the long season makes it a grind for all involved.

Teams that don't have any fun -- and the 2015 Sox immediately come to mind -- usually don't fare very well.

New guys like Navarro, Lawrie, Todd Frazier, Jimmy Rollins, Alex Avila and Austin Jackson recognize the importance of staying loose off the field in order to avoid being tight when it is go time for games.

"They did a great job getting players like we got right now, just to kind of change something a little bit," Navarro said. "That's what we've been trying to do."

After three straight losing seasons, the Sox have to change their place in the standings this year to avoid what would likely be massive changes throughout the organization.

"Antsy is probably a decent way of describing most all of us around the club the last few years," general manager Rick Hahn said. "We've been going through a process here that began midway through 2013 in terms of retooling this club and getting ourselves back in a position to contend.

"None of us really have the best patience streak in us, and (chairman) Jerry (Reinsdorf) is certainly no exception. We still realize this was going to be a process, one which hopefully here in the coming months is coming to an end as we take that next step."

The White Sox haven't been to the playoffs since 2008, and the '05 World Series memories are beginning to fade. The urgency to play competitive baseball is the highest in memory for the Sox, starting now.

"Everybody wants a good start," Frazier said. "It's not going to kill us if we don't, but at the same time let's get some (wins) on the road and show them we're going to do just as good on the road as at home."

Cubs, White Sox prepare for home openers

Lisa Fielding / CBS Chicago | April 5th, 2016

CHICAGO (CBS) — On the North Side, continued renovations of Wrigley Field will make life a bit more difficult as fans flock to the Cubs' home opener Monday against the Reds.

"Parking will be at a premium," Alderman Tom Tunney said. "I suggest Cub fans leave their vehicles at home or park in the remote lots.

One of the biggest additions to Wrigley Field this season will be newly installed metal detectors.

"Every single entrance will have metal detectors," said Julian Green, vice president of communications for the Cubs.

Major League Baseball mandated that all 30 teams around the nation install walk through metal detectors or use hand-held wands.

Green says the MLB mandate is now in place and fans should expect delays and to plan accordingly.

"If you're the customer that's across the street at your favorite restaurant or bar and you wait until Wayne Messmer to sing the national anthem, you're going to have some problems," he says.

The White Sox installed metal detectors in 2014. Green says they've learned a bit from other ball clubs, but it will still be a work in progress.

"While you can learn from different teams, how to expedite it, you won't be able to tell until boots are on the ground and lining up," Green says. "We have to figure out how they will cue, how they are entering, that's the things we have to figure out when we welcome upwards of 40,000 people."

"Fans who were with us last year, have some familiarity with the metal detectors, so anyone who is new to coming to the ballpark on opening day, we want you to be mindful that it is a bit of a slower process but we feel like we have the process down pat," says Christine O'Reilly, vice president of community relations for the White Sox.

CBS 2's Jim Williams reports it's still a construction zone at the ballpark, but the Cubs say the work won't hamper opening day.

Rich Warwick has lived around Wrigley Field his entire life, and with all the construction at the ballpark. He's thankful he no longer carries passengers in a pedicab.

"If I was still riding a pedicab I would hate this," he says.

Addison and Clark are both narrowed and heavy equipment and construction crews are everywhere, and will be for some time to come, with the project one third complete.

Still, there's been progress since the Cubs 2015 season ended in the NLCS loss to the Mets. Terracotta is replacing concrete and ornate fencing has been added. Thousands of seats have been replaced and the famous red marquee has been restored and will go back up over the main gate Wednesday. A new Cubs administrative building is under construction.

You'll also notice the McDonald's outside the park for many year is gone. What you don't see is the new 30,000 square foot clubhouse for the Cubs, which is underground.

Alderman Tunney says he and his constituents have to be patient.

"It's been a rough season, offseason, the construction has been 365 days a year," he says.

Rich Warwick knows it all too well.

"I think the changes are good, it's just that they're taking so long, it's chaos," he says.

The White Sox host the Indians in their home opener Friday at 3:10 p.m.. Parking lots open at 11 a.m. and the ballpark at 1:10 p.m.

Gates at Wrigley will open Monday at 4:35 p.m. for a 7:05 p.m. start.

Rollins homers in 9th to lift White Sox past Athletics 5-4

Associated Press | April 5th, 2016

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Having grown up in the Bay Area, Chicago White Sox shortstop Jimmy Rollins knew his ball might get caught up in the cool night air at the Oakland Coliseum, so he hustled around the bases as quickly as possible.

He could have slowed to a trot rounding first.

Rollins hit a tiebreaking homer off closer Sean Doolittle with two outs in the ninth inning and the Chicago White Sox beat the Oakland Athletics 5-4 on Tuesday night.

Signed to a minor league deal by the White Sox in February, Rollins connected on a 2-2 pitch from Doolittle (0-1) after Chicago's bullpen blew a two-run lead in the eighth.

"I hit it good but with this thick air you just never know what's going to happen," Rollins said. "I got a good amount of backspin on it and it stayed up just long enough."

Todd Frazier also homered for Chicago, a three-run shot in the fifth. Austin Jackson added an RBI infield single and Adam Eaton had three hits.

Rollins' first home run of the season came three innings after he grounded into a double play with the bases loaded. It also bailed out Chicago's bullpen after starter Jose Quintana left with a two-run lead.

"I don't know if that's the way you draw it up, but it's a nice team win," White Sox manager Robin Ventura said. "We're going to hit some homers -- Jimmy with the big one."

Doolittle, who missed 121 games a year ago with shoulder and rotator cuff issues, took the loss. It was Oakland's second straight one-run defeat after leading the majors in that category last year.

"It's tough to come back in here after a one-run loss at home after trying to come back from a one-run loss," Doolittle said. "I'm disgusted with myself."

Nate Jones (1-0) pitched one inning for the win and David Robertson worked a scoreless ninth for his second save.

Yonder Alonso and Jed Lowrie drove in two runs apiece for the A's. Oakland has lost 13 of its last 18 against Chicago.

53 AND COUNTING

Quintana allowed two runs over 5 2/3 innings with seven strikeouts but was saddled with the 53rd no-decision of his career -- most in the majors since 2012. Oakland rallied for two runs in the eighth off Zach Duke and Jones.

"The most important thing here is taking the W," Quintana said. "That's part of the game. It happens sometimes. We won the game, that's most important."

FLU BUGS A'S

The flu is apparently working its way through the Athletics' clubhouse. Oakland ace Sonny Gray was scratched from his opening day start Monday and sent to the hospital with possible food poisoning, though he now says it might have been a 24-hour flu bug. Fellow starting pitcher Kendall Graveman was also not feeling well and spent the day trying to recover, though he is expected to make his scheduled start on Thursday.

"I've had this Purell hand dispenser in here for years and now everybody doesn't think I'm so crazy," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "We had (head athletic trainer Nick Paparesta) address the team and go over what we can try to do to combat that. We're going to do the best we can."

Ventura said his ballclub dealt with a similar issue in spring training.

TRAINER'S ROOM

White Sox: Chicago has won six straight at the Coliseum. ... Ventura needs one win to reach 300 for his career. ... Jose Abreu struck out three consecutive times after singling in his first at-bat.

Athletics: Starting pitcher Chris Bassitt was drafted by the White Sox in 2011. He gave up four runs in 5 1/3 innings. ... Liam Hendriks retired all eight batters he faced.

UP NEXT

White Sox: LHP Carlos Rodon, who went 9-6 last season, faces Oakland on Wednesday. The 23-year-old Rodon finished fifth among rookies a year ago with 139 strikeouts.

Athletics: Gray makes his delayed season debut against Chicago. Gray has never defeated the White Sox and has an 8.10 ERA in two starts against them.

White Sox 5, Athletics 4: New guys leading the way in exciting start

Jon Greenberg / The Athletic | April 5th, 2016

Some things never change, like Jose Quintana getting a no-decision. But the White Sox's new additions have paid immediate dividends in their first two games in Oakland.

Jimmy Rollins hit a game-winning homer in the top of the ninth in the Sox's 5-4 win. Todd Frazier hit a three-run homer earlier in the game. Austin Jackson drove in a run with an infield single.

Rollins also drove in a run in the Sox's 4-3 win in Monday's season opener. That means the four Sox newcomers have collected six of the team's seven RBIs so far.

This is the first time the Sox and Cubs started 2-0 in the same season since 1951, according to everyone on Twitter. Last season, the Sox lost four straight and were never two games over .500.

So far, so good for the Sox, who had to have been glad to leave the messiness of spring training behind.

Fellow newcomer Brett Lawrie singled and scored on Jackson's hit in the sixth. Lawrie is an early frontrunner for White Sox social media MVP with his jittery intensity during the game.

White Sox general manager Rick Hahn's moves look pretty good 1.2 percent of the way in. After adding so many volatile veterans last season (Melky Cabrera, Adam LaRoche and Jeff Samardzija), Hahn's safer additions this offseason seem like they have a better chance of working out over the course of the season.

Frazier, the former Cincinnati Red third baseman acquired in a trade this past winter, is already busting out the "We're special" card.

@CST_soxvan: Todd Frazier: "We've got something special, man. It's a good team. We're coming together."

Pretty soon we'll be talking about the extension Robin Ventura is getting because of the way his new players have meshed with the holdovers. Adam Eaton is 5-for-8 with a triple and Jose Abreu is 3-for-8 with a double.

Quintana was lifted with two outs in the sixth. He gave up two runs on seven hits, but he struck out seven with no walks. The Sox blew a 4-2 lead when setup man Nate Jones hit two batters, with a man on base, and gave up a two-run single to Yonder Alonso. Jones wound up getting the win.

New videos, more food and a new voice for the resurgent White Sox

Jon Greenberg / The Athletic | April 5th, 2016

When White Sox senior vice president of sales and marketing Brooks Boyer showed a video of the new 60-foot-high, 130-foot-wide centerfield videoboard to a player this spring, he said the response was, “Hey, it’s like a big league ballpark.”

Zing.

The White Sox’s landlord at U.S. Cellular Field, the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority (ISFA), shelled out just under \$7.4 million for three new outfield videoboards this offseason and the team unveiled them to the media on Tuesday morning.

The state-of-the-art Mitsubishi boards have a 10-millimeter pixel resolution and the video in centerfield is enormous. After the Cubs outfitted Wrigley Field with two videoboards last year, the Sox’s already-aged technology looked obsolete. Boyer said their old videoboard was the smallest primary one in baseball. Now it’s one of the biggest and the largest in town.

The Cubs’ left-field videoboard (built by Daktronics) is 42 feet high and 95 feet wide and has a 13-millimeter pixel resolution.

Advantage Sox in the great civic pixel war? Sure.

The Sox tossed out the dot matrix board in left field, an original addition at “New Comiskey Park” in 1991, along with the 2003 videoboard and the flickering right field board, which was installed in 2008. White Way Sign put that one in and the company went out of business. Boyer said the now non-existent proprietary technology made it impossible to fix.

The centerfield board has the familiar pinwheels atop it, but the new ones are digital.

ISFA executive director Lou Bertuca said his state agency came in under the \$7.4 million budget for the three-board deal. It was originally budgeted for \$11.4 million, but that came down through “a competitive bidding process,” Bertuca said. He added that they even got Mitsubishi to front them the largest videoboard until a new fiscal year starts this summer.

“It’s a huge game-changer just for the facility,” Bertuca said. “We’ve already seen some of the fruits of our labor. We were able to ink Northern Illinois University to a football game this November.”

The boards will help increase revenue via advertising opportunities for sponsors, but mostly the ISFA is trying to improve the fan experience. The Sox could always use help in attracting more fans to the park and more attendance equals more rent for the ISFA, per the terms of their contract.

When asked about the state of ticket sales, Boyer said, “It’s OK. It’s not great. You always want more. I know everyone always says ‘It’s great.’ ”

While season ticket renewals were higher than anticipated, Boyer said single-game sales are a little sluggish right now.

“We’ll be jammed for Opening Day and after that, (attendance) will be about what you expect it to be,” he said.

If you go by last season, when the team also opened up on Friday after playing its first series on the road, the Sox drew 38,533 for the home opener and 22,317 for its first Saturday home game. The Sox drew 13,055 for their first Monday home game.

The team averaged 21,947 fans, the fifth-worst average in baseball, during a pretty miserable season. If the Sox are as improved as they think they are, they should be able to build on that number.

"We've analyzed our data and we know it's important to sell tickets 10 to 14 days before a series," Boyer said. "Sometimes that goes down to three to seven days, depending on the matchups. In April and May, weather is very important to us. Team performance drives sales for June, July and August."

So, getting off to a good start isn't just important for possible lame duck manager Robin Ventura.

A new snack at U.S. Cellular Field is the tater tacho. Fans can buy a small side for \$6 or a mini-helmet full of them for \$9

The White Sox also unveiled new food items, from an \$8.75 "Merkt's Cheesy Beef" steak sandwich to italian beef pizza available in the new Beggar's Pizza Pub (which has a host of other new dishes like a \$6 fried caprese ravioli and \$5 cheese-filled breadsticks) to a \$9 mini-helmet full of tater tachos, which are tater tots covered in cheese and jalapeno peppers.

"I always say whatever we can we put on a stick or in a helmet," Boyer said.

In brand team-up news, the team has also added a Hooters cart in the 100 level. A buffalo chicken sandwich will run you \$9.50.

For those cold games in April, adult fans can buy a \$12 spiked hot cocoa (with Baileys Irish Cream). For the hot days in July, they can buy a \$9 "boozy snow cone" infused with vodka.

Don't worry, there are healthy, non-alcoholic options for Sox fans. Fans in the club section can find an arugula and caprese salad, for instance.

OK, enough of that stuff. As the Simpsons taught us, you don't make friends with salad. Cool Sox fans in the clubs and suites can also buy a "loaded float," a creamsicle- or root beer-flavored ice cream drink with a pour of Henry's Hard Soda, or a "colossal chocolate chunk cookie sundae."

The White Sox are serving club and suite guests a "colossal chocolate chunk cookie sundae." In the foreground is a reuben sub smothered in swiss cheese.

When asked how many calories were in that cookie behemoth, executive chef Sonia Respeto said with a laugh, "Those numbers are in my office. I'll have to get back to you."

The team also unveiled its new partnership with Coca-Cola, which replaces a long relationship with Pepsi.

In other fan experience enhancement news, the Sox commissioned wildly popular local musician Chance the Rapper to narrate a new hype video that focuses on the city's relationship to the South Side.

Chance, born Chancelor Bennett, is from West Chatham and is known for wearing the classic black White Sox hat on stage. He will throw out the first pitch at the home opener on Friday afternoon.

"It's great to have someone who represent the South Side so well and represents our team," Boyer said.

First look: The White Sox's new video boards

By Danny Ecker / Crain's Chicago Business | April 5th, 2016

After more than a decade with one of baseball's smallest video boards, U.S. Cellular Field has officially entered the era of modern stadium amenities.

The White Sox today unveiled a 6,500-square-foot center-field video board that drastically alters the ballpark's backdrop. One of the largest video boards among all 30 MLB stadiums, it replaced a 1,484-square-foot board that was installed in 2003.

The new board features 10-millimeter-pixel resolution—among the clearest available for sports stadiums today—and includes on its top digital versions of the famous colorful pinwheels that have shone on the South Side for decades.

It also coordinates with two new 2,400-square-foot video boards in left center and right center field, giving the Sox the ability to show sponsor and other messaging across all three.

Taxpayers picked up the \$7.3 million bill for the three signs. The Illinois Sports Facilities Authority, the public agency that owns and operates the ballpark, was obligated to upgrade the boards under the White Sox's rental agreement.

That deal stipulates ISFA must replace any "obsolete component" with "modern replacements" if at least 75 percent of MLB's 30 stadiums have it.

Big eats, big boards greet Sox fans this season at the Cell

By Amy Rutledge / WGN TV | April 5th, 2016

CHICAGO -- There are plenty of new food offerings to please your pallet at U.S Cellular this season.

Old favorites are getting kicked up a notch, like tater tots. Only these are "tater tachos" are smothered in cheese and jalapenos. There's also the bacon cheddar pretzel dog and a new cheesy beef sandwich.

You can also get Italian beef pizza or barbequed chicken.

And or the health conscious there's an arugula caprice salad.

Or add a little kick with a number of Latin dishes like chicken or carne asada tacos, pork carnitas and corn street nachos.

Also new this year are Asian wraps, buffalo chicken egg rolls and floats, dreamsicle or a root beer.

Fans will also no longer have to try to get a glimpse of the scoreboard. Gone are the smallest boards in baseball. They have been replaced by three large video boards in the outfield. At center what was nearly 1500 square feet has been replaced by an 8,000 square foot board. The two boards in left and right fields are each 2500-square feet. It was more than seven million dollar upgrade to the 25 year old park.

For the White Sox, the new video boards mean more fan interaction and better use of social media for the team and for sponsors. Most importantly team executives say it is a chance to give fans a better experience at the ball park.

White Sox to give away ballpark food from Chicago food truck Wednesday

By James Neveau / NBC Chicago | April 5th, 2016

Chicago White Sox fans who aren't going to make it to U.S. Cellular Field for the team's opening game against Cleveland on Friday are still going to get an opportunity to enjoy some ballpark fare this week.

The team announced on Tuesday that they will deploy a food truck into the streets of downtown Chicago on Wednesday to give fans a chance to eat like they're at the ballpark. The truck, known as the "Bite Sox" truck, will provide free sample-size helpings of food like hot dogs, bacon on a stick, and bratwurst at random spots in the downtown area.

Curious about where the White Sox truck will be? Well, instead of making you hunt all over the city, the team has provided a list of locations where they will park:

Michigan and Lake: 11 a.m.

Michigan and Monroe: 12:10 p.m.

Clark and Monroe: 2:30 p.m.

Wacker and Adams: 4 p.m.

Food will be available while supplies last.

Chicago advises fans of new security measures at baseball stadiums

By James Neveau / NBC Chicago | April 5th, 2016

The Chicago Cubs and Chicago White Sox will open their respective home schedules within the next week, and the Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communications is advising fans to be aware of new security measures around both ballparks.

In a joint statement issued by OEMC and Aldermen Tom Tunney and Patrick Daley, city officials discussed new parking restrictions, security procedures at both ballparks, and specific enforcement initiatives that the city is undertaking to ensure the safety of fans.

“With opening day finally here, we join Chicagoans in wishing the Cubs and White Sox well and remind fans about the safety measures in place, as well strict enforcement of parking and public intoxication restrictions to help minimize impacts to nearby neighborhoods and businesses,” OEMC Executive Director Gary W. Schenkel said in a statement.

Both ballparks will open their gates 30 minutes earlier than usual on their respective Opening Days for fans to get through enhanced security procedures. Metal detectors have been mandated across Major League Baseball at all ballparks, and both U.S. Cellular Field and Wrigley Field will have the devices in place for their games.

According to OEMC, fans will not have to remove their belts or shoes at security checkpoints, but they will have to take their cell phones and cameras out of their bags and pockets in order to pass through the metal detectors.

The city of Chicago will also be heavily enforcing laws against underage consumption and purchase of alcohol, and will strictly enforce laws regarding public intoxication, according to the agency.

The city is also encouraging fans to use public transportation options, but also listed services that both teams will offer this season. White Sox fans looking for parking can park at McCormick Place’s Garage C for the opener on Friday against the Cleveland Indians, and they will have a free shuttle service to and from the garage.

As for the Cubs, their remote parking location is at Basic Wire & Cable, located at 3900 W. Rockwell. Free shuttle service is provided between the parking lot and Wrigley Field by the team before all night and weekend games.

The Cubs, White Sox, and Chicago Transit Authority websites all offer more information about the new procedures, which will first come into force Friday for the White Sox opener. The Cubs will hold their Opening Day contest on Monday night against the Cincinnati Reds.

White Sox home opener brings new cell features – and tater tachos

By Paul Meincke / ABC Chicago | April 5th, 2016

CHICAGO (WLS) -- The baseball season in Chicago is off to a great start, with both the Cubs and White Sox winning their openers on the West Coast.

The baseball season in Chicago is off to a great start, with both the Cubs and White Sox winning their openers on the West Coast.

Now, the fans are looking forward to the home openers in a few days.

The Cubs open next Monday at Wrigley Field and the Sox open Friday at U.S. Cellular Field.

This is the house - 25 years old now. And like every house, it undergoes change, especially when company is coming. You know, trade in the old TV for a big flat screen. So light it up.

The centerfield scoreboard at The Cell - roughly 8,000 square feet - now plays edge-to-edge video, with 10-millimeter pixel resolution - for those who keep track of those sorts of things. And if you choose a different line of site, there are two less-huge boards in right and left.

"I think there'll be more statistics - more fan interaction from a social media standpoint," said Sox exec Brooks Boyer.

Ballpark selfies can wind up on the big screen - bigger than life - and replays with such clarity that the umps may turn to watch. The Sox say the big boards are meant to enhance the fan experience. So too, are a new array of culinary offerings.

Consider the Merkt's cheesy beef sandwich, the bacon cheddar pretzel dog, and another rookie combo - Tater Tachos - a marriage of nachos and tator tots.

"In the off season, we come up with ideas of things we think would work - a laundry list of things. We try them and test them," said Rebecca Spalding, Delaware North.

Beyond tator tachos, there are Reuben subs and monster floats. Or go light with a salad, and then top it with a colossal chocolate-chunk cookie sundae.

So you can come to the ballpark, watch finely tuned athletes doing their thing, and then leave ten pounds heavier.

So locate the defibrillators. There's plenty of food, and boards plenty big, but ultimately, it's the product on the field that puts guests in the house, and the Sox are feeling up about that.

"When you couple a great product with a great ballpark experience, then it's a winning experience for the fans," Boyer said.

It's a full house Friday. Hope springs eternal. And Day One for Tator tachos.

Cubs, Sox prepare for 2016 season with new security measures

By Ted Cox / DNA Info | April 5th, 2016

WEST LOOP — The Cubs and White Sox are already telling their fans to allow more time to get through security checks this season in order not to miss the first pitch, and they received a resounding echo Tuesday when the city's emergency czar chimed in as well.

The Office of Emergency Management and Communications also called on fans to allow ample time to clear security Tuesday, while issuing additional warnings that public drinking and intoxication would not be tolerated outside the parks.

"With opening day finally here, we join Chicagoans in wishing the Cubs and White Sox well and remind fans about the safety measures in place, as well strict enforcement of parking and public-intoxication restrictions to help minimize impacts to nearby neighborhoods and businesses," said Gary Schenkel, executive director of the city's emergency office.

The Cubs and Sox both announced gates would open an extra half-hour early for their home openers: Friday afternoon for the Sox, and Monday night for the Cubs. That's to accommodate big crowds expected for the return of a highly anticipated baseball season on the South and North sides, but also to deal with metal-detector screenings and bag searches mandated this season by Major League Baseball.

Fans will not have to remove shoes or belts, as in clearing airport security, but will have to allow phones and cameras to be inspected.

Gates will open at White Sox Park at 1:10 p.m. Friday ahead of the first pitch set for 3:10, and similarly Wrigley Field gates will open at 4:35 p.m. Monday ahead of the 7:05 first pitch.

Wrigley Field, of course, is also dealing with snarled traffic as construction continues right outside the park as part of the ongoing renovation, including a new plaza and team office building on Clark Street.

Aldermen Tom Tunney (44th) and Patrick Daley Thompson (11th) also called on fans to respect their Wrigleyville and Bridgeport neighborhoods.

That includes respecting no-parking areas on game days, especially the parking ban at Wrigley Field for night games in the area immediately surrounding the ballpark.

Both the Sox and Cubs pitched remote parking lots with shuttle service: at McCormick Place Garage C, at 29th Street and Fort Dearborn, on the South Side; and at the Basic Wire & Cable lot at 3900 N. Rockwell St. on the North Side.

Both also recommend public transportation on the CTA, or Metra, which has a stop at 35th Street across the Dan Ryan Expressway from Sox Park.

In addition to enforcing public-drinking and -intoxication laws, Chicago Police will also be cracking down on unlicensed vendors and those selling or buying local parking passes.

The Office of Emergency Management also repeated calls that "if you see something, say something." Fans can report suspicious activity or objects by calling 855-777-8274.

White Sox switch from Pepsi to Coca-Cola for soft drink deal

Sports Business Journal | April 4th, 2016

The White Sox today announced a new multiyear deal making Coca-Cola the team's official soft drink, a category previously held by Pepsi. The brand will receive prominent exposure and product placement at concession stands, and it will sponsor a new interactive digital feature that allows fans to share photos from each game on new video boards at U.S. Cellular Field. Coca-Cola also becomes presenting sponsor for White Sox Family Sundays, covering all 13 Sunday home games of the '16 season (THE DAILY).