July 24, 2017

- Daily Herald, Another solid outing for Quintana as Cubs down Cardinals
  [Link](http://www.dailyherald.com/sports/20170723/another-solid-outing-for-quintana-as-cubs-down-cardinals)

- Daily Herald, Some Chicago Cubs advice on what Chicago White Sox can expect during rebuild

- Daily Herald, Imrem: Pressure on Chicago Cubs could be fun
  [Link](http://www.dailyherald.com/sports/20170723/imrem-pressure-on-chicago-cubs-could-be-fun)

- Cubs.com, Hendricks returns for crosstown rivalry opener
  [Link](http://atmlb.com/2upn3e1)

- Cubs.com, Cubs catch Crew, get 2nd W from Jose Q
  [Link](http://m.cubs.mlb.com/news/article/244046906/cubs-top-cardinals-in-jose-quintana-home-debut/)

- Cubs.com, Quintana overcomes nerves for quality start

- Cubs.com, Hendricks excited for return from finger injury
  [Link](http://m.cubs.mlb.com/news/article/244032900/kyle-hendricks-ready-to-rejoin-cubs-from-dl/)

- Cubs.com, Montgomery embraces move back to 'pen
  [Link](http://m.cubs.mlb.com/news/article/244041222/montgomery-embraces-return-to-cubs-bullpen/)

- Cubs.com, Cubs could find help behind plate, in bullpen

- ESPNChicago.com, Cubs continue their rapid second-half rebound
  [Link](http://www.espn.com/blog/chicago/cubs/post/_/id/45090/cubs-continue-their-rapid-second-half-rebound)

- CSNChicago.com, Willson Contreras Is Playing His Butt Off Right Now For First-Place Cubs

- CSNChicago.com, Jose Quintana Reveling In First Place Vibes After 'Overexcited' Home Cubs Debut

- CSNChicago.com, With Mysterious Injury Behind Him, Kyle Hendricks Has Returned To The Cubs And Brought Jokes

- Chicago Tribune, Jose Quintana gets warm welcome at Wrigley, helps Cubs beat Cardinals 5-3
  [Link](http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/baseball/cubs/ct-cubs-cardinals-spt-0724-20170723-story.html#nt=oft03a-1gp2)
Chicago Tribune, **Fresh, healthy Kyle Hendricks excited about return to Cubs rotation**

Chicago Tribune, **Cubs vs. White Sox: Best off-the-field matchups in this week's City Series**

Chicago Tribune, **Cubs back in 1st place in NL Central after 5-3 win over Cardinals**

Chicago Tribune, **Jose Quintana eager for his first at-bat with Cubs: 'I want a hit'**

Chicago Sun-Times, **Cubs look to be turning corner heading into series with sinking Sox**

Chicago Sun-Times, **Cubs keep rolling behind Quintana, go-ahead blast by Contreras**

Chicago Sun-Times, **MORRISSEY: When will you believe supremely in this team, Cubs fans?**

---

**Daily Herald**

Another solid outing for Quintana as Cubs down Cardinals

By Bruce Miles

The Chicago Cubs featured their most recent acquisition Sunday night when left-hander Jose Quintana took the mound against the St. Louis Cardinals at Wrigley Field.

Quintana worked 6 innings as the Cubs defeated the Cardinals 5-3. Willson Contreras hit a 2-run homer in the sixth to break a 3-3 tie.

Quintana has won both of his starts since coming over in a July 13 trade with the White Sox. The Cubs (51-46) moved into a virtual tie for first place in the National League Central with the Milwaukee Brewers (53-48). The Cubs hold a percentage point lead, .526 to .525.

"I didn't realize that, but now that I know, it feels great to keep helping the team," Contreras said.

When the White Sox come to the North Side on Monday, the Cubs will feature another "acquisition" when right-hander Kyle Hendricks comes off the disabled list after a month and a half.

It seems almost cliché to say that a team is "acquiring" a player when one of its own comes off the DL.

"You understand the cliché component, but it's actually true, I think, this time," Cubs manager Joe Maddon said. "To get these two guys coming on board at this time in the season,

"Quintana is at 110 innings, something like that overall, not awful. Kyle's (innings) numbers are down, which is good going into the latter part of the season. The rest of the guys, I think their numbers are in really good shape moving forward also."

Quintana gave up a 2-run homer to Randal Grichuk in the second inning.
"It's a really exciting night for me, a lot of emotions around me," said Quintana, who gave up 5 hits and 3 runs while walking two and striking out seven. "It's one I enjoyed a lot. I'm going to try to be focused inning by inning and put my team in good position."

The Cubs tied it in the third on an RBI double by Jason Heyward and a run-scoring single by Kris Bryant.

Paul DeJong homered in the top of the fourth before Kyle Schwarber tied the score on a massive homer to right against Michael Wacha. It was Schwarber's 15th of the season. Contreras put the Cubs ahead 5-3 with a 2-run homer to left in the sixth, his 15th.

"I think you've got to consider him one of the elite catchers in the National League already," Maddon said of Contreras.

"It feels great, especially winning this game, starting the second half with this kind of energy," Contreras said.

The Cubs are 8-1 since the all-star break and a season-high five games over .500.

Run those bases:

Media members were still talking to Joe Maddon about Kris Bryant's heads-up baserunning play Saturday, when he scored from first base on Anthony Rizzo's double to shallow left-center field. That play helped the Cubs win 3-2. Maddon said he has been stressing good baserunning since his days in the Angels' minor-league system.

"I wanted our guys to know back then that good baserunning wins 1-run games," he said. "Good baserunning wins championships. You don't have to get the hit. The ball can be hit. Or you can advance on a ball in the dirt. Just do something well with your mind, anticipatory, all that kind of stuff."

--

Daily Herald
Some Chicago Cubs advice on what Chicago White Sox can expect during rebuild
By Bruce Miles

An open letter to Chicago White Sox beat writer Scot Gregor:

Dear Scot,

Welcome to the world of a rebuilding baseball club.

I've been there.

When Theo Epstein and Co. hit town in the fall of 2011, they had a clean slate from Chicago Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts to do with the baseball operation what they chose.

They chose a total teardown and rebuild. Truth be told, there wasn't much to tear down, as the major-league club had declined badly since back-to-back playoff appearances in 2007 and 2008.

The farm system was bare, and it was clear Epstein, general manager Jed Hoyer and scouting and player-development chief Jason McLeod were going to use what remaining assets they had (or could acquire) at the major-league level to rebuild it.

You're now witnessing a similar plan with the White Sox. I listened to Sox GM Rick Hahn on a conference call when he traded lefty Jose Quintana to the Cubs for a couple of pretty good prospects plus two other minor-leaguers.
First, kudos to Hahn for ignoring whatever silly taboo there might have been against trading with the Cubs. Second, from what I've read, seen and heard, it looks like Hahn is on the right track.

Here are a few things to expect over the next two or three years.

A lot of losing:

Just as Epstein and Hoyer said when they got here, each regular season is sacred. Yes, the players on the field each day and the manager would go out and try to win, but the deck was stacked against them.

The 2012 team went 61-101, and on some nights Wrigley Field was as quiet as a library.

The Cubs had a couple of pretty good pitchers in their rotation to start the season in Ryan Dempster and Paul Maholm, but Dempster was dealt to Texas in a deal that brought Kyle Hendricks to Chicago, and the Cubs traded Maholm to the Atlanta Braves for Arodys Vizcaino and Jaye Chaman. That deal didn't really pan out, but the starting rotation was pretty well decimated, pretty much guaranteeing a 100-loss season.

The next year, the Cubs traded starter Matt Garza to Texas in a deal that brought Carl Edwards Jr. and Justin Grimm to Chicago.

In another key trade, they sent pitcher Scott Feldman to Baltimore for a guy named Jake Arrieta and a reliever named Pedro Strop.

The Cubs fared a little better that season, going 66-96, but manager Dale Sveum got himself fired, partly because he talked of sending young players Anthony Rizzo and Starlin Castro to the minor leagues.

The end of the painful process was signaled on July 5, 2014, when the Cubs again depleted their rotation by sending pitchers Jeff Samardzija and Jason Hammel to Oakland in the Addison Russell trade.

Manager Rick Renteria -- you may know him -- didn't get to enjoy it, as he was fired in the fall to make room for Joe Maddon.

A revolving door of players:

Don't get me wrong, any player who makes it to any level of professional baseball deserves undying respect, no matter how they do and how far they go.

Just as the Cubs did from 2012-14, the White Sox are likely to trot out a lot of players who couldn't make it on other major-league clubs.

In the early years of the rebuild, I watched a "finesse" right-hander named Justin Germano get lit up. I saw a guy named Jason Berken, who looked like your bowling-league buddy, make 4 starts for the Cubs in 2012. He never pitched again in the big leagues.

I saw reliever Alex Hinshaw pitch the final two games of his big-league career in 2012. He gave up a homer to Ryan Braun that may be passing Jupiter about now.

I got to interview Adrian Cardenas, Alex Burnett, Cole Gillespie, Joe Mather, Dave Sappelt, Blake Lalli, Brooks Raley, Scott Maine, Cody Ransom, Donnie Murphy, Julio Borbon and Thomas Neal, all nice guys but all guys who were fodder for the process.

There were some good stories, though. Get to know these kinds of players.

Some lighter moments, too:
In 2012, I saw outfielder-infielder Mather pitch. Catcher John Baker had his moment in the sun (or a couple of hours before the sun rose) when he pitched a scoreless inning and scored the winning run in a 16-inning 4-3 victory over the Colorado Rockies in July 2014.

Baker got the full clubhouse celebration in the middle of the night, and he held court with the media the following afternoon. That's OK. The journeyman parlayed his good-guy role into a front-office job with the Cubs.

The payoff:

Nothing is guaranteed, of course, but the object is to "build a foundation for sustained success," as I heard a couple of execs say about two million times.

Through good scouting and player development, the Cubs were able to watch their young players come up and contribute to a deep playoff run in 2015 and a World Series title last year.

If the White Sox can do something similar, I will hold a seat open for you in the renovated Wrigley Field press box for the 2020 Cubs-White Sox World Series.

Scouting report:

Cubs vs. White Sox at Wrigley Field

TV: ABC 7 and Comcast SportsNet Monday; Comcast SportsNet and WGN Tuesday
Radio: WSCR 670-AM and WLS 890-AM

Pitching matchups: The Cubs' Kyle Hendricks (4-3) vs. Miguel Gonzalez (4-9) Monday; John Lackey (6-9) vs. Carlos Rodon (1-3) Tuesday. Both games 1:20 p.m.

About the Cubs: Hendricks will come off the disabled list and pitch the series opener. He has been out since early June with tendinitis in his pitching hand. The defending ERA champion in baseball has a mark of 4.09. Cubs starting pitchers came out of the all-star break with an ERA of 2.16 over their first 8 starts. Cubs pitching entered Sunday fourth in the NL in ERA (4.06). Kris Bryant's .402 on-base percentage was seventh in the NL entering Sunday.

About the White Sox: They have dropped nine in a row, their longest losing streak since 2013. The Sox are batting .220 during the slide, and .154 (10-for-56) with runners in scoring position. Sox pitchers have a 6.00 ERA during the losing streak. Left fielder Melky Cabrera is one of the White Sox's few hot hitters, but he exited Sunday's loss vs. Kansas City with a bruised left foot. Yoan Moncada is only 1-for-13 since joining the Sox, but he has 4 RBI and 2 walks. Gonzalez is 1-9 with a 6.24 ERA over his last 10 starts.

Next: Cubs vs. White Sox at Guaranteed Rate Field, Wednesday-Thursday

-- Bruce Miles and Scot Gregor

--

Daily Herald
Imrem: Pressure on Chicago Cubs could be fun
By Mike Imrem

Stumbles here, twists there and turns everywhere ... the next thing you know you're in a playoff race.

Believe it or not, Chicago Cubs fans, this and the accompanying stress are good for you.

The only proof you need leapt onto your TV screen early Sunday morning.
Many expected Jordan Spieth to win his third major golf championship by coasting to victory in the British Open.

This could have been even less suspenseful and dramatic than the Cubs' wire-to-wire romp toward the playoffs last season.

Instead, Spieth went on a bogey binge early and had to save bogey brilliantly at No. 13. Rather than a coronation, the tournament became a head-to-head competition against Matt Kuchar.

Last year's Cubs season was like if Spieth shot 63 to win the Open by, say, a dozen strokes.

The Cubs went on to win the World Series and break a 108-year championship drought.

Some might point out, not incorrectly, that having to wait through disappointment and frustration for more than a century provided all the suspense and drama Cubs fans needed.

Point well taken.

Some might also point out that the suspense and drama came in the World Series, particularly the extra-inning victory in Game 7.

Point well taken again.

Still others might point out that the Cubs' 2016 run to glory was fun enough with all the celebrations in the streets around Wrigley Field.

Point well taken one more time.

But been there, done that; that was then, this is now.

The 2017 Cubs' mediocrity through nearly 100 games have plunged them smack dab in the middle of a playoff race.

Whether it will be a legitimate playoff race down the stretch remains to be seen because no other team in the NL Central should be as durable a challenger to the Cubs as Kuchar was to Spieth.

The possibility exists that the Cubs will add reinforcements before the trade deadline, go on an extended run, take the outright division lead sooner than later, be ahead by 10 games by Labor Day and win the thing by 15 games after all.

Yet there's also the possibility that the Cubs never will kick it in completely and one of the other teams will demonstrate more staying power than anticipated.

The Cubs would have to grind through the rest of the season and win games under the kind of pressure that they didn't experience during the 2016 regular season.

This September the Cubs are scheduled for home series against the Brewers and Cardinals and road series at Milwaukee, St. Louis and Pittsburgh.

That's a total of 18 games against current contenders that would determine whether the Cubs make or miss the playoffs.

That's also entertainment, because there's nothing like a tight, tense, two-month playoff race where every pitch is important.

The danger in suspense and drama is that sometimes they result in agony and defeat.
Spieth nearly suffered heartbreak, prevailing in dramatic fashion only after his own sloppiness and Kuchar’s steadiness forced him to play the final five holes in 5 under par.

If fans here are lucky, some opponent will force the best out of the Cubs down the stretch the way Kuchar forced the best out of Spieth.

It would be fun to witness if you can stomach a few more stumbles, twists and turns along the way.

Cubs.com
Hendricks returns for crosstown rivalry opener
By Scott Merkin

Rick Renteria returned to Wrigley Field during the 2016 season as the White Sox bench coach under then manager Robin Ventura. He also managed against the Cubs during Cactus League action this past Spring Training.

But Monday afternoon at Wrigley Field marks the first time Renteria will manage a regular season game against the team that presented his first managerial opportunity.

"It's not going to be any different I don't think. It's again, bittersweet," said the White Sox manager, who went 73-89 as Cubs skipper in '14 before being replaced by Joe Maddon. "That's where I got my first managing opportunity. "But I really take away fond memories from being there, and now I happen to be on the South Side. We're going to go in there and try to beat the Cubs."

Renteria presided over a rebuild with the Cubs when he had the job in '14 and is doing the same with the White Sox, who stand more at the beginning of their process. They enter this home-and-home set of two, two-game series with nine straight losses, while the defending World Series champion Cubs are pushing again toward the top of the National League Central.

Miguel Gonzalez gets the start for the White Sox, making his second trip to the mound after returning from the disabled list. The right-hander is 1-9 with a 6.24 ERA over his last 10 starts, having allowed five runs or more in six of those starts.

Kyle Hendricks, who has been on the disabled list since June 8 with tendinitis in his right hand, makes his return on Monday for his first start since June 4. He will be facing Yoan Moncada, among others, with the top-ranked prospect by MLB Pipeline.com, having joined the White Sox on Wednesday as their everyday second baseman.

"Walking around town, that's all you see. A lot of Cubs [fans] nowadays, but still all the White Sox fans out there, too," Hendricks said of the rivalry. "It's always fun."

Three things to know about this game

• The White Sox have lost three straight Interleague games and are 3-8 in Interleague Play this season. But they are 57-51 all-time vs. the Cubs, as well as being current owners of the Crosstown Cup. The teams have split 54 games played at Wrigley Field.

• White Sox shortstop Tim Anderson didn't start in either of the last two games against the Royals. He figures to be back in the lineup on Monday afternoon.

• As the combination of Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo tries to get all cylinders firing for the stretch run, Ian Happ and Willson Contreras have stepped up in the Cubs' lineup. Since June 1, the pair ranks first and third on the team in barrels, which are balls hit with the most ideal combinations of exit velocity and launch angle for hitters. Contreras also has one of the strongest arms in the league behind the plate, including the second-strongest throw on a caught stealing in MLB this season.

--
Cubs.com
Cubs catch Crew, get 2nd W from Jose Q
By Carrie Muskat and Jenifer Langosch

CHICAGO -- Welcome home, Jose Quintana. Kyle Schwarber smacked a game-tying solo home run and Willson Contreras hit a tiebreaking two-run shot to back Quintana in his Cubs home debut, posting a 5-3 victory over the Cardinals on Sunday night to move the Cubs into a tie for first place in the National League Central.

"We haven't had a run [until now]," manager Joe Maddon said of the Cubs, who are five games over .500 for the first time this year. "We've not run at all in the first half, we've been walking the whole first half. We finally get on a little bit of a mini-run now, and that coincides with the other team not doing as well. Bully for us."

The Cubs now have won eight of their nine games since the All-Star break, and the main reason has been the pitching with the starters combining for a 2.41 ERA and seven quality starts in that stretch. It's the first time the defending World Series champs have been in first since June 6.

The Cardinals finished their 10-game road trip with four wins despite leading in nine of the games. They now sit 4 1/2 games back in the division.

"We're putting up some good, good games against some good teams," Cardinals manager Mike Matheny said. "It's just that something is not letting us finish it, one way or another, whether it's enough offense or enough pitching and defense. But there's enough to be seen that the rest of this league knows that this team is for real. We are just missing that one good run of things falling into place."

Making his first start at Wrigley since he was acquired from the White Sox on July 13, Quintana struck out seven over six innings and scattered five hits, including home runs by Randal Grichuk and Paul DeJong. Quintana, who warmed up to music from his native Colombia, admitted he was a little excited about his first home game for the Cubs. Maddon saw that -- and that the left-hander was able to regain his composure quickly.

"I thought he was too quick with all of his actions and the pitches weren't going where he wanted them to," Maddon said of Quintana's early innings. "He wasn't as sharp as he was in Baltimore [when he struck out 12 over seven innings] but he was good. That's who he is -- he's so good in his delivery."

Said Contreras: "He's really good, especially when he has that conviction with every single pitch."

Grichuk hit his third home run in as many games in the second inning, a two-run shot, but the Cubs tied the game in the third when Jason Heyward hit an RBI double and scored on Kris Bryant's RBI single. The two teams then exchanged home runs as DeJong connected with two outs in the St. Louis fourth and Schwarber tied it at 3 with a 400-foot shot to right with one out in the Chicago half.

Grichuk and DeJong combined to go 9-for-23 with nine RBIs and seven runs in the series.

"Those guys are putting together really tough at-bats and coming up big for us, especially at a time when we need them the most," Matt Carpenter said. "We have some guys that aren't afraid of big games, aren't afraid of coming here and playing the Cubs at Wrigley Field and putting together tough at-bats against some really good pitching."

Bryant doubled to lead off the sixth and Contreras followed with his 15th home run. All of the runs came off Michael Wacha, and the homers by Schwarber and Contreras were the first by a 3-4-5 hitter against the right-hander this season.

"There's a big difference since the first half," Contreras said of the Cubs' vibe. "I think the All-Star break, we reset our minds and now we come to the clubhouse with high energy and high expectations. Now we want to win every single game."

Wade Davis pitched the ninth for his 20th save in as many chances.
MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Glovework: The Cubs defense got off to a shaky start in the Cardinals' first when Matt Carpenter reached on an error by second baseman Javier Baez, who couldn't get his glove on the ball. Heyward, a four-time Gold Glove winner, then robbed Tommy Pham of a potential extra-base hit with a leaping one-handed catch at the warning track in right field. One out later, Jedd Gyorko lined a double to left and Carpenter tried to score but was out at the plate on a perfect 7-6-2 relay. The Cardinals now have had a runner thrown out at home 14 times this year, fifth most among Major League teams.

"You have an opportunity with two outs to try and make something happen," Matheny said. "They had to have a perfect relay, which they did, and a great throw home."

Backstop: Contreras stymied the Cardinals again in the second. The Cardinals had take a 2-0 lead on Grichuk's homer and had a runner at first. Wacha bunted but Contreras threw to second, starting a 2-6-4 double play to end the inning. His throw to second was clocked at 89 mph, the hardest tracked throw by a catcher this year, according to Statcast™.

"I tried to throw quick, more than throw hard," Contreras said. "The ball was literally right in front of me. I never had a doubt of throwing to second base."

QUOTABLE

"Today I said I was going to play in honor of my country. We've been having a tough time and I just wanted to do the best for Venezuela. We're here, but our minds after the game go back to Venezuela and our families. ... We have to be able to grow up in a country where you can think of your future and your son's [future] and your kids, and that's something we don't have right now. That's it. I was playing for my country today." -- Contreras, who wore Venezuelan flag sleeves on both arms for the first time Sunday night, and kissed his forearms after his homer

"Everything is feeling good. Stuff wasn't quite where I wanted it to be, but good enough to perform better than I did." -- Wacha, on bouncing back after throwing a career-high 119 pitches in his previous start

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Contreras' blast was his 15th, and the Cubs now have four players with 15 or more home runs this season. Entering Sunday, only the Orioles, Reds and Nationals had at least four players with 15 home runs each.

MEDICAL REPORT

Luke Voit replaced Carpenter at first base in the middle of the second after Carpenter had to be removed from the game due to right quadriceps tightness. Carpenter said the issue likely stemmed from his run around the bases in the first inning, but he's optimistic he'll be back on the field Monday.

WHAT'S NEXT

Cardinals: The Cardinals will close out the month of July with a seven-game homestand that begins with the first of three games against the Rockies on Monday. First pitch is scheduled for 7:08 p.m. CT. Mike Leake, who is 1-6 with a 5.04 ERA over his last 10 appearances, is slated to start against Colorado's Antonio Senzatela.

Cubs: Kyle Hendricks will open the Cubs' Interleague series on Monday against the crosstown White Sox. The right-hander has been sidelined with inflammation in his right hand and will be making his first start since June 4. First pitch was scheduled for 1:20 p.m. CT from Wrigley Field.

--
Cubs.com
Quintana overcomes nerves for quality start
By Scott Chasen

CHICAGO -- Making his first home start in Wrigley Field, Jose Quintana could feel the buzz in the air.

"It was a really exciting night for me, the first one at Wrigley," said Quintana, who was acquired July 13 in a trade with the White Sox. "A lot of emotions around me. It’s not easy, but I tried to do the best."

Quintana showed jitters early on, but he made the most of his first game in the Cubs’ home whites. The left-hander went six innings, allowing three runs and getting the win as the Cubs topped the Cardinals, 5-3.

"He was great. He's as advertised," said Anthony Rizzo. "When we played the White Sox, he's kind of the guy I would always hope to miss. It's great to have him here. His demeanor on the mound, it's awesome."

Quintana's day got off to a rocky start, though it wasn't entirely his fault.

Matt Carpenter led off and reached after Javier Baez bobbled a ground ball in the infield. Jason Heyward made up for it with a leaping grab to record the first out of the inning, but Quintana wasn't out of the woods just yet.

"In the first inning, I think, too many emotions," Quintana said. "I tried making my pitch, and I know I faced a really good team [and] aggressive hitters."

The Cardinals got on the scoreboard in the second inning. Yadier Molina led off with a single and Randal Grichuk homered for the third consecutive game, giving the Cardinals a 2-0 lead.

Two innings later, after the Cubs had tied the game, Paul DeJong added a blast of his own, knocking a solo shot to center to put the Cardinals in front again.

"He's really good, especially when he has that conviction with every single pitch," said Cubs catcher Willson Contreras. "I think he was super excited to make his first start at Wrigley Field. He slowed down a little and made the adjustments and threw six innings. I like the way he did that."

Contreras wasn't the only one. After the home run in the fourth, Quintana went on to strike out five of the final eight batters he faced. He did not allow another hit and by the end of the sixth was in line for the win, a trend in his most recent outings.

Quintana's outing, which was his 11th quality start of the season, was also his seventh straight game in which his team came out on the winning side. There was one thing that distinguished this win: It moved the Cubs into a tie for first in the National League Central for the first time since June 6.

"It's awesome, the [run] support is really good every time," Quintana said. "First time I come on a team like this one and get [into] first place. ... I can't wait to keep doing my job every time."

--

Cubs.com
Hendricks excited for return from finger injury
By Carrie Muskat

CHICAGO -- Kyle Hendricks is eager to return to normal.

The Cubs right-hander will make his first start since June 4 on Monday, when he's activated from the disabled list and opens the Interleague series against the crosstown White Sox. Hendricks has been sidelined with inflammation in his right middle finger.
"I'm excited," Hendricks said Sunday. "Finally, I can feel some normalcy. I'm excited to get back out there and hopefully contribute to the roll we're on now."

It took two weeks for the pain to go away in Hendricks' hand, then another three weeks to build up arm strength. He made two rehab starts for Double-A Tennessee, throwing five perfect innings in his last outing.

Hendricks felt the most discomfort throwing his curve and also had some pain when he threw his sinker.

"Those two pitches are only coming off the middle finger there," Hendricks said. "The changeup, I didn't feel it at all, and the four-seam, it was minimal."

He will probably cut back on the number of pitches he throws during his side sessions to avoid a recurrence. "The volume will go down in my bullpens, but pitch-wise, everything will be the same," he said.

Getting Jose Quintana in a trade with the White Sox and now Hendricks off the disabled list gives the Cubs two starters heading into the final 2 1/2 months of the season.

"With Jose in Baltimore, you could definitely feel a difference in attitude," manager Joe Maddon said of Quintana's first start with the Cubs. "I think you'll feel that [when Hendricks returns]."

Hendricks said he wished the injury was to another finger. He's had to endure his share of teasing and joked that the problem was because he was "flipping the bird to people" while driving in Chicago.

"That was tongue in cheek of course -- Dartmouth in cheek," Maddon said of the 27-year-old right-hander, a Dartmouth alum. "He's the most mild-mannered wonderful fellow. It's such an awkward injury to come back from."

• Cubs closer Wade Davis has walked two batters in each of his last two outings, the only time he's issued two walks in one outing. Maddon isn't concerned.

"His stuff has been great," Maddon said. "If you talk to him, he'll say he feels off a little bit. It's primarily off-speed pitches -- his curveball and cutter that are off the plate. He's not getting them to chase. His fastball has been outstanding."

Davis has gotten out of the jams and is 19-for-19 in save situations with the Cubs.

"His stuff is dynamic, and he knows what he's doing out there," Maddon said. "I've always believed that about Wade. I also believe those two walks are going away.

"He will not give in. He's a former starter who will not give in."

• During an early batting-practice session, Anthony Rizzo turned around and hit right-handed, and did so with success. He hit a home run. Don't expect him to become a switch-hitter.

"He's not hitting right-handed," Maddon said of Rizzo.

• Manager Rick Renteria is in charge of the White Sox rebuilding process, and Maddon said it seems like a perfect fit.

"[Renteria] is rooted in development, he gets it, he understands how it all plays out," Maddon said. "He's had a lot of experience in that. I think it's probably interesting for him to put this whole thing back together. I'm certain he'll do a great job with it. They have done a wonderful job amassing talent. It's not unlike what [Cubs president of baseball operations Theo Epstein] and the boys did here a couple years ago."

• Speaking of Epstein, he gave a team of young ballplayers a tour of the Cubs' clubhouse prior to Sunday's game. One of the stops included Maddon's office.
"They checked out the flamingos in my office," Maddon said.

The group wasn’t shy, and gave the Cubs manager some suggestions for Sunday’s lineup. One even pointed out that rookie Ian Happ is "doing his damage on the first pitch."

"I asked them to walk by Happer’s locker and reiterate that," Maddon said. "Make sure St. Louis doesn't hear that."

--

Cubs.com
Montgomery embraces move back to 'pen
By Scott Chasen

CHICAGO -- Mike Montgomery is a capable starter, filling in after an injury to Kyle Hendricks with several solid outings, and he's done his part in the bullpen, notching a rare four-inning save on May 25 and pitching in several relief roles.

But if there's any one thing that makes the left-hander so valuable, it might just be his mindset.

"He's very talented, very durable and resilient. A lot of times a guy who starts can't warm up quickly and come into a game and be able to pitch the next day like he can," said Cubs manager Joe Maddon. "Beyond that, he accepts it, he understands it, he gets it. I think a lot of times a guy will fight that mentally. They don't like this idea, they want to be a starter, it's beneath them [to work in relief]. They're offended. He's processed things really well."

That mentality is a staple of what Montgomery does.

The lefty envisions himself as a starter someday -- as does his manager -- but he also understands there sacrifices are needed to be successful, something he's embraced in Chicago.

"I think it's just part of the game," Montgomery said. "You want to be in the big leagues, and when you first get here you're thinking about, 'OK, how do I stay here?' And then you come to a winning team, like last year, you already win a World Series. ... I think that's what it is.

"When you're on a World Series contending team, you have to be willing to do anything. I think at the end of the day I will be a starter for a long time in this league, but for right now I'm going to go be a reliever and try to help this team get back to the playoffs."

Through eight starts, Montgomery showed flashes of a potential future role. He struggled on July 6 against the Brewers, allowing seven runs in 2 1/3 innings, but posted a 3.79 ERA in his other starts, which included two before he was fully stretched out.

Montgomery has made three quality starts in 2017, including his last outing in Atlanta, where he went six innings and allowed one run. He topped out with seven strikeouts in any one outing, but showed plenty of growth from his first starts -- where the pitch count quickly became an issue -- to his final one.

"Outside of one [start], I thought I did a really good job," Montgomery said. "There's a lot of challenges trying to become a starter in the middle of a year. One, physically. You kind of have to make up ground. The routines are necessary and when you don't have that right away it's harder, but I learned a lot from it."

And even with that learning experience, he doesn't see it as a negative that he has to return to the 'pen.

"There's not a lot of guys that have pitched in all the roles that I have pitched in. I kind of take pride in that," Montgomery said. "It's definitely a big compliment [to pitch in those roles], because that's really as a pitcher what your job is. You kind of look at it like, 'Yeah, there's starters, relievers and everything, but your job is just to get people out.'"
"It's what I've worked to do and to let them know: 'Hey, I want to be valuable, so use me in whatever role and I'll be ready for it.'"

--

Cubs.com
Cubs could find help behind plate, in bullpen
By Phil Rogers

CHICAGO -- Yu Darvish pitching alongside Jon Lester, Jake Arrieta, Jose Quintana and Kyle Hendricks?

Well, yeah. Of course.

Outside of the other 29 Major League teams, who wouldn't like that arrangement? It would be an absolute home run if Theo Epstein could pull that off. But the cost to get Darvish is another story.

He's going to be an expensive proposition in terms of the talent going back to Texas if the Rangers decide to trade him, even if the Japanese icon is a rental. That was true on Saturday and even more so after a Sunday in which both Clayton Kershaw and Stephen Strasburg exited their starts with injuries.

Assuming Hendricks is healthy -- and we'll know more about that after he pitches against the White Sox on Monday -- the Cubs already have a rotation that can roll a long way in October, assuming they can get there. Not only is it deeper with Quintana in the mix, but Arrieta appears to be returning to his locked-and-loaded mode. Don't judge the Cubs by their troubling starter ERA in the first half of the season (4.66, which ranked eighth). They're gonna cut that by a run a game in the second half, maybe more.

So as much as another top starter would be great to have, it's the bullpen and catching depth that the Cubs need to shore up before the July 31 Trade Deadline. Players from those two areas lead this late list of targets:

BULLPEN ARM

1. LHP Brad Hand, Padres -- Claimed on waivers from the Marlins early in 2016, the former starting pitching prospect has turned into a beast as a setup man. He led the National League with 82 appearances last year and has been even better this season, earning a trip to the All-Star Game. He has two years of control after 2017 so he won't come cheap, especially not as a target of almost every contender.

1. LHP Justin Wilson, Tigers -- Rumors linked the Cubs to Justin Verlander previously, but Wilson might be just as impactful without the long-term risk. He's doing good work as the Tigers' closer, but they may be facing a rebuild so his one-year of remaining control could make him more valuable elsewhere. Like Hand, he would give Joe Maddon a strong arm to work alongside lefties Mike Montgomery and Brian Duensing.

3. LHP Zach Britton, Orioles -- Thought he would be higher on this list, didn't you? Britton is a fabulous pitcher when he's full speed -- this year's Trade Deadline version of Andrew Miller -- but his extended absence to recover from a forearm strain raises a caution flag about his durability. Some question if the O's would deal him to the Cubs without getting back a Major League player.

4. RHP Pat Neshek, Phillies -- He's been around the block with his one-of-a-kind pitching motion but has never been as locked in with it as he is in his 11th Major League season. The Phillies acquired him in the offseason from the Astros, who wouldn't have dealt him if they knew he'd have a 1.12 ERA after 43 appearances. One thing about Neshek: He throws strikes, so he could be even better working in front of the Cubs' group of fielders.

5. RHP A.J. Ramos, Marlins -- A 40-save closer a year ago, he'd give Maddon another right-handed option besides Carl Edwards Jr. and Koji Uehara in the seventh or eighth innings and, as a bonus, could replace Wade Davis as the closer if the Cubs can't re-sign their All-Star closer. Ramos isn't having a great season, in part because of lingering control problems but would surely be energized by a move to Wrigley Field.
6. Addison Reed, Mets -- Like Ne
dhek, Reed would be strictly a rental for the rest of this season. But he's pitched in
the last two postseasons -- including for the Mets in their 2015 NL Championship Series sweep of the Cubs -- and
was a primary closer when he was 23. Been there, done that. Good get for somebody soon.

CATCHER

7. Jonathan Lucroy, Rangers -- It's been such a tough year for Lucroy (.243/.293/.343 with four home runs) that he
wouldn't be atop this list if the Cubs needed offense from the position. But their lineup gives them the luxury of
prioritizing the complete player. The Cubs' issue post-Miguel Montero is that they have no established catchers
behind Willson Contreras. Nothing against Victor Caratini, but it will be vital to have another experienced receiver
in August and beyond. Lucroy is a great fit, and the Cubs might be able to buy low given his .244 average.

8. Alex Avila, Tigers -- You can argue for the left-handed hitting Avila behind the right-handed-hitting Contreras.
Avila is having a renaissance season with his bat (11 home runs, .902 OPS) and could become an important bat off
the bench if his dad (Tigers GM Al Avila) traded him to the Cubs.

9. Welington Castillo, Orioles -- Here's a catcher who can hit. But the Cubs traded him to Seattle in 2015 because of
his sub-par pitch framing, and he hasn't made big improvements since then. A team should only pick him up if it
wants him next season, too, as his 2017 contract with Baltimore includes a player option for '18 ($7 million).

10. Nick Hundley, Giants -- Signed to a one-year contract to play behind Buster Posey, he's done a solid job. Not
the sexiest name, but it would look fine on a Contreras-less lineup card in October.

--

ESPNChicago.com
Cubs continue their rapid second-half rebound
By Jesse Rogers

CHICAGO -- As he rounded first base in the sixth inning of Sunday's game against the St. Louis Cardinals, Chicago
Cubs catcher Willson Contreras turned to his coach, and to the fans behind the bag, and let out one of his patented
roars.

The team's most emotional player hit perhaps the most emotional home run of the season yet, breaking a tie
game and vaulting Chicago into a tie with the Milwaukee Brewers for first place in the National League Central just
10 days after they trailed the Brewers by 5.5 games. The scream heard around Wrigley Field might as well have
been heard around all of the major leagues: The defending champions aren't going down without a fight.

"You can't control what other teams do, so it's very good timing on us playing well, and the Brewers are in a little
skid right now, so it's the game of baseball," first baseman Anthony Rizzo said after the 5-3 win. "It has its ups and
downs. That's why you play the full season."

The Cubs are most definitely feeling it again after a first half that featured more starts and stops than a commuter
train. The Cubs have had an even record 21 times this season and are above .500 by at least five games for the first
time this year. Now 8-1 since the All-Star break, those early woes feel like a distant memory.

"Starting the second half with this kind of energy feels good," Contreras said. "It's not about me, it's about the
team."

Oh, but it is about you, Willson.

The second-year player is on fire in July, hitting .339 to go with six home runs. That's on top of taking on nearly all
the catching duties, considering his backup is now a rookie. Plus, he's working with a brand-new pitcher, Jose
Quintana, who was a little amped up for his first Wrigley Field start on Sunday.

"[Quintana] may have been a little bit overexcited," manager Joe Maddon said. "Not as sharp, but very good."
Quintana made it through six innings, giving up three runs -- thanks in part to Contreras, who calmed him down. Is there anything this guy can't do right now?

"Everything [Contreras is] doing has been pretty darn good," Maddon said. "He plays with enthusiasm, also, which, you have to feel that in the stands."

The stands are certainly full of enthusiasm after the Cubs won two dramatic games in a row over the Cardinals before they welcome in the fading Chicago White Sox on Monday, while the Brewers head to play the first-place Washington Nationals on Tuesday. Now that the Cubs have a share of first place, separating themselves is next on their minds. Maddon likes to assess his team in five-game increments, so finally he can smile after they achieved their season high over .500.

"That's just how this stuff happens sometimes," Maddon said. "We haven't had a run. We didn't run anywhere in that first half. We've been walking in that first half. ... We get on a mini run right now and it coincides with the other team not doing so well. Bully for us."

As for Contreras, he continues to mature as a key cog in the middle of the lineup. He's not the only one finding his game, though. Addison Russell has come alive in the second half, Kyle Schwarber has a .901 OPS since returning from Triple-A Iowa and former closer Hector Rondon is hitting nearly triple digits on the radar gun. No team needed a reset more at the break than the Cubs; the results show as much.

"The guys are different right now," Maddon said. "They're back to what they're supposed to look and feel like."

Contreras is so locked in, he didn't realize what his home run meant. A share of first place for the first time since June 6 sounds good to him.

"I didn't realize that, but now that I know, it feels great to keep helping the team," he said. "I'm not thinking about first place, though, I'm thinking about the game tomorrow against the White Sox."

"It's a big difference than the first half."

It certainly is.

--

CSNChicago.com
Willson Contreras Is Playing His Butt Off Right Now For First-Place Cubs
By Tony Andracki

This really is becoming Willson Contreras' team.

The dude is absolutely on fire right now and has almost singlehandedly lifted the Cubs back into first place.

Since the All-Star Break, Contreras has crushed four homers and three doubles while driving in 11 runs in just eight games.

The Cubs have won seven of those games, including Sunday night when Contreras' two-run shot in the sixth inning turned out to be the game-winner that pushed the Cubs into a first-place tie with the Milwaukee Brewers. (The Cubs also won the only game Contreras hasn't started since the Break.)

In the span of nine games, the Cubs have already erased the 5.5 game deficit they had in the National League Central entering the midseason break.

"He's just playing his butt off, literally, right now," Joe Maddon said. "Everything he's doing is pretty darn good. He plays with enthusiasm, also. You gotta feel that in the stands."
"There’s some times he might get over-enthusiastic. I prefer toning people down as opposed to pumping them up all the time. He’s doing everything. He’s hitting fourth, he’s catching, he’s handling a really good pitching staff, he’s throwing people out, he’s blocking the ball really well and he’s hitting homers, so God bless him."

Contreras’ offense has been amazing, but Maddon credits the young catcher’s block on a Wade Davis pitch in the dirt last week in Atlanta with helping to save the season. That play helped ensure a victory by not permitting the tying run to score from third base as the Cubs rattled off six straight wins to start the second half of 2017.

It’s at the point now where Maddon cannot rationally find ways to get Contreras out of the lineup, even though the veteran manager is a huge proponent of rest and wants nothing more than to keep his players healthy and playing at a high level late in the season and into the playoffs.

Contreras is like the Energizer Bunny out there, hopping all around behind the plate to block balls, throwing guys out, pumping his chest, screaming obscenities at his first base coach after home runs. He even plays long toss (from the warning track in left-centerfield to about the spot the second baseman normally plays) before games with catching coach Mike Borzello.

The 25-year-old just does not turn down for anything when he’s at the ballpark.

So does he ever get weary?

"I do get tired, but when I get home," he said. "When I’m here, I’m never tired. This is my job, this is what I love and you’re gonna see me like that all throughout my career."

Contreras credits the Cubs coaching staff with helping him make the mental adjustments that has him in the conversation as one of the best catchers in baseball.

"He’s growing up," Anthony Rizzo said. "He’s really taking control behind the plate, which is nice. His at-bats just keep getting better and better and it’s really fun to watch."

Contreras is on pace for 25 homers and 87 RBI, second only to Kansas City’s Salvador Perez in both categories among catchers.

"He definitely has the abilities to be one of the elite catchers," Maddon said. "You gotta consider him one of the elite catchers in the National League already. Because he just does everything so well.

"The biggest next hurdle is just — without pulling him in too much — controlling his emotions a tad more without losing that enthusiasm that he has. Really understanding the game and calling the game and working his pitchers."

"Mike Borzello does a great job with him. He started out this year and wasn’t so good — missing his pitches, missing fastballs, fouling stuff off. But he stayed with it and now you see what he’s capable of doing. He is really good right now and he’s gonna get better."

---

CSNChicago.com
Jose Quintana Reveling In First Place Vibes After 'Overexcited' Home Cubs Debut
By Tony Andracki

Jose Quintana is grateful for his defense and offense picking him up.

That’s not something he’s used to feeling after years of borderline-laughable run support from the White Sox in games he started.
But as he made his Wrigley Field debut in a Cubs uniform Sunday night, Quintana served up three rockets in a row to the heart of the Cardinals order and all three wound up as outs.

First it was a lineout to Jason Heyward in right field where the Gold Glover leapt in the air and did something of a karate kick while catching the ball.

Another hard liner at Heyward followed before Jedd Gyorko laced a double into the left-centerfield gap. But Kyle Schwarber retrieved it quickly, made a perfect throw to Addison Russell who spun and made a quick throw to Willson Contreras at the plate to nab Matt Carpenter by a mile.

Thus endeth the first top of the first inning for Quintana at "The Friendly Confines."

"At the beginning of the game, he might've been a little overexcited," Joe Maddon said. "He was too quick with all of his actions. The pitches weren't going where he wanted them to go.

"And then I thought he settled in very well. He wasn't as sharp as in Baltimore, but he was good. He was very good."

Quintana allowed three runs on five hits and a pair of walks in six innings, recording the bare minimum requirements for a quality start. He also picked up his second win in as many outings with the Cubs when batterymate Willson Contreras hit a game-winning two-run homer in the bottom of the sixth.

Quintana agreed with Maddon that he was a little over-exuberant in this one.

"Too many emotions for me," he said. "It was one I enjoyed a lot. I was just trying to focus on inning by inning."

This is the first time Quintana has been on a team in the playoff hunt since his rookie season in 2012 when the Sox went 85-77 and missed the playoffs.

With Sunday's win, the Cubs have moved back into a share of first place and Quintana is all about the success.

"That's awesome," he said. "First time. To come into a team like this one and get to first place, that's amazing. I want to keep doing my job."

Now Quintana will have four days to sit back, relax, strap it down and watch the Crosstown Series knowing he won't have to go in and face a bunch of guys who he called teammates just two weeks ago.

Quintana's next start will come Friday in Milwaukee.

"He's as advertised," Anthony Rizzo said. "Really didn't enjoy facing him. When we played the White Sox, he was the guy I always hoped to miss. To have him here and his demeanor on the mound is awesome."

--

**CSNChicago.com**

With Mysterious Injury Behind Him, Kyle Hendricks Has Returned To The Cubs And Brought Jokes
By Tony Andracki

Kyle Hendricks has returned at the turn of the tide for the Cubs and he brought his sense of humor.

Hendricks hasn't pitched since June 4 and is slated to return to the Cubs rotation Monday against the White Sox after missing the last seven weeks with inflammation in his pitching hand.

Basically, his middle finger hurt every time he threw certain pitches.
"That's probably the problem — flipping the bird to people," he joked. "Maybe it's too much driving in Chicago, I don't know."

Joe Maddon cracked up when he found out his stoic pitcher delivered a joke.

"He didn't say that. He did? That's very tongue-in-cheek, Dartmouth-in-cheek, right?" Maddon said. "He's like the most mild-mannered, wonderful fellow. It's just such an awkward injury to get and come back from.

"Right now, he's feeling great. [Cubs trainer PJ Mainville] feels really good about it, also. I think his velocity was up a bit also in the minor leagues in a couple starts. All that are good indicators. An unusual injury, but we're happy to have him back."

Kris Bryant injured his finger diving into third base Wednesday, but only missed one full game, using his freakish healing powers to do what Hendricks struggled to do in a month.

"100 percent [wish I could heal like Bryant]," Hendricks said with a smile. "I wish it wasn't the middle finger. If it was another finger, maybe it would've been easier. But a lot of things you wish, I guess, at the outset.

"But you just have to look at it — it was what it was and I'm done with it now. Now just go play."

The finger/hand injury is still largely a mystery to both Hendricks and the Cubs. They don't know how it popped up, beyond just excessive throwing (including pitching into November last season).

He said he felt the issue pop up right before he went to the disabled list and it affected him every time he threw his curveball or sinker, because he used his middle finger more on those pitches. But with his changeup and four-seamer, there was next to no pain.

Moving forward, Hendricks will still throw the curve and sinker just as much in bullpens, but he will cut back on how much he throws overall in between starts, etc. It's too early to address the offseason, but Hendricks — who likes to throw a lot during the winter — will likely have to fine-tune that as well.

Hendricks returns right as the Cubs have appeared to turn their season around. They won the first six games coming out of the All-Star Break and after a rough loss against the Cardinals Friday, pulled off an epic, 2016-esque comeback Saturday vs. St. Louis.

The Cubs trotted out Jose Quintana Sunday and will do the same with Hendricks Monday, making it back-to-back starts from guys who weren't a factor in the Cubs rotation for most of June and July.

"I understand the cliche, but it's actually true this time [that players coming off the DL gives a team a boost]," Maddon said. "To get these two guys coming on board at this time in the season.

"Getting Kyle back with this particular group is really interesting to watch right now. I think that's also gonna be a shot in the arm with the group, just like Jose in Baltimore. You definitely could feel the difference in attitude and I think when Kyle takes the mound, you're gonna feel the same thing, too."

Immediately after hitting the DL, Hendricks had to endure weeks of doing nothing and waiting around until the inflammation subsided. Then he spent the next few weeks building his arm strength back up after going so long without throwing.

"It's just an obstacle and you have to look at it as positive in a way," he said. "I used it to get my body in shape, get my cardio going, get my shoulder work and my arm strong. Just try to take every positive out of it that I could."

"Take a little breather in a way, too. Get away from it. But now, I'm ready to go. Mentally, definitely need this, need to be back and need to have baseball back in my life."

Hendricks and the Cubs are also optimistic his time off could mean he's strong for the stretch run.
Maddon and Co. had been looking for ways to bring the starting pitchers along slowly this season after pitching so many innings so deep into last fall.

The starters were held back in spring training, have been held under 100 pitches in most outings this season and get an extra day off whenever possible.

"The guys are all grinding it out while I'm sitting here getting healthy," Hendricks said. "They're wearing down a little bit, so the guys that are healthy by the end of the year, they can provide a little extra for us."

--

**Chicago Tribune**

Jose Quintana gets warm welcome at Wrigley, helps Cubs beat Cardinals 5-3

By Chris Kuc

Jose Quintana got his first taste of what it will be like pitching for the Cubs at Wrigley Field when he received a standing ovation from the fans in the bleachers while the left-hander strolled out to play long toss in the outfield before Sunday night's game against the Cardinals.

"It was awesome," Quintana said after helping the Cubs to a 5-3 victory over the Cardinals. "(There was) a lot of energy. I enjoyed that."

The Wrigley faithful continued to show the love when Quintana took the mound for his Cubs home debut and cheered even louder when his second pitch to Cardinals leadoff hitter Matt Carpenter was called a strike.

But the loudest cheers of the night came after Wade Davis nailed down the final out to save the win for Quintana and propel the Cubs into first place in the NL Central Division over the Brewers by a percentage point.

"It was a really exciting night for me for the first one at Wrigley," Quintana said. "I had a lot of emotions. I tried to be focused inning by inning and get my team in a good position."

That he did in his first home start for the Cubs after being acquired in a trade with the White Sox on July 13. Quintana went six innings and yielded three runs on five hits while walking two and striking out seven.

When he departed, the game was tied at 3-3 and the Cubs were in terrific position with the red-hot Willson Contreras at the plate. The catcher deposited a two-run homer into the seats in left to ignite the crowd of 41,582.

"It feels great to keep helping the team," said Contreras, who is batting .346 with 10 homers and 27 RBIs in his last 30 games. "I'm not thinking about first place, I'm thinking of the game that we have (Monday) against the White Sox and (we) keep doing what we've been doing lately."

What the Cubs have been doing lately is winning — a lot. They improved to a major-league-best 8-1 since the All-Star break.

"That's just how this stuff happens sometimes," manager Joe Maddon said. "We didn't run anywhere the first half ... so to finally go on a little bit of a mini-run right now that coincides with the (the Brewers) not doing so well (is) bully for us."

The surge has been led by Cubs starters, who are now 7-0 with a 2.41 ERA since the break.

Quintana got some help from his teammates early on as Jason Heyward made a leaping grab of Tommy Pham liner in right field in the first. Later in the inning, a perfect relay from Kyle Schwarber to Addison Russell to Contreras nailed Matt Carpenter trying to score on a Jedd Gyorko double.
Quintana allowed a Randal Grichuk two-run homer in the second, but the Cubs tied it in the bottom of the third when Heyward laced a double of the wall in right to score Russell and then Kris Bryant followed with a bloop single to make it 2-2.

After Paul DeJong gave the Cardinals the lead with a homer in the top of the fourth, Schwarber answered with a towering blast to tie it up.

Contreras put the Cubs in front 5-3 with a two-run blast just over the left-field basket off in the bottom of the sixth off Cards starter — and loser — Michael Wacha.

After overcoming deficits of at least two runs in each of their last five wins over the archrival Cardinals, the Cubs find themselves in first place.

"It's the first time coming to a team like this one and (we) get into first place," Quintana said. "It's amazing it happened to me in my career, so I can't wait to keep doing my job."

---

**Chicago Tribune**

Fresh, healthy Kyle Hendricks excited about return to Cubs rotation

By Chris Kuc

Cubs starter Kyle Hendricks had an interesting theory as to why tendinitis suddenly flared up in the middle finger of his pitching hand.

"Flipping the bird to people, maybe it was too much of that," Hendricks said with a hearty laugh before the Cubs faced the Cardinals on Sunday night at Wrigley Field. "Driving in Chicago..."

Actually, it was likely the result of throwing thousands of pitches during the mild-mannered pitcher's career that inflamed the back of his hand and sidelined Hendricks for seven weeks. Whatever the reason, the right-hander is happy that he is back and will take the mound when the Cubs face the White Sox on Monday at Wrigley.

"I'm just excited to get back out there to hopefully contribute to the roll that we're on right now," Hendricks said. "Hopefully, I can be that guy (who) ... can take the innings load off a few of these guys because it's been a long couple of years for them."

Hendricks hasn't pitched in the majors since he took a no-decision against the Cardinals on June 4, but he fared well in two rehab outings with Double-A Tennessee, allowing a run on two hits in 81/3 innings.

The veteran is focusing on the possible silver lining of the time missed: Being fresh down the stretch.

"That's one of the positives I tried to take from the DL stint," Hendricks said. "Rest up in a way so I can maybe be stronger toward the end of the year. These guys were all grinding it out while I'm sitting here getting healthy and they're wearing down a little bit. If I can provide a little extra uptick for us, that would be nice."

Keeping tabs: Manager Joe Maddon said it's never too early to check out how the other teams in the Central Division are faring.

"I scoreboard-watch pretty much all year," Maddon said. "I don't go nuts about it, but it's interesting to watch. As much an anything I'm always wondering who the pitcher is when things are going good or bad. You can't help to scoreboard-watch, and if you say you're not, you're living in denial. It's good for the game. Our division is exciting right now."

Switch it up: While taking some early batting practice, left-handed-hitting first baseman Anthony Rizzo took some swings right-handed and promptly belted several balls over the left-field wall.
Maddon said he was not surprised at the feat, but then said matter-of-factly, "He's not hitting right-handed."

--

**Chicago Tribune**

Cubs vs. White Sox: Best off-the-field matchups in this week's City Series
By Paul Sullivan

When Fortune Magazine dubbed him the "world's greatest leader" in March, Cubs President Theo Epstein responded, "I can't even get my dog to stop peeing in the house."

Sources indicate the dog is now house-trained, though Epstein's chances of maintaining the title he called "absurd" may be in jeopardy.

In fact, Epstein has even lost his monopoly on the genius executive moniker now that White Sox general manager Rick Hahn is accepting kudos for collecting teams' top prospects like kids collecting baseball cards.

Funny how life works. Only a year ago Hahn was criticized for allowing teenager Drake La Roche to travel with and pretend he was part of the team and for allowing a clubhouse culture in which Chris Sale sliced up throwback uniforms before a game.

Now Hahn is trying to replicate the success Epstein has enjoyed in Chicago and is being given the benefit of the doubt thanks in no small part to Sox fans having watched Epstein execute a similar game plan so well on the other side of town.

There's no way of knowing whether the Hahn collection will match or exceed Epstein's bunch, as Avisail Garcia predicted during All-Star week. We'll know if it has worked if everyone starts calling Hahn by his first name only, as Cubs fans do with Theo.

"Theo vs. Hahn" is just one of the off-the-field matchups in the City Series, which begins Monday at Wrigley Field.

Here are some other interesting matchups that can't be quantified by number-crunching alone:

**Ricketts vs. Reinsdorf**

Best owner in Chicago? Sox Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf has seven rings, though only one is relevant in this discussion.

Both Reinsdorf and Cubs Chairman Tom Ricketts have one World Series ring apiece. It took Reinsdorf 24 years to get his, while Ricketts won in only his sixth season.

They have similar management styles, leaving the baseball decisions to the baseball people.

Now that Hahn is generally untied from former GM Ken Williams, he's able to be himself, and it shows. Epstein came into his job with complete autonomy, reporting to Ricketts instead of Crane Kenney, president of business operations, and it shows too.

Reinsdorf always sits in his box and rarely grants interviews after years of being one of the most quotable owners in sports. Ricketts sits near the Cubs dugout and tends to schmooze more with fans in public.

Ricketts even apologized to a fan sitting near him after a lopsided loss to the Brewers on July 6. When I asked him why he felt the need to apologize, Ricketts said, "Well, he just saw a bad game."

Ricketts gets style points at the very least.
Wrigley vs. Guaranteed Rate

The Cubs' ballpark is head and shoulders above the Sox's in terms of atmosphere and history, as evidenced by the fact many tourists flock to Chicago just to attend a game at Wrigley.

Guaranteed Rate is a name that conjures up images of a late-night TV commercial on a UHF station. Four months into its first year of naming rights, people still refer to it as Sox Park.

The Sox do have a much more kid-friendly environment, including the fundamentals skill area in left field. It's also more tech-friendly, featuring the Sox Social Media lounge with phone-charging stations.

Wrigley's Wi-Fi is expected to improve next year.

We'll see.

Uniforms and logos

After a few decades of changing uniforms, the Sox finally settled on the classic white with black pinstripes in the early '90s, along with the Gothic-style Sox logo. Classic stuff.

But they also like to bring out the "Winning Ugly"-era unis with the batterman logo that is retro cool these days.

The Cubs' blue pinstripes and logo with the word "Cubs" in a circle is still their best uniform. Also classic. But the crawling bear logo never really caught on, even though they still use it.

Ballpark food

Despite a recent Tribune article that suggested the ballpark fare is better at Wrigley Field than Guaranteed Rate Field, there really is no comparison.

As someone who eats the food at both parks and has for over 50 years, I can attest Wrigley has improved over the last five years but still trails Sox Park in this important category.

The invitation of designated celebrity chefs at Wrigley has helped, but still this category is a gimme putt for the Sox. They also have the best churros in baseball, and in these trying times, churros matter.

--

Chicago Tribune

Cubs back in 1st place in NL Central after 5-3 win over Cardinals

By Chris Kuc

Jose Quintana got his first taste of what it will be like pitching for the Cubs at Wrigley Field when he received a standing ovation from the fans in the bleachers while the left-hander strolled out to play long toss in the outfield before Sunday night's game against the Cardinals.

"It was awesome," Quintana said after helping the Cubs to a 5-3 victory over the Cardinals. "(There was) a lot of energy. I enjoyed that."

The Wrigley faithful continued to show the love when Quintana took the mound for his Cubs home debut and cheered even louder when his second pitch to Cardinals leadoff hitter Matt Carpenter was called a strike.

But the loudest cheers of the night came after Wade Davis nailed down the final out to save the win for Quintana and propel the Cubs into first place in the NL Central Division over the Brewers by a percentage point.
"It was a really exciting night for me for the first one at Wrigley," Quintana said. "I had a lot of emotions. I tried to be focused inning by inning and get my team in a good position."

That he did in his first home start for the Cubs after being acquired in a trade with the White Sox on July 13. Quintana went six innings and yielded three runs on five hits while walking two and striking out seven.

When he departed, the game was tied at 3-3 and the Cubs were in terrific position with the red-hot Willson Contreras at the plate. The catcher deposited a two-run homer into the seats in left to ignite the crowd of 41,582. The blow helped the Cubs rally against the Cards for the second day in a row, and they now stand a season-high five games over .500 at 51-46.

"It feels great to keep helping the team," said Contreras, who is batting .346 with 10 homers and 27 RBIs in his last 30 games. "I'm not thinking about first place, I'm thinking of the game that we have (Monday) against the White Sox and (we) keep doing what we've been doing lately."

What the Cubs have been doing lately is winning — a lot. They improved to a major-league-best 8-1 since the All-Star break.

"That's just how this stuff happens sometimes," manager Joe Maddon said. "We didn't run anywhere the first half ... so to finally go on a little bit of a mini-run right now that coincides with the (the Brewers) not doing so well (is) bully for us."

The surge has been led by Cubs starters, who are now 7-0 with a 2.41 ERA since the break.

Quintana got some help from his teammates early on as Jason Heyward made a leaping grab of Tommy Pham liner in right field in the first. Later in the inning, a perfect relay from Kyle Schwarber to Addison Russell to Contreras nailed Matt Carpenter trying to score on a Jedd Gyorko double.

Quintana allowed a Randal Grichuk two-run homer in the second, but the Cubs tied it in the bottom of the third when Heyward laced a double of the wall in right to score Russell and then Kris Bryant followed with a bloop single to make it 2-2.

After Paul DeJong gave the Cardinals the lead with a homer in the top of the fourth, Schwarber answered with a towering blast to tie it up.

Contreras put the Cubs in front 5-3 with a two-run blast just over the left-field basket off in the bottom of the sixth off Cards starter — and loser — Michael Wacha.

After overcoming deficits of at least two runs in each of their last five wins over the archrival Cardinals, the Cubs find themselves in first place.

"It's the first time coming to a team like this one and (we) get into first place," Quintana said. "It's amazing it happened to me in my career, so I can't wait to keep doing my job."

--

Chicago Tribune
Jose Quintana eager for his first at-bat with Cubs: 'I want a hit'
By Chris Kuc

Jose Quintana picked up his first career RBI in his final at bat with the White Sox before being traded to the Cubs.

Now, the left-handed starter is eyeing another career first when he faces the Cardinals in his home debut with the Cubs on Sunday night at Wrigley Field.
"I want a hit," Quintana said with a smile before the Cubs rallied to defeat the Cardinals 3-2 Saturday. "I know I'm not a good hitter but I try to do my best. In this league it's really important with sacrifice bunts and trying to make contact."

After the stunning July 13 trade that brought him to the North Side and the National League, Quintana will find himself at the plate a whole lot more than the combined 27 official at bats he got while playing his first five-plus seasons with the Sox in the American League. During an interleague game against the Rockies on July 8, Quintana knocked in a run with a sacrifice fly before leaving the game. He's still looking for his first big-league hit.

Quintana played first base and center field as a kid, but said he was only an average hitter and it was clear his future was pitching.

"Now, hitting counts and I want to do a good job," he said.

Full strength: Kyle Hendricks, who has not pitched for the Cubs since June 4 because of tendinitis in his right hand, will come off the disabled list to start against the White Sox on Monday at Wrigley. With Hendricks returning to the rotation, Mike Montgomery was sent back to the bullpen, but manager Joe Maddon didn't dismiss the notion the Cubs would have him start again.

"We'll look and see what's happening over the course of August," Maddon said. "We've gotten guys in and out (with) some guys missing time based on injury, so there's that six-man almost automatically. But once Kyle gets back in you feel much more comfortable. If you want to keep Montgomery stretched out and then you pop him back out there ... it's still a possibility."

Up and down: Before Saturday's game, right-hander Felix Pena was recalled from Triple-A Iowa and infielder Tommy La Stella was optioned to Iowa.

---

**Chicago Sun-Times**

Cubs look to be turning corner heading into series with sinking Sox

By Tom Musick

Now and then, Javy Baez bumps into White Sox fans as he walks around the city. He enjoys meeting them.

"They're OK with me," Baez said with a smile. "We understand."

Then Baez goes his way, and opposing fans go theirs. Kind of like how the Cubs and Sox are heading in opposite directions as the crosstown series opens this week with two games at Wrigley Field before switching to the South Side for two more games.

After a frustrating first half, the Cubs are starting to sense that their magic might be back.

"I actually felt it at the end of the first half," Carl Edwards Jr. said. "It was only a matter of time for everything to start clicking."


But the Cubs, who improved to 8-1 since the All-Star break with a 5-3 victory Sunday against the Cardinals, are not afraid to admit that they carry some swagger. It’s evident in their choreographed dugout greetings before games and their dance parties in the bullpen after big home runs.

"Everybody’s flowing off each other and enjoying watching each other play great baseball," said Ian Happ, a newcomer to the Cubs-Sox series. "The atmosphere you have in this clubhouse, how close all of us are, is great. Every time there’s somebody up at the plate, the entire dugout, you’ve got 10 or 11 guys going through the at-bat with you and rooting for you."
Lately, the Cubs have had plenty to root for at the plate. They have scored 56 runs in nine games since the break.

The Cubs’ starting pitching has been heating up, too. Their starters are 7-0 with a 2.41 ERA since the break.

Kyle Hendricks will return to the rotation Monday after a seven-week stint on the disabled list. Hendricks should bolster a rotation that picked up ex-Sox ace Jose Quintana earlier this month.

“Getting Kyle back together with this particular group really—interesting to watch right now,” Cubs manager Joe Maddon said. “I think that’s also going to be a shot in the arm among the group just like Jose [gave us] in Baltimore. You can definitely feel a difference in the attitude.”

Meanwhile, Maddon appreciates how Sox manager Rick Renteria has kept his team playing hard amid a massive rebuilding project. The Sox have lost nine in a row and own the worst record in the American League.

“He’s rooted in development,” Maddon said. “He gets it. He understands how all that plays out.”

For the Cubs, the strategy played out to a World Series championship.

This year’s Cubs are not perfect, but they are improving. The magic that Edwards senses in the clubhouse manifests itself in the way players arrive every day expecting to win.

“I feel like we’re kind of selling ourselves short if we don’t think that way, if we don’t have that mindset,” Jason Heyward said. “Everyone understands you have to go out there and play the game. You’re not going to show up any day and it’s an automatic win — we’ve seen enough of that this season alone.

“Right now, we’re going in the right direction. A lot of good things are happening, but you can’t let off the gas now. We’re not in a situation to do that. We’ve got to keep pushing.”

--

Chicago Sun-Times
Cubs keep rolling behind Quintana, go-ahead blast by Contreras
By Tom Musick

Willson Contreras turned and screamed toward first-base coach Brandon Hyde after slamming a go-ahead home run in the sixth inning Sunday night against the Cardinals.

What exactly did he say?

“I can’t say it here,” Contreras said with a laugh. “It was part of my energy and my excitement.”

Forgive Contreras and his teammates for feeling bleeping wonderful after the 5-3 win. The Cubs (51-46) climbed a season-best five games above .500 and moved a percentage point ahead of the Brewers and into first place in the National League Central.

Jose Quintana (2-0) overcame early jitters to salvage a quality start in his Wrigley Field debut as a Cub. The southpaw settled down to finish with three runs allowed in six innings.

“A lot of emotions around me,” Quintana said. “It was fun.”

A healthy serving of run support added to the enjoyment.

Kyle Schwarber evened the score at 3 with a signature blast to right field, and Contreras punctuated the comeback with a go-ahead shot into the left-field bleachers. The Cubs improved to 8-1 since the All-Star break, which is the best record in the big leagues during that span.
Contreras has emerged as a significant factor in the Cubs’ recent success. He leads the team with 14 go-ahead RBI and is hitting .346 with 10 home runs and 27 RBI in his last 30 games.

“He’s doing everything,” manager Joe Maddon said. “He’s hitting fourth, he’s catching, he’s handling a really good pitching staff, he’s throwing people out, he’s blocking the ball really well and he’s hitting homers. So, God bless him.”

Maddon did not flinch when asked whether Contreras could develop into a superstar.

“You’ve got to consider him one of the elite catchers in the National League already,” Maddon said. “He does everything so well. He is really good right now, and he’s going to get better.”

Defensive gems

Jason Heyward robbed Tommy Pham of extra bases when he made a leaping catch in deep right field in the first inning. Pham jumped in disbelief before retreating to the visitors’ dugout.

Addison Russell provided another first-inning highlight with a pinpoint throw to nab Matt Carpenter at home. Russell quickly saluted Schwarber, who had fired a strike to Russell as the cutoff man.

Switching it up

During early batting practice, Anthony Rizzo decided to try a few right-handed swings.

The natural left-hander promptly launched a ball into the first few rows of the left-center field bleachers.

“It doesn’t surprise me,” Maddon said. “All of these guys are such good athletes. I’m sure Javy [Baez] could do it left-handed, if you watched Javy out there.”

This and that

Cubs closer Wade Davis converted his 20th consecutive save, which is a single-season team record. Davis surpassed the previous record of 19 straight saves that was shared by Carlos Marmol (2012), Ryan Dempster (2005) and Tom Gordon (2001).

- Former Bears coach and current Illinois coach Lovie Smith helped deliver the lineup card.

--

Chicago Sun-Times

MORRISSEY: When will you believe supremely in this team, Cubs fans?

By Rick Morrissey

What’s it going to take for you to feel really good about your team again, Cubs fans? I’m not talking about warm-all-over good. I’m talking about we’re-the-best good. Good enough to put the strut back in your step, the one you had all the way to last season’s World Series parade.

The Cubs getting to 10 games over .500? Fifteen?

Beating quality opponents?

Hitting better than .245 as a team?

Did the acquisition of Jose Quintana give you all the confidence you needed for a Cubs turnaround? Or do you require more proof, Cubs fans? (Photo by Patrick McDermott/Getty Images)
Or does your Cubs belief level depend on whether the team acquires another reliever, especially after that nine-run, eighth-inning embarrassment against the Cardinals on Friday?

Some of you are already there, confidence-wise. Some of you believe the Cubs turned a corner after the All-Star break by winning six consecutive games. I would just point out — gently, of course! — that the Orioles and the Braves, the victims in that streak, aren’t exactly juggernauts. Nor are the Cardinals, who lost the last two games of a three-game series with the Cubs over the weekend.

But you in your eternal optimism see a dominant Cubs team that had been bored or distracted and finally is ready to rid itself of the pretenders silly enough to think they ever had a chance. And if the struggling, rebuilding White Sox are up next on the schedule, who are you to say it’s not a gift from a loving God who also happens to love the Cubs? Isn’t heaven directionally the ultimate North Side?

Maybe the Cubs’ acquisition of pitcher Jose Quintana from the Sox sealed it for you. Maybe his 12-strikeout debut last week left you pondering different routes for this year’s parade. And getting pitcher Kyle Hendricks back from the disabled list Monday figures to put even more of a bounce in your step.

But I don’t think you true believers are the majority at this point. The loud minority is more like it.

I’m guessing that many more Cubs fans want proof. You still have trust issues, thanks to that confounding first half, when the team with arguably the most talent in baseball rode a roller coaster to a 43-45 record. You see a team feeding on lesser opponents and think: “I need something more substantial in my diet. More meat, fewer sprouts.”

For some of you, a final dispatchment of the pesky Brewers in a three-game series at the end of July will be enough proof that the Cubs are back for good. For those who see the National League Central as the sickly child in the major-league family, that might not be sufficient.

However you feel, there’s a decent chance you’ve learned not to take your cue from manager Joe Maddon, the kind of person who tells you that everything is spectacular, even as the tornado picks up you and your house. He’s not the Boy Who Cried Wolf. He’s the Boy Who Cried Wonderful.

I have a suggestion that might help all Cubs fans, from true believers to those with doubts: Circle Aug. 4-6 on your calendar. That’s when the Washington Nationals come to Wrigley Field for three afternoon games. The Nationals are 21 games over .500. That series might help answer any doubts you have — or reinforce your complete faith in this club.

The Cubs haven’t been good against good teams. They’re 13-21 against teams with winning records, including 2-2 against the Nationals. If they want to do a decent imitation of the team that won 103 games last year, they need to prove they can beat quality opponents. If they want to collect back-to-back World Series, which would seem to be the goal, they need to show up against the better teams. That would answer some of the issues on the agenda of the Doubting Thomas Club.

If winning is contagious, if beating lesser opponents makes it easier to beat quality teams down the road, then, sure, what has happened since the All-Star break is a very good thing. The Cubs are remembering how imposing they can be. It’s not their fault if they’re filling up on empty calories. The schedule is the schedule. And after an up-and-down first half in which they lost to some of those mediocre teams, beggars can’t be choosers. So four games against the Sox starting Monday? What, are the Cubs supposed to send that meal back to the kitchen?

No. But until they start beating the better teams, it means there will be questions. The idea that the Cubs can flip a switch when the postseason arrives is more a matter of faith than fact. The benefit of the doubt seeped out when the Cubs played so inconsistently in the first half.

It’s why we’re asking the same question we’ve been asking for weeks: What’s it going to take for you to feel really good about your team again, Cubs fans?