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COLETTE'S COMMENTARY: WNBA RETURNS WITH UPSETS, RECORDS AND PLAYOFF DRAMA

by Colette Doyle
STAFF WRITER
SHE/HER/HERS
crd23003@uconn.edu

After three weeks of international basketball, the WNBA is back. The FIBA World Cup brought the league stars together on the world stage, but now they return to their WNBA teams for the final stretch of the regular season. With all eight playoff spots already secured, the remaining four regular season games will determine where they enter the postseason and who they will face when playoffs begin.

The Minnesota Lynx, Golden State Valkyries, Las Vegas Aces, Atlanta Dream, Indiana Fever, New York Liberty, Washington Mystics and Dallas Wings make up this year's playoff field. With the conclusion of the World Cup, the focus shifts from who made the post season to where each team will end up. The WNBA took no time getting back into full swing, with a week filled with upsets and surprises.

The biggest upset of the week came on Tuesday night when the Portland Fire, who did not make the playoffs, defeated the second-place Golden State Valkyries. The 90-82 overtime loss for the Valkyries locked in the Lynx as the No. 1 overall playoff seed. The Valkyries entered the game looking like they would be the clear winners, starting off 17-0. The Fire was able to fight their way back, bringing the game into overtime. Fire guard Carla Leite ultimately won the game in overtime, making a 3-pointer with only 26.5 seconds left on the clock to break the Valkyrie's six-game winning streak.

The WNBA's return also featured a rare double-digit loss for the Fever, who were defeated by the Mystics 93-77 on Sept. 20. The 16-point loss marked the team's first double-digit loss since July 15 and dropped the Fever to the fifth seed, just behind the Dream. The Fever struggled offensively throughout the game, while the Mystics put up a dominant offensive performance. Known for their offensive strength, the Fever scored only 30 points in the first half and headed into halftime down 21 points.

The Mystics controlled much of the game, shooting 56.9% from the field and scoring 50 points from inside the paint. The Fever also appeared to experience a disconnect between players and coaching staff, as star guard Caitlin Clark was seen audibly yelling at head coach Stephanie White. While it looked like the Fever may have lost their offensive touch during the WNBA break, they quickly bounced back with a 96-77 win over the top-seeded Lynx.

The playoff seeding further shifted around following Liberty's 95-84 loss to the Dream on Monday, Sept. 21. The defeat eliminated Liberty from securing home-court advantage for the first round of the WNBA playoffs and caused them to shift from the No. 6 seed to No. 8. Guard Jordin Canada led the Dream with 19 points and nine assists.

Angel Reese also had a dominant game, finishing with 18 points and 10 rebounds to record her 32nd double-double of the season, extending her own WNBA record for the most double-doubles in a single season. Breanna Steward led the Liberty with 27 points. Stewart also made history in her own regard, receiving her first technical in nine years and only the third of her career after protesting a missed foul call, where she said Reese slapped her hand while attempting to steal the ball.

Fever guard Kelsey Mitchell also shattered records. The guard dropped 33 points against Toronto to surpass A'ja Wilson's single-season scoring record with 1,034 points this season. Mitchell also extended her streak to 25 consecutive games with 20-plus points. Mitchell kept her humble attitude even while breaking records, unaware she had broken record until a postgame confetti celebration.

The WNBA's return did not disappoint, with upsets, record-breaking performances and major shifts in the playoff seeding. With the playoff seeds officially locked in today, the stage is set for what should be an exciting postseason.



A Portland Fire player shoots a basket over a Golden State Valkyries defender. The Fire ended up defeating the Valkyries 90-82 in overtime.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @PORTLANDFIREWNBA ON INSTAGRAM

MONEYBALL WEEKLY: ZEROES TO HEROES — THE CHICAGO WHITE SOX

by Jack Yadlon
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
ptf24003@uconn.edu

The 2024 Chicago White Sox are widely regarded as one of the worst teams to ever step foot on a professional sports field. Their 41-121 record set the modern record for most losses in a year, a mark unmatched since 1899 if the pre-modern era is included.

The White Sox became known for how gloomy their future was. The organization traded budding ace Garrett Crochet after that season and looked to only be trending downhill. If there was one thing the baseball world could agree on, it was that by all logic the White Sox were doomed.

However, baseball doesn't always care about logic.

The 2026 White Sox are a completely different story. The sorry Southsiders suddenly budded into a team gunning for the playoffs, a position which they'll look to secure in the final weekend of the regular season.

The beauty of the new-look Sox comes from the stories of the players. The roster mainly consists of players who were written off or rejected by most of the MLB world— that's what makes them so easy to root for.

Miguel Vargas is prime representation of that redemption. Vargas was the No. 37 prospect heading into the 2023 season and was a possible next big thing for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

A year and a half of struggle later, the Dodgers decided they had seen enough and traded him to the Southside. The world seemed to give up on him. A picture of him sitting defeated on the field following a loss to the Oakland Athletics went viral, with the general sentiment surrounding him having been traded from the World Series favorite to possibly the worst team ever. One of the lowest moments of his career became the cover of the team's season.

But as they say, when you hit rock bottom, you can only go up. Vargas improved in 2025 and exploded this season. His OPS of .844 leads the team and his 33 home runs is tied for the team lead, with his performance being enough to earn him an all-star nod. There is nobody more emblematic of the current White Sox than Vargas.

The other lead bat has been slugger Munetaka Murakami. Murakami was hailed as the big international free agent prize heading into this past offseason, but concerns began to build about his strikeout rate and lack of contact. As a result, Murakami slipped past the big-name suitors and into the hands of Chicago.

Though Murakami had a very slow September and there have been valid concers about his contact, his power has made up for it and more. He's set to finish the season above an .800 OPS and will finish high in American League Rookie of the Year voting.

Outfielder Tristan Peters is another storied Sox member. Peters famously suited up for the Savannah Bananas back in 2021, though that contains some misconception as the team was still a collegiate summer league team at the time. Regardless, Peters was rejected by three different teams before arriving in Chicago and becoming an all-star in his first full season.

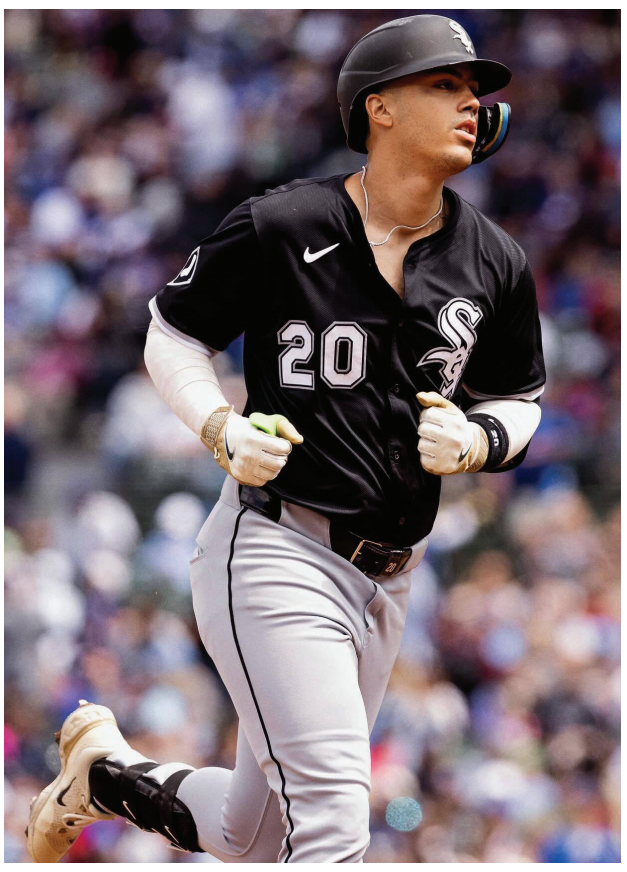
Randal Grichuk and Bryan Hudson were DFA'd and waived respectively, with the Sox taking flyers on both during the year. Now, both have become crucial parts of the roster as strong situational assets.

Chicago's lineup is rounded off by homegrown talent and a few names from the Crochet trade. The bullpen has been their other solid piece, though that's a part of baseball rosters which usually features starting pitching rejects.

The rotation features Sean Burke and Davis Martin, two homegrown talents who were written off earlier in their careers before playing well this year. While both are solid arms, neither projects as an ace and would be better in the middle of a rotation. However, the Sox do have the two of them to be the team's top talent in the position.

While there is a scenario where they play the New York Yankees, it is more likely that the Sox will avoid the AL East side of the bracket and fall on the weaker side. Facing the three-seed would normally be a bad thing, but with the current standing of the AL it would be a blessing. There will be a clear path to the ALCS, but their relative inexperience could hold them back in the playoffs.

No matter what happens in October, there'll be no team in the dance that has a better story than the White Sox do. With much of the roster being tossed aside at some point in their career, the White Sox's journey this season has been nothing short of amazing.



Miguel Vargas runs on the field during a game. During his career, he's had ups and downs in his performance.

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