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## Greenberg: Tim Anderson's nightmare season takes a KO in Cleveland



By Jon Greenberg Aug. 6, 2023

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[Tim Anderson](#) is no stranger to going viral.

There was the [bat flip heard 'round the world](#). There was the [homer in the corn stalks](#). And who could forget about [the shushing three-run homer](#) in the Bronx?

Those were moments that helped him elevate above his station as a provincial Chicago shortstop and into the stratosphere as a budding national star.

And then came Saturday night when Anderson's disappointing slugging percentage took an unlikely hit.

In the midst of a nightmare season in which he's been, arguably, the least productive hitter in baseball for one of the most unwatchable, disappointing teams in the sport, Anderson squared up and became a baseball-wide punching bag.

It's fight night in Cleveland 🤪 [pic.twitter.com/3NEIpBEbSf](https://pic.twitter.com/3NEIpBEbSf)

— White Sox Talk (@NBCSWhiteSox) [August 6, 2023](#)

In case you missed it — and why would you be watching [White Sox](#)-Guardians on a Saturday night if you didn't have to — Anderson and Guardians star infielder [José Ramírez](#) got into a squabble in the bottom of the sixth inning after Ramírez didn't appreciate Anderson standing over him to try a tag during Ramírez's headfirst slide into second base.

After some pointing and yelling, Anderson dropped his glove and put up his dukes, throwing would-be haymakers at Ramírez's head. Then, Ramírez, while being restrained, dropped Anderson with a wild right hand. Anderson went down like Glass Joe.

As [Guardians](#) broadcaster Tom Hamilton intoned, "Down goes Anderson!"

Tom Hamilton's call of the Jose Ramirez-Tim Anderson fight on Cleveland radio is the stuff of legend.

"DOWN GOES ANDERSON! DOWN GOES ANDERSON!" [pic.twitter.com/ZXSUW4eE0V](https://pic.twitter.com/ZXSUW4eE0V)

— Awful Announcing (@awfulannouncing) [August 6, 2023](#)

"It's not funny," Guardians manager Terry Francona said after the game, "but coming in (to the clubhouse) and listening to Hammy, it's hard not to chuckle."

"There you go, Joe Louis ... Joe Louis goes down!" said Ozzie Guillen, the former White Sox manager and current TV analyst, on the postgame show.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that this fight happened almost 30 years to the day after White Sox third baseman Robin Ventura got pummeled by Nolan Ryan. Poor Robin, still catching strays.

Most know Robin Ventura not for being 5th all-time in Grand Slams. Or winning 6 Gold Gloves. Or the Grand Slam Single in the NLCS

They know him for the fight vs Nolan Ryan

This, I fear, is the fate for Tim Anderson after he got put to sleep by Ramirez [pic.twitter.com/CzmRcJ3krC](https://pic.twitter.com/CzmRcJ3krC)

— Herb Lawrence (@Ecnerwal23) [August 6, 2023](#)

After the knockdown, a lengthy bench-clearing fracas (not a brawl) ensued with oft-injured [Eloy Jiménez](#) hopping around and Sox first baseman [Andrew Vaughn](#) having to carry a barking Anderson off the field.

The hidden star of Saturday's fight might've been second-base umpire Malachi Moore. Watch the video. The rookie ump tried to break it up but once Anderson squared up, he backed up like a real boxing referee.

Anderson is no punk, to be sure, but the most shocking thing about Saturday's game is that the White Sox won, 7-4. As White Sox broadcaster Jason Benetti noted, the score was calculated by "Compubox."

The knockdown would be a tough look for anyone, let alone a player with a 59 wRC+ (100 is the league average), which is dead last in baseball among qualified hitters, who finally homered last week in his 81st game of the season. Anderson's offense had been much better since the All-Star break, but this is the only hit people will remember from this season. Maybe he should call former Sox catcher A. J. Pierzynski for pointers on how to spin this particular kind of embarrassment.

Michael Barrett delivers a punch to AJ Pierzynski after being run over at the plate, 2006 [pic.twitter.com/M4fcAhM8WF](https://pic.twitter.com/M4fcAhM8WF)

— Baseball In Pics (@baseballinpix) [December 22, 2022](#)

Twitter (or X, I suppose) went wild with reactions to the fight. It's not often that a Saturday night showdown between losing teams in the AL Central dominates conversation like that.

How many times has someone been dropped in a baseball fight? I can only remember Mickey Rivers/Bill Lee in 1976. Odor/Bautista came close. Now Ramirez / Tim Anderson. Waiting on [@GlobeBobRyan](#) for official answers. [pic.twitter.com/bfbzvsGGyQ](https://pic.twitter.com/bfbzvsGGyQ)

— Bill Simmons (@BillSimmons) [August 6, 2023](#)

It's hard to believe that Anderson, who was well on his way to becoming a rare crossover baseball star, is the guy now getting mocked online, but it feels very fitting considering how the White Sox have plummeted from ascendant power to league-wide joke.

Before Saturday, in his previous 19 games after the All-Star break, Anderson slashed .316/.374/.382. But it was too little, too late for a team that is now 24 games under .500.

In his 67 games before the break, when the Sox needed him to spark the team, Anderson slashed .223/.259/.263 with just nine doubles and one triple in 274 at-bats. In Anderson's defense, he was playing through some injuries in the first half, but the lack of production, combined with manager Pedro Grifol continuing to bat him at the top of the lineup, was a reason why the team struggled.

Everyone likes to say Anderson is one of those "as he goes, we go" players. Well, it works both ways.

Saturday was actually the team's first win since the trade deadline when GM Rick Hahn finished off his in-season fire sale of the awful team he put together. Hahn should continue to break up the team in the offseason. Anderson, who is heading into his last year under contract (if the Sox pick up his option, which they should), could be on his way out too. Given that no one will pay attention to this team the rest of the season — unless there's

another fight — it would be sad if this is how he goes out, considering what he has meant to the team. Anderson has been through a lot in his life and he's overcome obstacles to become an All-Star. He'll bounce back.

Anderson didn't talk to reporters in Cleveland to give his side of the story, but he's definitely facing some discipline from the league. (Ramírez told reporters, via team interpreter Agustín Rivero: "He's been disrespecting the game for a while. It's not from yesterday or from before. I even had the chance to tell him during the game, 'Don't do this stuff. That's disrespectful. Don't start tagging people like that.' In reality, we're here trying to find ways to provide for our families. When he does the things he does on the bases, it can get somebody out of the game. So I was telling him to stop doing that and then as soon as the play happened, he tagged me again really hard, more than needed, and then he reacted and said, 'I want to fight.' And if you want to fight, I have to defend myself.")

Call me soft but I think Anderson should be benched by the league for two weeks. A fortnight for a fight night. He should get seven games for starting it and another seven for losing. That'll teach him to square up like he's Sonny Liston.

Anderson should welcome the punishment because his season, like the White Sox's, can't end soon enough.

*(Photo of Tim Anderson, right, José Ramírez, left, and umpire Malachi Moore: Ron Schwane / Getty Images)*

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