



Podsednik shakes off shyness to analyze Sox with Garfein, Melton on CSN Chicago

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Scott Podsednik was a natural at the skills needed for his previous job: base-stealing leadoff man of the 2005 world champion White Sox and other teams before and after.

Also a natural as pre- and post-game Sox analyst for 25 games on CSN Chicago? Not so much.

“I didn’t think about TV at all until the opportunity came up for me,” said the personable Texan. “I was a very shy, very introverted guy growing up. I remained pretty introverted and to myself (going into his career). For me to even think about pursuing a career in TV or in media didn’t seem right, didn’t seem natural.

“It was something that my agent had thrown past me and had mentioned to me. I would think a little bit about it. But I never thought I’d pursue TV as a second career.”

But here is Podsednik, working a partial schedule of CSN Chicago Sox games in tandem with host Chuck Garfein and veteran analyst “Beltin’ Bill” Melton, a great talker and storyteller with a deep voice whose broadcast roots go back more than two decades.

How did Podsednik cross that Rubicon to talk relatively smoothly in playing off his fellow panelists?

At a much slower pace than his basepaths pursuits, Podsednik began comprehending a bit of comfort when the red light went on. You certainly knew he had a trial-by-fire post-game after he shockingly ended the drizzle-soaked Game 2 of the 2005 World Series with a homer at what is now Guaranteed Rate Field.



Scott Podsednik brings some World Series glamour to 25 Sox pre- and post-game shows on CSN Chicago.

“You get used to talking in front of the camera,” Podsednik said. “At SoxFest, you have various interviews and you’re talking in front of the camera. We obviously made it to the World Series and you have media obligations on that front.

“Through my nine years in my big-league career, I got used to and more comfortable talking to the media and in front of cameras. We did a ‘Saturday Night Live’ skit after the World Series. That was a fun, neat experience in front of multiple cameras. I’ve done some small commercials for different organizations I’ve played with. Doing more of it, I developed more of a comfort (zone).”

Gets a taste during Cubs-Sox series

Several years back, CSN Chicago asked Podsednik to be on the pre- and post-game panel during the Cubs-Sox series.

“Still, up to that point I did not think that TV would be a career or future for me,” he said. “But I thought to myself there’s no way I would pass up this opportunity. Obviously, they had enough confidence in me going in. I felt I had nothing to lose, let’s go see what this is about, talk some baseball and see if I enjoy doing it.”

Podsednik enjoyed himself and felt like he had held his own. The idea of TV work was then planted.

Through 2015, Frank Thomas was employed as the third wheel with Garfein and Melton. But the Big Hurt landed a gig on the Fox over-the-air and FS1 cable pre- and post-game shows. There was room for another personality. Melton was the resident old-timer, so why not add a 2005 World Series hero?

“Going into it, I really didn’t know what to expect,” said Podsednik. “Sometimes, Chuck or Bill will throw a question my way. Then it’s basically a conversation between you and him. Then, other times you’ll be talking about a clip in the game that the fans are



Chuck Garfein (left) and Bill Melton (right) are helping mentor Scott Podsednik in his on-air persona.

seeing on TV. You have to articulate your perspective and what's going on with that clip.

“That's some getting-used to, and all the ins and outs about being up there. It's something I'm getting a feel for. I'm trying to hone and get better at, try to get a better feel with Chuck and Bill, and try to give the fans a leadoff hitter's perspective based on all my experiences in my 19 years of pro ball.”



One of Scott Podsednik's earliest CSN Chicago assignments was a remote from the Sox home dugout.

He can compare a rookie being mentored by selfless veterans in his relationships with Garfein and Melton.

“No question,” he said. “They have been extremely helpful in bringing me along in this entire process. They're good people. And they're genuinely interested in helping me with any questions I have. The chemistry and rapport among us is hopefully continuing to get better. From Day One, I felt comfort working with them. Hopefully it will be something entertaining and enjoyable for the fans watching.”

Like a player's own body English and muscle memory, Podsednik is learning the technique of alternately facing his fellow

panelists and seamlessly turning his head to face the cameras. A good panelist will do both while talking without making the movements jerky or stilted.

Rookie scouts other TV analysts

Podsednik helps himself here. A diligent analyst of video in his playing career, he now carefully watches more experienced sportscasters' on-air styles even more than the action they are analyzing.

“Those are things I'm still trying and looking to improve upon,” he said. “Now when I'm watching ESPN SportsCenter, MLB (TV) or whatever, I pay attention to the way these analysts articulate information. I pay attention to their gesticulation, how they are using their hands, how they're moving, how much attention they're paying attention to the camera and their colleagues. I'm honing in on how they're going about their entire craft.”

“There are things I notice that I like about their moves or things they say, and things that I see that I may not want to do. I want to gather as much information as I can and plug it into my own way of doing things to become better at what I'm doing.”

Podsednik is obviously too busy analyzing the present state of the Sox to delve deep into nostalgia. But he could stock a whole bunch of shows if asked. He arguably was the product of the key trade that transformed the 2005 Sox lineup into a world champion-worthy bunch.

With an abundance of right-handed power bats, the Sox could shake down the thunder, but could not dial down enough to play small ball to keep up with the AL Central division-champion Twins prior to 2005. General manager Kenny Williams gambled by dealing Carlos Lee to the Brewers for Podsednik, who led the National League with 70 steals, but batted just .244, in 2004.

The trade paid off. Podsednik, shifted to left while Aaron Rowand played center, stole 59 bases and revived to .290 with a .351 on-base percentage before being slowed a bit late in the season with a leg injury. With still plenty of power (200 homers), the Sox zoomed to a 15-game lead before holding off a late Cleveland charge.

Then came the heroics that overshadowed everything else in his career. After the Sox dominant starting pitching enabled them to sweep into the World Series against the Astros with just one loss in eight postseason games, the South Siders found themselves in a 6-6 tie in the bottom of the ninth in a damp Game 2. Paul Konerko had done the heavy lifting with an earlier grand slam, and it appeared he'd have to be a hero again against Astros closer Brad Lidge.

Leadoff man ditched brass' dictum for walkoff homer

But Podsednik beat "The King" to the crown. He slugged an all-time Fall Classic homer against Lidge to right center to throw the ballpark up for grabs. All after not slugging a homer in the regular season, strictly heeding the Sox brass' dictum to slash the ball around as a leadoff man following his 12-homer output in Milwaukee in 2004.

Podsednik does not hear much about the dramatic clout in suburban Dallas, where when not back in the CSN Chicago River North studio he is a dutiful dad, watching his two grade-school children's games and even mowing his own lawn. But come to Chicago and it is Oct. 23, 2005 everywhere he goes.

"When I'm in Chicago, probably not a day goes by where I'm not talking about it with someone, which is fine," he said. "That is obviously the highlight of my career. It doesn't get old. It gives me goose bumps to talk about it no matter what."

Podsednik still shakes his head in disbelief he connected against Lidge to rank among the handful of World Series walkoff achievers.

"I have quite a few pictures hanging in my office dealing with the World Series, and then specifically that Game 2 home run," he said. "When I walk in, I see Sports Illustrated with me on the cover hitting that home run and right next to it is a picture of Aaron Rowand holding me up with teammates right after."

"I catch myself looking up and saying, 'How in the world did I run into that ball?' I only hit 42 homers in my career and none in the regular season. How in the world did you weasel your way into hitting one in the World Series?"



Scott Podsednik had a good career, but his World Series walkoff homer is his highlight.

Expect the unexpected in the most unpredictable sport ever invented. But Podsednik just cannot find a good answer to the chain of events that resulted in an all-time Chicago and World Series moment.

“Absolutely, I ask that question all the time,” he said. “It was not supposed to come off my bat. Thinking back to it, I wasn’t thinking home run, I wasn’t looking to hit a home run. I was ahead in the count 2-1, and I was looking to put a good swing on the ball. Fortunately I got a perfect pitch right out over the plate. I put as good a swing as I could on it and didn’t miss it.

“Yes, I am still shocked and still surprised to this day I managed to hit that home run.”