



2015 is a new year for Chicago baseball

*By David J. Fletcher, CBM President
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Happy New Year!

For Chicago baseball fans the upcoming 2015 campaign will be exciting.

This off-season so far is one of the most exciting Hot Stove Leagues ever and bodes well for an exciting 2015 season after the last few years of mediocre or

worse Chicago baseball (except in 2012 when the White Sox let an AL Central Division championship slip away the last two weeks).



When I was out at the San Diego for the winter meetings in early December 2014, there was a strong buzz about the two Chicago teams going on in the lobby and bars at the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel, overlooking the sparkling San Diego Bay.

New Cubs manager Joe Maddon was out and about spreading cheer about the upcoming 2015 season. He was really excited to be in Chicago with the Cubs and the challenge of overcoming a championship drought that goes back to 2008. He was constantly in the Hyatt Starbucks and was talking up Cubs baseball, gushing with excitement about the signing of ace lefty Jon Lester. Now in a large market, Maddon will really blossom and get even more national exposure. I found him very zany and it will be a fun year for Cubs fans with his new leadership and all the young talent the Cubs have brought in.

The Sox were also turning heads and surprising baseball insiders in San Diego, as well as the Cubs. So far this off-season, the White Sox have brought on free agents Zach Duke, Adam LaRoche, Melky Cabrera and David Robertson and traded for Jeff Samardzija and Dan Jennings. GM Rick Hahn is not done and still has Dayan Viciedo as a trading chip to further improve the team.

Right now, several baseball experts are picking both the Cubs and Sox to win their respective divisions.

The White Sox and Cubs — with the exception of 2008 — haven't played in the same postseason in 108 years when they met in the 1906 World Series. There is a possibility in 2015 that the two teams could meet again for a World Series showdown in October.

The Cubs Convention is less than two weeks away, along with the Friday night, Jan. 16, companion event, the fourth annual Woody's Winter Warm-Up Event at a new location this year: Harry Caray's 7th Inning Stretch Restaurant & Bar, Level 7 at Water Tower Place on Michigan Avenue. For ticket information, contact www.woodfamilyfoundation.org.

SoxFest, also at new location this year (Chicago Hilton on Michigan), starts on Friday, Jan. 23, and will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Sox's 2005 World Championship team.

After the close of SoxFest, Sunday afternoon, Jan. 25, will mark the 69th Annual Awards banquet for the Chicago Pitch and Hit Club. The event starts at 3:30 p.m. at the Tinley Park Convention Center and will honor the Jackie Robinson West Little League Champions. The CBM will award its Holtzman Award winner award to Bob Vorwald of WGN-TV for his outstanding documentary he produced last year celebrating a 100 years at Wrigley Field.

For tickets to the Pitch and Hit Club dinner click www.pitchandhitclub.org. Emcee Tom Shaer, along with George Castle, will present the CBM's annual Holtzman award as I am going on the DL unfortunately for a few weeks to have back surgery. I will be out of the lineup until around Opening Day 2015.

In 2015, The Chicago Baseball Museum (CBM) also resumes efforts to locate its future bricks-and-mortar museum home in Chicago, after we spent nearly two exhausting years unsuccessfully negotiating with the City of Whiting to locate in that Northwest Indiana suburb.

I have been at it for a decade now trying to establish a permanent home that celebrates the rich cultural history of Chicago baseball. I remain convinced, especially with our market research, that there is a strong interest in establishing a baseball museum in Chicago, the No. 3 U.S. market

Along the way, I have gotten some good advice from Bruce DuMont, whose life mission has been the establishment of The Museum of Broadcast Communications (www.museum.tv) in Chicago. Bruce said for a museum to become a reality it takes persistence and a little luck from some angels. Well, after a decade working on this project I can handle the persistence part just fine. Now, in 2015, I am hoping for some angels to help drive this project forward.

All in all, 2015 is shaping up to be a great year for Chicago baseball.



Joe Maddon (left) with Chicago media veteran John Reyes.