

Hickey Beat Long Odds to Realize His Dream

By Paul Ladewski

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Of all the unlikely major leaguers in Chicago baseball history, Kevin Hickey may have been the most unlikely of all.

Despite limited baseball experience, the native South Sider realized his dream at a tryout camp, and he lived it for much of the rest of his life.

Hickey passed away at 56 years of age at Rush University Medical Center on Wednesday morning. His death came six weeks after the former pitcher was found unconscious in his hotel room in Arlington, Tex., the result of what was believed to be a diabetic condition.



The popular White Sox instructor lapsed into a coma and was placed in hospice care last week.

In a statement released by the organization, first baseman Paul Konerko said, "Ask anyone in our clubhouse, every person here appreciated what Kevin did to help the White Sox win baseball games. No one wanted to win more, no one was more optimistic, no one cared more and no one took more pride in his job. He made all of us better."

Hickey attended St. Rita and Kelly High Schools but never played organized baseball at either one. He took up 16-inch softball before he accepted an offer from the Markham Cardinals semi-pro team.

In 1977, Hickey participated in an audition at Comiskey Park, and the 20-year-old did well enough to be offered a contract. The left-handed reliever made his major league debut four years later.

In six seasons split between the White Sox and Baltimore Orioles, Hickey compiled a 9-14 record, 3.91 earned run average and 17 saves.

In 2004, Hickey returned to his hometown team as a pregame instructor and batting practice pitcher. He was so respected in the clubhouse that, one year later, teammates awarded him a full share of their World Series earnings.