

## **Curse of No-hitter haunts Buehrle, White Sox one more time**

*By Paul Ladewski*

*Posted on Monday, August the 31st*

Amid the celebration of his perfect game on July 23 at U.S. Cellular Field, White Sox pitcher Mark Buehrle suggested that the masterpiece be kept in perspective. The last time he pitched a no-hitter, the veteran pointed out, the 2007 season didn't turn out particularly well for him or the team.

Weeks later, the words of Buehrle have proved to be prophetic. Since that memorable afternoon, the White Sox lost 22-of-36 games to tumble six games out of the Central Division lead. Inexplicably, Buehrle failed to win any of his half-dozen starts since then.

The fact is, there's something about no-hitters and the White Sox that haven't mixed well for decades.

Since World War II, the White Sox have pitched seven of them. In each instance, the fortunes of the team took a turn for the worse soon thereafter. Furthermore, with the exception of Joel Horlen, the pitcher in question either fell on hard times or retired a short time later.

The victims of the Curse of the No-hitter:

Bob Keegan, 1957. On Aug. 20, Keegan blanked the Washington Senators in the second game of a doubleheader at Comiskey Park, 6-0, as the White Sox moved within seven games of first place with a 70-48 record.

The South Siders won their next five games to pull within four games of the first-place New York Yankees, but they failed to sustain the momentum. They could do no better than a 20-16 record after the fact and finished in second place, eight games out of the lead.

In his final six starts, Keegan posted a 2-2 record. They would be the final victories of his career. Less than one year later, at 38 years of age, he appeared in a major league game for the final time.

Joe Horlen, 1967. On Sept. 10, in the heat of the American League pennant race, Horlen pitched a 6-0 shutout against the Detroit Tigers in the first game of twin bill at Comiskey Park. In the nightcap, the White Sox moved within 1 ½ games of first place with a 4-0 victory.

The White Sox lost their next three games at home, which began a stretch in which they won only nine of their final 19 games of the season. They finished in fourth place, three games behind the leader.

Horlen never pitched better than in the final days of the season. The right-hander had a 3-1 record in his next five starts, which included back-to-back shutouts.

John Odom and Francisco Barrios, 1976: The two pitchers combined for an unlikely no-hitter against the Athletics on July 28 at Oakland Coliseum. After Odom walked nine batters in five innings, Barrios was called on close the 2-1 victory.

The game was one of the few highlights in the White Sox season. The West Division cellar-dwellers dropped their next six starts en route to a 64-97 record. And Odom would never win another game in the major leagues.

Joe Cowley, 1986. The right-hander walked seven batters in the game played on Sept. 19 at Anaheim Stadium, but he received ample support in a 7-1 victory. The White Sox lost their next five games and nine of their final 16 overall en route to a fifth-place finish in the West Division.

Cowley failed to win any of his final three starts. The next season he was beset with wildness led to his retirement at 28 years of age. It was scenario all too familiar for White Sox pitchers who had experienced career highlights only a short time earlier.

Wilson Alvarez, 1991. In his second appearance in the major leagues, the left-hander beat the Orioles in Baltimore, 7-0, as the White Sox (65-45) moved to within one game of the West Division lead.

No one could have predicted what was about to follow after the Aug. 11 game -- the worst collapse after a no-hitter in major league history. The White Sox dropped 15 of their next 17 games and any thoughts of the postseason came to an abrupt end. Alvarez split his final four starts of the season.

Buehrle, 2007. When the southpaw shut down the Texas Rangers on April 16 at U.S. Cellular Field, the White Sox improved to a 6-7 record. They finished in fourth place with a 72-90 mark.

As for Buehrle, split 18 decisions the rest of the season. His 10-9 record marked the lowest victory total of his career.

Two years later, history appears intent to repeat itself.