



## ***For Chicago, Next Year Can't Arrive Soon Enough***

*By Dr. David Fletcher*

*Posted on Tuesday, Oct. 9*

As a Chicago baseball historian, it is a sad time to have another round of playoffs with neither Chicago team in the mix. Not since 2008 have both teams appeared in the post-season.

The final result hurts even more after the White Sox collapsed in late September. Some contend that rookie manager Robin Ventura could have made better use of his bench in the final weeks, which might have changed the outcome.

Practicing medicine in Decatur, Ill., for two decades, I got to know ex-Cubs first baseman Roe Skidmore, who rode the bench in September, 1969, while manager Leo Durocher stuck with Ernie Banks and other veterans in the final month. Skidmore tore up the Pacific Coast League that season, but he watched the black cat at Shea Stadium in New York from the dugout, not from the on-deck circle. A career 1,000 hitter (one hit, one at-bat), he would share his frustration about the lack of opportunities in the stretch drive.

It seemed like déjà vu all over again this September, as hot-hitting first baseman Dan Johnson didn't get a chance to spell either Adam Dunn or Paul Konerko when he needed a rest. That Konerko required hand surgery after the season spoke for itself. In retrospect, I believe Johnson could have made the difference in the division race.

Give credit to Ventura for a great season, one in which some experts expected the White Sox to lose as many as 95 games. He put the focus back on the players not unlike a modern-day Eddie Collins, the White Sox player-manager of decades ago. General manager Kenny Williams also did a commendable job to make key acquisitions while the season was in progress.

The White Sox weren't the only surprise team in town, as the Cubs were worse than what many had expected. But under operations president Theo Epstein and his staff, there's hope for the future. Team owner Tom Ricketts wants a winner on the North Side more than anyone.

There is always Next Year.