



Believe: The Story of the 2005 Chicago White Sox

*By David J. Fletcher, CBM President
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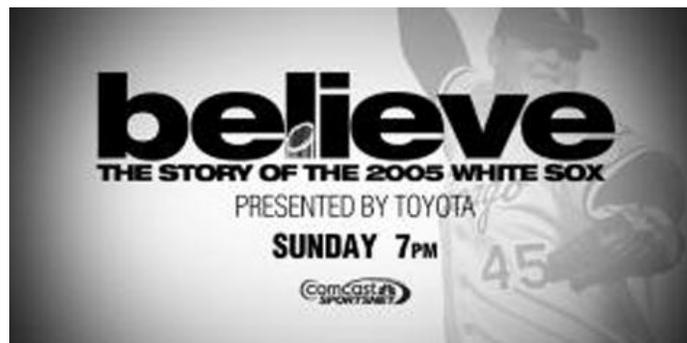
Disheartened White Sox fans, who are disappointed by the White Sox slow start in 2015, can find solace in Sunday night's television premiere of "Believe: The Story of the 2005 Chicago White Sox" that airs on Sunday night April 12th at 7pm on Comcast Sports Net Chicago.

Produced by the dynamic CSN Chicago team of Sarah Lauch and Ryan McGuffey, "Believe" is an emotional roller-coaster-ride of a look at a key season in Chicago baseball history that even the casual baseball fan will enjoy because of the story—a star-crossed team cursed by the 1919 Black Sox—erases 88 years of failure and wins the 2005 World Series championship.

Lauch and McGuffey deliver an extraordinary historical documentary that includes fresh interviews with all the key participants, except pitcher Mark Buehrle who declined. "Mark respectfully declined multiple interview requests. (He) wanted the focus to be on his current season," said McGuffey. Lauch did reveal "that Buehrle's wife saw the film trailer on the Thursday (April 9th) and loved it."

Primetime Emmy & Tony Award winner, current star of Showtime's acclaimed drama series "Homeland", and lifelong White Sox fan Mandy Patinkin, narrates the film in an under-stated fashion that retains a hint of his Southside roots and loyalties.

The 76 minute-long "Believe" features all of the signature moments of the 2005 postseason including "El-Duque's" masterful escape artist performance getting out of a bases loaded jam in the bottom of the 6th inning in Game 3 of the ALDS in Fenway (in what White Sox pitching coach Don Cooper called "**the most important inning in White Sox history**"); AJ's "steal" of first base with the dropped third strike in Game 2 of the ALCS against the Angels ("**Dropped third strike was a smart baseball play**," praised manager Ozzie Guillen); four complete game pitching gems in the ALCS; Paul Konerko's gram slam in Game 2 of the World Series; Scott Podsednik's walk-off home run in Game 2; Juan Uribe's dive into the stands in Houston for the second-to-last out



[Believe: The Story of the 2005 Chicago White Sox](#) will air on Sunday, Apr. 12 at 7:00pm CT, on Comcast Sportsnet.

of Game 4, and the parade and victory celebration where Konerko gives Chairman Jerry Reinsdorf the ball from the final out from the Game 4 sweep of the Astros.

What makes seeing these highlights more meaningful are the interviews with the historical lens of a fresh perspective ten years down the road.

The person who brings the historical significance of the legacy most in perspective is the unlikely hero of Game 3—Geoff Blum, who in his only at bat in the World Series, slams a 14th inning home run that won the longest World Series game ever. “This is your grand-dad” (the now 43 year-old former player referring to showing his historic home run to his future grandchildren).



Geoff Blum's trots around the bases after his historic Game 3 home run in the 14th inning.

Blum was picked up at the trading deadline on July 31st from the Padres and was the only addition to the team since Opening Day other than the promotion of Bobby Jenks to big leagues in early July. As General Manager (GM) Kenny Williams recalled the Sox “held tight at the trading deadline” except for picking up the most unlikely Blum for just a minor leaguer.

“Believe” also features a recent interview with Former Commissioner Bud Selig—who tried to buy the White Sox in 1970 to replace his beloved Milwaukee Braves, who had left town to move to Atlanta after 1965 season breaking his heart. It is Selig who provides the historical gravitas to the film when he proclaims “The Chicago White Sox are the World Champions.”

What this meant was that the Chicago White Sox—a charter American League team—had finally reached the pinnacle of baseball excellence again for the first time since 1917.

“Believe” provides some joyous background how the 1981 Journey song “Don't Stop Believin’,” became the team's adopted theme song which started off as a joke: “At a hotel bar in Baltimore “(Joe) Crede and (Aaron) Rowand and I were just in there goofing around after a game and I think Crede yelled out ‘Play some Journey!’ and the guy was like ‘I don't know anything like that.’ And then, the next day in Baltimore, we were losing and they played ‘Don't Stop Believin’ and Crede again yells and we were all like ‘Play some Journey!’ We came back and scored and won the game (that started a four game sweep of Baltimore). Then it just seemed like we would go to different places and they would play that song and we'd always be like ‘Play some Journey!’ and then we would always come back and win the game,” recalled AJ, who was a key new addition to the 2005 Sox.

In 2004, the White Sox finished with a record 83-79 for 2nd place in the American League Central, nine games back behind the champion Minnesota Twins.

The film begins with the close of the 2004 season and the realization by Sox GM Kenny Williams, who later confesses in the film that he nearly missed the Sox 2005 World Series victory parade because he wanted to go home because of exhaustion, that he needed in 2005 to engineer a roster make-over to compete against the Twins. Soon, Williams introduces a new, “small ball,” grinder approach to the Southside in 2005, especially when he unloaded slugger Carlos Lee to the Brewers for speedster Scott Podsednik.

Williams and Ozzie talk about how the '05 team was assembled, including picking up the much-maligned AJ as a free agent in January 2005 and Jermaine Dye as a free agent. Picked for a fourth place finish, the White Sox team started out of the gate with a spectacular 53-24 record through June and by August 1st have built a seemingly insurmountable 15-game lead over the Cleveland Indians with a 69-35 record. And, then the wheels nearly fell off as the Sox stumbled and went 23-26 through September 24th while the Indians went on a 37-12 rampage to cut the Sox lead to just a game and a half.

This segment of the film represents one of its strengths telling the inside story how the ChiSox nearly blew it and the walls were caving in, which turns out to be the catalyst that propels the Sox through the postseason with a 11-1 record, when the Sox reverse their fortunes and become hot the last week of the season.

Reinsdorf, who appears still profoundly moved by the '05 White Sox team ten years later, confesses that after the last out: “For a moment, it was a feeling of disbelief. The Chicago White Sox have won the World Series after 88 years?! It was amazing. It was just an amazing feeling and we were all up, all night long, celebrating.”

With the 2014 retirement of Konerko, there is no player from the '05 team still on the roster. Only pitching coach Don Cooper is still in a White Sox uniform, while Reinsdorf and Williams remain in the Sox front office and Hawk Harrelson in the TV booth.

The “El Duque” interview was done last June when the White Sox hosted a Cuban Baseball symposium that featured Hernandez, the late Minnie Minoso, and the Sox’s 2014 roster of Cuban players, including AL Rookie of the Year Jose Abreu. “El Duque” had not been back to Chicago since the Sox had installed the Championship Plaza statue saluting the '05 World Series win.

Hernandez could only do one thing when he spied his 2005 image commemorated in sculpture outside U.S. Cellular Field, which captured El Duque’s pure joy by pointing after working out of a bases-loaded, no-out jam to strike out

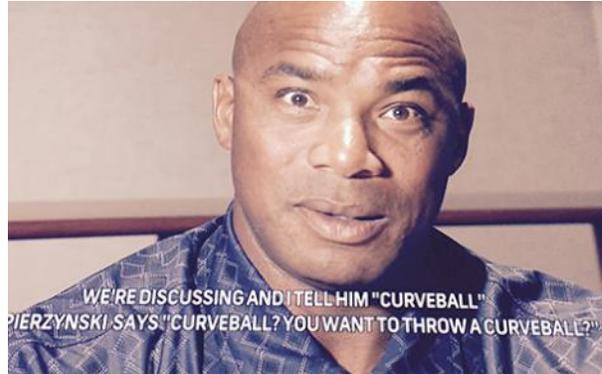


Orlando “El Duque” Hernandez on June 17, 2014 next to his sculpture.

Johnny Damon in the sixth inning of Game 3 of the AL Division Series on Oct. 7, 2005 at Fenway Park.

So the crafty Cuban did what came natural. He pointed again, in the same direction, live action mimicking bronzed history.

In “Believe” he reveals why he shook off AJ’s calls for a fastball to opt for the curve ball.



“El Duque” in “Believe” from June 2014 Interview.

“We’re discussing and tell him “Curveball. Pierzynski says “Curveball? You want to throw a curveball?” says Hernandez in Spanish on the film.

Ozzie finishes the story: “You know what Duque told me? He said ‘everybody wants to be a hero in that time...everybody wants to swing 3-2...they want to be the hero... and I got them (with the curve). Experience.” And, that (experience) is what GM Kenny Williams wanted when he signed “El Duque” as a Free Agent in January 2005.

In the story-line told in “Believe”—that for once has a happy ending for Chicago baseball—Chicago Sun Times Richard Roeper provides the voice of the long suffering White Sox fan. Roeper—who authored the book “Sox and The City” after the Sox won in 2005—expounds on the collective community joy that prevailed after the Sox had finally won the World Series and Chicagoland saw area cemeteries draped with Sox World Series gear on headstones by families who wanted to share the joy with their departed love ones, who did not get to see the Sox win the World Series in their lifetime.

The sound bite of Reinsdorf reflecting on receiving the final out World Series ball from Konerko expands on that shared collective community experience that baseball provides. Reinsdorf admits in “Believe”: “I almost lost it when he gave me the ball; it was never on my mind. Then, when he called me up and gave me the ball, I really came very, very close to being overly emotional. I was emotional enough as it was. If you take out the birth of children and getting married, certainly, yeah, that was my number one moment with the White Sox. Baseball is the one sport that ties generations together. We were able to give everybody that wonderful feeling. That was the best part of it.”

White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen, who stole the show in the CSN Chicago duo’s 2013 film “5 Outs” (he played the villain role as the Marlins third-base coach who witnessed the Cubs 2003 Playoff collapse at rat-infested Wrigley Field after the infamous Bartman incident) is the clearly the star in “Believe” and almost did not appear in the film. Ozzie was the final interview for the young talented CSN Chicago production team that has now produced three films over the past three years that document key historical moments and/or players in Chicago baseball history and were awarded the Holtzman award in January 2014.

McGuffey said that it was only after they had sent Ozzie, whose voice was essential to the “Believe” documentary, a trailer that he agreed to do an interview.” He (Ozzie) admitted he had cried and said let’s get this done and sent us dates (to fly to Miami to interview him).”

CSN Chicago did a screening for the White Sox brass and some select media on the Thursday night at the Wit Hotel. There was a little gloom in the pre-screening cocktail affair that included several key White Sox brass because the 2015 White Sox had dropped their first three games of season against the Royals. I reminded CSN’s Sox analyst Bill Melton that his 1972 White Sox dropped their first games of the season in Kansas City and went on to a 87-67 record (2nd best in the AL) in the strike-shortened 1972 season but unlike the ’72 Sox, who reeled off seven straight wins at home, the Sox dropped their home opener to the Twins to start off 0-4 in 2015 before finally winning Saturday afternoon, 5-4.

In October 2013, Comcast Sports Net Chicago came out with their first feature documentary on a pivotal moment in Chicago baseball history—a stand-out documentary entitled ‘5 Outs,’ capturing the star-crossed tragic events of the ’03 Cubs play-offs that is forever seared into the collective memory of Cubs fans and part of the franchise DNA.

In July 2014, McGuffey and Lauch followed up with a documentary on Frank Thomas and his career path to Cooperstown.

In September 2014, producer McGuffey screened “5 Outs” at the National Baseball Hall of Fame film festival in Cooperstown.

Looks like McGuffey and Lauch need to book now the Otesaga Hotel in Cooperstown for a romantic weekend this fall with their spouses and be ready to show “Believe” at this year’s baseball film festival because the film is that good; it deserves selection as one of the best baseball film productions of 2015.

I also hope that someone from SABR’s planning committee contacts the dynamic duo of “McGuffey and Lauch” to screen both “Believe” and “5 Outs” at the 45th SABR National Meeting in 24-28 June 2015 at the Palmer House. Their work really showcases two defining moments in Chicago baseball history that deserves a national audience of baseball researchers and historians.

Comcast better secure a long-term deal with these two young talents, who have put together an amazing triptych of films on Chicago baseball history, and bring tremendous energy and passion to their work. Their boss at Comcast Sports Net, Kevin Cross,



Ryan McGuffey and Sarah Lauch

knows how hard Ryan and Sarah worked to put together “Believe” (conducting more than 500 hours of interviews) a film that has certainly has some legs to be an important historical document long into the future.

In summary, no White Sox fan will be disappointed watching “Believe”. I hope that Comcast Sports Net Chicago releases an expanded director’s cut of the film and posts outtakes left on the cutting room floor. Even Cubs fans will enjoy the film when the City of Chicago came together, hoping that they will see a Cubs version of “Believe” in the near future. If that happens, I am sure Comcast Sports Net will produce it.



The *Chicago Tribune* front page from October 27, 2005.