

## **Say good-bye to the Double Oughts, one of the best decades there ever was**

*By Paul Ladewski*

*Posted on Tuesday, December the 29th*

The ball is about to drop on the 2000s, and Chicago baseball fans should be sad to see it leave. In the modern era, no decade produced more individual and team success at both sides of town.

Overall, the Cubs (807-811 record) and White Sox (857-764) combined to win 51 percent of their regular-season games, the highest rate since the 1910s period (54 percent). They split six division titles, more than in any decade since the major leagues adopted their current format.

The highlight of the Double Oughts was the end to lengthy streaks of futility, as the White Sox provided the city with its first league pennant since the 1959 season and first World Series championship since the 1917 campaign.

Now let's raise a toast to the 10 greatest moments of the last decade in chronological order . . .

April 6, 2003: In the seventh inning at Great American Ballpark, Cubs slugger Sammy Sosa goes deep against Cincinnati Reds reliever Scott Sullivan to become the first Latin player to reach 500 career home runs.

Sept. 27, 2003: On the next-to-last day of the regular season, the Cubs sweep a doubleheader against the Pittsburgh Pirates to claim the Central Division crown, their first in 14 years. Starter Matt Clement earns credit for the 7-2 clincher in the nightcap at Wrigley Field.

Oct. 5, 2003: The Cubs eliminate the Atlanta Braves in Game 5 of the NLDS, 5-1, as pitcher Kerry Wood wins for the second time in the series. The postseason series victory is their first since the 1908 Fall Classic.

Oct. 12, 2005: In the shrewdest play in memory, White Sox catcher A.J. Pierzynski swings at a third strike in the dirt, but while the Los Angeles Angels head to the dugout after what they believe is the third out, he races to first base. After Umpire Doug Eddings confirms that the ball was trapped and therefore not caught legally, Joe Crede strokes an RBI double and the home team pulls out a 2-1 victory that evens the ALCS at one game apiece.

Oct. 16, 2005: The White Sox rally for a 6-3 triumph against Angels and clinch their first American League pennant in 46 years. Jose Contreras pitches a five-hitter as the fourth consecutive starter to hurl a complete game.

Oct. 23, 2005: White Sox outfielder Scott Podsednik decides the second game of the World Series with a walk-off homer against Houston Astros closer Brad Lidge in the 10th inning. If not the greatest baseball game in Chicago history, then the 7-6 thriller has the most unlikely conclusion. The roundtripper is the second for Podsednik in 615 trips to the plate this season.

Oct. 26, 2005: The wait is over at last, as the White Sox complete a sweep of the Houston Astros to claim their first World Series championship in 88 years. Outfielder Jermaine Dye delivers a two-out single in the eighth inning for the only run of the game at Minute Maid Park and is selected Most Valuable Player of the series.

Sept. 14, 2008: In the first no-hitter at a neutral site in major league history, Cubs pitcher Carlos Zambrano dominates the Houston Astros in a 5-0 triumph. Because of the threat of Hurricane Ike in Texas, league officials had moved the final two games in the series to Miller Park in Milwaukee. Spurred on by the pro-Cubs crowd, Zambrano strikes out 10 batters.

Sept. 30, 2008: In a one-game playoff to decide the Central Division title, White Sox pitcher John Danks limits the Minnesota Twins to two hits in a dramatic 1-0 victory at U.S. Cellular Field. Designated hitter Jim Thome slugs a 461-foot homer for the only run of the game.

July 23, 2009: Mark Buehrle becomes the second pitcher to author a perfect game in White Sox history, as he sets down the Tampa Bay Rays in order at U.S. Cellular Field. In typical Buehrle fashion, the 5-0 masterpiece requires only two hours, three minutes to complete.

### **But these we'll try to forget . . .**

Sept. 19, 2002: The White Sox trail 2-1 in the ninth inning when 34-year-old William Liguette Jr. and his 15-year-old son storm the field and assault Tom Gamboa, 54, the Kansas City Royals first base coach. The Liguettes are arrested and later sentenced to 30 months of probation without prison time.

June 3, 2003: In the first inning of a game against the Tampa Bay Devil Rays at Wrigley Field, Sammy Sosa shatters his bat on a groundout. The umpires

discover cork from the bat on the field, which Sosa claims was used mistakenly. Three days later, the league suspends him for eight games.

Oct. 14, 2003: Five outs away from their first World Series appearance in 58 years, the Cubs squander a 3-0 lead in the eighth inning at Wrigley Field. The Florida Marlins rally for an 8-3 victory to even the NLCS at three games apiece, then they clinch the National League pennant the next evening.

July 6, 2007: The White Sox drop both games of a doubleheader against the Minnesota Twins by 20-14 and 12-0 scores at U.S. Cellular Field. The South Siders allow 32 runs on 36 hits in the Twin killing to fall 13 games out of the Central Division lead.

Oct. 4, 2008: After 97 victories in the regular season, more than any Cubs team since the 1945 season, the North Siders are swept by the Los Angeles Dodgers in the first round of the playoffs. The losers total as many errors as runs (six) in the three games.