

Chicago Baseball Museum Awards

By Paul Ladewski

There was no shortage of candidates for the annual Chicago Baseball Museum awards, as a number of candidates turned in exceptional performances in the 2010 season.

And the winners are . . .

Team of the Year: White Sox. The South Siders overcame a slow start to win 88 games and finish in second place. They owned a share of the Central Division lead as late as Aug. 11.

Hitter of the Year: Paul Konerko, White Sox. His 14th season might have been his best yet, as he hit 39 home runs and set career-highs in on-base (.393) and slugging (.584) percentages.

Pitcher of the Year: Carlos Marmol, Cubs. Not only did he save 38 games, the third-highest total in team history, but he was near unhittable at times. His strikeout rate of 16.0 per nine innings was the best mark for any pitcher with at least 50 innings in major league history.

Defensive player of the Year: Alexei Ramirez, White Sox. Based on his performance in the field, the shortstop deserved more serious Gold Glove consideration. He ranked first in chances per game (4.79) and third in fielding percentage (.974) among American Leaguers that started more than 125 games at the position.

Unsung Player of the Year: Chris Sale, White Sox. Only weeks after the 21-year-old pitcher was drafted out of Florida Gulf Coast University, he made an impact in the major leagues. In 21 appearances, he posted a 1.93 earned run average and four saves.

Rookie of the Year: Starlin Castro, Cubs. In his major league debut, the undrafted free agent hit .300 and stole 10 bases. At 20, the Dominican Republic native flashed the potential to be an infield anchor for years to come.

Executive/Manager of the Year: Mike Quade, Cubs. After he replaced the retired Lou Piniella in late August, the team responded with 24 victories in its final 37 games. The Evanston native made such a favorable impression that he was hired on a full-time basis after the season.

Performance of the Year: On June 13, Cubs starter Ted Lilly held the White Sox without a hit for eight innings at Wrigley Field, which takes us to the . . .

Game of the Year: Cubs 1, White Sox 0. After the visitors loaded the bases, Lilly retired Carlos Quentin with the bases loaded to conclude one of the most intense games in crosstown series history.

Clutch Player of the Year: Konerko. As his .333 batting average and .593 slugging percentage with a runner(s) on base attest, he was at his best in crucial situations.

Minor League Organization of the Year: Joliet JackHammers. Under manager Chad Parker, the Northern League entry showed a 20-game improvement on the field, one of the greatest turnarounds in the minor leagues last season. The JackHammers also earned a playoff berth for the first time in six years and showed a 13 percent increase in home attendance.

Broadcaster of the Year: Ron Santo, Cubs. Cancer claimed the life of the former Cubs third baseman in December, but not before he entertained in the radio booth for 21 seasons and helped raise more than \$60 million for diabetes research.

Media person of the Year: Sarah Kustok, Comcast Sportsnet. An extensive sports background, deep South Side roots and unusual poise set the former DePaul star apart from her peers.

Amateur Baseball Person of the Year: Mark Kingston, Illinois State University. In his first season at the controls, he led the Redbirds to their first-ever share of the Missouri Valley Conference title in the regular season. The team went on to capture the MVC Tournament championship and post its first NCAA Tournament victory since the 1976 season.