



# Danks for the Memories

*Posted by Paul Ladewski  
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While corks popped and champagne sprayed in their clubhouse late Tuesday evening, only moments after the White Sox had beaten the Minnesota Twins to claim the Central Division title and a postseason berth, general manager **Ken Williams** suddenly remembered why his team was there in the first place.

"Where's **John Danks**!? Anybody see John Danks?!" Williams shouted to nobody and everybody in particular while he checked out the craziness around him, his vision reduced to a squint by the sweet burn of success. "Where did John Danks go?!"

The question wasn't where John Danks went, really. The question was, where did the kid come from? And how special was what he had done?

A 23-year-old such as Danks isn't supposed to be able to pitch the game of his life in a one-game, winner-take-all situation, especially one who works on three days' rest. Four days earlier, Danks allowed seven runs in four innings against the Cleveland Indians, a loss that left his team one-half game in back of the Twins with three left to play. Realistically, he couldn't have been expected to do much more than that on short rest. "Six and three," Williams said. "That's what we hoped that John would give us -- six and three." As in six innings plus three batters.

Instead, Danks gave his team eight and oh!

Not only did Danks blank the Twins on two hits in the 1-0 thriller, but the lefthander was in such complete and utter control that he required only 103 pitches to get through eight innings before **Bobby Jenks** came out of the bullpen. "The best feeling in baseball that I've had," Danks called it. "I couldn't imagine doing better than I did tonight."

The truth is, neither could his manager. "I never thought that John Danks could do what he did tonight," **Ozzie Guillen** remarked.

How dominant was Danks on this crisp autumn evening? So dominant that, in the seventh inning, Twins catcher Joe Mauer went so far as to lay down a bunt in an unsuccessful attempt to get on base. Remember, that was Joe Mauer, two-time American League batting champion. The same guy who had four hits in eight at-bats versus Danks previously.

"He had a lot going for him out there," Mauer conceded afterward. "Personally, he made a lot of good pitches against me. I couldn't figure him out."

The performance ranks as the best for a White Sox pitcher in an elimination game since **Britt Burns** some 25 years earlier. The difference was, in the fourth game of the 1983 ALCS, Burns was on the wrong end of a 3-0 score. "I've played with a lot of great pitchers, but this was best game that I can remember," shortstop **Orlando Cabrera** said.

Asked if he could recall a better performance in a pressure game, board chairman **Jerry Reinsdorf** said, "There was the one that Jack Morris pitched in the (1991) World Series . . . But I can't think of many games that were better."

So let the debate begin as to where Danks ranks on this list of best-pitched games in team history (listed in chronological order):

\* **Nick Altrock**, 1906 World Series, Game 1. In a tense duel against Cubs ace **Mordecai (Three Finger) Brown** at West Side Grounds, Altrock went the distance on a four-hitter in the 2-1 victory. The right-hander walked one batter and struck out three.

\* **Ed Walsh**, 1906 World Series, Game 3. In a 3-0 shutout of the Cubs at West Side Grounds, Big Ed allowed two hits, struck out a dozen batters and set the gold standard for White Sox pitchers to follow. Walsh allowed a single and double in the first inning, then he retired 25 of the last 27 batters.

\* **Red Faber**, 1917 World Series, Game 6. Faber was more methodical than dominant in the 4-2 victory against the New York Giants at the Polo Grounds, but because the performance came in the series clincher, no list would be complete without it. The righthander limited the home team to a half-dozen hits, no more than one in any inning.

\* **Dickie Kerr**, 1919 World Series, Game 3. At Comiskey Park, the rookie southpaw allowed only three hits -- all singles -- as the White Sox scored a 3-0 win, their first in the series.

\* **Lamarr Hoyt**, 1983 ALCS, Game 1. The soon-to-be Cy Young Award-winner took a three-hit shutout against the Baltimore Orioles into the ninth inning, when Cal Ripken Jr. singled with two outs to make it a 2-1 game. Hoyt retired the dangerous Eddie Murray on a

groundout to end the game at Memorial Stadium.

\* **Britt Burns**, 1983 ALCS, Game 4. His team on the brink of elimination, the left-hander responded with 9 1/3 scoreless innings. In the 10th inning, Orioles reserve Tito Landrum slammed a home run in what would be the final postseason game at Comiskey Park.

\* **Wilson Alvarez**, 1993 ALCS, Game 3. In a 6-1 victory at Skydome, Wilson limited the Toronto Blue Jays to seven hits and retired nine consecutive batters in one stretch. This was no ordinary Blue Jays line-up, either, but one that included Rickey Henderson, Paul Molitor, Joe Carter, John Olerud and Roberto Alomar among others.

\* **Mark Buehrle**, 2005 ALCS, Game 2. The game at U.S. Cellular Field is best remembered as the one in which batterymate **A.J. Pierzynski** stole first base in the ninth inning, but if not Buehrle, the White Sox wouldn't have pulled out a 2-1 decision. The lefthander limited the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim to five hits, and only a Robb Quinlan homer prevented a shutout.

\* **Jon Garland**, 2005 ALCS, Game 3. Garland was in control from start to finish -- he allowed only four hits and one walk -- and the White Sox never trailed again in the series. After Cabrera clubbed a two-run homer in the fifth inning, he retired the next 10 batters in a row to nail down the 5-2 victory.

\* **Freddy Garcia**, 2005 World Series, Game 4. The righthander pitched seven innings of four-hit ball, as the White Sox completed a four-game sweep. Other than the fourth inning, when Garcia struck out Jason Lane with the bases loaded and two outs, he never was in serious trouble.

"I don't know where this one ranks," Reinsdorf said of the Danks masterpiece. "But it's on a very short list."

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