

For wild, woolly White Sox, it's crazy '08 all over again

*Posted by Paul Ladewski
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Sit back, relax and strap it down, White Sox fans, because history tells us that a photo finish like this one may not come around again until, say, the year 2108 or so.

How rare is a season in which first place is on the line for the White Sox in their final game? Consider that, while the New York Mets went down to the wire twice in the last two seasons, the South Siders have been there *twice in the last 101 years*.

The last time the White Sox were in this position was in the wild, wacky 1908 season, when three teams were in contention for the American League pennant on the final day of the regular season. At that point, on Tuesday, Oct. 6, the White Sox (88-63) and Cleveland Naps (89-64) trailed the first-place Detroit Tigers (89-63) by one-half game each.

The White Sox had tamed the Tigers in the first two games of their three-game showdown at Comiskey Park, and a sweep would have paved the way for the second all-Chicago World Series in three years. But Tigers righthander Wild Bill Donovan was anything but his nickname, as he outpitched **Doc White**, 7-0, his second shutout in a span of four days. (Donovan was referred to as Wild Bill after he walked nine batters in a row in a minor league game years earlier. The fit of wildness was his way to protest the demotion of a teammate who had inadvertently thrown a ball over the fence behind home plate, an offense for which Donovan was fined \$10 reportedly.)

Meanwhile, the Naps scored a 5-1 victory in St. Louis to move into second place. Because league rules did not require postponements to be rescheduled, the Tigers claimed the pennant by one-half game even though they played one fewer game.

The only other close call for the White Sox in the Live Ball Era took place in the 1964 season. As they entered the final weekend, the White Sox (94-64) and Baltimore Orioles (95-65) trailed the first-place New York Yankees (97-62) by a mere 2 1/2 games. A three-way tie for the lead was possible.

On Friday afternoon, Oct. 2, the Yankees beat the Cleveland Indians at Yankee Stadium, 5-2, and the Orioles were out of contention. The White Sox stayed alive with a sweep of the Kansas Athletics in a twilight doubleheader at Comiskey Park, 3-2 and 5-4, as they moved within two games of the lead with two games to play. Behind **Joe Horlen**, who pitched a two-hitter, the White Sox extended their win streak to eight games in a row with a 7-0 victory the next afternoon. But when the Yankees beat the Indians again, 8-3, the South Siders were eliminated on the next-to-last day of the season.

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