

Ex-White Sox slugger **Ron Kittle** takes his cuts for the Chicago Baseball Museum.



By Paul Ladewski

After what the Cubs went through in the postseason, do you have any sympathy for them given that you played for the 1983 White Sox team that also experienced a sudden and massive slump?

There's no sympathy for anybody in this game. There are winners and there are losers. That's how I was brought up to play, you know? There's going to be a W next to one team and not the other. But I don't like to see the season end for any team.

How do you explain that the White Sox scored only three runs in four games against the Baltimore Orioles in the ALCS that season?

Good pitching will shut out down good hitting. In '83, we finished, what, 20 games ahead of everybody in our division? A slow time was going to come for us -- and it did. *(Laughs.)*

Orioles starter Mike Flanagan fractured your left kneecap with a pitch in Game 3 of the series. You sat out the last three innings of that game and all of the next one. If healthy, would you have made a difference in the last two games?

Nobody knows. I can only attest to what I thought -- I wanted to be the hero every single day that I played the game. Every day. I knew that I would be the goat more times than not, but at least I went into every game with an attitude. I would just like to have played and been a part of it.

At the time, the Orioles had a 4-1 lead. Earlier in the game, White Sox pitcher Richard Dotson had buzzed Eddie Murray with an inside pitch. In your last previous at-bat, you had doubled to left field. Did Flanagan plunk you on purpose?

Yeah, I believe so. I was hit a lot that season, but I could tell by the count and location. It was a 3-and-0 pitch, and Flanagan threw it low and inside, one of the spots where you can't get out of the way. He wasn't the type to have control problems.

What was it like to know that you had probably played the final game of your rookie season?

Sitting on the bench being a cheerleader wasn't something that I planned on doing. The worst part was when I arrived to the park the next day. (General manager) **Roland**

Hemond met me when I got there, and I was on crutches. I was like, 'Well, that's too bad, you know?' They told me that I probably wouldn't have been able to play in the World Series if we had gotten there. I would rather play and do horrible than sit on the bench and not do anything.

What effect did the injury have on the rest of your career?

It affected me all of '84, to tell you the truth. The ball sort of slid the whole thing over -- my kneecap was on the inside of my leg. The rehabilitation was miserable. I couldn't push off on it. I couldn't land on it. But I just wanted to play the game, so sometimes you play hurt.

Are you among those who believe that the White Sox would have went on to win the World Series if they had been able to get to the fifth and decisive game?

I would like to say yes. We had **Lamarr Hoyt** scheduled to pitch (Game 5), and he was a big time pitcher. He definitely was a gamer. Baltimore had trouble with him throughout the year. Philadelphia was flat in the World Series. It didn't do anything well. Baltimore didn't do anything great, but it won.

What is the legacy of the 1983 White Sox team?

There was no winning in Chicago until the '83 team. In '84, the Cubs came about, and in '85, it was the Bears. Then the Bulls started to pick things up later. We started some exciting times in Chicago sports -- you know, Na-na, hey-hey and all that stuff -- and I was glad to be a part of it.

Do you ever wish that you were on the field again?

"I get the itch all the time. I've fallen in the love with the game more in the last few years than in the past. I kind of miss it. I miss the action. I miss the camaraderie. I won't bet my house on it, but I've talked with a few people, and there's a chance that I'll come back as a coach or something. If they pay me enough, I'll sweep the stadium. *(Laughs.)*

(Editor's note: A native of Gary, Ind., Kittle currently lives with his wife in northwestern Indiana.)