

2010 Chicago Baseball Season Review

By Paul Ladewski

It raised barely an eyebrow when a 21-year kid named Chris Sale retired the final batter of the season at U.S. Cellular Field on Sunday, Oct. 3, but it proved to be one of the most significant outs of the season.

The victory was the 163rd of the season for the Cubs and White Sox, which allowed Chicago to keep its streak of consecutive above-.500 finishes alive. It stands at four in a row now.

The season didn't turn out as planned at both sides of town, but it didn't lack highlights, either. A few of the better ones:

Best game: June 13, Cubs 1, White Sox 0. The classic duel at Wrigley Field ranks on the short of list of best ever in the crosstown series.

White Sox starter Gavin Floyd and Cubs counterpart Ted Lilly took no-hitters into the seventh inning, when Alfonso Soriano doubled for the first hit of the game. Chad Tracy followed with a single that plated the only run of the game.

The South Siders threatened in the ninth inning, which Juan Pierre opened with a single, their first hit of the game. Lilly retired Paul Konerko and Carlos Quentin with the bases loaded.

Best manager: Mike Quade, Cubs. When the Evanston native replaced the retired Lou Piniella on Aug. 23, the team owned a 51-74 record and was 21 1/2 games out of first place. They won 24 of their next 37 games to finish 16 games off the pace. Several players endorsed him for the full-time position.

Best pitcher: Carlos Marmol, Cubs. He ranked first in strikeouts (138), second in opponents batting average (.147) and fourth in saves (38) among National League relievers with at least 60 innings on the mound.

Best play: Mark Buehrle, White Sox. Since Opening Day, there was little doubt that his between-the-legs flip to Konerko would stand not only as the best defensive gem in Chicago but in the major leagues as well.

Best position player: Konerko, White Sox. In his free agent year, the veteran produced one of the best all-around seasons in team history. Among American players, he ranked among the leaders in home runs (39, second), RBI (111, sixth) and batting average (.312, eighth).

Best rookie: Starlin Castro, Cubs. A Starlin was born on the North Side, where the shortstop hit .300 and stole 10 bases in 125 games. The 20-year-old merits consideration in the Rookie for the Year Award vote.

Honorable mention: Sale. Only weeks after the left-hander was drafted in the first round, he was good to the last pitch.