

Ventura Has What It Takes to Carry on White Sox Way

By Paul Ladewski

When the White Sox named Robin Ventura as their manager last week, more than a few eyebrows were raised in baseball circles here and around the country.

Yet for those who have paid closed attention to the franchise in recent decades, the choice doesn't come as any great surprise, really. The former third baseman meets the requirements of the White Sox way, which places a premium on communication skills, baseball aptitude and a connection to the city and the organization.

Or as general manager Kenny Williams put it, "We don't need any examples from other organizations. This is right for us."

Ventura was formally introduced as the 39th manager in team history on Tuesday morning.

"In knowing somebody in the organization, they know what they're getting," said Ventura, 44. "There's some comfort in that they know me and have confidence that I can do this. I feel confident that I can do this, but you definitely have that family feel when you're here."

In the last 12 seasons, the White Sox captured two division titles and one World Series championship and finished above .500 eight times. As Ventura is well aware, their rather intense fan base demands more than an honest effort on a regular basis.

"A tough town," he called it. "I've played here, so I know it can be tough. It should be tough. Chicago is a tough city."

Because Chicago presents challenges that are different than most markets, team management admits to a checklist that is a bit different than the others.

"I'm interested in finding the right guy," Williams told the Chicago Baseball Museum. "Just because somebody has had success doesn't mean that he's right for this situation. This is a unique market and team in this market, and no matter what his pedigree, not everyone has the right personality to survive in this market. It's a lot more difficult than people think – a lot more."

Ventura became the seventh full-time White Sox manager since 1981, when Jerry Reinsdorf and his limited partnership purchased the franchise. Of the other six, only Jim Fregosi and Jeff Torborg had been a major league manager previously. None of the last four had such experience – Gene Lamont, Terry Bevington, Jerry Manual and Ozzie Guillen.

Williams likened the situation to that of eight years ago, when Guillen left his position as Florida Marlins third base coach to come aboard. The former White Sox shortstop was 39 years old at the time.

"What was important was personality and what he brought to the table and how he was going to fit in the organization at that time," Williams said. "So in that respect, this isn't dissimilar at all. As far as experience, I don't view it any differently than the last hire. Neither one of them had managerial experience. That's OK. You're talking to a guy who didn't have general manager experience when I was first hired, so I don't think that's a prerequisite. I just ask whether he can do the job."

Unlike Guillen, Ventura was never a coach at the major league level. He served an advisor for director of player development Buddy Bell last season.

The two-time All-Star played 16 seasons in the major leagues, the first 10 in the White Sox uniform.

"He has got 16 years of managerial experience from my perspective," Williams said. "Because I know what you think about when you're on that field as a player and as a player

who is very focused on the game at hand. He is a guy who is very considerate and a thinker.”