

Last year the White Sox \$121 million dollar payroll brought in an 89-74 record, first place in the AL Central. They faced the Tampa Bay Rays in the American Division Series and were beat 3 games to 1. Starter Javier Vasquez was traded in the off-season to Atlanta for slugging prospect Tyler Flowers, who'll spend this season in AAA. The Chisox have shed some payroll here in 2009, and in his latest Look Around The AL, David Buona checks in to tell us how this year's White Sox will look.



2008 Recap:

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2009 Outlook:

The White Sox have shed some payroll in '09, moving veterans Nick Swisher and Javier Vazquez and failing to resign Orlando Cabrera, Joe Crede, and Ken Griffey, Jr.

Hello: INF Wilson Betemit, 1B Ben Broussard, RHP Bartolo Colon, INF Brent Lillibridge

Goodbye: SS Orlando Cabrera, 3B Joe Crede, OF Ken Griffey, Jr., RHP Boone Logan, OF Nick Swisher, RHP Javier Vazquez

If the White Sox Were an 80's Movie They'd Be:

The Living Daylights. Recasts don't always work out, and *The Living Daylights* with new James Bond Timothy Dalton might have made some cash (\$51 million), but Dalton proved to be no Roger Moore, and he would be permanently both shaken and stirred from his 007 role after

Daylights

follow up,

License to Kill

. If this roster shake-up doesn't work, don't be surprised if loudmouth manager Ozzie Guillen gets recast as well.

The 2009 Projected Lineup:

CF Jerry Owens

SS Alexei Ramirez

LF Carlos Quentin

RF Jermaine Dye

DH Jim Thome

1B Paul Konerko

C A.J. Pierzynski

3B Josh Fields

2B Chris Getz / Brent Lillibridge

The ChiSox lineup is really a mix of the old and the new, with no veterans to speak of that you couldn't attach the adjective "seasoned" on to. Dye, Konerko, Thome, and Pierzynski are all over 32, and Thome is definitely in his twilight years on his way to the Hall of Fame (he has to wear a Chief Wahoo hat, right?).

The two biggest revelations during the '08 season came from 2B/SS Alexei Ramirez and left fielder and former D-Backs bust Carlos Quentin. Both were not even opening day starters, but both certainly earned their keep by season's end. Quentin became an offensive monster until a broken wrist ended his season like a teenage boy's first encounter with a girl, prematurely. He batted .288, drove in a 100 runs, and hit 36 home runs in only 480 at bats. Ramirez had the exact same amount of at bats, and while he didn't inflict as much damage, he still did pretty darn well, driving in 77 runs, homering 21 times, and stealing 13 bases.

The Golden Oldies performed well too, with Dye and Thome both chipping in with 34 homers, but the young ones will have to step up big this year to match 2008's success. Third baseman Josh Fields will have to revert back to his '07 self and forget about his '08 self if he wants to replace the steady but oft-injured Joe Crede. Fields hit 23 home runs in 373 at bats two years ago, but last year he only hit .167.

Centerfielder and possible leadoff hitter Jerry Owens will also be depended on heavily to rebound, after following a good to 2007 with his own terrible 2008. Owens stole 32 bags in 356 at bats two years ago, but injuries and ineffectiveness held him to only 2 steals and 16 at bats.

The 2009 Projected Rotation and Closer:

LHP Mark Buehrle

RHP Gavin Floyd

LHP John Danks

RHP Bartolo Colon

RHP Nick Marquez / Jose Contreras

RHP Bobby Jenks

White Sox starters certainly held their own last year, leading the American League with 93 quality starts and finishing fifth with a 4.06 ERA. Mark Buehrle will again be the security blanket of the staff after winning 15 games last year while sporting a 3.79 ERA. Gavin Floyd came out of nowhere last year to win 17 games, topping his previous career high of 4. If he and John Danks (12 wins) come anywhere close to their 2008 numbers, the front three will be able to carry the back 2, which at this point aren't looking nearly as good.

The rest of the staff is made up of two oldies but possibly goodies and a couple of kids. Bartolo Colon is all but assured to man down the 4th starter role, but he's coming off numerous health problems that allowed him to only start 7 games last year, and he still looks like he's been eating too much rice and beans during the offseason. Jose Contreras is out probably until the All-Star break with a torn Achilles, so keeping his spot warm will be Clayton Richard, Jeff Marquez, or Aaron Poreda, their 2007 1

st

round pick. Marquez was the key player in the Nick Swisher offseason trade with the Yankees, and he may get first crack at the spot despite never pitching above AAA. Richard has starting experience, going 8 times for the Sox last season, albeit with dreadful results (6.04 ERA).

The White Sox bullpen has a few quality arms, with lefty Matt Thornton being the best. He pitched in 74 games last year, earning a 2.74 ERA while keeping lefty batters down to a .170 average and righties .218. Veterans Scott Linebrink and Octavio Dotel also did a good job in innings 7 and 8, with Dotel striking out 92 men in only 67 innings.

Closer Bobby Jenks last year becomes the first White Sox stopper ever to save 30 straight games for three straight years, but his velocity dipped again last season and so did his strikeouts. In '08 he averaged less than 5.5 K through 9, despite averaging nearly a strikeout an inning in '07 and over a K an inning in '06 and '05. The results are there though (2.63 ERA), and will probably be there again as long as his Tommy John-ed elbow holds out.

So Magic Eight Ball, will the White Sox be able to put their mix of young and old to good use to repeat as champ in '09? "Reply hazy-try again."