

# Is winning once a century too much to ask?

The Cubs were leading 3 to 2 and Rick Sutcliffe headed to the mound for the start of the bottom of the seventh inning. The Padres scored four runs to take a 6 to 3 lead and eventually win the game, the series and the chance to go on to the World Series.

The year was 1984, the beginning. I was 11 years old and fortunately blissfully unaware of what the next 24 years would be like for me as a Cubs fan.

Though broken-hearted as I was over the Cubs loss, it was a great time for a young boy to begin a deep rooted love for his Chicago sports teams. The White Sox had made the playoffs the previous year and the Bulls had just drafted Michael Jordan. The Bears won the Super Bowl in January of 1986. And the Cubs, my new favorite team? Little did I know the pain and misery they would cause me in the years to come.

## COULD THIS BE THE YEAR?

The 2008 Chicago Cubs will take the field at the Friendly Confines with extremely high expectations. They are projected by most experts to win the National League Central with ease. Many are even talking about a World Series berth for the lovable losers. I am cautiously optimistic. But history is not on our side. Like all of Cubs Nation, fear of another letdown forces me to be tempered in my enthusiasm.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Cubs' last World Series victory. Lou Piniella is telling his boys not to think about the long World Series drought. He says it will just cause unnecessary pressure. I disagree. I say embrace the futility and celebrate 100 years of failure by treating loyal Cubs fans to the best season ever.

Here are a few ideas. Every 100th person who enters Wrigley Field should receive a gift. Invite all Cubs fans who were alive in 1908 to a special game where they would be honored. Designate one game against an American League team, maybe against the White Sox, where they turn back the clocks to 1908. This would include more than just wearing vintage uniforms. They should charge fans 1908 pricing for tickets and food as well.

Ignoring the 100-year anniversary would be counter-productive and could actually end up putting more pressure on the players and the organization. The media are certain to ask about it, so ignoring it will just mean that players will have to answer the same question

## ONE on ONE

with **Matt Abbatacola**  
of *WSCR 670 AM*  
*The Score*



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throughout the entire season. I say beat the media to the punch. Talk openly about the 100 years, but not in a negative way. Celebrate the fans for 100 years of support. We deserve it.

## HAS IT REALLY BEEN 100 YEARS?

Here are some interesting tidbits about 1908, the year the Cubs last won the Series. The fourth modern Olympics were held that year in London. That same year the first passenger flight took to the sky, and Bill Murray hit the charts with *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*. On October 14, the smallest crowd ever to watch a World Series game, 6,210, watched the Cubs and Tigers play.

Since 1945, the last time the Cubs made it to the World Series, the woe-be-gone ballclub has gone to the playoffs just five times, finished above .500 only 19 times in that 63-year period, and came in first or second only eight times in that same time span. If the Cubs finish above .500 in 2008, it will be only the third time since 1945 that the team has had consecutive winning seasons. This includes almost a 40-year stretch from 1946 to 1983

without ever even making the playoffs.

In that same time period, every National League team made the playoffs at least once with the exception of Houston, which came into the league in 1962, and San Diego and Montreal who didn't begin play until '69.

So what does all of this mean? It means that the Cubs have mastered the art of losing while somehow still managing to build a huge local and national fan base. So I say use this year to celebrate your fans.

## WHY WILL THIS YEAR BE DIFFERENT?

The 2008 Chicago Cubs have depth at pitching. They signed their prized off-season free agent target in Kosuke Fukudome. The bullpen looks solid once again. Of course, they do have some questions that need to be answered. Who will claim center field? Can Alfonso Soriano stay healthy and be a solid lead-off hitter? Is catcher Geovany Soto the real deal? Can last year's surprise performers Ryan Theriot and Mark DeRosa deliver once again? Will Derrek Lee and Aramis Ramirez be the offensive stars they need to be? Can Carlos Zambrano hit that 20-win mark and be the leader that he must be?

For me, though, it's the man in charge that will be the key to the 2008 season. If the Cubs are to win, it all begins and ends with Lou Piniella. He has had a nice start to his tenure as the Cubs' skipper. But this year must be different. Piniella must lead his players with a sense of urgency that this organization has never had before. The extended spring training that had the team playing catch up for most of last season can't happen again. By opening day, decisions about players and roles must be clearly defined. I wasn't in favor of Lou's hiring. I hope this year he proves me wrong.

I wasn't around for the Cubs swoon in 1969. In '84, Steve Garvey broke my heart. In the following playoff years of 1989 and 1998, the Cubs didn't really have a chance to do much. In 2003, I felt like an 11-year-old boy again. It took me over a year to get over that. Last year was fun until the playoffs started.

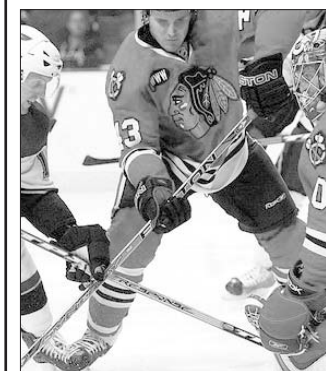
So it's been 100 years. Celebrate the fans and embrace the futility. Oh yeah, winning the World Series would help a lot, too!



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## Chicago Sports Schedules\*

\*MARCH 2008



Chicago Blackhawks

### BLACKHAWKS (Hockey) Home games only

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
March 2	Vancouver	2:00
March 5	Anaheim	7:30
March 7	San Jose	7:30
March 9	Edmonton	2:00
March 12	Carolina	7:30
March 16	Calgary	2:00
March 19	Washington	7:30
March 23	St. Louis	2:00
March 30	Columbus	6:00

### STEEL (Hockey) Home games only

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
March 14	Green Bay	7:30
March 21	Waterloo	7:30
March 22	Indiana	7:30
March 28	Ohio	7:30

### WOLVES (Hockey) Home games only

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
March 1	Milwaukee	7:00
March 2	Providence	6:00
March 7	Iowa	7:30
March 8	Quad City	7:00
March 12	Hamilton	7:00
March 14	Lake Erie	7:30
March 15	Peoria	7:00

### SHAMROX (Lacross) Home games only

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
March 1	Rochester	7:00
March 29	Minnesota	7:00

### BULLS (Basketball) Home games only

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
March 4	Memphis	7:30
March 6	Cleveland	6:00
March 11	Utah	7:30
March 14	Philadelphia	7:30
March 18	New Jersey	7:30
March 20	San Antonio	7:00
March 22	Indiana	7:30
March 25	Atlanta	7:30
March 29	Milwaukee	7:30

### STORM (Soccer) Home games only

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
March 8	La Raza de Monterrey	7:00
March 22	Baltimore	7:00
March 28	California	7:00

### SLAUGHTER (Aren football) Home games only

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
March 7	Kalamazoo	7:30
April 4	Miami Valley	7:30

### RUSH (Aren football) Home games only

DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
March 3	San Jose	8:00
March 9	Philadelphia	Noon
March 22	Colorado	7:00
March 28	Arizona	7:30