

# For Cubs fans, the real season is just starting

On a day that I was supposed to be celebrating the Cubs' second consecutive National League Central Championship, Lou Piniella broke my Cub-fan heart.

"To hear all this talk about, 'Well if you guys don't win the division and you don't win a World Series, it's a lost year.' That's a bunch of (expletive)," the Cubs' skipper said.

With one fell swoop, Sweet Lou destroyed all the joy I have felt in this 2008 season.

The Cubs have now won three division titles in the last six years. General Manager Jim Hendry has been allowed to spend at will to build a championship team. Heck, the addition of Piniella alone spoke volumes about where this franchise was headed. And where's that? The World Series, at long last.

Now, with the team at the cusp of accomplishing this long-awaited goal, for Piniella to try to lower the expectations of his team makes me sick to my stomach.

"Which team isn't built to win the World Series?" rationalized Piniella. "Is this the only team in baseball that is built to win the World Series? I don't think so."

Which team isn't built to win the World Series? Hmm, let's see — the Pirates, the Mariners, the Nationals, the Braves, the Padres, the Giants, the Reds, the Orioles and the Royals, to name a few.

The better question is, which team is best built to win the World Series? The Cubs are one of those teams. They are in the team photo with Boston, Los Angeles and Tampa Bay.

There are no guarantees in baseball. In the playoffs, anything can happen. The Cubs might not make it to the World Series. I understand that. They could meet a very hot team in the National League Division Series or the National League Championship Series and lose. But I don't want to hear my manager setting the table for failure on the very day the Cubs clinched the division title. I don't want to hear excuses from a manager who was brought in specifically to lead this team a World Series victory.

I know that every team wants to win the World Series. I also know that not every team has the ability to win. Certain teams have advantages that others do not. There is payroll to consider, managerial experience, players having career years and, let's face it, some teams just have better talent than others. The Cubs are one of those teams

## ONE on ONE

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



“But even if they don't win it all, I will still have positive memories of the 2008 season. I will look back at certain moments and games in this year's campaign and smile. No matter what, I will always remember the 2008 Chicago Cubs.”

with virtually every advantage.

My anger over Piniella's comments has nothing to do with the past. I know the Cubs' history. I don't care about it. I'm only concerned with the 2008 season and the 2008 Cubs. This team is the best Cubs team that I have ever seen play the game in 25 years of watching baseball. If this team fails to win the World Series, it will be the biggest disappointment that I will experience as a Cubs fan.

Why? Because this team has the best chance of any Cubs team that I have seen to win it all. That statement is based on the talent and depth of the current roster. It has nothing to do with curses or history. There is no 100-year magic that will descend upon the Cubs this year. All of that is just a coincidence.

Some people claim that Piniella said what he said to alleviate any pressure that his players were or are feeling. Others have said it was a crafty move by a veteran

manager taking the focus off of his team.

Both of those theories are ridiculous.

Taking pressure off of a veteran team? Please. Derrek Lee already has a ring with the 2003 Florida Marlins. He knows what it takes to win. He's faced the pressure before. Lee is a team leader. Alfonso Soriano has come up through the New York Yankees organization. He's familiar with October baseball. He's won two rings, in 1999 and 2000. Mark DeRosa was an Atlanta Brave for seven seasons. Jim Edmonds won his ring playing with the hated St. Louis Cardinals. All of the key players on the 2008 roster were here last year and faced the pressures of playoff baseball and the media. Granted, they crumbled and were swept by the Arizona Diamondbacks, but they have been there before. This year, they are better!

So how can this year be the most disappointing? I was watching in 1984. The Cubs had a two-game lead in a best-of-five series against the San Diego Padres, and they lost. In 1989, they were beat by a much better San Francisco Giants team. Nearly a decade later in 1998, we had a comical year led by the steroid machine that was Sammy Sosa. I'll admit it — 2003 hurt very badly, but I had very low expectations for that team, and they simply overachieved throughout that season. Last year was disappointing, but I knew they weren't a championship-caliber team. At least one win would have been nice, but oh well.

This year will hurt the most because this is the best team that the Cubs have put on the field since I've been a fan. They have a real chance of winning a world championship this year.

But even if they don't win it all, I will still have positive memories of the 2008 season. I will look back at certain moments and games in this year's campaign and smile. No matter what, I will always remember the 2008 Chicago Cubs.

My only hope is that years down the road I will be remembering this Cubs team as World Series champions. Either way, I'll remember Piniella, who, though he ably led the team in 2008, had the audacity to say on the very day the Cubs won their division, that failure to win the world championship was acceptable. Not so, Lou. At least not for this Cubs fan.

## CHICAGO SPORTS SCHEDULES\*

\*HOME GAMES ONLY

BEARS		FOOTBALL
DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Oct 19	Minnesota Vikings	Noon
Nov 2	Detroit Lions	Noon
Nov 9	Tennessee Titans	Noon
Dec 7	Jacksonville Jaguars	Noon
Dec 11	New Orleans Saints	7:15
Dec 22	Green Bay Packers	7:30

FIRE		SOCCER
DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Oct 12	Columbus Crew	7:30
Oct 23	New York Red Bulls	8:00



BLACKHAWKS		HOCKEY
DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Oct 13	Nashville Predators	7:30
Oct 15	Phoenix Coyotes	7:30
Oct 19	Vancouver Canucks	6:00
Oct 22	Edmonton Oilers	8:00
Oct 25	Detroit Red Wings	7:30
Oct 31	Dallas Stars	7:30
Nov 3	Colorado Avalanche	7:30
Nov 9	Calgary Flames	6:00
Nov 12	Boston Bruins	7:30
Nov 14	St. Louis Blues	7:30
Nov 16	San Jose Sharks	6:00

WOLVES		HOCKEY
DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Oct 18	Peoria Rivermen	7:00
Oct 21	San Antonio Rampage	7:00
Oct 26	Rockford IceHogs	3:00
Oct 29	Providence Bruins	7:00
Nov 2	Syracuse Crunch	5:00
Nov 22	Grand Rapid Griffins	7:00
Nov 25	Manitoba Moose	7:00

STEEL		HOCKEY
DATE	OPPONENT	TIME (PM)
Oct 4	Sioux City Musketeers	7:30
Oct 10	Cedar Rapids Rough	7:30
Oct 11	Green Bay Gamblers	7:30
Oct 24	Tri-City Storm	7:30
Oct 25	Tri-City Storm	7:30



Want more sports? Find events and Chicago team schedules online now at [theinsider.us](http://theinsider.us).