



# Sports

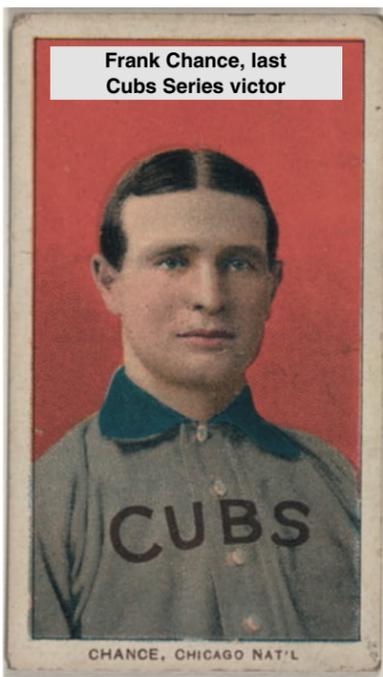
by Jerry Keys

Any baseball fan does not go long without hearing about "curses". Until four years ago, we heard of "The Curse of the Bambino". 2008 may be the end of the longest one-the Curse of the Cubs.

It was 100 years ago when the Chicago Cubs, managed by Frank Chance, won the World Series. There were numerous close calls after 1908. They appeared in the Series seven times between 1910 and 1945 ('10, '18, '29, '32, '35, '38, and '45). The '45 Series loss is famous for the "Curse of the Billy Goat".

Legend has it, a Cubs fan paid for two box seats and wished to bring along his billy goat. At first the owner, Billy Sianis, and the goat were allowed to parade around the field. The goat had a sign pinned to its blanket stating, "We got Detroit's goat". Security attempted to eject Sianis and the goat from the stadium soon afterwards. After a heated argument, they were permit-

ted to stay; until the rains came. After the rain appeared, Cubs owner Philip Wrigley had them removed due to the goat's negative odor. Sianis was furious and legend states he placed a curse on the Cubs to never again claim a pen-



nant or participate in a World Series at Wrigley Field.

To most this is simply folklore but was it a coincidence the Cubs did not reach the post-season for 39 years (1984)? The curse was not noteworthy until the Cubs epic 1969 collapse.

On August 16, Chicago

sported a 75-44 mark and a nine-game lead in the NL East. By October 1, they were nine games out of 1<sup>st</sup> with a 91-70 record (16-26 during the two dates). What is lost in everything is the New York Mets went from 62-51 to 100-61 during the same time frame; a 38-10 clip.

Was it more a streak of bad luck or just being outplayed? Had the Cubs posted a .500 record during the two dates given (21-21), they still would have been four games out (96-65). Maybe after 24 years of nothing better than a few 3<sup>rd</sup>-place finishes, Cub fans were looking for a "scapegoat".

Ironically, Sianis' nephew has been summoned on four documented occasions to break the curse. He brought a goat onto the field in 1984 and 1989 (Chicago won the pennant each of those years), as well as 1994 and 1998 (a wild-card entry for Chicago). Cub fans, in hopes of cursing the Houston Astros, traveled to Houston in 2003 and attempted to attend a game with a billy goat. They were refused entry

# A Century Of Waiting

and proclaimed a "reverse of the curse". Houston faltered down the stretch allowing Chicago to win the NL Central.

Sadly this leads us to the infamous collapse of '03. Chicago had defeated the Atlanta Braves in the opening round of the playoffs and led the NLCS three games to one over the Florida Marlins. Fans were demanding World Series tickets immediately after a victorious game four. Chicago lost game five in Florida but returned home knowing the next two games were left in

ceived after the incident to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in



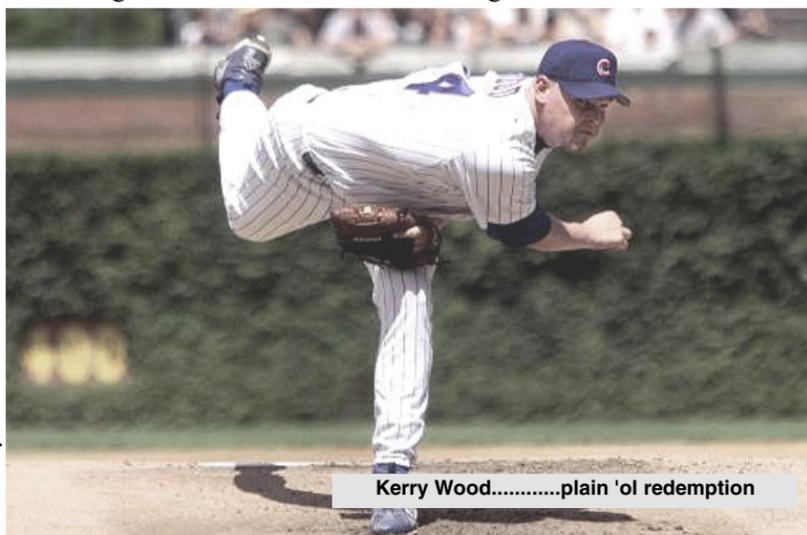
Piniella seeks 2nd World Series title

honor of Ron Santo, a star Cub player who currently battles diabetes.

If any fans in America can be forgiven for their

to make Bartman feel better. It appears Alou looks to pursue a political career after his playing days are over.

Fear not Chicago fans, 2008 will be the remedy. Lou Piniella is one of the best managers in baseball. He turned the Seattle Mariners into winners in the 1990's, began managing the New York Yankees less than two years after his retirement, led the Cincinnati Reds to a 1990 World Series triumph (while being in 1<sup>st</sup> place every day of that season), and will lead the Cubs to post-season play for consecutive years



Kerry Wood.....plain 'ol redemption

the hands of Mark Prior and Kerry Wood (18-6, 2.43 and 14-11, 3.20).

Chicago carried a 3-0 lead into the top of the 8<sup>th</sup> inning of game 6, five outs to their 1<sup>st</sup> World Series since 1945. Any sports fan knows what happened next, aka Steve Bartman. Bartman had to disconnect his phone and was unable to go to work. Florida governor Jed Bush offered him asylum in Florida and the Marlins offered him a job. Bartman refused and his instant-celebrity status annoyed him. He donated his gifts re-

appalling and putrid actions, it is the loyal Cub fans. It took Boston Red Sox fans 18 years to forgive Bill Buckner (a borderline Hall of Fame player). Cub outfielder Moises Alou did state in 2008 that "Everywhere I play, even now, people still yell, 'Bartman! Bartman!' I feel really bad for the kid," and "You know what the funny thing is? I wouldn't have caught it, anyway."

Alou denied this statement soon after and insinuated he did not remember that statement and if he did, it was just

(last done by Chance in 1906-08).

Maybe Theriot to DeRosa to Lee will become as famous as Tinkers to Evers to Chance. Could Wood find redemption for his game 7 of the 2003 NLCS melt-

down (Cubs led the deciding game 5-3 entering the 5<sup>th</sup> inning) by closing out the deciding game of the World Series? Maybe Chicago brass will honor Bartman after their World Series triumph by asking him to speak at their day of celebration after their crowning as champions.

I know somewhere Jack Brickhouse is still saying "hey-hey" and Harry Caray is still having a beer during the 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch. One hundred years of sorrow erased in a Fall Classic.

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