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Chicago White Sox

The Chicago White Sox professional baseball franchise has constantly battled for respect and attention since arriving in Chicago in 1901. Some of the lack of respect has been self-inflicted, coming from stunts such as uniforms with short pants, or a disco record demolition promotion that resulted in a forfeiture of a ballgame, one of the few in baseball history. The other source of disrespect comes from being in the same market with the Chicago Cubs, which has developed an elite and special image in the minds of many despite having the longest championship drought in professional sports history. The past 20 years have featured an uptick in the franchise's reputation, with the opening of a new ballpark (called U.S. Cellular Field since 2003) that seats 40,000 plus, and a World Series championship in 2005.

The franchise began in 1901 when Charles Comiskey moved his team, the St. Paul Saints, to Chicago to compete in a larger market. Comiskey soon built a ballpark on the south side of town, named it after himself, and won two championships, the last under his ownership in 1917. After that, the franchise has been volatile, reaching the depths during the Black Sox scandal of 1919, when eight players were accused of conspiring with gamblers to affect game scores to win bets. Although the players were found not guilty in court, they received lifetime bans from baseball.

Showmanship and Winning

The highlights of the franchise include the Bill Veeck years, with the controversial and promotion-happy owner introducing uniforms with short pants, an exploding scoreboard when the Sox hit home runs, a shower in the outfield stands to cool patrons during hot summer games, and other unusual promotions. The man who once found a 3'7" pinch hitter to bat against the St. Louis Browns, to draw attention away from the rival local team the Cardinals, brought bizarre events to the field in Chicago, convincing White Sox Hall of Famer Minnie Minoso to return for a brief stint in 1980 just to achieve the unusual record of a player competing in five different decades, four with the Sox.

Attempts to change the image of Sox game attendees as rowdy drunks using foul language to



When the White Sox won the World Series against the Houston Astros in 2005, it was their first championship since 1917.

more family-oriented has had some hiccups along the way. Disco Demolition Night was one of the ugliest nights in White Sox baseball history. A local radio station promoting the anti-disco music movement held an event in between games of a double header that included blowing up all the disco records fans brought to the game that night. The huge fireball that accompanied the explosion damaged so much center field grass that the field was unplayable and the Sox had to forfeit the second game.

Change occurred in 1981, when Jerry Reinsdorf, a success in real estate, led an ownership group to buy the team. Reinsdorf soon recognized the need to build a new stadium to replace aging Comiskey Park and threatened to move the team to Florida unless a new ballpark was built. After a lot of political wrangling and a last-minute deal, the state of Illinois built the ballpark. It opened in 1991, the first sports facility to be built in Chicago since 1929. In 2003, a 23-year, \$68 million naming rights deal

was struck with a midwest cellular phone company. Two years later, U.S. Cellular Field was the site for the World Series against the Houston Astros. The White Sox championship in 2005, the first for the franchise since 1917, came with the added satisfaction that their bitter crosstown rival, the Cubs, now stand alone with a streak without championships that has surpassed 100 years.

Current promotions include an Elvis look-alike night, mullet night, and ethnic nights for Asian, Greek, Hispanic, and Polish populations that are significant in Chicago. In 2006, the White Sox changed the starting time of night games to 7:11 P.M. to lure a sponsorship from convenience store chain 7-Eleven. An innovative, interactive Website allows potential sponsors to see how their sponsorship signage would look in different areas of the ballpark. Camelback Ranch, opened in 2009 in Glendale, Arizona, is a state-of-the-art spring training facility that is a joint venture with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

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See Also: Franchise; Major League Baseball; Promotion; Sponsorship.

Further Readings

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Chivas USA

Club Deportivo Chivas USA, or Chivas USA as they are more commonly referred to, is an expansion

franchise in Major League Soccer (MLS) that joined the league in 2004. Chivas USA is based in the Los Angeles area, and shares the Home Depot Center, the home stadium for the Los Angeles Galaxy, a rival MLS franchise. What makes Chivas USA unique among MLS clubs is its connections with Club Deportivo of Guadalajara of the Primera División de México, the highest-level professional soccer league in Mexico. Both C. D. Guadalajara, which is known as Chivas, and Chivas USA are owned and operated by Omnilife, an organization that also is in control of Deportivo Saprissa, a club in top-flight soccer in Costa Rica. Omnilife's president, Jorge Vergara, a successful businessman and movie producer, is the main driving force behind the expansion of Omnilife and the Chivas brand, leading to the creation of Chivas USA.

In 2002, Vergara managed to get ownership of C. D. Guadalajara, which at the time, while being one of the most popular clubs in Mexican soccer, was in severe financial trouble. Vergara bought the club because of his belief of being able to turn around the club's finances, as well as expand the Chivas brand into new markets. It was thus, while attending the 2003 MLS All-Star Game at the Home Depot Center, that Vergara announced that he would expand Chivas into the MLS through an expansion franchise.

The public reaction to this announcement was quite varied, with fans from both Mexico and the United States worried about the quality of club teams in both countries, as well as the issue of whether the two Chivas clubs would be moving players back and forth, with one serving as a farm system for the other. Furthermore, Vergara famously alienated a large number of fans when negotiating a television contract for C. D. Guadalajara in Mexico. Wanting a large contract, he refused to allow Chivas matches to be broadcast on television for two weeks, until the networks capitulated and signed a \$200 million deal with the club.

It was for these and other reasons that fans, officials, and the media were somewhat wary of Vergara and the Chivas brand coming to the United States. While Vergara has continually been criticized as an owner by fans and the media, his ownership of the Chivas brand has led to the success of Chivas USA in the MLS.