

# Left-hander Chris Sale's confidence is soaring

After pitching through last season's adversity, White Sox ace convinced only better things are to come for him and team

White Sox pitcher Chris Sale on his first spring training outing.

**By Colleen Kane, Tribune reporter**

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GLENDALE, Ariz. — One of the lessons White Sox pitcher Chris Sale carries with him into 2014 is knowing how to stay competitive even when his team is in shambles.

The left-hander pitched several solid outings last season that were spoiled when the Sox failed in other facets of the game.

Sale hopes a retooled Sox squad set off on the road to changing that Friday in the Cactus League opener against the Dodgers at Camelback Ranch, but he also doesn't mind knowing the adversity of 2013 has fortified his resolve.

"I learned to grind last year," Sale said. "... Our psychologist, **(Jeff) Fishbein**, talks about being in the moment of every pitch, seeing how many pitches you can throw with everything you have, not only physically but mentally, being locked in, being engaged and trusting what you have. I felt like that got me over the hump last year."

In his fifth season with the Sox, Sale has inserted himself into the conversation with some of the better pitchers in the game. One year after posting 17 victories in 2012, he went 11-14 with a 3.07 ERA and 226 strikeouts in 214 1/3 innings.

"Over the last couple of years he has been able to put himself right up there," Sox manager Robin Ventura said. "If we can

score some runs for him that'll help his cause even more, but he has put himself in the position to always being talked about in that vein."

Ventura said Sale looked great in the Sox's Cactus League opener Friday in throwing 42 pitches, 26 for strikes, in 22/3 innings. He allowed one hit and struck out four. He said he located his fastball well and threw a couple of good changeups after a few bad ones slipped from his hands.

"I wasn't quite as jittery as normal," Sale said. "I just tried to stay as calm as I could and not overthrow, not try to make anything too nasty."

Sale did a lighter offseason workload coming into spring training, and he said he likes the way he feels.

"So far it's working out well," Sale said. "My arm is staying loose. I'm not hitting any dead arm periods right now. Just have to play it by ear and keep doing the same stuff."

The Sox are hoping for more of the same stuff from the pitcher who signed a \$32.5-million contract through 2017, with club options through 2019 potentially worth \$26 million more. At 24, Sale is in the same age range as many of the new players the Sox have brought in to boost their chances, and he likes being a part of that group.

"Hopefully we stick together for a while too," Sale said. "They seem like great guys, hard workers obviously, and talented ballplayers. Hopefully we can ride this thing out for a few years and do some special things."

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