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Astros notes: Robertson sets mark

Redding returns after birth of son

By Alyson Footer / MLB.com

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DENVER -- Jeriome Robertson set a club rookie record with his 15th win Tuesday against the Rockies and is on a favorable pace to finish the year with the most wins of any Astros pitcher. The left-hander will make two more starts this year while Wade Miller, who has 13 wins, has three more starts scheduled, including the final game of the regular season against the Brewers.



Jeriome Robertson pitches Tuesday en route to his 15th victory of the season. (David Zalubowski/AP)

Should Robertson end the season as the Astros' winningest pitcher, he would be the seventh different pitcher to lead the team in wins in seven seasons. The leaders, year by year: Darryl Kile (19-7 in 1997), Shane Reynolds (19-8 in 1998), Mike Hampton (22-4 in 1999), Scott Elarton (17-7 in 2000), Miller (15-4 in 2001) and Roy Oswalt (19-9 in 2001).

Reaching the 15-win mark is an accomplishment for any pitcher, but for Robertson it was even moreso considering he began the year 1-3 with an 8.36 ERA over six starts and earned his lone demotion to Triple-A.

With a 4.85 ERA, Robertson is not the Astros most consistent starter. In fact, he received the most run support of anyone in the rotation. But what he has is patience, maturity and confidence, qualities that came into play during the more trying times of his rookie campaign.

"Nothing rattles him on the mound," said Oswalt, who possesses the same qualities. "He seems to do well under pressure. That's something you learn in the minor leagues. He probably has five or six hundred innings in the minor leagues, so he learned that.

"For someone who gets rushed up (to the Majors) real quick, you have to learn that up there and that's hard to do. It's something you should learn on the way up." Robertson resembles a veteran player not only on the mound but also during his post-game talks with the media after he pitches. He's never been one to talk too much about himself, focusing more on the team aspect. He contended that he did not give much thought to setting a club record during a crucial time during which his team is fighting to win the National League Central division title.

He admitted he probably would have thought more about the record if the club was out of contention.

"There wouldn't be much more to think about this late in the season," he said. "If you're down and you know you're out of it, it might be something for the team to look at. You're looking for something. Maybe guys would lose focus a little bit, maybe some guys look toward next year. But right now, we're thinking about winning the division."

Redding return: Plenty has transpired since Tim Redding threw his final pitch against the Cardinals Sunday at Minute Maid Park.

First, he held the Cardinals to one run over six innings. After manager Jimmy Williams handed the ball over to the Astros' trusty bullpen, the right-hander hitched a ride with a friend to Houston Intercontinental Airport, where he caught a flight to his hometown of Rochester, NY, in time to join his wife Jaime, scheduled to give birth to the couple's second child the next day.

Redding listened to the remainder of Sunday's game on the radio on his way to the airport and was relieved to hear the Astros won the game, 4-1.

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"I got to the airport an hour and 15 minutes before the plane left," he said. "The security people were like, 'Didn't you just pitch?' I told them, 'Yes, but we're having a baby tomorrow and I have to get home.' They said, 'Congratulations, good game.'"

Less than 24 hours later, at 1:16 p.m. Monday, son Brennen Robert was born, weighing eight pounds, 20 1/2 ounces. Redding spent an extra day with his family and flew to Denver on Wednesday, arriving to the clubhouse around 4:30 p.m. local time.

Fans weigh in: The Astros finished second among 30 teams in terms of fan loyalty, according to a recent poll.

Brand Keys, Inc. recently released the 2003 Brand Keys Sports Loyalty Index, which rated every major pro sports team in four categories: pure entertainment value, authenticity, fan bonding and history and tradition. The index is based on responses from 105 fans between the ages of 21 and 59 in each market who are fans of the team in that market.

The top five baseball teams in the 2003 Brand Keys Sports Loyalty Index were the New York Yankees, the Astros, the San Francisco Giants, the Boston Red Sox, and the Philadelphia Phillies.

The Astros have finished in the top five among MLB teams every year since the poll was first conducted in 1999. The only other MLB team to make the top five in the index the past five seasons was the Yankees. In fact, the Astros are one of only eight franchises of the current 121 franchises in Major League Baseball, the NFL, the NBA, and the NHL to finish in the top five in their respective sport over the past five seasons.

And the rest: Cardinals right-hander Matt Morris will pitch on his sixth day when he starts the series opener with the Astros on Friday. The pitching matchup for the weekend series in St. Louis is as follows: Friday -- Morris vs. Roy Oswalt; Saturday -- Brett Tomko vs. Tim Lincecum; Sunday -- Sterling Hitchcock vs. Robertson. ... Several non-starting position players arrived early to Coors Field on Wednesday in order to take extra batting practice. The group included Raul Chavez, Eric Bruntlett, Colin Porter, Jason Lane and Mitch Meluskey. Oswalt showed up to take some extra swings, too. ... Representatives from the accounting firm KPMG were in town to conduct balloting for the Players Choice Awards, scheduled for late October. The players voted for the most outstanding player, pitcher and rookie in the league, plus the "Marvin Miller Man of the Year" award.

Alyson Footer is a reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to approval by Major League Baseball or its clubs.

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