

After Further Review: Better game, better result

Jun 7, 2003

It was supposed to be a coronation. It was supposed to be a national TV showcase for Roger Clemens to win his 300th game, he was supposed to strike out nine Cubs and get his 4,000th and it was the second to last best chance to flog the Sammy Sosa story to death.

Instead, we got a riveting game, and one of the starting pitchers grabbed it by the throat. Only, it was the wrong one.

- Joe Buck and Tim McCarver did the announcing, and unlike most Cubs fans, I am starting to kind of like Joe Buck. In fact, given him or Chip Caray, I'd take Joe every day of the week. Tim McCarver? Not so much. Case in point, this exchange as Clemens was warming up before the first inning. Buck: "Clemens is 6-3, and 6-0 on the road. He's winless in Yankee Stadium." McCarver: "Yeah, he's 0-3 at home." Gee, thanks for doing that necessary math for us, Tim.
- In the first inning, I wrote this note, "Kerry is throwing some serious shit."
- In the fifth inning, we had the pop-up and the collision between Kerry Wood and Hee Seop Choi. At the time we had 440 pounds of Cubs farm system production lying motionless on the ground. Wood got up, Choi didn't. It was just plain scary to see him, obviously unconscious on the field. Replays showed how hard his head the dirt on the third base line and it was scary. And an ambulance drove onto the field at Wrigley? Has that ever happened? They didn't even do that when YA Tittle's nose fell off in the 1963 NFL Championship Game.
- McCarver then referred to him as "Hee Kop Choi" about three times. Who had the concussion, Big Choi or Tim?
- Three things about this I'll never forget. First, Choi moving his arms and legs, which certainly made you

124 Dusty giving Hee Seop the ball was pretty cool. Unfortunately, it was also basically the end of Hee Seop's Cubs' career.

125 To clarify, K-K-K meant he struck out three batters, not that he joined the Ku Klux Klan. He struck out Posada to end the fourth, then Ventura and Mondesi to start the fifth.

126 Laz Diaz has always been terrible.

feel better. Second, as he was put on the stretcher the crowd chanted his name over and over again. If that didn't give you goosebumps, well, you're a dope. Third, Dusty Baker making sure the ball that Choi caught was given to him in the ambulance. I mean, that moment was a lot cooler than when he gave the ball to Russ Ortiz to keep in game six of last year's World Series.¹²⁴

- Remember on Mother's Day when Eli Marrero blew out his ankle trying to avoid running into the oblivious Jim Edmonds, and the Cubs took him off on that weird little stretcher? Did you see a clubhouse guy bring the stretcher out and get sent back to the dugout with it. You could almost see the trainer go, "No, not THAT stretcher, the good one. We only use that one for the Cardinals!"
- Did you see the jackass standing by the double doors as they were trying to get the ambulance back out onto Sheffield? He was standing there, on his cellphone waving at the camera. I think the ambulance driver should have run him down.
- He went from Hee Seop Choi to He's Not Conscious.
- I am so impressed with how Kerry Wood reacted to the collision. Here's a guy, throwing a no-hitter and he's in the middle of a frightening accident on the field. There's nearly a 20-minute delay and what does Kerry do to the next three hitters? K – K – K.¹²⁵
- The fourth was Hideki Matsui. First of all, if Hideki's 28 years old, I'm 12. Second, Matsui struck out TWICE in that at bat. The 1-2 pitch he clearly didn't check his swing. The reason the Cubs got so mad is that they knew that the third base umpire, Laz Diaz¹²⁶ missed the play. I don't mean he blew the call, he missed the play. He didn't see the swing, so he had to say it wasn't one. Nice. Way to go. Then the 2-2 pitch was a curve-ball that the home plate umpire missed. Then, Matsui on this third life homered. Shutout gone. No-hitter gone. Sigh.
- McCarver said that of all the players on Major League rosters, in his opinion, Lenny Harris would make the best manager. Hey, maybe we can trade him to the White Sox then.
- Finally, McCarver and Buck got to the Sosa "contro-

versy.” They were fair, though they showed no sympathy for Pedro Martinez, Gary Sheffield and Manny Ramirez’s contention that much of the attention is racist in nature. I don’t know if it’s racist, but I know there are a lot of media (Rick Reilly number one, Skip Bayless number two and on and on) who don’t like Sammy, and are glad they have a reason to pile on him.

- Kevin Kennedy’s injury update on Choi was, “He was conscious and moving when they put him in the ambulance. That’s good... I think.” You think?
- Fox’s in game poll was “Which cap should Roger Clemens have on his Hall of Fame plaque?” Buck seemed surprised that the voting was 55% Yankee, 45% Red Sox. I was surprised it was that close. Can’t imagine a lot of Red Sox fans felt the need to watch today’s game.
- The Cubs completely botched the sixth inning. Damian Miller doubled. Wood’s bunt was too hard and Miller was nailed at third. Clemens did a dance like he just won the lottery. God, I hate him. Grudzielanek reached on a fielder’s choice, stole second, went to third on a bad throw by catcher Jorge Posada and Alex lined out to Ventura (on a great play) to end the inning.
- Buck and McCarver had some good stuff on George Steinbrenner’s temper tantrums that caused the Derek Jeter \$190 million contract press conference happen on a bad-news cycle Saturday, caused the general manager to call Joe Torre and tell him that Jeter was his new captain, and saddled Joe with a third DH, Ruben Sierra, who he doesn’t want.
- McCarver misspoke and said, “Clemens throws the hardest spitter in baseball.” Oops, maybe he didn’t misspeak.
- I really enjoyed Kevin Kennedy’s interview with Clemens’ wife and son. Kennedy asked little Kody (all of Roger’s kids names start with K, which is awkward for little Karcus) what he thought of his dad going for 300 and he said, “Go Yankees!” Then Kevin asked him what his favorite subject was in school and he also said, “Go Yankees!”¹²⁷ There are dogs who know more words.
- After Sammy had a great seventh inning at bat against Clemens and singled, Alou walked and Joe Torre

127 I can tell you that putting this book together 22 years later, Kody Clemens is playing for the Twins, and I’m still yelling “Go Yankees!” whenever his name is mentioned.

128 Fox kept showing a trunk Roger had in the dugout. After every half inning he pitched he was changing jerseys. His plan was to autograph and sell all of them after he won his 300th game. What a prick.

129 Before the renovations to Wrigley this was a thing that happened a lot. The dugouts were built for 1914 sized players.

130 Ball three on Laz Diaz.

hopped out of the dugout. I actually wrote this down, “Torre’s going to take Clemens out. Eric Karros should walk over to Torre and give him a hug.” I’m nothing if not prescient.

- Buck was incredulous as to why Torre would take Clemens out. McCarver and Kennedy both opined that there’s “no way Clemens would have said he wanted out.” Yeah, he’d never do that. Would he? No. Never. No way. (Oops, forgot the sixth game of the 1986 World Series.)
- Karros’ eyes were bigger than Juan Acevedo as Juan threw him a cookie on the first pitch. Karros ate the cookie and the Cubs had a 3-1 lead. Clemens went nutty in the dugout, yelling at the home plate umpire. Classy. Roger just reeks of class. Time to lock that precious jersey up for four more days, you jackass¹²⁸. Roger’s next start comes in Yankee Stadium against the hated Cardinals. It’s like trying to pick a side to root for in a fight between Satan and Joe Morgan.
- How many times do you see this happen in baseball though? The big Korean kid knocks himself senseless, and his replacement hits the game.
- Wood got in trouble in the eighth and loaded the bases with two outs and Jason Giambi at the plate. Mike Remlinger came in and threw SIX perfect pitches. I mean he hit his exact spot with every one of them. The last one was a changeup that struck Giambi out. Wrigley went nuts. Wood got fired up in the dugout, slammed down his Gatorade bottle, high fived everybody and then jumped up and cracked his head on the dugout ceiling¹²⁹.
- Great stuff, the way Buck just let the crowd noise tell the story on Giambi’s strike out. No words were needed.
- In the bottom of the eighth, the crowd started their first good “Yankees suck” chant. Very nice.
- With a 5-1 lead, Dusty went to Regular Joe to nail it down. Things didn’t go smoothly to say the least.
- Jorge Posada hit a foul ball back that missed Miller and hit the home plate umpire right in the mommy and daddy basket.¹³⁰
- Posada then homered to make it 5-2. No big deal.

- Things got so dicey in the ninth that not only did the Yankees have the tying run at the plate with one out, but El Pulpo got up in the bullpen. Thankfully, Regular Joe subdued both Jungle Juan Rivera and Todd Zeile and party time erupted on Chicago's north side.
- Tim McCarver summed this up, as only he can. "The bad thing is that not only did Clemens lose the game. But he didn't win it."

I have nothing to add to that.

Tomorrow, prime time the Cubs go for the Meat Loaf. Two out of three ain't bad.