

LIVING ROOM TIMES

BINDER UPDATE

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1998

SEVENTY

All-Time Single Season Home Run Leaders

1. Mark McGwire, 1998 — 70
2. *Sammy Sosa, 1998 — 66
3. Roger Maris, 1961 — 61
4. Babe Ruth, 1927 — 60
5. Babe Ruth, 1921 — 59

1998 Major League Home Run Leaders

1. Mark McGwire, Cardinals — 70
2. *Sammy Sosa, Cubs — 66
3. Ken Griffey Jr., Mariners — 56
4. Albert Belle, White Sox — 49
Greg Vaughn, Padres — 49

*Sosa has one game remaining, a special regular-season playoff game tomorrow to determine the NL wild card winner

Elsewhere in baseball Sunday...

- Blue Jays rookie Roy Halladay loses no-hitter with 2 outs in ninth inning
- Twins veteran Paul Molitor gets 3,319th hit, possibly his last
- Yankees' Bernie Williams beats out Red Sox' Mo Vaughn for AL batting title in tight contest on final day
- Sosa (158) edges out Rangers' Juan Gonzalez (157) for ML RBI lead
- Cubs lose to Houston in bottom of 11th inning; moments later, Giants lose to Rockies in bottom of 9th, forcing one-game playoff tomorrow to determine wild card winner

"Sixty, count 'em, sixty! Let's see some other son of a bitch match that!" —Babe Ruth, 1927

"I mean, it's unheard of for somebody to hit seventy home runs, so I'm like in awe of myself right now." —Mark McGwire, 1998

McGwire raises home run record to a new plateau

ST LOUIS (Reuters) - In the only possible fitting ending to a magnificent, magical season, St Louis Cardinals slugger Mark McGwire belted two more homers in his final game Sunday to reach a previously unfathomable 70 home runs.

"I think the magnitude of this will probably not sink in or be understood for a while," McGwire said after the game.

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Above: Mark McGwire watches as his 70th home run of the season leaves the ballpark.

Wild end to historic season

Associated Press—Pitch by pitch, batter by batter, baseball history was changing Sunday.

Mark McGwire hit No. 69, then homered again to set a number that might stand for another generation — 70.

The Cubs lost at the Astrodome, then got a second chance a minute later

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McGwire's final total: 70

Ends season with 4 home runs in last 2 games

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"I mean, it's unheard of for somebody to hit 70 home runs, so I'm like in awe of myself right now."

McGwire finished with a dazzling flourish in front of his home fans at Busch Stadium, drilling a three-run shot off Montreal's Carl Pavano into the seats in left field in his final at-bat of the season to lift the Cardinals to a 6-3 victory over the Expos.

"This is a season that I will never, ever forget and I hope everybody in baseball never forgets," McGwire said in a postgame ceremony on the field honoring him.

McGwire went 3-for-3 with a walk Sunday, smashing home run number 69 in the third inning and 70 in the seventh.

That made five home runs over the final three games for "Big Mac" as he pulled away from Chicago Cubs star Sammy Sosa to virtually assure that it would be his name that goes into the record books with the single-season home run mark.

The record will not become official, however, until Sosa's season is over.

Sosa, who did not hit one out of the park in Chicago's 4-3, 11-inning loss to the Astros in Houston, remained at 66 home runs. But moments after the Cubs lost, the San Francisco Giants fell 9-8 to Colorado, leaving Chicago and the Giants tied for the National League wild card berth, forcing a playoff.

Any home runs Sosa hits in Monday night's one-game playoff against San Francisco will count towards his regular season statistics.

"If Sammy and I were to be tied at 70, I'd still be proud," said McGwire. "It's been one helluva ride."

McGwire had spared himself the gut-wrenching pressure of trying to break the record on the final day that Roger Maris endured in 1961 by eclipsing Maris's 37-year-old mark with nearly three weeks left in the season.

McGwire became the first player in baseball history to surpass Maris's record of 61 home runs by smacking his 62nd at Busch Stadium Sept. 8 against the Cubs.

But the relentless pursuit by Sosa kept the mesmerizing race for the most revered American sports record



Above: Mighty "Mac" McGwire launches #70.

alive and the drama at fever pitch through the final weekend of the season.

Sosa had caught McGwire at 65 with a pair of home runs Wednesday and grabbed the lead outright for only the second time by smacking his 66th homer Friday night. But Sosa's edge lasted only about 45 minutes as McGwire responded with his 66th and added two more in each of his final two games.

On the two occasions that Sosa managed to pull in front, McGwire took less than an hour to erase "Slammin' Sammy's" lead.

"We're two guys that really enjoy playing the game of

baseball," an emotional McGwire said.

"He's having a magical year. It's been exciting, it's been nerve-racking, but I'm proud that I've been doing what I'm doing with Sammy Sosa," added McGwire, who formed a mutual admiration society with the Cubs star that inspired the nation throughout the thrilling race for the record.

With all the fans at Busch Stadium on their feet for each McGwire at-bat Sunday, their hero delivered his historic 70th home run in the seventh inning, lining a rocket 370 feet down the left-field line to set off a raucous celebration that required two curtain calls by McGwire.

Two at-bats earlier in the third inning, McGwire had lofted a towering, 377-foot homer into the left field seats off Mike Thurman for his 69th home run.

Right: Mark McGwire is high-fived by the Montreal Expos' third baseman during his 70th home-run trot of the season.



Historic regular season ends in a frenzy

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when the Giants lost at Colorado. It'll be Chicago vs. San Francisco at Wrigley Field on Monday in a one-game playoff for the NL wild-card spot.

Bernie Williams won the AL batting title over Mo Vaughn, barely. A rookie came within one out of a no-hitter. The New York Yankees finished with an AL record 114 victories.

What a day!

And there was even more on the final day of the regular season.

Paul Molitor got his 3,319th -- and perhaps last -- hit in the big leagues. The Cincinnati Reds assembled the majors' first all-brother infield -- a pair of Larkins, a pair of Boones. Ruben Amaro Jr. got the winning hit in his final major league game, then left to become Philadelphia's assistant general manager.

Rookie Roy Halladay started the rush, nearly pitching a no-hitter in just his second major league game. The 21-year-old Toronto righty lost his bid when Detroit pinch-hitter Bobby Higginson homered with two outs in the ninth inning at SkyDome.

Dave Stieb, the only Toronto pitcher to throw a no-hitter, caught Higginson's ball after it bounced off a wall in the Blue Jays bullpen.

"Stieb told me congratulations," Halladay said. "To have him acknowledge something like that it made me feel good, and hopefully somewhere down the road I'll get a chance to do it again."

Then it was McGwire's turn to make more history. The slugger who hit a grand slam on opening day ended his season with a smash -- two of them, that is.

McGwire connected twice in the St. Louis Cardinals' game against Montreal, a startling finish to a race in which he and Sammy Sosa spent the year chasing Roger Maris' 37-year-old record of 61.

"I've never even thought about it, dreamed about it," he said. "It's absolutely amazing! It blows me away!"

Baseball actually spilled over into football when,

across town, the announcement of McGwire's home run cost the St. Louis Rams a 5-yard penalty. A huge cheer erupted at the Trans World Dome and seemed to disrupt the Rams' play calling, leading to an illegal motion penalty.

"Did the Rams win?" McGwire asked. Told they lost 20-17 to Arizona, he said, "Oh, I hope I didn't cause a loss."

The Cubs, Giants and the New York Mets all lost chances Sunday. While the Mets fell out of contention, Chicago and San Francisco will meet in the NL's first one-game playoff since Houston beat Los Angeles in 1980.

Chicago was beaten 4-3 in 11 innings at Houston. But as some of the Cubs were walking off the field, they heard the result from Colorado -- Rockies 9, Giants 8, on a home run by Neifi Perez.

"I'm halfway up the stairs coming to the clubhouse, and people were in here celebrating," Cubs closer Rod Beck said. "I knew it wasn't because we did good. People were jumping up and down shouting, 'There's a tomorrow! There's a tomorrow!'"

Also:

-- Williams, who began the day leading the AL batting race by less than a point, went 2-for-2 with a sacrifice fly to finish at .339. Vaughn went 2-for-4 and hit .337.

-- The Yankees won their seventh straight game for their 114th victory. Only the 1906 Cubs (116) won more.

-- The Florida Marlins finished at 54-108, the worst record in the majors in 19 years and the worst ever for a defending World Series champion.

-- Molitor singled in the eighth inning in Minnesota's 6-2 win over Cleveland at the Metrodome. The 42-year-old Twins star is leaning toward retirement.

"It was tough to try to stay composed," Molitor said. "I was a little emotional, and I was trying to dig deep for some self-control."