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Colorful Cardinals ace Andujar dies



Home plate umpire Lee Weyer restrains Cardinals pitcher Joaquin Andujar from going after Milwaukee second baseman Jim Gantner in Game 7 of the 1982 World Series. Gantner grounded out to the pitcher and then called Andujar a 'hot dog' on his way back to the dugout. Looking on are Ozzie Smith and coach Hal Lanier (far left). Photo by J.B. Forbes / Post-Dispatch

September 08, 2015 5:30 pm • By Derrick Goold 51

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Joaquin Andujar - a look back

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He was 62, and died from complications of diabetes.

Andujar was a star for the Cardinals' 1982 World Series team, and two years later he went 20-14, leading the National League in wins, shutouts (four), and innings pitched (261 1/3). He finished fourth in the Cy Young Award voting that season, one of three times that he finished the top seven for pitching's highest honor.

In five years with the Cardinals, Andujar — who was fond of promoting himself as "One Tough Dominican" — went 68-53 with a 3.33 ERA. He was eclectic and whimsical, and often entertaining, throughout his time in St. Louis. Post-Dispatch sportswriter Dan O'Neill noted that Andujar "was known for philosophically summarizing things with one fundamental, if slightly compressed, expression: 'Youneverknow.' "

Video: Rick Hummel on some of Andujar's antics

During a press conference in Los Angeles before the start of the 1985 National League championship series, Andujar would adjust his cap between questions. Forward for one answer. Back for another. He was asked by a reporter if he felt the pressure of carrying the Cardinals in the series.

"I was reading (Post-Dispatch baseball writer) Mr. Rick Hummel in the paper before I leave St. Louis, and I read that the key is Joaquin Andujar," the pitcher said. "The playoffs haven't even started yet, and they're blaming me. If we lose, they blame me. ... They may blame me if we lose, but I'm only pitching Game 2, not 1, 3, and 4. I tell you guys. I wish I could have another season like this. Only one or two pitchers reach the 20-win mark."

Andujar actually was one of two 21-game winners on the '85 team. Lefty John Tudor also won 21 for the '85 team.

Andujar also fancied himself a power hitter, a notion that may have been hatched when he hit a "called shot" grand slam in 1984. But his wild swing betrayed him in '85, when he struck out a whopping 50 times in 94 at-bats.

After the '85 season, the Cardinals traded 33-year-old Andujar to Oakland for catcher Mike Heath and pitcher Tim Conroy. Andujar pitched poorly down the stretch in '85, winning only one game after Aug. 23. In his final appearance for the Cardinals, he was ejected from Game 7 of the '85 World Series after a tirade on the field that earned him a suspension to be served at the start of the '86 season.

In 2007, Andujar returned to St. Louis to help the team celebrate its World Series championship from the previous fall. Hummel described him as "smaller than we remembered him."

Andujar confessed he was worried that fans would remember him at all. He described then how he watched the Cardinals on television in the Dominican and how he kept up with the team and knew its players, particularly its pitchers.

"I'm a Cardinal all the way," he told Hummel.



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Asked then if Chris Carpenter, the staff ace at the time, was better than he was, Andujar gave an appropriately Andujar response.

"He is pitching and I am not pitching," the retired righthander said.

Cardinals chairman Bill DeWitt Jr. said in a statement today: "We are deeply saddened by the loss of one of the best pitchers in Cardinals history. Joaquin Andujar was 'One Tough Dominican' who endeared himself to Cardinals fans not only for his great talent, but his unrivaled passion for the game. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, his friends and his teammates today."

• GORDO: Fiery Andujar earned place in Cards lore

Born in San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic, Andujar debuted on April 8, 1976, at age 23, with Houston. He had originally signed with the Reds before being traded to the Astros for players to be named later. He spent his first 5 1/2 seasons with the Astros before the Cardinals landed him on June 7, 1981, in exchange for Tony Scott. Already a two-time All-Star when the Cardinals acquired him, Andujar would appear in two more All-Star Games as a Cardinal, and he would help the team to two National League pennants.

In the 1982 World Series, Andujar went 2-0 with a 1.35 ERA in two starts against the Milwaukee Brewers. That series is

remembered now with Bruce Sutter's final, title-clinching pitch in Game 7, but it was Andujar who started that game and pitched until Sutter appeared for the two-inning save. Andujar allowed seven hits over his seven innings against the Brewers.

He retired after the 1988 season, which he spent with the Astros, at age 35. In his 13-year career, he was 127-118 with a 3.58 ERA.

He spent most of his retirement in the Dominican.

"Joaquin struggled for years with diabetes and in recent days had deteriorated," Mario Soto, an official with the Cincinnati Reds, told ESPNDesportes. Hospitalization "could not help with the disease that consumed him completely."

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