

LIVING ROOM TIMES

BINDER UPDATE

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61 gone, 1 to go

McGwire ties Maris's home run record, owns a share of history



St. Louis celebrates historic home run

ST. LOUIS (Associated Press)— Mark McGwire's 61st home run sent St. Louis into a cheering, horn-honking frenzy.

As McGwire rounded the bases after tying Roger Maris' record in the first inning, Busch Stadium gave him an ovation that lasted well into the at-bat of teammate Ray Langkford.

McGwire gave high-fives to Chicago first baseman Mark Grace and third baseman

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ST. LOUIS (espn.com)— Move over, Babe. Make room, Roger. Mark McGwire has crushed his way into history.

McGwire joined Maris as co-holders of baseball's most cherished record Monday afternoon, slamming a 1-1 fastball from Chicago's Mike Morgan 430 feet into left field for his 61st home run.

The historic blow came at 1:22 p.m. ET in the Cardinals' 3-2 win over

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Fan who caught homer #61 will return it...

ST. LOUIS (Associated Press)— Mike Davidson won the scramble for Mark McGwire's historic 61st home run, but it wasn't easy.

Davidson watched McGwire's first-inning, 430-foot blast soar over his head, slam against the glass-enclosed Stadium Club, and careen into the lower left-field seats. The homer tied Roger Maris' 37-year-old single season record.

And the ball will soon belong to McGwire. Davidson said he plans to give the ball to McGwire, passing up a chance to cash in for \$100,000 or more from collectors. All he wants is to meet McGwire and get an autographed jersey.

"It will mean more to him and baseball than it will to me," said the 28-year-old catering manager.

Davidson was seated in section 281, row 1, seat 1, when McGwire sent the 1-1 pitch soaring down the left field line.

"It came down, bounced off about five people's hands," Davidson said. "Rolled underneath my seat. I picked it up."

Well, it wasn't quite that easy.

Fans looked like NFL players diving for a fumble as the ball bounced their way. As the pileup cleared, Davidson, appropriately attired in a red "McGwire 25" jersey, emerged with the ball. He stopped at a store and paid \$57

for the jersey prior to the game.

"I didn't have anything red to wear," he said.

Davidson got the ticket from his brother-in-law, who had to work.

Davidson, a catering manager and lifelong St. Louisan, said he sometimes works 80 hours per week. He and his wife, Lisa, are expecting their first child. Yet he said he never considered selling the ball, noting that a distant relative who won a lottery was constantly harassed thereafter.

"I figure it would be more aggravation with people coming out of the woodwork," he said.

Nick Hinkley of Indianapolis was among those who just missed out on the ball.

"I had my hands on it, then everybody jumped on top of me," Hinkley said. "The guy who got it threw me off it."

Rich Reichert, 32, of St. Louis, was also part of the mad scramble, and had a bloody finger to show for it.

"I held out my hands and actually had it," he said. "After it was out of my hands everything was a bit of a blur. The next thing I knew I was face down on the ground."

"I was just happy to have touched No. 61."

...But even if it's returned, IRS may tax #62

WASHINGTON (Associated Press)— If some fan snags the historic 62nd home run ball, the Internal Revenue Service will be taking note.

With Mark McGwire on the verge of breaking Roger Maris' home run record, fans have been scrambling to get their hands on a piece of history.

They may want to think twice before giving the ball back to the slugger.

According to the IRS, if a fan returns the ball to McGwire, the fan may be asked to pay a federal gift tax if the historic ball is determined to be valued at more than \$625,000 -- even if the fan doesn't get any money for it.

"The giver is responsible for paying any applicable tax on any large gift," IRS spokesman Steven Pyrek said Monday.

A baseball is owned by major league baseball until it leaves the field. It is then owned by the fan who comes up with it.

A gift tax applies to any property given away that is worth \$10,000 or more. The person receiving the gift owes no taxes.

Under the federal tax code, the first \$625,000 would be exempt because of the lifetime tax credit provided to every individual. So if the ball is deemed to be worth \$1 million, the fan would owe at least 40 percent of the remaining \$375,000, or \$150,000, to the government.

"One of the biggest problems would be coming up with

the value of whatever is given," Pyrek said. He could not say how much -- if anything -- a fan would have to pay to the IRS unless it can be determined how much the ball is worth.

On Monday, Mike Davidson, 28, came up with McGwire's 61st home run ball that tied Roger Maris' record. Davidson said he planned to return the ball to McGwire and wanted nothing in return. Some collectors have suggested the ball hit Monday could be worth \$100,000.

Whoever catches McGwire's 62nd home run ball will have a number of options, all of which may have tax implications:

-- Keep the ball. The fan owes no tax immediately, but the ball will become part of his estate, and be taxable after death.

-- Sell the ball. The fan would owe taxes on any profit, likely putting him in the highest tax bracket, nearly 40 percent.

-- Give it away. The fan would face a 40 percent gift tax. While the first \$625,000 would be exempt because of a lifetime gift tax credit, the fan as a result would lose the right to use that credit as part of his future estate settlement.

The only way to avoid the IRS would be to give the ball to a charity, which in turn would not have to pay a tax if it sells the ball for a profit.

McGwire ties Maris with 61st HR

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the Cubs. The crowd of 50,530 erupted and stood in unison as McGwire held both arms wide and high as he approached first base, pumped his fist as he circled the bases, got a high five from Cubs first baseman Mark Grace, shook hands with former teammate Gary Gaetti as he reached third base and jumped on home plate with both feet.

He then immediately picked up his 10-year-old batboy son, Matt, who was waiting for him at the plate and carried him for four steps in a joyful hug.

Matt arrived from California just in time to see his Dad make history -- on the day McGwire's own father, John, celebrated-- get this -- his 61st birthday.

"I was down there getting my bat," McGwire said. "He said, 'How you doing?' I gave him a kiss, told him I loved him. The next thing I knew, I hit a home run."

After he set Matt down, McGwire was mobbed by his teammates as fireworks crackled over Busch Stadium. He saluted the crowd, hailed Sammy Sosa in right and in a touching tribute to the man he matched, McGwire acknowledged Maris' children by pointing his right index finger to the sky, tapping his heart three times and blowing a kiss.

"He tapped his heart, like dad was in his heart," said Kevin Maris, a son of the former New York Yankees slugger, who died in 1985.

Indeed, that was the message: "I know he's with me and that's really all I can say - thank you to all the Marises," McGwire said.

In right field, Sosa, nipping at McGwire's heels with 58 homers, clapped into his mitt. Meanwhile, the grounds crew immediately ran out and changed all the bases.

The ball hit off the facing of the luxury suites in left field and then bounced into the lower deck, where it was caught by Mike Davidson, a 28-year-old from St. Louis, who said he plans to give the ball to McGwire and wouldn't ask for anything in return.

"They are my brother-in-law's seats," Davidson said. "He gave them to me because he had to work today."

The first fan to get his hand on the ball was Rich Reichert, 32, of St. Louis. But he couldn't hang on and cut his left ring finger as he tumbled to the concrete.

"After the ball bounced off my hands, it was a little bit of a blur," Reichert said. "All I know was I got knocked down by about 10 guys."

McGwire's first chance to break Maris' record came in the third inning, when he singled sharply past Gaetti at

third. In the fifth, he swung at the first pitch from Morgan and flied to shallow center. In the seventh inning against reliever Matt Karchner he hit a soft liner to center.

Sosa, ironically, popped up to McGwire in his first at-bat. Sosa came to the plate to a similar reaction that McGwire has been getting -- loud applause. Sosa, obviously moved, tipped his helmet to the sellout crowd. Sosa went 1-for-5 and struck out with Lance Johnson and third to end the game.

McGwire hit his 61st homer in the Cardinals' 144th game of the season (they've had one tie and McGwire has played in 136 of those games). Maris hit his 61st on the final day of the 1961 season (it was Maris' 159th game played). Babe Ruth hit his 60 home runs in 1927 when baseball played a 154-game schedule (Ruth hit No. 60 on the final day of the season).

And in contrast to Maris, who set his record in front of a crowd of only 23,000 in Yankee Stadium, Busch Stadium was sold out beyond capacity and a national television audience on ESPN looked in.

The blast capped an incredible eight-day stretch for McGwire, who hit his 55th home run of the season in a game against Atlanta two Sundays ago. He homered twice on Tuesday and twice on Wednesday in Florida, then reached 60 on Saturday with a first-inning homer off Cincinnati's Dennis Reyes.

Rather than succumb to the pressure, McGwire has thrived. He has hit 14 home runs since Aug. 19, when he hit Nos. 48 and 49 at Chicago. He hit his 50th one day later in New York, making him the first player in history to come into September with 50 home runs.

McGwire and Sosa spent the early part of the morning holding a news conference together. Sitting bicep to bicep, they took turns praising each other.

"Wouldn't it be great if we just ended up tied," McGwire said. "I think it would be beautiful."

With how many homers, guys?

"Seventy would be a nice number," McGwire said.

Sosa and McGwire also said that they were excited for their historic meeting.

"Both of us are aware of the history and what it means," McGwire said. "But I can't think about it right now."

Busch Stadium was alive with excitement as the two rivals squared off. The added drama of McGwire vs. Sosa head-to-head brought it to a crescendo.

"Like I've been saying, your heart's not beating if you're not excited about today," McGwire said.

St. Louis celebrates McGwire's feat

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Gary Gaetti, then lifted his 10-year-old son Matthew and carried him for several steps after crossing home plate.

The scene moved many in the crowd of 50,530, which included Maris' sons. Even Chicago's Sammy Sosa, who is chasing McGwire with 58 home runs, applauded in right field.

"To be here, I will remember and cherish my entire life," said Rick Faccin, 44, of Alton, Ill. "The reception he received and what he did as he rounded the bases gave me chills all over."

There were some tears, too.

"When I saw the ball hit off the glass and I knew he tied the record, I had a few tears in my eyes," said Don Fisher, 51, of Marion, Ill. "It made me feel like I was part of history since I saw it live."

During a curtain call, McGwire thumped his chest and pointed skyward as he looked to the Maris family, sitting behind photographers along the first-base line.

"He acknowledged us. He tapped his heart, like dad was in his heart," said Kevin Maris.

Downtown, horns blared in the minutes after McGwire's homer. TV stations interrupted programming to announce the news.

The celebrations didn't end even though McGwire failed to hit No. 62. In the eighth inning, the Blue Angels' precision flying team roared over Busch Stadium, sending the crowd into another round of cheering.

It was a day St. Louis won't soon forget.

The Cardinals have won 15 pennants and nine World Series, but the city hadn't seen hysteria like this since the ticker-tape parade after Charles Lindbergh flew the Spirit of St. Louis across the Atlantic in the 1920s.



Red 60s were plastered everywhere -- billboards, store signs, even a few bare chests. By early afternoon, 61s were already going up.

In health clubs, grocery stores, restaurants, even taxi cabs and hospitals, all conversation centered around McGwire and Sosa.

"A lot of the nursing staff is wearing red today, and many of them brought small radios to work so they can keep track of the game," said Mary Jo Wich, a spokeswoman at St. Anthony's Medical Center.

The radios weren't really necessary. In virtually every patient room, the game was on TV. "You walk down the hall and you can hear it everywhere," Wich said.

St. Louis County Cab Co. dispatcher Ron Gregerson said most of his 63 drivers were tuned to the game, not only for their own interest, but because their fares were demanding it.

"There better not be any Chicago fans among us," he laughed.

Typically, thousands of Cubs fans make the trek for games in St. Louis, and Tuesday was no exception. There were nearly as many blue "Sosa 21" jerseys as red "McGwire 25s."

"I'm here to see Sammy surpass Mr. McGwire as the home run king of major league baseball," said Dan Sherman, 30, of Quincy, Ill., wearing a Sosa jersey and Cubs cap. "This is the best thing that I've ever been to."

Most fans at the stadium were just happy to be there.

"To be a part of history is something I will never forget," said Bill Wethigton, 49, of Morris, Ill. "For Mark to do it with Sammy and the Cubs in town makes it even more emotional. For me to be here and witness it is mind-boggling."