



Tone Setting Victory

by Brian Stull

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(Busch Stadium) It may have just been one game of 162 on the schedule, but if Opening Night is any indication, the tone has been set for the St. Louis Cardinals.

“That’s big,” acknowledged Mike Matheny after his team delivered the walk-off 4-3 victory over the Chicago Cubs.

“You’ve got our home crowd and all the excitement that goes into Opening Day and being able to get knocked back after they hit the 3-run homerun to tie it and guys just kept playing. Some big at-bats right there. It’s a huge win. Just a huge win. Exactly what we were hoping for—could’ve looked a little different and we’d have been alright too, but any kind of win right now is good.”

“It sets the tone,” agreed left-fielder Randal Grichuk. “Defending World Champs. It’s definitely a huge game with the rivalry. It sets the tone for the season.”

Grichuk hit a 2-run homer in the 8th inning to give the Cardinals a 3-0 lead and came through again the next inning as he hit a line drive to the base of the wall in left center to score Jose Martinez with the winning run.

“We knew we had a chance to win, we were still in the driver’s seat obviously, having that last inning,” said Grichuk. “Josey getting that big knock, lifting us up and then Yadi working that good AB, getting that walk, put us in a good spot. We were excited at that point, we knew it was our game.”

The reference to Molina’s walk was tongue in cheek from Grichuk. Due to a rules change this season, Molina’s free pass was historic, as the catcher became the first player to receive an intentional walk without seeing a pitch.

As for Grichuk, he was looking to continue on the progress made over the last couple weeks at the plate.

“Try and see the ball,” he explained. “Don’t try to do too much—I feel like when you do that, you kind of get jumpy and kind of start guessing a little bit too much. That last at-bat when I went 0-2, got back and worked the walk, I really felt locked in, really saw the ball well and just tried to take that feeling into the last two at-bats.”

On the mound, Carlos Martinez also set the tone as he struck out 10 Cubs hitters with a combination of 100mph fastballs mixed with changeups.

“I would really compare it to a crucial game because adrenaline was high, it was stressful,” said Martinez. “But I was so incredibly focused.”

Making his first career Opening Day start, Martinez retired 12 straight batters between the 3rd and 7th innings.

“It was a whole different level of focus, a whole different level of sharpness,” he continued. “I think I had to handle it a different way. When I came to the game, I kept in my mind I wanted to pitch 9 innings, thankfully, I was able to take it to 7 1/2 and again I’m going to keep on doing what I need to do.”

Martinez joins Bob Gibson as the only Cardinals pitchers to throw 7.0 innings with at least 10 strikeouts on Opening Day.

—The official attendance for the game was 47,566 which set a new record as the largest regular season crowd at Busch Stadium III.