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野茂ついに金字塔 メジャー100勝



<ドジャース ジャイアンツ> 7回を4失点、4度目の挑戦でメジャー通算100勝の舞台に乗せた野茂（AP）

【ロサンゼルス（米カリフォルニア州）伊藤直樹】日本人メジャーリーガーの“パイオニア”がついに金字塔を打ち立てた。3連敗中だったドジャースの野茂英雄投手（34）が20日、当地でのジャイアンツ戦に先発。7回を4失点ながら打線のバックアップを受けて今季2勝目（3敗）を挙げ、メジャー通算勝利を「100」の舞台に乗せた。95年5月のメジャーデビューから255試合をかけて打ち立てた金字塔。光と影に彩られた9年間のメジャー生活に、トルネードが新たな足跡を記した。

ピンチを耐え抜き、真っ向勝負を挑み、逆境をしのいだ。その103球には野茂の“生きざま”が凝縮されていた。9年前にメジャー初勝利を挙げたときと同じユニホーム、同じグラウンドで達成したメジャー100勝。「単なる通過点ですから。これで終わりじゃない」。試合後、いつものように淡々と話すだけの野茂の手には球団スタッフからプレゼントされた祝福のシャンパンと、記念の先発オーダー票があった。

5連敗中だった宿敵ジャイアンツ相手に苦しいマウンドを強いられた。ボンズ、ガララーガにアーチを浴びるなど序盤で4点のビハインドを背負った。しかし四回、実に23イニングぶりに打線から援護を受けると闘志に火がつく。「自分から崩れることだけはしたくなかった」。3 4と1点差となった直後の五回を3者凡退に抑えると、六、七回も無失点。気迫の熱投で打線の反撃を呼んだエースを、コルボン投手コーチは「彼は例えるならば竹なんだ。どんなに曲がっても折れることはない」と称賛した。

いくつもの荒波を乗り越えてきた。「これまでたくさん失敗をしてきたから今の僕がある」と言ったことがある。新人王、奪三振王、球宴先発、2度のノーヒットノーラン。その栄光の陰で挫折も味わった。98年には成績不振でドジャースを追い出され、99年にはメッツを解雇。アイオワで極寒の中、マイナー生活も送った。開幕前「失敗とは何か」の質問に野茂はこう答えた。「そんなこといちいち覚えていませんよ。だって過去を振り返ることになるじゃないですか」

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だから現実を受け入れ全力を尽くす。今年1月、神宮外苑で吉井（オリックス）らとの自主トレでは、レガースを着けてブルペン捕手も務めた。限られた人数での練習。それでもケガを恐れるどころか、年俸725万ドル（約8億7000万円）の男は楽しそうに投球を受けていた。「次の試合、次の試合、そればかりを考えていた」と語ったメジャー初勝利の夜。その姿勢は今も変わらないのだ。

日本球界を飛び出すようにして海を渡ってから9年。「最高の打者（投手）と対戦したい」という欲求を満たすために切り開いた道を、14人の“サムライ”が続いた。「これからは（日本人の100勝も）当たり前になってくるはずですよ。目標にされるような数字じゃないですよ」。そう言った野茂は「もう日本の中だけ考えていては駄目でしょうし...」と続けた。それは日本にメジャーを“世界”を伝えたフロンティアのメッセージだった。✖

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Dodgers finally find their offense in 16-4 drubbing of Giants

Nomo earns his 100th career win; Bonds blasts home run No. 619

April 21, 2003 — 2:17 a.m.

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The end of Fred McGriff's hitting slump coincided with the Los Angeles Dodgers' biggest offensive game of the season.

McGriff went 4-for-5 and drove in four runs, Hideo Nomo earned his 100th career victory and the San Francisco Giants lost for the first time in nine road games, 16-4 to the Dodgers on Sunday night.

"I knew at some point in time our offense was going to get going. I didn't necessarily mean it to the tune of 16 runs," Dodgers manager Jim Tracy said. "I just hope this is the beginning of something that's very good. We don't need 16, but if we get enough offense with a bullpen like I know I have down there, we can do this quite often."

McGriff took extra batting practice before the game to try to improve his .177 average that resulted from him going



BAD CHOICE: Giants shortstop Rich Aurilia receives a throw at second base to tag out Dodgers first baseman Fred McGriff in the fourth inning of Sunday's game. McGriff was trying to stretch a single into a double.

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5-for-20 in his previous five games.

"Oh, believe me, I got over .200. It was a great game and I'm going to keep going," said McGriff, who is now hitting .224. "I dug myself a little hole, so now I got a fight on my hands. I stayed back and I saw the ball well. I know I can hit, it's just sometimes I'm ugly."

Barry Bonds hit the 619th home run of his career for the Giants, who at 15-3, are off to their best start since having the same record in 1938.

"No matter what our record was, we wanted to win this game and sweep these guys at home," Giants shortstop Rich Aurilia said.

Shawn Green also had four hits for the Dodgers, who scored eight runs in the seventh. They finally generated the offense that had been missing in their five defeats to the Giants this season. They had managed just four runs in losing the first two games of the three-game series.

"It really was a tight game for the first five, six innings, so it was nice to come from behind and all of a sudden have that huge inning," Green said. "Hopefully, it will help get the bats going, but it's nice to finally give these guys a loss because they're playing so well."

Nomo (2-3) gave up four runs on six hits in seven innings. The Japanese right-hander struck out seven and walked two to end his personal three-game losing skid. The Dodgers had scored just three runs in Nomo's last three starts.

"I'm happy," Nomo said. "I believe in this team's ability to come back and score runs."

Nomo didn't allow the Giants a hit after the fourth inning.

"He struggled a little bit early," Dodgers catcher Paul Lo Duca said. "After about 70 pitches, he gets really, really tough. He could be 5-0 if we'd have swung the bats a little better in his other games."

The Giants took a 3-0 lead in the second on four extra-base hits. Bonds hit a solo homer, his sixth of the season, to become the visiting home run leader at Dodger Stadium. He passed George Foster with his 24th homer.

Yorvit Torrealba, subbing for Benito Santiago, and Ruben Rivera, subbing for Marquis Grissom, hit back-to-

Opinion Poll

Do you think spanking should be banned?

Yes.

No.

I don't know/care.

back RBI doubles for the Giants' other runs in the second.

Andres Galarraga, subbing for J.T. Snow, hit his first homer of the season in the fourth to give the Giants a 4-0 lead.

"I'm not afraid to use the reserves. They can really play," Giants manager Felipe Alou said. "We're getting some big hits from them."

The Dodgers cut it to 4-3 in the bottom half on McGriff's RBI single and a two-run homer by Jolbert Cabrera. McGriff was thrown out trying to stretch it into a double.

Rookie Kurt Ainsworth (1-3) forced in the tying run on a bases-loaded walk to Brian Jordan in the fifth. McGriff cleared the bases with a three-run double to right-center field off Joe Nathan to give the Dodgers a 7-4 lead.

With one out, Aurilia committed a costly error when he bobbled a grounder by Lo Duca that could have been a double play. Instead, the Dodgers had runners on first and second, then Green singled to load the bases for Jordan.

The Dodgers stretched their lead to 10-4 in the seventh on Ron Coomer's two-run single and Cabrera's ground-rule double. Their other runs came on a sacrifice by Alex Cora, a bunt by Roberts, Green's two-run double into the right field corner and Jordan's sacrifice fly to make it 15-4. Six of the Dodgers' eight runs in the inning came off reliever Jim Brower.

NOTES: Nomo laid down his first sacrifice bunt of the season in the sixth. It was the Dodgers' 14th, which leads the major leagues. . . . The Dodgers' 16 runs were a single-game season high. . . . The Giants went 10-2 against NL West opponents in 12 of their first 18 games. They won't play an NL West opponent again until May 19 at Arizona. . . . McGriff passed Mickey Mantle for 39th place on the career RBI list, with his 1,510th in the fourth. . . . Eric Gagne pitched the ninth inning for Los Angeles. It was his first appearance since April 17.

Monday, April 21, 2003



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