

# Baseball legend will retire this season

BALTIMORE (AP) — Nothing lasts forever — not even Cal Ripken Jr. Baseball's Iron Man, who broke Lou Gehrig's record of 2,130 consecutive games, will retire after his 21st season with the Baltimore Orioles — the only team he ever played for.

"I don't see this as an ending so much. I'm not stopping something. I'm just moving on," the 40-year-old third baseman said at a news conference Tuesday, which would have been Gehrig's 98th birthday.

Injuries were not a factor, said Ripken, who has been plagued by back problems in recent seasons. Time away from his family was.

"I'm as healthy now as at any time," he said. "The last couple of years I've been noticing that I miss being away from home. I miss my kids' activities and it seems like the passion ... I was getting into other things."

Ripken, a two-time Most Valuable Player, said it was the start of another phase in his career, one that will include more time with 11-year-old Rachel and 7-year-old Ryan.

"The reality is that players can't play forever," he said.

Ripken played in 2,632 straight

games, from May 30, 1982, to Sept. 20, 1998, when he voluntarily ended the streak. At the time, Ripken said he chose to sit down because he feared his Iron Man run was a distraction to the Orioles.

Though he is defined by his consecutive-games streak, Ripken is also one of seven players in major league history with 3,000 hits (3,107) and 400 home runs (421).

He is a rarity in baseball — a player who has spent his entire career with the same team. Baltimore also happens to be the team he grew up rooting for, and the one his father once managed and coached.

"The Orioles have been my whole life," he said.

An 18-time All Star whose 345 home runs as a shortstop are a major league record, Ripken has been a part-time player this year. He is hitting .210 with four homers and 25 runs batted in.

Ripken recalled hearing some players talk about their regrets. Some wished they took better care of themselves, others said they wanted to play more and a few lamented not taking the game more seriously.

"I didn't want to be in position at the

end of my career and regret not going about it a certain way," Ripken said. "So when I look back, I don't have those regrets. I accomplished what my skills, ability and determination allowed me to."

Ripken has always played the game with a certain childlike exuberance. But this season, reduced to a part-time player on a team geared toward youth, his approach became more business-like.

Ripken agonized over the decision, which he initially arrived at weeks ago. But he delayed an announcement, just in case he changed his mind.

A few more weeks of bench time, in addition to his failure to lift his average over .220, helped him make up his mind.

"Going into the season, I didn't know. I had to play it out and see where it would end up," Ripken said.

Ripken broke Gehrig's long-standing record on Sept. 6, 1995, and the celebration surrounding his feat became a national event. Ripken spoke this spring about his disdain for a possible farewell tour, but that now appears inevitable.

Ripken's final home game would be

Sept. 23 against the New York Yankees. Coincidentally, the Orioles finish the season Sept. 30 in Gehrig's home — Yankee Stadium.

By 9 a.m., 75 people were in line at Camden Yards hoping to buy tickets for Ripken's final home game. At 9:30 a.m., an announcement over the public address system alerted those in line that tickets for the final two games at Camden Yards were sold out. Only standing-room tickets remained.

The Yankees sold 19,600 tickets on Tuesday to sell out the Sept. 30 game.

Fans, meanwhile, expressed gratitude for Ripken's longevity.

"I guess it was not unexpected," said Bob Hamm of Westminster. "What he did for baseball is truly amazing. This is one of those things in life. Life goes on."

Ripken has said he wants to run a major league organization, similar to the way Michael Jordan has become the president and part owner of the Washington Wizards.

In his hometown of Aberdeen, Ripken has financed a complex that includes a 5,500-seat minor league stadium, a baseball academy, dormitories, dining halls and six baseball fields

modeled after past and present major league stadiums.

"I have a big interest in teaching baseball," Ripken said. "Baseball's in my blood. I see this as a beginning, an opportunity."

Ripken was American League rookie of the year in 1982 and was selected league MVP in 1983 and 1991. He won a World Series championship with the Orioles in 1983.

In 1990, Ripken set a record for shortstops with a .996 fielding percentage, making just three errors in 161 games. He moved to third base in 1997.

In 1999, Ripken and Ernie Banks of the Chicago Cubs were selected as the shortstops for baseball's "All-Century" team.

Ripken, who regularly signs autographs before games at home and on the road, has often spoken about his love for fans of the game.

They love him back. Despite his poor batting average and part-time status, Ripken leads all AL third basemen in voting for the All-Star game.

He said he would be honored to play in another All-Star game.

"It would be very special to say goodbye that way," he said.

sports briefs

Speedway names new sponsorship

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — The Kansas Speedway on Wednesday announced sponsorship agreements for some races.

Ameristar Casino and O'Reilly Auto Parts reached a multiyear agreement with the speedway to sponsor two of the track's races.

Royals acquire player from Reds

CINCINNATI (AP) — The Cincinnati Reds traded utility player Donnie Sadler to the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday for left-hander Cary Ammons, a 24-year-old pitcher in Class A.

Sadler was designated for assignment to the minors last Friday after hitting .202 with one homer and three RBIs in 39 games for the Reds.

Ammons was 2-6 with a 3.88 earned run average in 12 starts for Class A Wilmington. He was assigned to Class A Mudville.



# Rockies rocked in Houston

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Astros' hitting and pitching are in synch for the first time this year.

Moises Alou and Wade Miller led the way in a 7-2 victory over Colorado on Wednesday night that gave Houston its first sweep of the Rockies at home.

Alou went 4-for-4, including a home run and two RBIs, to improve his average to .363. It came on the heels of a 2-for-4 game with a home run Tuesday.

"Tonight and last night, I had everything together for the first time in a long

time," he said. "I can trust my hands and I am turning on pitches."

"Hopefully, it can continue. If it continues, I can tell you I feel locked in. It's close to the best I've felt this year."

Miller (8-3) also looked locked in Wednesday. He had gone three starts without a win, including a no-decision in which he allowed seven earned runs to Texas and a loss in which he allowed seven more at Colorado.

The Astros hadn't won a series since May 15-17 at Chicago and hadn't won

a home series since the opening three games of the season against the Brewers April 3-5.

The Rockies didn't get the kind of pitching they wanted. Ron Villone (1-3) lasted just five innings and allowed four runs on seven hits. He struck out five and walked one.

Colorado took a 1-0 lead in the second inning on Greg Norton's fifth home run of the season. Cirillo added his 10th homer, also a solo shot, in the fifth.

# Slumping Royals swept by Chicago

CHICAGO (AP) — Leading off the eighth inning Wednesday, Carlos Lee said he was just trying to get something — anything — going for the Chicago White Sox.

He wound up winning the game, tagging reliever Jason Grimsley for a home run that gave the White Sox a 2-

1 victory and a three-game sweep over the Kansas City Royals.

Lee, who beat the Cubs on June 8 with a 10th-inning grand slam, hit a 2-1 pitch from Grimsley (0-3) over the wall for his 11th homer.

That made a winner of Jon Garland (3-3) who pitched three hitless innings

in relief of starter Rocky Biddle. It was Garland's first relief win of the season.

Keith Foulke pitched the ninth for his 16th save in 17 tries.

The White Sox three-game sweep was the first at home for Chicago against Kansas City since 1997.

The Royals have lost four in a row.

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