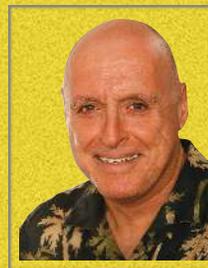


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



438 A World Class Reminder of How to Act Like a Team

What do you do when you're not expected to succeed, when the whole world sees you as an organization heading in the wrong direction? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, what can happen when everybody says you're finished — but you don't accept it. It's next on The Extra Point.

On May 23 the Washington Nationals were a mess. Almost one-third of the major league baseball season was complete and they had a record of 19 wins, 31 losses, and just about everybody had written them off. Their season looked to be on the verge of collapse.

There they were with a poor record and the prospects for turning things around seemed bleak. They had nothing, except the belief they were better than their record showed, and belief in each other. They also had a tough manager, Dave Martinez, who told them they could still win a championship if they pulled together and did it for each other.

The team began to win. On June 27 the record evened out at 40-40. August 14 they had 10 more wins than losses and, over the remainder of the season they were the winningest team in baseball. Yet, the attention of the media and most fans were on three teams — the Houston Astros and New York Yankees in the American League, and the Los Angeles Dodgers in the National League. Almost all projected potential World Series matchups included those three teams. The Nats were basically invisible.

They trailed the Milwaukee Brewers in the Wild Card playoff game, and won. They trailed the heavily favored Dodgers in the final game of the opening playoff series, and won. They then swept the St. Louis Cardinals in four games and would face the Astros in the World Series. The Nats were a curiosity, a good story, but surely all the magic of their turnaround and feel-good season would end in a Houston win.

Then they won the first two games on the

Astros' home field. Could this miracle be true?

Just when the so-called experts were ready to anoint them as champions, Houston roared back to win all three games in Washington to take a 3-2 series lead. No doubt now it would end with the Astros lifting the trophy at home. The Nats were in trouble. Their fiery pitcher, Max Scherzer, had neck spasms and might not be available for the rest of the series.

Scherzer got treatment and did pitch in game seven. However, the team's bats went silent and Washington went scoreless for six innings. They were nine outs from losing the series when, against one of the best pitchers in baseball, Zack Greinke, they broke through, scoring six runs in the last three innings to win the championship. The Astros and their fans were stunned. They had lost to a team nobody had thought would be in the World Series.

In all, the Nationals faced elimination five times and won all five games, after trailing in all five. Pitchers got outs when they had to, hitters got hits at the critical moments. They delivered when needed and they became champions.

The message for us? Never mind what people say. Never stop believing you can win. It's not their decision. It's ours. Be smart, put in the work. Trust in each other. The team also had a trust in Martinez as their leader. Despite a late-season emergency heart procedure, he pumped them up daily and let them know he believed. The result? They wouldn't, couldn't be denied.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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