

June 9, 2009

Former Blue Raider Carroll achieves milestone in win

Connects for first Major League home run against all-time great

Athletic Communications

MIAMI, Fla. - Former Middle Tennessee baseball standout Brett Carroll always will remember his 84th game in the Major Leagues as it served as the backdrop for his awaited breakout performance and provided a surplus of memorable achievements against one of the greatest left-handed pitchers ever.

Playing right field for the Florida Marlins, Carroll came within a double of the cycle Monday when he went 3-for-4 with a home run, triple, three RBI, two runs scored and a stolen base in a 4-0 win against San Francisco. The home run was his first in 100 Major League at-bats and came off future Hall of Famer Randy Johnson, the most recent member of the exclusive 300-wins club. Carroll became the seventh player in Major League history to hit his first home run against the Big Unit, according to Elias Sports Bureau.

"I will definitely remember it for the rest of my life," said Carroll of his second-inning, three-run blast off Johnson to stake the Marlins to a 3-0 lead. "It was my first time facing Randy Johnson and (teammate and veteran) Wes Helms reminded me that Johnson may not be the same 98 mile-per-hour flame-thrower he once was but it's still Randy Johnson out there competing, snarling. What a great opportunity and I was just thankful to face him - 300 wins and the career he has had.

"I just tried to stay with a simple approach and not do too much. I got a pitch up and away from the plate. I couldn't feel my feet running around the bases but I was running hard with my head down, doing it like you are supposed to. It was kind of surreal."

Carroll tripled in his second at-bat against Johnson in the fourth to become the only Major Leaguer to hit a home run and triple off Johnson in the same game. Making the momentous occasion even more significant is that the Marlins won and Carroll and teammate Sean West almost combined for more big league firsts. West threw no-hit baseball for six innings. Carroll missed the cycle by a double. They were on the cusp of producing the first cycle and no-hitter in the same game in Major League history.

"My role has been defense and spot starts here or there and I haven't had a breakout game so to have that and West pitching like he did makes it sweeter," Carroll said. "Had we lost it would have been a great personal feat but but to play well and help contribute to the team winning is what you remember."

Carroll is hitting .270 entering tonight's action against St. Louis. Taken in the 2004 Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft following a sterling three-year career at Middle Tennessee, Carroll has climbed through the Marlins organization and made his Major League debut in 2007. He has played in 84 career games.

Middle Tennessee Head Baseball Coach Steve Peterson said Carroll's achievements are special but the fact Johnson was on the mound will make it even more special for years to come.

"Your first home run is a historic one and I don't care who it is off of but Randy Johnson, that's something you tell your grandkids about. That's like hitting one off Nolan Ryan," said Peterson, who coached Carroll at Middle Tennessee. "I asked Brett during his junior year, 'Brett is it important for you to be drafted and signed?' He said, 'No, it's important for me to play in the Big Leagues.' I told him it was a great answer and not to forget it and tell the scouts the same thing. Brett was not just interested in being drafted. He wanted to get to the Big Leagues. That was his desire, his dream and his goal.


"That's what it's all about. He's there and he's had a good piece of success. I'm happy for him."

That Carroll reached the Major Leagues three years after his final season at Middle Tennessee is not surprising to Peterson.

"Except for baseball ability Brett was like anyone else on campus but he was special on the baseball field," Peterson said. "What was neat about him was when he walked off the field he didn't try to be special. He didn't ask for favors but he knew he had a special talent on the baseball field. He knew it but he never tried to take advantage of it. That's why he is successful in the Major Leagues and that's why the Marlins really like him. He's a good person as well as a good player."

Driving to Land Shark Stadium Tuesday afternoon in preparation for the game against the Cardinals later that night Carroll is reminded of something his former college coach told him.



Former Blue Raider slugger Brett Carroll was 3-for-4 with his first Major League home run and a triple against future Hall of Famer Randy Johnson Monday. (Florida Marlins) 

"I have to steal a quote from Coach Pete," Carroll said when describing baseball as work. "I remember Coach Pete telling me he's coached a long time but he has never felt like he's worked a day in his life. I pull into the stadium and I feel the same way."

Printed on February 10, 2012

Original URL: <http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/39434>