

ANOTHER SEASON IN THE BOOKS -

I can't say that I am not disappointed with how things ended up, but I am more convinced than ever that we ran into two of the best pitchers of our time, at probably their very best. Not to mention that I am so proud of this team's heart and the way that we battled until the end. Guys like Julio, Rey and Gilly were not even in our starting line-up at the beginning of the year. That's 3/4 of our starting infield that were not in our opening day line-up. To witness the way these guys approached our division race and the playoffs made me proud to be part of the Atlanta Braves. BJ, Javy, Andruw and BJ (Jordan) all played such a veteran role for us as well. And the pitching staff? Well, what can you possibly say about our starting rotation and the bullpen? They were just superb and were responsible for us being in the position of going to the World Series. The bench (from DeRo, Wes, Paul, Dave, and Keith to everyone on our playoff roster) contributed at some point down the stretch or in the playoffs. I am just really proud of this team. How couldn't you be?

Having said that, there is that reluctance to be satisfied with what happened the NLCS. We let some opportunities slip through our hands that could have made the difference in the series. Despite the fact that Schilling and Randy pitched unbelievable games, we had the opportunities to win Games 4 and 5. We just didn't capitalize when we needed to, which will doom you against guys like Randy Johnson. We didn't play Braves baseball in those games, which is centered around good pitching and defense. There certainly shouldn't be any finger pointing, because there wasn't one play that lead to the defeats, but we wanted to play a little better. I think all the guys would agree with that. All we can do now is work hard this offseason and get back with a sense of vigor next season.

I have already been down to the ranch once to check things out. Mom and dad have done such an amazing job down there. I almost didn't recognize the place. Hunting season opens up on November 3. I'm heading back down there tomorrow (November 1) with a few buddies and Matthew. Matthew loves going down and spending time with pop-pop, mi-mi and the "big bucks," as he calls them. We are going to stay down there for a few days, then I'll be heading back to Atlanta to get ready for Don Sutton's golf tournament in Destin, Florida. I'm going to do a little fishing and golfing down there for a few days with the family and some buddies. On November 15, I'll be playing in a celebrity softball game in Atlanta at the Georgia Dome (for Muscular Dystrophy - put on my 99X radio station). Then, on November 17, me and the family are heading back down to the ranch for Thanksgiving. It'll be nice to have everyone together down there for a few days.

I've got a ton of friends coming out to the ranch this year. It should be a pretty full house until the middle of December. Hopefully, we'll be able to kill some good bucks this year and get the herd ready for a huge year next year. We've already got one "Boone and Crockett" buck on the ranch, and hopefully, within the next few years, we'll have a couple more. I'm excited about everything we are doing down there. Mom and dad are getting the place into shape (mom's horse facilities are looking great, too).

I'll pretty much take most of November off and just relax. At the end of November, I'll start lifting and hitting again. I want to have another good year offensively, and I know that starts out at the ranch in my batting cage with my dad. The work never stops, and it never gets easier. There are no shortcuts and there is no "easy" way to do things. I still have to take the 1,000s of cuts and work out 5 days a week every offseason. I'm quite sure that will never change.

I hope everyone has a great Holiday season. We should all realize how important our families are over the next few months. Take the time to spend time with the ones your love. God Bless and keep safe."

- Chipper Jones