

FRUSTRATING YEAR -

2004 marked probably the most frustrating year I have ever had as a player. The bright side to that was that we were able to win our 13th consecutive division title with a team that everyone (and I mean everyone) wrote off. It's funny to read some of the commentaries, articles and fan comments about the team from last off-season. I didn't read one article that said we were the favorite to win the division again. That makes it that much sweeter.

I just couldn't shake that injury bug. If it wasn't a foot or a hand, it was my hamstring. That thing really got me down. It was just so dang frustrating to pull it here, tweak it there and downright tear it the next day. I really felt hampered much of the year. And, the thing was, I felt like I was having a really good year up to that point. All I can say is thank goodness for guys like Nick Green, Roche, Estrada, Charles, Druw, JD and our entire pitching staff. They continued to pick us up all year. With me and Gilly out, these guys (and others) continued to pull us through. When I was able to get healthy and we started pulling away from the pack, it was a really gratifying feeling that I was able to help. Fans sometimes forget that when we aren't a part of things, or aren't putting up numbers, we are the most disappointed of anyone.

I'm writing this journal entry as we have made some moves this off season. We have just moved Smoltz to the rotation, traded for Tim Hudson and Jorge Vazquez, and said goodbye to guys like JD, Charles, Juan, Eli, Byrdie, Jaret and a few others. This is just the game of baseball and should show every person out there how special John Schuerholz and Bobby Cox are to this franchise. They have continued to add 5-10 new faces each year and build a contender every year. And, I can honestly say that our goal for a 14th straight division title is stronger than ever. John and Bobby are just amazing. I continue to be extremely proud to be a part of this organization.

I've been spending quite a bit of time down on the ranch. We acquired another ranch and combined it with our existing ranch down here in Texas. It is now a fully commercial hunting ranch with over 9,000 acres. I am truly in my haven when I'm down there. It is great to get away... and, it is really AWAY. We have had quite a few hunters in for hunts. We had in Doug Johnson, Keith Brooking, Chris Mohr and Jon Xynidis down for a big hunt a few weeks ago, and we have had 100s of bird hunters from Texas and other states. It has been awesome.

I just started hitting and have been lifting and doing some other core/strength training. I have really tried to stretch more as well. I need to maintain my flexibility a bit more this year (as I get older) to keep down my risk of injury. I am motivated to come back this year ready to go at 3B, and ready to help this team win its 14th straight. The pitching staff we have put together is going to be special. Hopefully, we can get some guys in that OF to help us offensively. With John running the show, I have every confidence that we will be stocked and ready to go.

The family is doing great, too. Sharon and the boys are busy doing their thing, and our new addition, Shea, is growing like a weed. I can't tell you how much I have

changed as a person seeing my wife and kids by my side. It really puts things into perspective for you. I love them more than anything and know that they are the most important thing in my life. I just consider myself one of the luckiest people in the world.

Everyone hang in there and we'll see you out at The Ted in April. All my best.

Chipper Jones