

A TALE OF 2 JONESES

HOW CHIPPER & ANDRUW MADE THE MOST OF A DIFFICULT SEASON

BY JON COOPER

For nine seasons, Andruw Jones and Chipper Jones have chased the dream of a World Championship. Together they've established excellence in their domains – Chipper primarily at third base, Andrew in center field.

They're fourth and fifth on the list of franchise home run leaders, third and fourth among Atlanta Braves home run leaders, and first and second in homers at Turner Field.

But 2004 saw unprecedented struggles for the duo.

John Schuerholz labeled them the team's "twin towers of run production," but Andruw and Chipper frequently carried the lowest batting averages among the team's regulars.

Chipper was hit by a series of injuries that cost him 25 games and so impeded his swing that he barely hit over .200 in the season's first half (.214 for the record). Andruw, plagued by strikeouts and the doubleplay ball, was dropped to the seventh spot in the order and was the subject of mid-season trade rumors for the first time in his career.

Yet, during July and August, when the team went 40-14 and made its run to a 13th consecutive division title, the Jones Boys were on the lead horses.

"We've gone through tough times, whether it be slumps or injuries or whatnot this year, but still our power and our run-production numbers are very respectable," said Chipper, who finished with 30 homers and 96 RBIs. "More than anything else, Andruw (20 homers, 91 RBIs) and I have gone out there every day our bodies have allowed us and provided leadership on and off the field. I think this team, above all others, has needed some stabilizing forces, and if Andruw and I have been those forces, then we've done our jobs."

Their resilience inspired teammates, but it didn't surprise them.

"They're consummate big leaguers," said J.D. Drew. "You want big-league guys who keep pushing, regardless of the circumstances. Both of them have done that. Those guys are going to put the numbers up, year in and year out."