

April 3

Cubs 6, Brewers 3

Cubs 1-2, 1 Game Back

My 96-year-old grandmother and I can both identify the exact game in which Kerry Wood became our favorite player. First, I should explain that it's no wonder that I'm a Cubs' fan.

Grandma Decker became a fan in the 1960s when my brother Gary and I would visit and watch games on her cable TV, the one luxury she afforded herself. She rooted for the Cubs well into her 90s. She refused to answer the phone during games. Unfortunately, she passed away about 15 years ago...no pennant.

Grandma Brimeyer also caught the bug from Gary and me. She will answer the phone during games, provided the Cubs are losing by more than three runs. She's still sharp as a tack, reminding me of events I've long since forgotten.

The mere mention of Kerry Wood's name sets her to reminiscing of May 6, 1998 when, in only his fifth major league start, Woody struck out 20 Astros. "Oh my gosh," I thought to myself. The Cubbies finally have a pitcher!"

For me the date was October 15, 2003 – Game 7 of the NLCS against the Marlins. After the Game 6 debacle, every Cubs' fan older than eight years old knew the outcome of Game 7 was a foregone conclusion. This was confirmed when Miguel Cabrera hit a three-run in the top of the first inning. Yet Woody hit a two run homer in the

bottom of the second to tie the game and allow Cubs' fans everywhere to believe, if only for a couple more innings. I remember watching him circle the bases with tears in my eyes; I'm not sure if they were out of sadness or joy. Entering the game with 211 regular season and 20+ post season innings, Woody's tired right arm didn't have its best stuff, and he eventually left the game in the sixth inning after giving up seven runs. Nonetheless, I never forgot his competitiveness and how he tried to keep the Cubs in the game any way he could.

Today was a happier day; as the Cubs won their first game of the season and Kerry Wood recorded his first career save. In the process of pitching a scoreless ninth inning, Woody saw his ERA drop 13.50 points. Ryan Dempster picked up his first victory as a starter in almost three years. The improbable path, both pitchers traveling back from severe arm injuries makes a pennant seem almost plausible...at least after a win.