Injury-riddled Cardinals are proud of accomplishments

By PAUL LeBAR **AP Sports Writer**

MINNEAPOLIS - Twice in three years, the St. Louis Cardinals have had their wings clipped in the World Series. This time, its possible they shouldn't have even been there.

"If somebody had told me all the bad things that were going to happen to us this year. I'd have said we'd be lucky to get where we did," center fielder Willie McGee said following Sunday night's 4-2 loss to the Minnesota Twins in Game 7.

"But we just kept playing as hard as we could and doing our jobs every day," McGee said. "We had a lot of adversity, but sometimes that's how you form your character. I feel that in spite of getting beat, it may even make us better.

The team Minnesota defeated with its 'Homer Dome Magic' was not to be mistaken for the offense that started the year for St. Louis.

First baseman Jack Clark, whose bat provided the only legitimate power to supplement the Cardinals' speed for the first half of the season, sat out the last seven weeks with an injured ankle. As if that weren't enough, third baseman Terry Pendleton joined Clark on the bench for all but designated-hitter duties during the Series because of a rib-cage injury

"I know this team isn't one that likes to make excuses, so I won't do that," Pendleton said of St. Louis. "But, still, it makes you wonder. You wonder Game 4 of the World Series, leading the Cards to a 7-2 what we might have achieved without all the injuries. I guess we'll never know, and that's what makes it a little tough.

Almost from the beginning, the Cardinals had the makings of a team that was star-crossed.

Catcher Tony Pena suffered a broken thumb on the season's third day. Nine days later, pitcher John Tudor sustained a broken leg. Other subsequent injuries, although less devastating, persisted.

"At one point in the season, I almost hated to check with (trainer) Gene Gieselmann to see who was hurt," Manager Whitey Herzog said.

"Fortunately, we got a lot of help from players we really hadn't counted on and that kept us from falling apart. If we hadn't, we could have been buried by July. I d say the last half of the year. we were just holding on.

Help for the Cardinals, who limped home from a lead of 9_{12}^{12} games they held shortly after the All-Star break to win the National League East by three games over the New York Mets, came from players who eventually wound up playing in the World Series.

Catcher Steve Lake was part of the reason for St. Louis' strong start while filling in for the injured Pena. Versatile Jose Oquendo played all positions except catcher. Otherwise, or so it sometimes seemed. the Cardinals used Band-Aids to hold together.

"We were just a bunch of guys who went out and took whatever hard knocks were dealt us and kept on going." shortstop Ozzie Smith said.

"One day it would be Steve Lake who would pick us up. another day it would be Jose Oquendo. A lot of guys contributed. The big thing was that we didn't let our troubles get us down.

St. Louis, fittingly, won its 15th NL pennant with the help of Oquendo's three-run homer in a 6-0 victory over the San Francisco Giants.

Unsung hero Tom Lawless hit a three-run homer in victory. But at the end, of course, the Cardinals came up short

Following the loss, second baseman Tommy Herr summed up the Cardinals' bittersweet feelings

"Most teams would be happy just to get as far as we got," Herr said. "We're proud of what we accomplished, even though we lost. We took (the Twins) to the limit with a crippled crew. You've got to give them credit."



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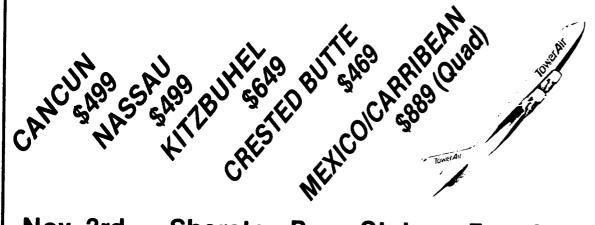
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