

Piazza drills a pair for streaking Dodgers

By ALAN ROBINSON
AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH — The Pittsburgh Pirates finally learned how to fill the left-field seats in Three Rivers Stadium. They kept pitching to Mike Piazza.

Piazza hit two homers and drove in six runs — four in the first two innings — and the division-leading Los Angeles Dodgers continued jumping out to early leads, winning 9-5 yesterday for their 11th victory in 15 games.

Piazza had a run-scoring single in a three-run first inning, then hit the first pitch thrown in the majors by Jason Johnson for a three-run homer in the second. He added his 31st homer of the season in the ninth, a two-run shot off Matt Ruebel measured at 456 feet that landed deep in the third-level grandstands.

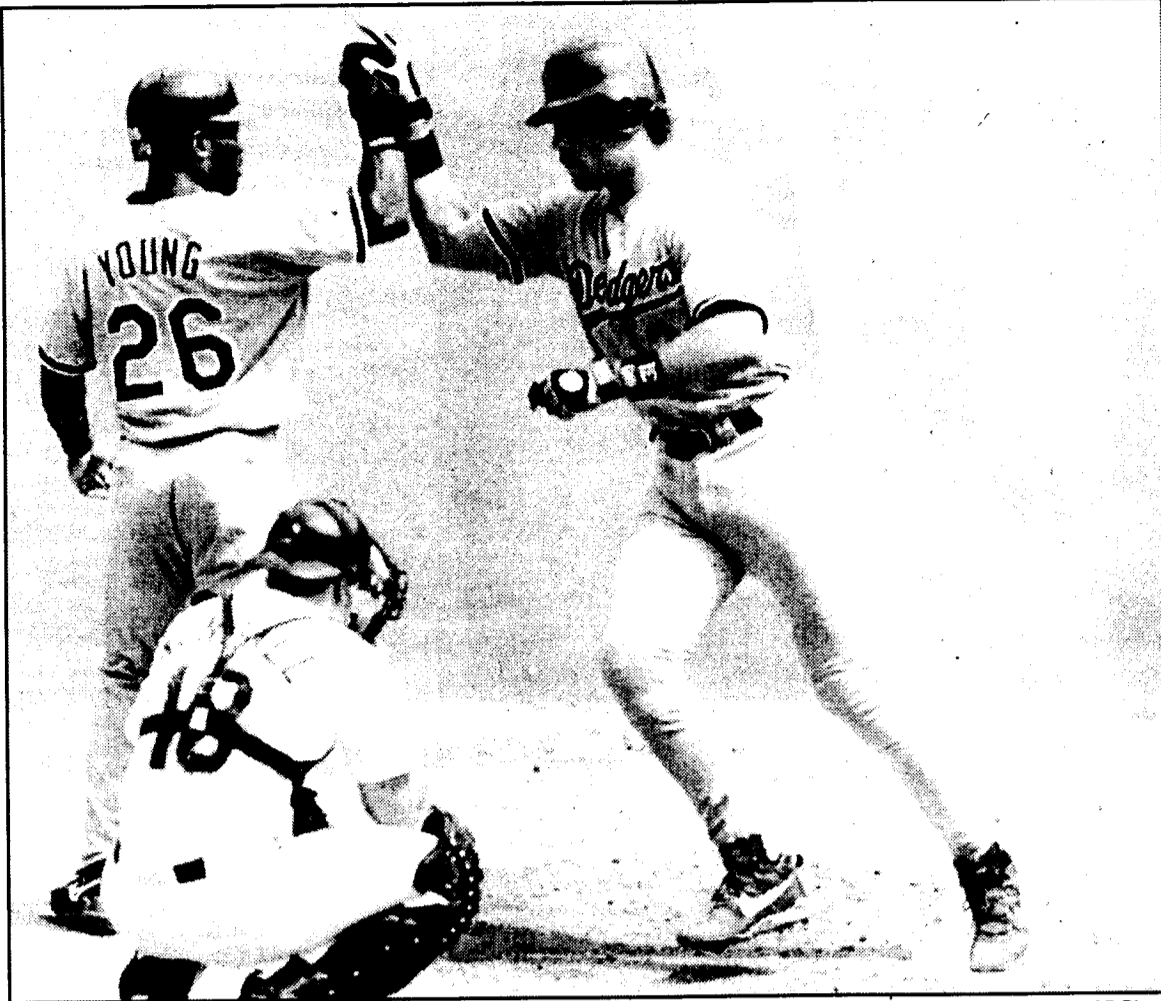
Los Angeles took three of four from the Pirates to win the season series 9-2, outscoring them 66-32.

"Yeah, I'd have to say I'm happy to see them leave town," Pirates manager Gene Lamont said. "Sometimes you don't match up well against a team. They can put a lot of pressure on a defense when their veterans at the top of the lineup get on base."

The Dodgers' 1-2 batters had nine hits — Eric Young had four and Otis Nixon had a career-high five — to jump start an offense that has scored in the first inning of its last four games and seven of its last 10. The Dodgers have batted .432 (19-of-44) in the first inning of those 10 games.

Los Angeles scored four runs in the first inning of a 6-4 victory Tuesday, then added three more Wednesday as Pirates starter Steve Cooke (9-13) was lifted after getting only three outs.

"That's why we got Eric Young and Otis Nixon. We wanted those guys with their speed to get on base, create problems for the other team and give Piazza, (Eric) Karros and (Raul) Mondesi RBI



Los Angeles Dodgers' catcher Mike Piazza crosses home plate in yesterday's 9-5 victory over the Pittsburgh Pirates. Piazza hit a three-run homer in the second inning off Pittsburgh starter Steve Cooke.

opportunities," Dodgers manager Bill Russell said. "When those guys get on, you're going to score a lot of runs and that's what happened on this (8-2) road trip."

The Dodgers were so happy with their recent pickups of Nixon and Young, they added outfielder Darren Lewis from the White Sox after the game for a player to be named. He will be the utility outfielder replacement for Roger Cedeno, who went on the disabled list with a fractured toe.

Nixon was hitting just .135 since joining the Dodgers until receiving a phone call from former Pirates manager Harry Walker, considered one of the top hitting instructors in the game.

"I don't know why he called me. It surprised me," said Nixon, who worked with Walker in 1989. "It was a back-to-basics thing."

"I guess he saw (Tuesday's) game on TV, and he said, 'Remember what you did in '89?' I took some of that with me."

Piazza, the first Dodger to hit

at least 30 homers in three consecutive seasons since Duke Snider (1953-57), was 8-for-14 and reached base in 12 of 15 plate appearances during the series. He was 15-for-29 against Pittsburgh for the season.

Piazza made for a rough debut for Johnson, who didn't arrive in Pittsburgh until 90 minutes before game time.

He rushed to the ballpark, put on his uniform, went to the bullpen and was told to start throwing.

Schilling paces Phillies with 15 Ks

By The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — If the Phillies' bullpen were better, Curt Schilling would have 17 wins. Still, he's putting together a mighty impressive season.

Schilling became the first pitcher since 1984 to reach double digits in strikeouts 15 times in one season, and Philadelphia beat the San Diego Padres 7-6 in 12 innings yesterday.

"Being a closer is a tough job," Schilling said. "I know because I've been there."

After Ricky Bottalico wasted a 6-3 lead in the ninth, the Phillies won it on Kevin Stocker's 12th-inning single for their first four-game sweep in two seasons.

Schilling allowed three runs and six hits in six innings, struck out 10 and walked two. He raised his strikeout total to 264, tying Seattle's Randy Johnson for the major-league lead.

"I had some fatigue and my arm felt a little tired," said Schilling, 33-10 with a 2.92 ERA. "I'd love to get the win, but I'm thrilled that we won the game."

The last pitcher to reach double digits 15 times had been Dwight Gooden with the New York Mets.

"He clearly battled himself but he also battled," Phillies manager Terry Francona said of Schilling. "He doesn't have to have his best stuff, and he deserved to get a win today."

San Diego, which has lost nine of 11, tied the score in the ninth when Bottalico blew a save for the seventh time in 32 chances — four of which cost Schilling wins.

"I feel bad for Ricky," Schilling said, "but we won the game and he's just got to keep on battling, and he will."

With the Phillies ahead 6-3, Quilvio Veras and Steve Finley hit RBI singles and Tony Gwynn hit a sacrifice fly.

"I (stunk) today and I've (stunk)

a lot lately," Bottalico said. "We should have won the game, and I went out there and stunk up the joint."

Francona was supportive. "He's pitched well, even though he didn't do so good today," Francona said. "He's my closer, and I'll keep giving him the ball."

Ken Caminiti homered into the right-field upper deck on an 0-2 pitch in the sixth, becoming only the 12th player to hit a ball into that level since the ballpark opened in 1971. He reached 20 homers for the third consecutive season and is 22-for-52 in his last 14 games with six homers and 11 RBIs.

Rico Brogna singled off Jim Bruske (3-1) leading off the 12th and Mike Robertson was hit by a pitch with one out. A groundout by pinch-hitter Kevin Sevcik advanced the winning run to third, and Stocker singled to right.

Wayne Gomes (3-1), Philadelphia got five outs for the win. Gwynn went 2-for-5, leaving his league-leading average at .382.

Padres starter Joey Hamilton allowed six runs and 11 hits in seven-plus innings. He had been 6-1 in his previous 14 starts.

Philadelphia took a 4-0 lead in the third on Kevin Jordan's RBI single, Brogna's RBI double and Mike Lieberthal's two-run single.

Gwynn hit an RBI double in the fourth and scored on a single by Chris Gomez.

Schilling has 27 double-digit strikeout games in his career. Philadelphia completed its first four-game sweep since June 1995 at New York and its first four-game sweep over San Diego since May 1979. Philadelphia's Scott Rolen was in the original starting line up but the Phillies decided to wait until Friday before he returns.

Rolen bruised his right arm after being hit by a Hideo Nomo fastball Saturday. It was the fifth game he has missed.

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