

CUBS WORLD SERIES QUEST

‘What a way to go’ for Cubs nailing Game 5 in Wrigley season finale

‘Rosey’ passes up World Series, by choice

[*See story below...*](#)

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Jackie Gleason is long gone.

So we’ll steal the Great One’s line – “What a way to go!” – for the Cubs’ final Wrigley Field game of 2016 Sunday night at Wrigley Field that sent the World Series to a likely climax in Cleveland, the season spilling into November on Tuesday night.

“Go, Cubs, Go!” was a particularly heartfelt final singalong as the Cubs salvaged Game 5 in a nail-biting 3-2 triumph, dodging the off-season by the skin of their teeth. Or, rather, via gutty pitching by starter Jon Lester and closer Aroldis Chapman in his longest-ever outing.



Jon Lester (left) lived up to his playoff pedigree, while Aroldis Chapman did not have to baby his arm via his longest-ever outing.

Chapman in particular pitched the “big-boy game” that haircut-avoiding John Lackey could not navigate in Game 4 that place the Cubs teetering on the edge of a disappointing denouement.

And now the Cubs can only hope they go down in history like the 1958 New York Yankees and 1968 Detroit Tigers, each rallying from a 3-1 deficit against teams trying to win two World Series in a row. And, of course, evening up with the baseball gods for their own frittering away a 3-1 advantage in the 2003 NLCS.

With the two teams sporting the longest championship droughts battling deep into the World Series, shame on TV viewers if Game 6, and for Cubs fans’ sake, Game 7 do not draw record ratings in this 1,000-channel universe.

Most astounding development was Chapman’s 42-pitch, eight-out journey that nailed down Game 5 in favor of Lester. If Sandy Koufax could once throw 196 pitches in a Wrigley Field game, the not-overworked Chapman could certainly extend himself with a day off Monday.

Perhaps the desperate, extending outing was why Cubs manager Joe Maddon kept pushing Chapman's psyche by inserting him into postseason games in the eighth, contrary to the Cuban fireballer's comfort zone.

With a runner on second and one out in the seventh, Chapman fanned Jose Ramirez for the first out, hit former Cubs farmhand Brandon Guyer and then finally induced an inning-ending groundout by Roberto Perez.

Chapman had only one brain cramp his journey to a well-earned save. After he fanned Yon Gomes to start the eighth, he failed to cover first base on a Rajai Davis shot to Anthony Rizzo behind first base. Davis, timing Chapman perfectly, stole his second base of the game.

Chapman finally outdueled Northbrook's Jason Kipnis in a tough at-bat, getting him to pop to left. Davis then stole third unmolested, putting more pressure on in case of a wild pitch or passed ball. Chapman rallied by getting Francisco Lindor looking for strike three on a nifty outside-corner heater.

Finally, Chapman's moment of truth proceeded without incident in the ninth without having to whiff the side. He got a Mike Napoli grounder to short and a Carlos Santana fly to right before Jose Ramirez fanned for the final out.

Then the crowd was treated to an excess of class as many Cubs poured out of the dugout to salute the fans for an unforgettable season. The players may not return from Progressive Field with the Commissioner's Trophy, but they know they've made an indelible impression compared to every team in their fans' lifetime.

One particular Cub sticking in the collective memory was starter Lester, one of October's top money men. Unlike the fading Lackey, Lester is still in his prime as a playoff performer, revving up the crowd to airport-decibel levels by striking out the side in the first. He did not disappoint in his six-inning, 90-pitch stint.

After allowing a second-inning Jose Ramirez homer, Lester's inability to throw to first base on pickoff attempts did cost him a run in the sixth.

Rajai Davis wasted no time stealing him clean, scoring moments later on a single by the "irrepressible" Francisco Lindor, as the late baseball writers' dean Jerome Holtzman would have labeled him. Lester got help from his teammates when Lindor's own steal attempt was thwarted by a Warp 9 throw from catcher David Ross (in possibly his final big-league start) and a slick sliding catch-and-tag of by Javy Baez.

Carl Edwards then relieved Lester to start the seventh. Two batters later, Chapman entered. Maddon, rightly so it seemed, earned criticism for calling on Chapman in the eighth inning in playoffs seemingly going against the fireballer's comfort zone. But perhaps he was preparing him for moments just like Sunday's.

Kris Bryant's homer was only the Cubs' second in the World Series. There's a good reason why. A mini-"dead-ball era" has returned.

Going into Game 5, just 5.5 runs per game had been scored. In only two other World Series (2011 and 2015) has the game average been that low. Game 5 kept to that aver-

age. This year represents the biggest gap since 1966 in runs per game between the Fall Classic and the regular season.

That's why the Cubs' "crooked number"—a three-run fourth — stuck out by its singularity. But any astute baseball observer knew that for the Cubs to "retire" the concept of 1908, they'd have to outpitch their World Series foe with a minimum of run support.

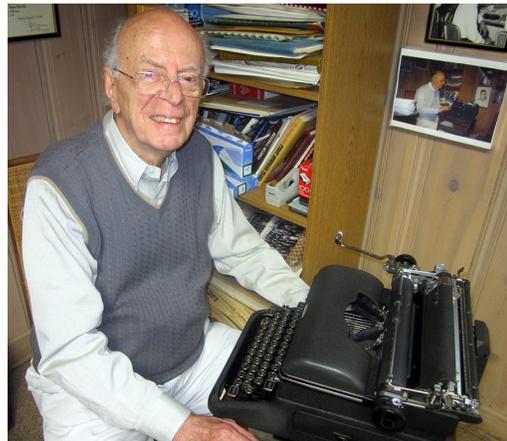
The pitching-dominated flow of the Indians-Cubs battle was so strong Kris Bryant's fourth-inning homer, touching off the victory-thirsting crowd, was just the Cubs' second of the World Series.

And there could be more dominating pitching to come. Jake Arrieta gets his chance in Game 6. If he succeeds, then Kyle Hendricks, the surprise majors' ERA leader, draw the titanic task. But such a Game 7 scenario might also bring in Lester again, doing the Madison Bumgarner long-relief drama.

'Rosey' passes up World Series after being decades-long Wrigley mainstay

One of the two last remaining mainstays of WGN-TV's golden age of baseball coverage is taking a pass on attending the World Series — even though he and late boss Jack Brickhouse totally missed out on October glory back in the day.

Jack Rosenberg, who celebrated his 90th birthday this year, is so well-connected he could have snared a World Series entrée at Wrigley Field with a couple of phone calls. After all, "Rosey" in his heyday as WGN's sports editor helped line up interviews with John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan for the TV station.



Jack Rosenberg

But given the crunch of people descending on a jam-packed ballpark, Rosenberg opted to watch at home with his extended family. He would have had to arrive hours early to avoid the worst of the crowds, and "Rosey" was unwilling to test his stamina.

Rosenberg's absence from Wrigley Field is like the "missing man formation" honoring a fallen warrior. His clattering manual typewriter in the background assembling pertinent material for airing while Brickhouse announced Cubs games was the

soundtrack of summer for Baby Boomers. He worked with Brickhouse from 1954 to the latter's retirement from play-by-play in 1981, then similarly assisted Harry Caray for much of the next decade.

Rosenberg and retired director Bill Lotzer, also 90, are the last living links to the telecasts that formed the basis of the fiercely loyal regional Cubs interest that was built to national appeal in successive decades by Caray and WGN's satellite-borne "superstation" status.

— *George Castle*