

Cruz clubs former team with homer

Written by Administrator

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ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Elvis Andrus and the Texas Rangers certainly preferred it when Nelson Cruz was hitting home runs for them — and not against them.

Cruz hit a towering three-run homer in his return to Texas, capping a six-run outburst for the Baltimore Orioles in their 8-3 victory over the Rangers on Tuesday night.

"I haven't seen him in a while and I got to see him and talk to him, playing around a little bit. It was a great feeling. I didn't like anytime he popped one," Andrus said. "I've seen too many when he was on this side, but he's a talented guy. Whenever he's on, he can carry a team."

The homer by Cruz, and estimated 404 feet deep into the left field seats, came on the first pitch thrown by Shawn Tolleson, the fourth Texas reliever.

Cruz was the 2011 AL championship series MVP on the way to the Rangers' second consecutive World Series. When introduced before drawing a walk in the first, Texas fans responded with an extended ovation. While there were some boos, those seemed to be outnumbered by fans who called "Cruuuuuzz!" like they used to do when the left fielder was on their side the previous eight seasons.

The Rangers, coming off a 7-4 record in their longest road trip this season, got two inning-starting homers: Adrian Beltre in the fourth, and Robinson Chirinos in the seventh.

Joe Saunders, the winning pitcher for Baltimore in the 2012 AL wild card game at Texas, allowed two runs and 10 hits over six-plus innings in his first home start for the Rangers. The left-hander was signed during spring training and he made the season-opening rotation before missing more than seven weeks with a stress fracture in his left ankle after being struck by a liner in his first start.

Alexi Ogando (2-3), the second Texas reliever, got a popup to start the eighth before allowing three straight Orioles to reach. He was gone after a tiebreaking RBI double by rookie catcher

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Caleb Joseph, whose two hits matched his total in his first 11 games.

Through 55 games with the Orioles, Cruz is hitting .313 and leads the majors with 21 homers and 55 RBIs.

"He's swinging the bat well. We've seen him do it before," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "We got him out all night and then when we needed to get him out, we didn't. I've seen him do that too."

Cruz took a slow trot around the bases after hitting the homer, but he wasn't really savoring the moment. He was cramping so bad that he almost didn't even take that final at-bat.

"We were debating, he and I were," Orioles manager Buck Showalter said. "He go about halfway down the first, and that was a cramp trot."

Heading into free agency last year, Cruz missed the final 50 regular-season games for the Rangers for violating baseball's drug agreement.

Cruz turned down a \$14.1 million qualifying offer in November from the Rangers, who likely would have used him primarily as a designated hitter if he had accepted. He went through the entire offseason before signing an \$8 million, one-year deal with the Orioles early in spring training.

Adam Jones matched a career high with four hits, including a homer off the right-field pole leading off the Baltimore fourth.

Brian Matusz (2-1) went 1 2-3 innings in relief of Ubaldo Jimenez, who held Texas to one run and four hits while striking out five over 5 2-3 innings.

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Notes: Texas is 13-14 at home this season. ... Baltimore has won six in a row in the series after losing 12 of the previous 14 games against Texas. ... Three-time AL All-Star first baseman Jim Gentile, who played in the majors from 1957-66, attended the game on his 80th birthday. With Baltimore in 1961, he finished third in the AL MVP voting behind Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle.