

Beltran & Mates Riding High

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The Mets enter this weekend's Subway Series on an uptick, and the Yankees come in on a downswing. But as Carlos Beltran knows, that can all change in a flash.

"This game is like that," Beltran said. "It's all ups and downs."

Even after Alex Rodriguez's sparkling April, the Bombers hardly resemble the team that split the season series with the Mets last season. They'll arrive at Shea today having lost five of their last seven, sporting an 18-21 record.

"They're just not playing good right now," Beltran said.

On the other hand, the Mets are playing some of their best baseball. Yesterday against the Cubs, they erased a four-run ninth-inning deficit and won, 6-5, to take three of four from Chicago. The Mets have won six of eight.

"Getting the win today really helps," Beltran said.

The Mets won despite resting Beltran, the Mets' RBI leader with 29, until he pinch-hit as part of the ninth-inning rally. He walked and scored to help close the gap.

Beltran didn't drive in a run yesterday, but every time he does, he and the Mets have promised to donate \$1,000 to the Harlem RBI program, an East Harlem nonprofit organization that provides athletic and educational opportunities for Harlem youth.

Last season, Beltran donated \$500 for each RBI and drove in a career-high 116 runs. He presented a check for \$58,000 to Harlem RBI last night at the Grand Hyatt in Manhattan.

This season, he hopes to eclipse that total - even if it means opening his wallet further.

"My goal is to stay healthy and help the team," Beltran said.

Of course, these Mets don't need much help. David Wright has busted out of his early season slump, Jose Reyes has been steady all season, and Carlos Delgado showed signs of breaking out of his funk yesterday as well, getting the game-winning hit.

"The team's doing well," said Mets COO Jeff Wilpon. "We'll take it one day at a time, though."

Wilpon knows the Mets could easily slip against their crosstown rivals. Last season, the Mets and Yankees split six games. But in 2005, the club from Flushing entered the first of two series with the Yanks at 22-19. After dropping two of three to the Bombers, they lost three straight to Atlanta and slipped under .500. The Mets proceeded to miss the postseason.

Still, entering this series, things are looking up for the Mets.

Said Wilpon: "It's always nice to have a few wins going into this weekend."



Mets' Carlos Beltran presents check to Harlem RBI program last night for \$58,000, or \$500 for each of his 116 RBI last season. Photo by Michael Albans/Daily News