

Bonds seizes baseball's all-time home run record

Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants watches as career home run 756 clears the wall against the Washington Nationals 07 Aug at AT T Park in San Francisco, California, to break the record Hank Aaron had held for more than 30 years. Bonds, 43, clubbed the 3-2 pitch by Washington Nationals left handed pitcher Mike Bacsik into the right field seats with one out and nobody on in the fifth inning.

Barry Bonds seized the most hallowed record in US sport here Tuesday, completing a long, controversial climb to the top of Major League Baseball's all-time home run list with his 756th career homer. The 43-year-old San Francisco Giants slugger clubbed a 3-2 fastball by Washington Nationals left handed pitcher Mike Bacsik 435 feet into the right field seats in the fifth inning to break the record Hank Aaron had held for 33 years. He had tied Aaron's mark of 755 on Saturday in San Diego. Bonds had a sharp retort for critics who say steroid suspicions that cling to him taint his achievement. "This record is not tainted at all, not at all. Period," snapped Bonds, who has been linked to the BALCO steroid distribution scandal. His personal trainer, Greg Anderson, was among those convicted in the wake of the probe into the San Francisco-area lab fingered by authorities as the source of the designer steroid THG. Bonds has never tested positive for steroids and denied ever knowingly using performance enhancing drugs. While the doubts have left baseball fans divided about the seven-time National League Most Valuable Player's pursuit of history, his feat on Tuesday was the signal for unalloyed joy and delirious celebration in San Francisco. Bonds had singled and doubled off Bacsik earlier in the game. One pitch before the home run, Bonds hit a foul ball down the right-field line. Sensing they were on the brink of an unprecedented sporting spectacle, the crowd began chanting "Barry, Barry, Barry." Bonds gave them what they wanted, and raised both hands over his head in triumph after he connected with the pitch from Bacsik, who became the 446th pitcher to yield a home run to the Giants' superstar. "I knew I hit, knew I got it," Bonds said. "Whew, I'm just glad it's over." Bacsik stood still on the mound, not even turning to watch the flight of the ball. "I was trying to go down and away for a strike," Bacsik said. "I got the ball up over the middle of the plate in one of his sweet spots. Obviously he was swinging for a home run and he got it - congratulations." As Bonds approached second base, Nationals second baseman Ronnie Belliard clapped. On arriving at home plate, Bonds again raised both arms and pumped his fist. He hugged his 17-year-old son Nikolai, his teammates, two daughters, mother and wife. Bonds acknowledged the cheering crowd of 43,154, bowing and blowing kisses to each corner of the ballpark as fireworks exploded in the background. Willie Mays, No. 4 on the all-time home run list and Bonds' godfather, came out to embrace his godson, and Aaron, who had made it clear earlier this season he didn't care to be present for the moment, delivered a video tribute that was played on the center field scoreboard. "I would like to offer my congratulations to Barry Bonds on becoming baseball's career home run leader," Aaron said. "It is a great accomplishment which requires skill, longevity and determination. "Throughout the past century the home run has held a special place in baseball, and I have been privileged to hold this record for 33 years. "I move over now and offer my best wishes to Barry and his family on this historical achievement." Bonds said that message from the man who endured racial threats during his pursuit of the all-time home run mark of legendary Babe Ruth "meant absolutely everything." "When I saw Hank Aaron on the scoreboard that just made it," Bonds said. "He'll always be the home run king." After Aaron's message played, Bonds took a microphone and offered his thanks to the crowd and to his teammates. With his voice cracking, he thanked his late father, Bobby, a former Giants player who laid the foundation for Bonds' career. After the inning was over, Bonds walked to his position and raised his cap to the fans, turning to each section of the park. Then Giants manager Bruce Bochy replaced Bonds with Rajai Davis, Bonds walked back to the dugout to another standing ovation and the game continued without him, eventually going into the books as an 8-6 Washington victory. "It's pretty awesome," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "We're all very proud for him. It must have been very hard for him with all that he has gone through." Major League commissioner Bud Selig wasn't present at the game, but spoke with Bonds by telephone and issued a statement congratulating the player. "While the issues which have swirled around this record will continue to work themselves to a resolution, today is a day for congratulations on a truly remarkable achievement," Selig said. Matt Murphy of New York emerged from a scrum in the bleachers with the historic ball - which some memorabilia experts predict could fetch up to one million dollars - in his hand. The 22-year-old, who was wearing a New York Mets jersey, was hustled out of the right-center field section, flanked by a squad of San Francisco policemen. Murphy was en route to Australia with a friend and bought the ticket on a whim.

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