

Phillies: Sayonara, dynasty

By **WILLIAM C. KASHATUS**

WHEN THE Phillies lost to the Giants on Saturday night, they not only let a pennant slip through their hands, but also a dynasty that was theirs for the taking.

In baseball, "greatness" is determined by the ability of a team to repeat a championship performance. A team that captures two or more world cham-

pionships and three pennants in as many years is a "dynasty," and among the elite in baseball history.

The Phillies, the best team in baseball over the past three seasons, had that potential entering the postseason. They could have made history becoming the first NL team to win three straight pennants in 66 years. If they'd gone on to capture the fall classic as well, they'd be in the pantheon — but it wasn't to be.

However, I'm not as disappointed about the team's failure to make his-

tory as I am about the way they went down. Simply put: The Giants didn't beat the Phillies — they beat themselves. Elite teams don't do that. Here are the facts:

➤ The offense, which produced 2,371 runs and an astounding 604 home runs over the past three seasons, hit an anemic .200 and stranded 45 runners on base.

➤ Ryan Howard, the franchise player who slugged 124 homers and knocked in 395 runs over the past three seasons, didn't have a single RBI or home run during the NLCS.

➤ The leadoff hitters — Victorino, Utley and Rollins — hit a combined .190. Not only that, but they failed to draw walks or steal bases, imperatives for the top of the order.

While the pitching performed admirably, the offense was pathetic. That's more of a reflection of the Phillies' poor hitting than the Giants'

pitching and fielding, which looked pretty vulnerable at times. The Phils just weren't as hungry as they've been in past postseasons.

Last season at this time I was saying, "Wait 'til next year!" But my gut tells me that this may be the beginning of the end for this team.

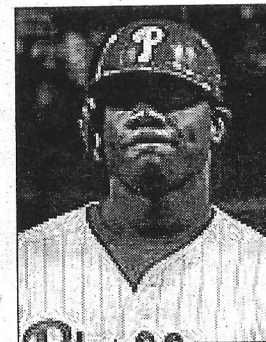
Jayson Werth, the Phils' most productive postseason player, is a free agent. All indications point to him signing with another team for much more money than the Phillies will offer. With him goes Howard's protection in the batting order and the team's best right-handed power hitter.

Rollins and Utley are showing the effects of age and their extremely physical play. Both already spent considerable time on the disabled list this year, which doesn't bode well for the future.

The outfield looks just as shaky with an aging Raul Ibanez, who struggled at the plate all season, and an unproven commodity in Domonic Brown, who will inherit Werth's place in right field.

The strength of the team will continue to be its starting pitching — Roy Halladay, Roy Oswalt and Cole Hamels, our "H2O." But if the team has trouble scoring runs, it doesn't matter how well any of the starters perform.

Unless the front office addresses these concerns, this Phillies team will be remembered for having a good run. Just not good enough to



Have Phils, like Ryan Howard, struck out?

make history. ★

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