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Ryan still hot after 21 years in the majors

MILWAUKEE (AP) — At age 42, Nolan Ryan could be working his cattle ranch in Texas instead of working over big league hitters as he has done the past 21 years.

But pitching is more profitable, especially when neither you nor your fastball show signs of slowing down.

Even at that, there seems little left to accomplish — save another World Series championship — for the new-est member of the Texas Rangers, whose biography and accompanying records occupy 10 pages in the press guide.

Ryan holds 41 major league re-cords, including most career strike-outs. He's thrown five no-hitters.

Who can top that? Maybe Ryan himself as he nearly did Wednesday night against the Milwaukee Brew-ers when he lost a bid for a sixth nohitter in the eighth inning.

But he got his first victory of the season and his ability to still domi-nate a game was evident from start to finish as he overpowered the Brewers with his 90 mph fastball and teased them with his changeup. He gave up only one hit in his eight in-nings, walking two and striking out a club-record 15, including six straight

at one point. "I would like to throw another nohitter," said Ryan, who has gone nearly eight years between hitless masterpieces. "But my attitude about it is if it happens, that's fine. That's not something you can work towards.

"My attitude is that last year I lost one in the ninth so I don't start anticipating those things. The main thing is to win the game," Ryan said. He is still working to relearn the

hitters in the American League, at least the ones still around from his last days with the California Angels in 1979 before he joined the Houston Astros.

The hitters must also learn Ryan. Some already know. Terry Francona knew Ryan from his playing days in the National League and he broke up the no-hit bid Wednesday night with an eighth-inning single.

"What's so impressive about him is when I faced him in 1981, '82 and '83, he threw a hard fastball and breaking balls. Now he's throwing changeups or whatever. I'd give him more credit except we have to face him next weekend," Francona said.

With 4,798 career strikeouts, Ryan is an unassuming millionaire. He signed a \$1.8 million contract as a free agent with the Rangers during the offseason.

"I don't make any predictions. I've been blessed with a good arm and body and I think the fact I've concentrated on proper mechanics and my conditioning routine is paying dividends," Ryan said.

'But I can't say I've done something different than other pitchers." Except strike out nearly 5,000 bat-

ters in a career that began with the New York Mets back in 1968.

"I've probably surpassed my expectations by 10 years," Ryan said. "I don't have any way of gauging how long I'll continue to pitch. At the end of the season, I'll evaluate how things went and how I feel physically and what the club's attitude is. Then I'll make a determination there.'

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Astros' early season attendance down from '88

HOUSTON (AP) — Attendance at the first nine Astros baseball games is down from a year ago, lead-ing to speculation that fans are still upset about the club's failure to keep hometown favorite Nolan Ryan.

That Ryan deal has a lot to do with it," said Astros fan Sal Ramirez of Sweeny. "You can just tell, it's club. mattered with the fans."

Through the Astros' first nine games this season, paid attendance has been 135,069, or an average of 15,007 fans per game. That's down 32 percent from last year's ninegame paid total of 197,892 - 21,988 average.

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Many fans blame the slow start on Astros majority owner John McMullen, who did not re-sign Ryan, the all-time strikeout leader who now pitches for the Texas Rangers. Some also blame him for not having or al-lowing general manager Bill Wood to make trades to strengthen the

Houstonian Glenn Miller said he has noticed different, less supportive attitudes toward the Astros early in the season. He suggested that the situation might improve if the Astros, now 3-6, play better baseball.

"As they say, winning solves a lot of problems. If the team gets back to" baseman Glenn Davis.

playing .500 ball, or a little better, people will start making it to the games," Miller said. But the loss of Ryan also is a fac-

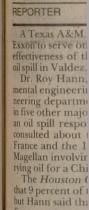
tor, Miller said. "A lot of people resented them letting him (Ryan) go. I invited a guy, a business friend out (to a game Wednesday), and he said, 'Hell, I'm boycotting them. Thanks, but no thanks'," Miller said.

Even some of the players believe that the loss of Ryan has not been quickly forgotten. "A lot of fans got disgusted by the Nolan Ryan situation. There are all binds of forst work in the state of the s

kinds of factors involved," said first

by Jeff Millar & Bill Hinds

MILLAR/HINDS GOT ANY PETE ROSE MEMORABILIA ? STEEL BASEBALL TR DING FAIR OVER THERE. TAKE MILLAR / HINDS NOW WE'RE GOING TO THE NEW WING OF THE BASEBALL HALL OF FAME FOR PLAYERS WHO'VE BEEN RELUCTANTLY ELECTED EXCLUSIVELY ON THE BASIS OF THEIR PLAY ON THE FIELD. SORRY, SPORT, CHILDREN NOT ADMITTED.



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