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Astros sweep Cardinals, extend lead in NL Central

By Micael A. Lutz
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — The Houston Astros just about ended the playoff chances of the Cardinals. Tim Redding combined with three relievers on a three-hitter and Craig Biggio drove in three runs as the Astros beat St. Louis 4-1 Sunday to complete a big three-game sweep.

Houston boosted its lead to two games over the Chicago Cubs and dropped the third-place Cardinals 5 1/2 games back with two weeks left in the regular season. The Astros and Cardinals play three more times in St. Louis next weekend.

"We came down here thinking we pretty much had to win two out of three," the Cardinals' Ken Robinson said. "That's our approach to every series, but it just didn't happen."

Redding (9-14) allowed one run and three hits in six innings. He had been 0-5 in six starts since being Florida on Aug. 1. The Astros scored an average of 1.6 runs in those losses.

Brad Lidge, Octavio Dotel and Billy Wagner each pitched one hitless inning, with Wagner getting his 43rd save in 46 chances, his 21st in a row.

Dan Haren (3-6) lost his fifth straight decision, allowing four runs and five hits in 3 2/3 innings. He is 0-4 in six starts since defeating Pittsburgh on Aug. 11.

2003 National League Standings

	CENTRAL			
	W	L	PCT	GB
Houston	81	68	.544	-
Chicago	79	70	.530	2
St. Louis	76	74	.507	5.5
Pittsburgh	68	80	.459	12.5
Milwaukee	64	84	.432	16.5
Cincinnati	64	85	.430	17

"You can't start talking about scenarios," Cardinals catcher Mike Matheny said. "We're not going to give up. The guys in here believe in each other, and that's what's gotten us this far, and it's going to continue to get us through the rest of this season."

It was the first sweep over the Cardinals for the Astros since a three-game series in April 1997.

"These games do end up counting more, because if you win three you're in great shape, and if you lose three you end up being in even more of a mess," Astros third baseman Morgan Ensberg said. "You have to put them away, and we did in this series. It was a great series for us."

St. Louis has lost four straight overall, dropping to just two games over .500 at 76-74.

"Obviously, it's going to be tough," Tino Martinez said. "But we're not out of it yet. We've got ... three more against these guys, so we've just got to stay in striking distance until they have to play us at home, and then maybe we can get back in it."

Houston outscored the Cardinals 20-6 and out-hit them 29-13 in the three-game series. The Astros are 10-5 against St. Louis this season.

They did everything better than we did," Cardinals manager Tony La Russa said. "I need to think we'd come in here and lose three, but we got to find a way to hit the page, and we will."

Lance Berkman tripled to start the second inning, scored on Rich Hidalgo's sacrifice fly, and Houston made it 2-0 in the third when Redding doubled and scored on Biggio's single.

Scott Rolen grounded into a run-scoring double play in the fourth. Biggio had a two-run single in the bottom half after Brad Ausmus singled and Adam Everett was hit by a pitch.

Notes: Jim Edmonds of the Cardinals is on a 1-for-22 slide. He had been hitless in 18 at-bats before a ninth-inning single Saturday. Haren hit Biggio at the start of the game. Biggio has been hit 24 times, tying Pittsburgh's Jason Kendall for the major league lead. This year's NL Central is the first division race in 20 years that has had three first-place teams in September: Houston, Chicago and St. Louis. In September 1983, Montreal, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia each led the NL East.

Arkansas whips up on Texas in upset

By Jaime Aron
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The Texas Longhorns woke up Sunday with a strange feeling. For the first time since most of them pulled on a burnt orange jersey, they faced the morning-after regrets of a home loss.

Texas was upset 38-28 Saturday by former nemesis Arkansas, ending a run of 20 straight wins at Royal Memorial Stadium. It had been the second-longest active streak in the country and goes down as the third-longest in school history, one shy of second place.

Kansas State was the last visiting team to win in Austin, doing so in October 1999 when fifth-year senior Bo Scaife was a true freshman. He's the only player who played in both losses; seven other current players redshirted that season.

"This is very weird," said receiver B.J. Johnson, a high school senior the last time it happened. "I don't know how to handle this."

Actually, the Longhorns (1-1) had nearly four quarters to prepare for it. They led only after their first drive, and not for very long as the Razorbacks (2-0) answered with a touchdown. They scored again on their next possession and led by at least a touchdown the rest of the way.

During the home winning streak, no team had scored more than 20 points. Arkansas had 21 at halftime. The Razorbacks finished with the most points by a visitor since October 1997 and became the first unranked foe to win in Austin since Texas Tech in November 1997.

Arkansas had only one three-and-out possession, that coming on its first drive of the second half. The Razorbacks had a 46-yard touchdown run and a 60-yarder that set up the game-sealing field goal. They forced three fumbles, scoring off the first two while the third ruined a Texas drive that had reached the Arkansas 10.

The Longhorns averaged only 2.1 yards on 29 rushes. Of their four touchdowns, one

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