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NATIONAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES: CARDINALS DEFEAT ASTROS 4 GAMES TO 3

NL CHAMPS



LAURIE SKRIVAN / POST-DISPATCH

Jim Edmonds makes a diving catch on a ball hit by Astros catcher Brad Ausmus with two men on base in the second inning.

Cardinals reach World Series for first time in 17 years

By JOE STRAUSS
Of the Post-Dispatch

After two games it seemed inevitable. After five it became improbable. After seven, it's real.

Thursday night inside packed Busch Stadium, the Cardinals finished off the Houston Astros, capturing a compelling National League Championship Series in seven games to forward themselves and their long-awaited fan base to their first World

Series since 1987.

Offered new life by Wednesday's 12-inning, 6-4 win off the bat of center fielder Jim Edmonds, the Redbirds followed through Thursday within a sea of red and white. On Saturday, they will stage a rematch of the 1967 World Series against the Boston Red Sox in Fenway Park. Busch Stadium will host its first game Tuesday in Game 3.

A Cardinals team that led the major leagues with 105 wins faces an angst-ridden

franchise that strongarmed its way past the New York Yankees by becoming the first team ever to rally from a 3-0 deficit in a best-of-seven series. The Red Sox last won a World Series in 1918 with a pitcher named Ruth. The Cardinals haven't won since 1982, when they played on a rug with a shortstop named Ozzie.

More than a month has passed since the Cardinals clinched the National League Central. Their magic number is once again four.

WORLD SERIES SCHEDULE

Game 1	Saturday, Oct. 23	at Boston	7:00 p.m.
Game 2	Sunday, Oct. 24	at Boston	7:10 p.m.
Game 3	Tuesday, Oct. 26	at St. Louis	7:30 p.m.
Game 4	Wednesday, Oct. 27	at St. Louis	7:25 p.m.
Game 5	Thursday, Oct. 28	at St. Louis	7:25 p.m.
Game 6	Saturday, Oct. 30	at Boston	6:55 p.m.
Game 7	Saturday, Oct. 31	at Boston	6:55 p.m.

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