

'Trade good for Richard, Padres

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SAN DIEGO — As Clayton Richard trots off the field following San Diego Padres batting practice, fans lean over the seats next to the dugout hoping to get an autograph.

Being that this happened to be Clayton Richard bobblehead day at Petco Park, Richard stops, smiles and signs a few dolls bearing his likeness before heading into the clubhouse.

Now a fan favorite, Richard's arrival in San Diego a year ago wasn't as welcoming. Padres fans were befuddled why the team traded 2007 National League Cy Young winner Jake Peavy to the White Sox for Richard and three pitching prospects.

This season, Richard has been a key to helping the Padres achieve their goal of reaching the playoffs. San Diego leads the NL West by 3½ games over San Francisco.

"They don't make that deal, none of this happens," said Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn, who has a statue outside of the stadium deeming him "Mr. Padre."

"They got guys that can really help, Clayton being the key piece. He's come to the National League and you can see the progression. He's throwing strikes and getting better and getting more confidence."

Richard has rewarded the Padres with a career year in his third Major League season. Richard is 10-5 and 15-7 since joining the Padres last July.

Meanwhile, Peavy is 10-6

RICHARD

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since joining the White Sox and is currently on the disabled list.

"Losing Jake was a gamble we took and it's definitely paid off for us," said relief pitcher Joe Thatcher, a Kokomo High School graduate.

Ask around the Padres' clubhouse and the word constantly related to Richard is workhorse.

Richard can't help it. Those values have been instilled in him and carried through all levels.

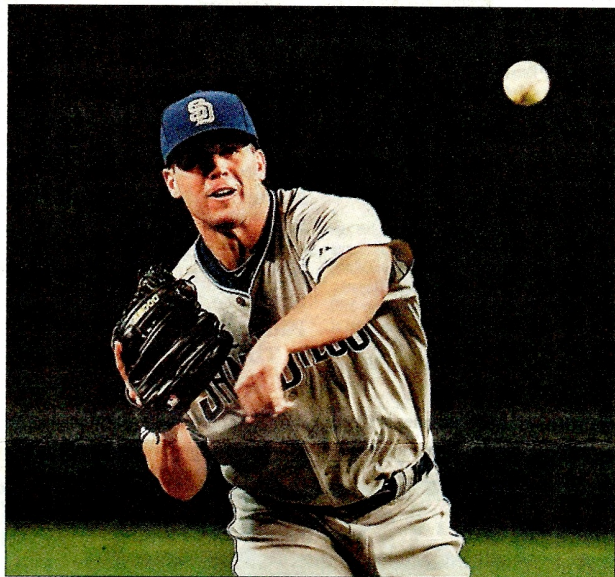
"It's something I grew up with," Richard said. "My dad was a real big component of strong work ethic. I applied that firsthand and, in baseball, it gives you an opportunity to be successful."

And so Richard and the Padres have worked to become baseball's surprise story.

Some analysts predicted San Diego would lose 100 games this season. The Padres knew in spring training that wouldn't be the case. They were alone.

"Everybody in the dugout are the only ones who thought that," Gwynn said. "I go back to spring training and people thought they were going to lose 100 games."

Gwynn believes trading for Richard helped bolster San Diego's starting rotation with a big left-hander



By The Associated Press

Clayton Richard has five more wins than former Cy Young Award winner Jake Peavy since the Padres' trade with the Chicago White Sox in 2009.

and filled out a deep pitching staff.

Defense has been San Diego's calling card this season. The Padres ranked 19th in runs per game entering Sunday's contest against Giants.

They also lead the majors in earned run average and batting average against and are second in strikeouts and shutouts.

"They pitch and play defense every night and that combination keeps you in ballgames," Gwynn said. "You can find a way to manufacture enough runs and that's what they've done."

"We haven't had a team like this. Very rarely is there a game where it gets out of hand. Every night the rota-

tion can mix and match it and get outs."

When Richard was traded to the Padres, he brought with him postseason experience, pitching in two divisional round games with the White Sox in 2008. Richard and Jon Garland are the only Padre pitchers with postseason experience.

Now leading the division with a month-and-a-half remaining in the season, the Padres hope to have several more joining that club.

"Last year at this time we were wishing we were in a position like this," Richard said. "It's cool to be in a position where we realize every game means something."

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