

Dodgers Ace Aims for More Than a World Series Title

Clayton Kershaw was his usual masterful self on Tuesday. In Game 1 of the 2017 Major League Baseball World Series, the Los Angeles Dodgers ace struck out 11 batters, gave up just three hits and walked no one. All night long, Houston Astros batters were off balance, and the Dodgers prevailed in a historic 3-1 win.

Any World Series is big, of course. But this year, the stakes are raised on the field and off. Los Angeles hasn't won baseball's October championship in three decades. Houston has never claimed the big trophy. That's a long time!

For Kershaw, as well as he pitches and as big as playing in the World Series is, more than a title is on the line. Yes, he loves to compete, and each pitch oozes with drama, but he has increased the stakes. Each time Kershaw strikes out a batter, he donates \$100 to Kershaw's Challenge, the Christ-centered, other-focused non-profit work he and his wife Ellen started. And he strikes out a lot of batters—202 in the regular season this year.

Kershaw's Challenge helps HIV-positive orphans in Zambia, orphans in the Dominican Republic and inner-city children in Texas and Los Angeles. They have worked with other charities, too, and annually host a gala fundraiser at Dodger Stadium called Ping Pong 4 Purpose. Jimmy Kimmel, Magic Johnson and George Lopez have participated.

Not only does Kershaw contribute \$100 for each batter he strikes out—and he is annually one of the league leaders in strikeouts—he also encourages others to do likewise. Kershaw's Challenge's motto is Strikeout to Serve. Other ballplayers—from professionals to little leaguers—have donated

\$1 or whatever they choose for every batter they strike out or every hit they get. The idea is that the better a player performs, the more he or she gives. Athletes from other sports have accepted and adapted the challenge too.

This year, a special-edition Clayton Kershaw World Series T-shirt is being sold at The T-shirt reads "Challenge Accepted" and features an artistic rendering of Kershaw, along with his iconic uniform number 22. Proceeds from the limited time sales go to Kershaw's Challenge.

Monday was media day as a leadup to Game 1 of the World Series. The first question to Kershaw noted his faith—reporters know where he stands. Kershaw's response: "Yeah, my faith is very important to me. That's the No. 1 reason I'm here."

For Clayton and Ellen Kershaw, their Christian faith has always been their driving force. A few years back, the couple wrote a book titled *Arise: Live Out Your Faith and Dreams on Whatever Field You Find Yourself From the Major Leagues to Africa*. About his faith, Clayton Kershaw wrote, "When I realized that I could have a personal relationship with God, I began relating to Him as a great King. I was blown away by His creation and goodness in the world."

Each year, Kershaw speaks at the Dodgers Faith and Family day, along with other Christian players such as Adrian Gonzalez, Logan Forsythe and former battery mate A. J. Ellis. In addition, Kershaw's Challenge () has teamed up with The Dream Center in Los Angeles, Behind Every Door in Dallas and Cure International. And they have just linked up with International Justice Mission to help raise awareness in the battle to combat human trafficking.

Ellen Kershaw echoes her husband's commitment to faith. Before game one, she said: "The Lord is gracious enough to allow our family to experience this joy right now. Praying we can

glorify Him with each pitch, post, game and hopeful win!"

The Dodgers and Astros play Game 2 tonight in at Dodger Stadium, then the best of seven series moves to Houston. If there is a Game 5, Kershaw will again accept the challenge—unless, of course, his team calls upon him to pitch earlier on short rest, which he has done before. Either way, if he pitches again in the series, there will be more strikeouts. That's why He is there.