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Team of Destiny!

By David Post

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The big news out of Washington DC this weekend was from Nationals Park, where one of the great moments in recent baseball history (not involving Derek Jeter) occurred on Sunday. It has persuaded me – and I thought I owed it to you all to let you know – that the Nationals have all the makings of the TEAM OF DESTINY – you know, the one that just really feels like it has the wind at its back heading into the postseason. It was the very last game of the regular season yesterday, and the game was completely meaningless in terms of the standings (the Nats having already locked up top spot in the NL). But the team has been on fire of late – winners of 16 of their last 20 games — and their 5 frontline starters (the best rotation, by far, in MLB) were a combined 12-0 since mid-September with a 0.80 ERA and something like 6 walks total; in their preceding 3 games they had pitched a 3-hitter (Doug Fister, 9 innings, 0 runs, 9 strikeouts), a 2-hitter (Stephen Strasburg, 6 innings, 0 runs, 7 strikeouts) and a 1-hitter (Gio Gonzalez, 7 innings, 0 runs, 12 strikeouts) ... so starter #4, Jordan Zimmermann, goes out Sunday and completes the series by pitching a no-hitter! An astonishing run – I can't remember one quite like it.

But that's not the amazing, ToD part. The amazing part was that in the top of the 9th the Nationals insert Stephen Souza – up from the minors a couple of weeks ago for the proverbial September cup of coffee – into the game in left field as a defensive replacement, and with 2 outs the batter smashes one to the gap in left center, a clear extra-base hit off the bat – and Souza makes the catch of a lifetime to preserve the no-hitter:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTl5gy3igsQ>

And that's the last play of the regular season. Whew. If momentum means anything in sports – and I think it does, if only because of the confidence it inspires in the players themselves – the Nats have been shot out of a cannon. It is close to unprecedented, I think. Nats are 9/2 to win the Series – those look like good odds to me, at this point. You heard it here first.

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