



**Cardinals GM Jockey has an eye for winners;
A builder of strong teams, a championship had been a dream since he was growing up in Minneapolis.**

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St. Louis, Mo. -- Walt Jockey is a company man in a company town. So, while he stood in the Cardinals' clubhouse late Friday night, celebrating a World Series title, he didn't spray champagne.

He sipped Budweiser.

That's one way to ensure job security in St. Louis, home of Anheuser Busch.

Another: being the general manager who engineered the Cardinals' first World Series since 1982.

As Jockey chatted in the middle of the clubhouse, the speakers cranked out illicit rap lyrics, and the players partied.

Jockey took another sip. "I come here," he said, "for the music."

Actually, he came here to do what he did Friday - win a championship.

That's been his goal since he was a kid growing up in Minneapolis. He and a buddy named Vic Perlbachs would play a baseball strategy game called APBA - American Professional Baseball Association.

"That's how I first knew I wanted to get into this business," Jockey said.

Growing up, he'd get the Sporting News, then known as the Baseball Bible, every Friday and read it cover to cover.

He knew he wouldn't make it to the big leagues as a player. He competed for a junior college before attending the U of M. He got married at age 20, realized he would need a real job, and became general manager of the White Sox Class AAA team in Des Moines when he was 25.

He cut his teeth while moving through the Oakland A's organization, spent a year in Colorado working under former Twins executive Bob Gebhard, and in 1994 became the Cardinals' 11th general manager, about the same time Terry Ryan was taking over the Twins.

Now he's the third-longest-tenured GM in the game, and he's maintained a remarkably low profile for someone of his accomplishments.

Twice he's been named baseball's executive of the year. He's built teams that have won 105 and 100 games. He was instrumental in bringing in manager Tony La Russa, with whom he worked in Oakland. He has traded for Mark McGwire, Scott Rolen, Jim Edmonds and Chris Carpenter; he signed David Eckstein and presided over the rise of Albert Pujols.

The pitchers who won Games 2, 3 and 4 were Carpenter, Adam Wainwright and Jeff Weaver. Jockey signed Carpenter before the 2003 season, even though Carpenter wouldn't pitch that year because of Tommy John surgery.

Carpenter was only average in Toronto, but Jockey saw something he liked, and Carpenter has gone 51-18 with a 3.10 ERA for the Cardinals and will probably win the Cy Young this year.

Jockey traded for Wainwright when the pitcher was a starter in the Braves' organization; Wainwright became the Cards' closer when Jason Istringhausen got hurt near the end of the season, and he struck out Carlos Beltran to save the NLCS.

Weaver was considered a headstrong underachiever with the Angels in July. They were ready to get rid of him, so Jockey traded them an outfield prospect on July 5.

Weaver became the extra starter the Cardinals needed in October. Friday, he allowed one earned run in eight innings and won the World Series clincher.

"I thought he had tremendous upside," Jockey said. "And the way he pitched [Friday night], you could see him winning the Cy Young next year."

When Jockey took over as general manager, he took his key aides to old Busch Stadium for a tour he hoped would be significant for more than nostalgia.

"We went and looked at all the old flags, the ones for the championships," Jockey said. "We even counted them. There were nine. That's why I talked about the importance of winning the 10th, and winning it with our manager wearing No. 10. That's what people have been waiting for around here for a long time.

"I'm very happy for Tony."

Jockey hasn't done bad for himself, either. He grew up playing with baseball cards and wound up winning the World Series with the Cardinals.

"This," he said, before taking another sip of Budweiser, "is very satisfying for all of us."

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