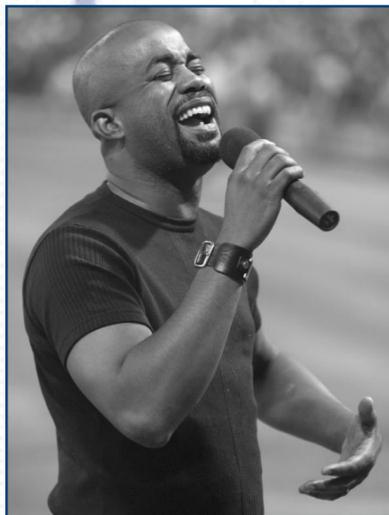


Astros honor their namesakes

Baseball and spaceflight came together on April 1 as the STS-107 crew was honored at the Houston Astros' home opener. Families and friends of the STS-107 crew simultaneously threw out seven first pitches to start the Astros' 2003 season, during which the players are wearing the STS-107 mission patch on their uniforms.

The pregame tribute also included a live performance by Patti LaBelle, who sang NASA's anthem "Way Up There" while footage of the STS-107 crew was shown on Minute Maid Park's video screen. NASA's Astronaut Corps and 107 Mission Representatives were also introduced, and the Expedition 6 crew greeted Houston baseball fans from the International Space Station. Another moving segment of the tribute was the national anthem sung by Darius Rucker. During Rucker's performance, Challenger, a trained bald eagle named for the orbiter that was lost in 1986, soared around the stadium. After all the pregame activities, the Astros went on to beat the Colorado Rockies 10-4.

The Houston Astros, formerly called the Houston Colt .45s, were renamed after NASA's Astronauts in 1965 because of Houston's importance to the space program. Nearly 40 years later, the team is still honoring those ties. NASA astronauts will visit some of the cities the Astros play in during the 2003 season to continue the mission of telling the world about the importance of space research, development and exploration. ❖



NASA JSC 2003e27660
Darius Rucker performs the national anthem.

Photos by James Blair



NASA JSC 2003e27620
Patti LaBelle sings 'Way Up There' during the opening ceremonies. The song was written for NASA by Tena Clark to serve as the Agency's anthem, as well as to commemorate the upcoming Centennial of Flight. However, since Feb. 1, the song has also served as a fitting tribute to the crew of STS-107.



NASA JSC 2003e27644
Evelyn Husband, wife of STS-107 Commander Rick Husband, displays an Astros jersey with her husband's name and mission number on the back to her son, Matthew. Each STS-107 crewmember's family received similar jerseys from the Astros.

NASA JSC 2003e27622
The Expedition 6 crew - Commander Ken Bowersox, NASA ISS Science Officer Don Pettit and Flight Engineer Nikolai Budarin - greet the spectators at Minute Maid Park from the International Space Station, while astronauts and Mission Representatives carry the American flag off the field.



NASA JSC 2003e27668
Friends and family of the STS-107 crewmembers deliver seven first pitches to begin the Astros 2003 season.

