

# Hank Aaron Is 'Man Of Hour' As Tonight's Game Is Seen Drawing Enthusiastic Crowd

## Nation Focuses Attention On Heroics Of 'The Hammer'

Hammering Hank Aaron is the man of the hour in Atlanta today as his home run-hitting feats, unsurpassed by any mortal, focuses national attention on this deep south city and the Atlanta Braves, who are expected to play before a large, enthusiastic crowd tonight.

Aaron, a Mobile, Ala. native, whose 20-year career in major league baseball has equalled the most distinguished records compiled over one-hundred years, today is literally and figuratively the toast of Atlanta, the nation and many faraway coun-

tries, where his heroics have been made known.

The Braves, who opened an 11-game home stand before a near - capacity crowd last night, will tangle with the Los Angeles Dodgers again tonight with the national spotlight on The Hammer, the team's big gun and superstar.

A crowd of several hundred fans showed up at the Atlanta Airport Sunday night to welcome the Atlanta Braves and Aaron home after the team opened the 1974 season in Cincinnati.

The crowd packed the airport terminal and cheered loudly as the team emerged from the plane. Many fans carried cameras and attempted to get photos of their favorite players.

But the man who has tied baseball's home run record, Hank Aaron, was the player in the spotlight. He belted the tying homer in Cincinnati last Thursday and 714 mark is now being shared with Babe Ruth.

Aaron is expected to break the record during the 11-day homestand against the Los Angeles Dodgers, Cincinnati Reds, and San Diego Padres.

The slugger had a chance to break the 39-year-old record in Sunday's game against the Reds when he was called out on strikes and he grounded out on his other appearance at the plate before leaving the game in the seventh inning.

Aaron talked about Sunday's performance.

"I played the tame today and I did the best I could," he said in the clubhouse. "I hope it was good enough."

Aaron started the game af-



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ter baseball commissioner Bowie Kuhn ordered Atlanta Braves manager Eddie Mathews to play the 40-year-old star Sunday. Before Kuhn's order came down Mathews had indicated he would save Aaron until the Braves begin an 11-game homestand.

"I'm satisfied that we won the game today," said Aaron. "Although I did the best I could, I was not satisfied with my performance."

In Aaron's first two trips to the plate he struck out on three straight pitches from Reds' righthander Clay Kirby. Aaron took called third strikes both times.

Asked whether baseball fans might wonder about taking the third strikes, Aaron replied, "I can't help what people think."

Aaron, who tied Ruth's record with a home run in the season opener in Cincinnati Thursday, argued briefly with home-plate umpire Tom McSherry after being called out on strikes in the first inning.

"I told him that I thought the pitch was low," Aaron said.

Aaron said he had been fooled by Kirby's pitches the first two times at the plate.

"I wasn't guessing right," he explained. "On the first two times up I guessed fastballs and he threw sliders."

In Aaron's final time at bat in the fifth inning he fouled off a pitch before bouncing out to third baseman Don Briessen.