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Jones signs autographs prior to rainout

Sunday, April 15, 2007 3:12 AM EDT
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By David Friedlander

Cherokee Tribune Sports Writer
 MARIETTA - Andruw Jones didn't have much to do at Turner Field with the postponement of the Atlanta Braves' game against the Florida Marlins on Saturday night.



Earlier in the day, however, the Braves' Gold Glove outfielder's writing hand got a major workout by signing autographs for hundreds of fans as part of the grand opening of the SOHO Hero Meeting Center in east Cobb.

The event also served as a fundraiser for Jaden's Ladder, a post-shelter program for domestic violence victims Jones' wife, Nicole, works with and supports.

"Our business is about connections," said Chris Kouloukas, founder of SOHO Hero, a company with 30 locations throughout the Southeast designed to provide a more comfortable and creative atmosphere for people with small businesses or home-based businesses.

"One of our public relations people knows an event planner, who knows another event planner, who knows Andruw's wife. So, it was like four degrees of separation.

"This event was about local contributions, and we wanted an Atlanta-based organization to benefit."

Judging from the turnout - fans arrived as early as 7 a.m. for the noon-2 p.m. session in which Jones was present to sign autographs - Jared's Ladder received major contributions from the community, something both Joneses were pleased to see.

"It means a lot," Nicole Jones, a Smyrna native and 1995 graduate of Pebblebrook High School in Mableton, said of the turnout. "A good friend of ours, Anita Bobbit, approached us in 2002, and we like the charity."

The event proved to be a nice break, as well, for Andruw Jones, who is off to

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a slow start (.189, 2 HR, 5 RBIs) even though the Braves have won seven of their first 10 games.

But Jones points out he has always been a slow starter, and he is confident his swing will soon come around.

"I'm not a big-start guy," the Braves' center fielder said. "It's a long season, and I've got to keep going out there and try and make adjustments so I can finish strong. Right now, I'm working on my balance and rhythm."

Today's series finale against Florida will mark a big day for Jones, who will be one of several players around the major leagues to switch jerseys and wear the number 42 to honor the late Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson and commemorate the 60th anniversary of his integrating the majors.

"It's a big honor," Jones said. "(Robinson was) the one who broke the (color) barrier that gave all African-American and Latin-American players a chance to play (major league) baseball. (The league) just came and asked me to do it, and I was happy to."

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