

## Reds' Baker in good health as new season starts

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By GARY SCHATZ

The Associated Press

GOODYEAR, Ariz. — Reds manager Dusty Baker has watched his diet and gotten plenty of rest, the main changes in his lifestyle since his health scare late last season.

Baker was in a hospital in Chicago when the Reds clinched the NL Central title last season, getting treatment for an irregular heartbeat and a mini-stroke. He was back in time for the playoffs, which ended with a first-round loss to San Francisco.

The 63-year-old manager acknowledged that he wasn't feeling all the way back to normal when he returned to the dugout. "I didn't really know how to feel," Baker explained. "All I know is I wasn't myself but I was better than most."

After the Reds were eliminated in a 5-game series, Baker returned home to California and had more tests. He's made a few changes in his lifestyle.

"I always took care of myself but now you're really aware of what you eat, how you sleep and stuff like that," Baker said. "I lost weight by being sick but once you do lose weight by being sick, it's up to you to keep it off. I didn't really change what I eat but I eat less of it."

He works out every day, makes sure he gets enough rest and tries to manage the stress of his job. He said the toughest part of the offseason was living in an area with so many fans of the Giants, who overcame a 2-game deficit to beat the Reds and went on to win the World Series.

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"Everywhere I went there were Giants caps and Giants jackets," Baker said. "So many people came up to me and said, 'I root for you unless you play the Giants.' After a while, you say, 'Come on.' You don't get over it that fast."

Baker had surgery for prostate cancer in 2001 but had been otherwise healthy. He noted the most difficult part was being in the hospital at the end of last season, when the Reds clinched the division title at home. He also found it tough to have his 14-year-old son, Darren, visit him.

"It was hard to be in bed then," Baker said. "It was hard to have my son see me in bed. My son had never seen me sick at all. I was sick — I had cancer — but he was 3 years old. I never saw my dad sick — only at the end. My dad never missed a day of work. I didn't think my dad got sick. I thought the flu skipped over our house."

Owner Bob Castellini awarded Baker a 2-year contract extension at the end of last season, giving the manager a chance to try for his third division title with the Reds.

"I appreciate Mr. Castellini giving me an extension when he didn't have to," Baker added. "I appreciate my team. I appreciated how they reacted and responded."

"I don't worry about my health. There isn't much that scares me. I'm really not scared of dying. I am scared of leaving my son and my wife."