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Martin pledges clean water worldwide

LA catcher donating $600,000 to foundation fighting poverty

By Ken Gurnick / MLB.com

LOS ANGELES -- Russell Martin is tackling something even more daunting than his season-long offensive slump.

The Dodgers catcher Thursday announced he will donate $600,000 over the next 10 years to the ONE DROP Foundation, whose mission is to fight poverty by supporting access to clean water. The foundation, Martin explained, also seeks to raise awareness of water-related issues and of the need to get involved to ensure that good quality water is accessible to all in sufficient quantity.

Martin's announcement coincides with the launch of his official Web site, www.russellmartin55.com. Martin's Web site will highlight his career as a professional baseball player as well as his efforts to support the ONE DROP Foundation and his local community efforts with the Dodgers. The site will feature a blog, contests, and links to the ONE DROP Foundation as well as videos of his future visits to foreign countries on ONE DROP projects.

"We take water for granted, but there are people around the world struggling to get it and that's unacceptable to me," said Martin.

He discovered a connection with the cause after hearing about the goals of ONE DROP's founder, Guy Laliberte, like Martin a native of Montreal who is best known as founder of Cirque du Soleil. Martin, who is earning $3.9 million this year but does not have a multiyear deal, said he feels good about the donation he's made.

"You start making money and you can give it to wherever you want, but I wanted something close to my heart," he said. "I was thinking about what I can do to help ever since I got called up. I wanted to find something important to me. It doesn't get more important than water, and when you think about it, some people don't have it."

Martin made the announcement at a Dodger Stadium news conference flanked by his father, model/girlfriend Marikym Hervieux and agent Matt Colleran. Hervieux's sister, Valerie, is married to former Dodgers pitcher Eric Gagne.

Then Martin went out to take batting practice, while manager Joe Torre fielded questions about the two-time All-Star's batting slump. He's hitting .236 with no homers and 20 RBIs.

"He's working hard on the other end and doing a good job with that," said Torre of Martin's defense. "We talked today. He continues going out and understanding it's not a lot of fun right now, but we're winning our share of games, and that helps. His throwing is much better and we're trying to get better at holding runners on."

Ken Gurnick *is a reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.*

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