Bonds' bat helps Bucs close to within one in NLCS

PITTSBURGH (AP) - First, Barry Bonds opened up his mind. Then he turned on his bat.

With his career in Pittsburgh down to possibly one game. Bonds sparked a four-run first with a key double, and later added a big single and a fine catch. He went 2 for 5 and more than anyone else pumped up the Pirates to a 7-1 victory over the Atlanta Braves on Sunday night, closing Pittsburgh to 3-2 in the NL playoffs.

"I didn't want my season to end the way it seemed it was going to end," said Bonds, who spent a long time talking with manager Jim Leyland Saturday night. "Jim said, 'What do you have to lose? Go for the gusto and just think positive.'

Bonds was 1 for 11 in the series. Even worse, he was 8 for 56 in three playoffs with Pittsburgh, a .146 average, and a record 0 for 28 with runners on base.

"Basically, I felt really bad for my team," Bonds said. "I couldn't believe it was happening three years in a row. It was something I couldn't explain."

Bonds was in a funk. After the Game 4 loss he talked with Leyland for about 1 1/2 hours

"He feels bad," Leyland said. "He feels, obviously, like he let me down, he let the club down. And I told him that wasn't the case."

Bonds' wife, Sun, thought her husband was so down that she called ex-teammate Bobby Bonilla on Sunday morning. Bonilla, who left the Pirates as a free agent last winter, flew from his home in Greenwich, Conn., and talked to Bonds about two hours before the game.

"Don't try to force any issue," Bonilla recalled telling Bonds. "Just let things happen."

'He's my best friend in the whole wide world," Bonds said of Bonilla after the visit

In the first, Bonds' long double gave Pittsburgh a 2-0 lead. He singled and scored Pittsburgh's fifth run in the third inning. And he hit a long fly in the sev-

It could have been the last games as Pirates for Bonds and Doug Drabek, the loser in Games 1 and 4. Both are eligible for free agency following the World Series

"I know Pittsburgh's a great place to play," Leyland said. "But if somebody can get \$10 million, I can't tell them to stay just because the Allegheny and Monongahela form the Ohio.'

Leyland said his talk with Bonds was emotional.

"It was a discussion of a lot of years in Pittsburgh. It was a father-son talk. I didn't know it was news until my wife heard it on television."

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