

Alex Rodriguez

Interview by Marvin R. Shanken



Being booed at Yankee Stadium

“There’s nothing worse than getting booed by 56,000 people at home. Those who say they don’t hear it are bullshitting you. They hear it, and it doesn’t feel good.”

Building A Business

“It started out of fear. The average career is five and a half years for baseball. You make 90 percent of your lifetime earnings from ages 20 to 30. Of the 750 players in the Major Leagues, less than five percent have a college degree. I’m not a stock broker, but with that information alone I would short that stock.

I didn’t want to be one of those numbers.”

His Suspension

“I needed to heal physically and emotionally. My mind was a mess. I was exhausted and I needed to rest. I wanted to understand why I kept beating myself up. I was a pretty good guy making dumb decisions. I wanted to dig into my childhood. My father left when I was 10 and I wanted to get a grip on that.”



When his father walked out, leaving his mother Lourdes to support the family, the young Rodriguez watched his mother work two jobs, struggle with the rent, and was determined to use his budding athletic talents to give her a better life. A star in high school, he skipped college as he was drafted No.1 by the Seattle Mariners at age of 17. In 22 seasons he amassed statistics that are the stuff of a legend: 696 home runs, 2,086 runs batted in, 14 times named an All Star. Only three men have hit more career home runs. No one has hit more grand slams. His efforts were rewarded with record contracts with the Texas Rangers and New York Yankees; he and the Yankees tasted victory when they won the 2009 World Series. At times, he struggled in the bright light of superstardom and his salary made him a target for criticism. Major League Baseball suspended him for the 2014 season for steroid use; he returned to the Yankees in 2015 with a new perspective on life and played his final game on August 12, 2016. Rodriguez is back in the public eye as an acclaimed analyst talking baseball on Fox and ESPN, he appears on, Shark Tank, and he is engaged to superstar Jennifer Lopez. A savvy investor he bought his first piece of real estate as a young athlete; today A-Rod Corp., manages more than 15,000 apartment units, among other business ventures.

Shanken: Everyone knows who you are. Nobody knows who you are.

Rodriguez: In my playing days, pre-suspension, they’re both accurate. Post-suspension, people are getting to know me better. I played 25 years just wanting to hit home runs and help my team win championships. Pre-suspension/post-suspension, I knew I had to make a paradigm shift because someone else was telling my story. I made mistakes, but I wasn’t a bad guy. I was portrayed as a bad guy. I needed a year to understand that I better take control of my life and my narrative. Tell my story good, bad or ugly be real, honest, and take my chances. People hate you and it’s not even you. At least be myself. If they are going to hate me, hate the real me. You are an average of the five people you hang out with the most. I say surround yourself with great people.

Shanken: What about the Hall of Fame?

Rodriguez: You have to follow rules. I made mistakes, and I have to live by the mistakes. Whether I get in or not, and let’s be clear, I want to get in, I hope I get in, I pray I get in... if I don’t, I have a bigger opportunity; the platform of my mistakes has allowed me to have a voice to the next generation, to say when in doubt, just look at my career. The other message is, maybe I’m not a Hall of Fame player, but I get a chance to be a Hall of Fame dad, a Hall of Fame friend.

Shanken: You were traded to the Red Sox instead, of the Yankees in 2004.

Rodriguez: True story. We went through a plan of the organization, the team, how it looks today, how will it look in the future, we did mock lineups. The deal was done. We took it to the union, they said, “There is no way you can concede giving this money back, it will set a bad precedent,” they basically kiboshed the whole thing.

Shanken: Let’s talk about the women in your life.

Rodriguez: I’m big into women empowerment; women equality. That started watch-

ing my mother for years. So much respect and admiration. I wish she had more power growing up. I have a sister and two daughters. I want them to aim for No.1, for CEO, for president, don’t concede that job or power. At my company women have a seat at the table, my two highest-paid employees are women and I love it. Jennifer... when you talk about power and beautiful, inside and outside. The way she mothers her twins, and way she is with my daughters. So much admiration. I love how genuine she is and how much she does and how she inspires others. Both of us are New York kids; she was born in the Bronx. I was born in Washington Heights. We are both Latinos, she is Puerto Rican, I am Dominican. We have been through a lot over the years, good and bad. We are both in our 40s now and feel like we have an opportunity to give back.

Shanken: The University of Miami has a baseball stadium with your name on it.

Rodriguez: I grew up loving Ron Frazier the legendary [baseball] coach there. I didn’t have money to go to games and the older ushers there couldn’t see well. So we’d jump over the fence in the right field corner. If we were in by four o’clock we’d stay until midnight, watching Hurricanes baseball. We did this for a long time. I figured [Shanken laughs, you owe them...] when I could give a donation, I wanted to give it to name the field Alex Rodriguez.

Shanken: Growing up first in New York, then Dominican Republic and Miami...

Rodriguez: New York was a great place to be a young boy. I was sad when we went to the Dominican Republic, but my mother wanted a safer environment. I had a great time there. My parents were happy. A lot of my baseball DNA came in those four years. It made me gritty and appreciate things. Around nine I joined the Boys & Girls Club [in Miami]. I thought I had walked into Princeton or Harvard. They had new balls, great aluminum bats. I was so happy and grateful. It was the start of my formal baseball life.

Shanken: Tell me about Eddie Rodriguez.

Rodriguez: Eddie Rodriguez was and still is the director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Miami. He was the first coach I had in Miami. They call him, The Rooster, in Spanish El Grillo; he was tough love day one. In many ways like Lou Piniella, my first manager in pro sports. Eddie is a hero; he’s dedicated to Boys & Girls Clubs. We’ve had over 25 Major League Baseball players come from his program. I had two or three father figures in my life. Eddie Rodriguez is No. 1. I love him.

Shanken: How would you like to be remembered?

Rodriguez: I think, someone that has been through a lot. Has accomplished a lot. Has made great mistakes, but he refused to be defined by those mistakes. ■

For more on Alex Rodriguez visit Cigar Aficionado which offers a Front Cover profile on this baseball legend along with incredible video clips. Launched in 1992, Cigar Aficionado is the definitive lifestyle magazine for men. CigarAficionado.com. Watch Shanken News Daily and Shanken’s Impact Newsletter.