

# 'Sad day': 1984 Tiger Dave Bergman dies at 61



By Anthony Fenech, Detroit Free Press

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*Bergman played first base, outfield for Tigers from 1984-92, won World Series in '84*



(Photo: Julian H. Gonzalez, DFP)

Of all the on-field memories Dave Bergman shared, and all the off-field contributions he made to the game of baseball and its youth over the years, the former Tigers first baseman will be most remembered for this scene.

June 4, 1984. ABC's "Monday Night Baseball." Tiger Stadium.

The Blue Jays, just a handful of games behind the Tigers in the American League East standings, were one strike away from escaping the bottom of the 10th inning in a tie game, in front of a packed crowd on national television.

"I remember it well," Alan Trammell said.

"I don't think anybody that followed us back then will forget that," Lance Parrish said.

And pitch after pitch after pitch — Bergman fell behind no balls and two strikes to Blue Jays reliever Roy Lee Jackson — that third strike never came.

"He fouled off 10 or 12 pitches," Parrish recalled.

And on the 13th, Bergman hit his first home run as a Tiger — a walk-off, three-run home run into the rightfield upper deck for a 6-3 win — a shot that is forever etched in team lore as one of the most memorable in the team's most recent World Series championship campaign.



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Flashback: Detroit Tigers' Dave Bergman's walk-off homer vs. Jays

(<http://www.freep.com/story/sports/mlb/tigers/2015/02/02/detroit-tigers-dave-bergman-toronto-blue-jays/22757811/>)

"That was Dave Bergman's moment," Trammell said. "It was just one of those magical moments that was so fitting for our team."

Bergman, the unsung hero of that 1984 team, died Monday after a three-year battle with bile duct cancer. He was 61.

"I loved Dave Bergman," Parrish said. "Everybody on the team loved him. He was a great friend and a great teammate.

"It's just a sad day. We know this battle has taken every ounce of strength and energy to fight. It's sad to see it turn out this way."

Bergman played nine seasons in Detroit — 1984-92 — and was a lifetime .258 hitter in 17 big-league seasons with the Yankees, Astros, Giants and Tigers.

He is most known for that 1984 season, when he hit .273 with seven home runs and 44 RBIs after joining the team as a little-known player in a three-team trade with the Phillies and Giants that spring.

"I'll be honest with you," former Tiger Tom Brookens recalled before the team's 30th anniversary celebration last summer. "When we traded (John) Wockenfuss and Glenn Wilson in the spring for a guy named Willie Hernandez and Dave Bergman, I thought, 'What the hell is going on here?'"



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Dave Bergman was beloved teammate, beat writer remembers

(<http://www.freep.com/story/sports/mlb/tigers/2015/02/02/dave-bergman-remembered/22778057/>)

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On the field, Bergman is remembered as the consummate professional.

"He was a leader," Parrish said. "A very intelligent man who played the game the way it is supposed to be played. He played very hard, and I just loved being on the field with him."

And off the field, he is remembered for his charitable contributions and philanthropic endeavors within the Detroit community.

"He was a class act," longtime friend and co-worker Robert Bilkie said. "A true professional. He was giving in his ways and he served the kids. Anybody that needed him, he'd go out of his way to help."

Bergman played a large role with the C.A.T.C.H. organization — a charity for kids founded by former manager Sparky Anderson — and youth baseball around the area, most notably the Grosse Pointe Redbirds youth baseball club, which he founded.

Bergman, a former partner and portfolio manager for Sigma Investment Counselors in Southfield, also was a board member of the Joe Niekro Foundation, which supports research and awareness for brain aneurysms. Niekro was a teammate of Bergman's with the Astros, and his best friend.

Trammell last saw Bergman on Jan. 24 at his home in Grosse Pointe Woods and although his health had taken a turn for the worse, "He sounded the same," Trammell said, especially when talking about Niekro's foundation.

"It just put a smile to my face to hear him talk about something so dear to his heart," he said.

Bergman had been doing some fundraising for the foundation and was planning an event in Detroit this summer.

"We're going to do it," he said. "Put it on your calendar.

Trammell said: "Even though he was going through this and he was dying, his mind-set was still to help his old buddy Joe Niekro and that just tells you a little bit in a nutshell the kind of person Dave Bergman is."

Bergman was drafted by the Yankees in the second round of the 1974 MLB draft.

He is survived by his wife, Cathy, and children, Troy, Bria and Erika.

Funeral arrangements have not been finalized and the family asks that memorial contributions be made to the Joe Niekro Foundation and Grosse Pointe Redbirds baseball organization.

"It is with heavy hearts we extend our condolences to the family of Dave Bergman," the Tigers said in a release Monday. "Dave was as spirited a person as he was a player. He will forever hold a special place in Tigers history for the versatile roles he played and his significant contributions as a member of the 1984 World Champion Tigers."

And none more so than that at-bat on a Monday night in extra innings, with Al Michaels, Howard Cosell and Earl Weaver on the call.

Anderson called it "the greatest at-bat in baseball history."

"It was getting near midnight," Bergman said. "Somebody had to get a hit."

So he did.

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