

Star-Telegram

Longtime Rangers clubhouse manager Joe Macko dies

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Former Rangers clubhouse manager Joe Macko was a club ambassador, which included talking to youth players at Dr Pepper Youth Ballpark in Arlington. PAUL MOSELEY / STAR-TELEGRAM

Longtime Texas Rangers clubhouse manager Joe Macko died Friday morning. He was 86.

Macko worked in professional baseball for 54 years before retiring from the Rangers in 2001. He played for 16 seasons in the minors, including two seasons with the Fort Worth Cats.

Macko spent the last 29 years of his career as a clubhouse manager for the Rangers, first in the Rangers' clubhouse from 1973 to 1994 and in the visitors' clubhouse from 1995 to 2001.

"He was always proud of the fact that he played," his son Mike Macko, of Arlington, said. "I think that that certainly gave him credibility in the clubhouse. A lot of those guys recognized that he played professionally for a long time, too, and he could relate to what they were going through."

Macko was born in Port Clinton, Ohio, in 1928. In 16 minor league seasons, he hit 306 home runs with a career .272 batting average. He hit a career-high 37 homers in 1956, playing for the San Diego Padres and Dallas Eagles in the minors. Macko also pitched for parts of four seasons, compiling an 11-7 record with a 3.70 ERA in 37 appearances, including 15 starts.

He hit 11 home runs in major league spring training for the Indians one year but never got called up.

"I remember him talking about being in camp with Bob Feller," Mike Macko said.

Longtime *Star-Telegram* columnist Jim Reeves first met Macko in the mid-1960s. Reeves was a 19-year-old cub reporter at the time.

"He treated me like a friend and with respect," Reeves said. "He was just a prince of a human being."

Randy Galloway, another longtime sportswriter, columnist and radio personality, called Macko a dear friend for decades.

"Joe was the nicest guy you'll ever meet. He was the most generous guy you'll ever meet," Galloway said. "No one liked to have more fun than Joe. He crammed a lot of value in his 86 years."

Macko managed four minor league teams while still an active player: the Tulsa Oilers (as interim) in 1955, the St. Cloud Rox in 1961, the Wenatchee Chiefs in 1962 and 1964, and the Amarillo Gold Sox in 1963. Among players he managed were Lou Brock and Roger Maris.

Before his playing days were over Macko was business manager and general manager for the Dallas-Fort Worth Spurs in the Texas League from 1965-71.

He was the Rangers' first business manager when the club moved to Arlington from Washington in 1972.

"He was just a wonderful, kind man," former Rangers catcher Jim Sundberg told MLB.com. "He cared about the guys he served as clubhouse manager. He had a kind, loving family. He will be missed. His big hands, all his rings, his big bat ... he really took care of rookies when we broke into the big leagues, helped make it a softer transition. He loved the Rangers, he was an ambassador to the Rangers. He loved the Rangers and he loved his family."

The Rangers paid tribute to Macko in a statement.

"The Rangers organization is deeply saddened by today's passing of Joe Macko," the statement read. "Joe was a loyal and dedicated member of this franchise for more than four decades. Joe made hundreds of players feel at home in the home and visiting clubhouses at old Arlington Stadium and the current Globe Life Park in Arlington. In his later years, Joe made numerous public appearances on behalf of the team, and he was the ultimate goodwill ambassador. He spent more than 40 years promoting the Texas Rangers, and we will always be indebted for his exemplary service to the organization."

In August, the Rangers paid tribute to Macko with a plaque in the service concourse at Globe Life Park, halfway between the home and visitors' clubhouse.

"One of the neatest things for him was when he moved to the visiting side that was about the time when a lot of the guys he [managed] as players became managers," Mike Macko said. "So they came through as managers then, like Buddy Bell and Mike Hargrove, guys he was close to as players and he got to spend more time with them later on their careers when they were doing something different."

Macko's eldest son, Steve, reached the majors with the Cubs in 1979-80 but died of cancer in 1981.

Macko is survived by daughter Karen and husband Josh Wells, daughter Linda and husband Chris Eadler, and son Mike and wife Brooke. He had two grandchildren, Jay and Lindsey Eadler. His wife, Dorothy, died in 2007.

Services are pending.

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