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Joe Macko, the minor-league great who became the Rangers' 'goodwill ambassador,' dies at 86


Robert Wilonsky [Twitter](#) [Email](#)

Published: December 26, 2014 1:29 pm



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John F. Rhodes/Staff photographer

Joe Macko, taking in a Texas Rangers-Baltimore Orioles at the Rangers Ballpark

Video



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in Arlington in 2009

Joe Macko, a 306-home-run hitter in the minors and [the Texas Rangers' longtime "goodwill ambassador,"](#) died today at the age of 86, according to team spokesman John Blake. Says Blake via Twitter on this day after Christmas, "The club extends its deepest sympathies to Joe's family."

Macko was part of the Rangers family for a long time, having served as the home equipment manager from 1973 through '94, when he moved over to running the visiting team's clubhouse. He did that through 2001 before becoming, for some, the face of the franchise.

But his roots in Dallas baseball extend far deeper than his behind-the-scenes stint with the Rangers.

[A minor-league lifer dating back to his 1948 stint with the Batavia Clippers of the Pennsylvania-Ontario-New York League,](#) the Port Clinton, Ohio, native made several stops through here as a first and third baseman for the Dallas Eagles in the early 1950s.

He first played for the Eagles in 1951, just for a month, then returned the following year, when the Eagles won the Texas League title. After a stint with the Los Angeles Dodgers' minor-league team in San Diego, he came back to Dallas in '56, when the Eagles were the New York Giants farm team. Macko was brought into replace Bill White, who by then had gone up to the big club. He hit 36 home runs in 125 ball games that year, leading a team full of guys who'd go on to play in the majors.

[As he told me 16 years ago,](#) Macko didn't mind being a minor-leaguer. Better that than not playing ball at all.

"Nowadays, if guys don't make it in three, four years, they're done," Macko said. "They don't stick around like we did. The biggest reason is money. Our hearts were in baseball. There's probably still that love in some of the guys out there today, but a lot love the game because the money's good. My first years, we got \$150 a month and then \$200 a



Dallas History & Archives Division/Dallas Public Library

Joe Macko, at left wearing No. 24, gets a hug from Dallas Eagles owner Dick Burnett after the 1952 Eagles took the Texas League pennant.

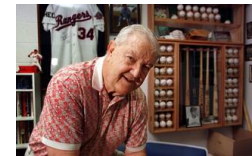
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Photos



Tom Fox/Staff photographer

Joe Macko may be gone. But this plaque in main underground tunnel near the elevators at Globe Life Park in Arlington will be there as long as the ballpark is.

month, and I played semi-pro basketball in the winter to play baseball in the summer.”

He played until '64, wrapping up his ball-playing career with the faraway Wenatchee Chiefs — one of more than a dozen stops between here and there, including some time in the late '50s with the Fort Worth Cats.

After ball, he went to work selling Hamm's beer — or, as he told our Kevin Sherrington in 2009, “I was the dancing bear.” And that got old quick, he said: “I got tired of

drinking beer in the morning.” He got back into ball in 1970 with a short-lived stint playing for the Dallas-Fort Worth Spurs, who called Turnpike Stadium in Arlington their home. He played in four games, and went 0-for in 10 at-bats. Then he moved to the front office, first as business manager and then as general manager. But by 1971, Turnpike Stadium had a new team: the Washington Senators, rechristened the Texas Rangers. And that's how Joe Macko got to the big leagues.

Said Macko in 2009, eight years after he retired to become the goodwill ambassador, “I've had a lot of fun in this game.”



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Next Game

Thu, Mar 5

2:05 PM CT

Texas
Kansas City

Schedule / Results

Next Games

Date	Opp	Time
3/5	@ KC (p)	2:05 CT
3/6	vs. SF (p)	2:05 CT
3/7	@ Mil (p)	2:05 CT
3/8	@ ChC (p)	TBA
3/8	vs. Cle (p)	3:05 CT

[Full Schedule](#)

Individual Leaders

Leaders

AVG:	A. Beltre	.324
HR:	A. Beltre	19
RBI:	A. Beltre	77
SB:	L. Martin	31
W:	Y. Darvish	10
ERA:	C. Lewis	5.18

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Shawn Handelman

11 hours ago

I met joe when I was in Arlington on business for several months and hanging out at Tailgate Tavern. Joe was a wonderfully blessed man and kind as anyone I have ever met. I enjoyed his stories while sitting with him as did my fiancé. God bless you my friend, keep them entertained in heaven

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Michael Wallace

6 days ago

Watched him play at Burnett Field in the 50's. Visited a few times at "Smacko's" in Arlington. Once, when I was coaching a high school that was dismal in the equipment area, I called Joe. He told me, "I cannot donate anything to your school due to rules. But, come on out and let's see what we can do". I left with new catching gear, about 6 dozen batting practice balls, a set of bases and an old net. Great man passed away this week. A class act and loved the game.

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Scott Presnall

6 days ago

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Texas Rangers Stats

Texas Rangers Stats

View All Players | Last updated Sep. 30, 1:28 A.M. ET

Batting									
Player	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	
Adrian Beltre	148	549	79	178	33	1	19	77	
Alex Rios	131	492	54	138	30	8	4	54	
Leonys Martin	155	533	68	146	13	7	7	40	
Elvis Andrus	157	619	72	163	35	1	2	41	
Shin-Soo Choo	123	455	58	110	19	1	13	40	

Pitching									
Pitcher	W	L	Pct	G	GS	S	IP	K	E
J.P. Arencibia	0	0	-	1	0	0	1.0	0	0
Mitch Moreland	0	0	-	1	0	0	1.0	0	0
Spencer Patton	1	0	1.000	9	0	0	9.1	8	0
Derek Holland	2	0	1.000	6	5	0	37.0	25	0
Michael Kirkman	0	1	.000	12	0	0	5.2	3	0
Neftali Feliz	2	1	.667	30	0	13	31.2	21	0

Full Player Stats

AL West Standings

AL West				
Team	W	L	Pct	GB
X-LA Angels	98	64	.605	-
Y-Oakland	88	74	.543	10
Seattle	87	75	.537	11
Houston	70	92	.432	28
Texas	67	95	.414	31

Full Standings

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Joe proudly showed us his ALCS ring during the World Series. Hechuva nice guy.

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texantrent

7 days ago

He had another son, Mike, who was a class act as well. Played at Martin High School. A wonderful family. Joe will be missed.

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Richard Dowdy

7 days ago

His son Steve played third base for Baylor and unfortunately died from cancer. One of the best college third baseman ever to play the game in Waco. He made plays that would leave shaking your head. Like Joe he was just incredible. They are finally at rest together.
<https://www.facebook.com/MackoFund>

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Barry Crook

7 days ago

My condolences to the Macko family. Mr. Macko was a constant at my high school -- Bishop Dunne HS, where I went to school with his son Steve and his daughter Karen. Great folks!

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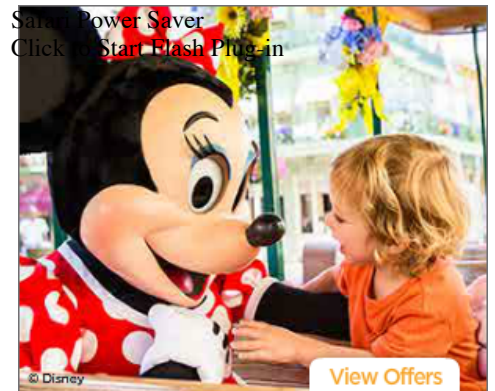


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