



Ken Rosenthal

# How Ripken's special night helped unite the Palmeiros

The baseball world crackled with anticipation on September 6, 1995, waiting for Cal Ripken to break Lou Gehrig's consecutive-games record. But as game time approached, **Rafael** Palmeiro stood nervously inside the Orioles' clubhouse, preoccupied with a more urgent matter. President Clinton was coming, and Palmeiro intended to speak with him. He wanted to get his brother out of Cuba, and he hoped the President would help.

Palmeiro had struck out with the Baltimore District Office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). He had struck out with Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Ballart, a Florida Republican. Now he was holding a letter addressed to Clinton, a letter explaining the plight of Jose **Palmeiro** Jr. Jose had stayed in Cuba to fulfill his military obligation when his parents and three younger brothers received permission from the Castro regime to emigrate to the United States in 1971.

"I thought we had a slight chance," **Rafael** says. "I wasn't giving it 50-50. I thought it was less than that. But that was an option we hadn't tried yet. We thought, it couldn't hurt."

On Ripken's historical night, the clubhouse was full of top government officials: Clinton, vice president Al Gore and national security adviser Anthony Lake, among others.

After meeting with **Palmeiro**, Clinton instructed Lake to inquire about Jose. "He was very open about it, very positive, willing to help," **Rafael** says of the former president.

It took roughly two years, but Jose, his wife and three children were allowed to leave Cuba in 1997. Clinton's intervention was necessary to expedite the move of Jose and his family, says **Palmeiro's** agent, Fernando Cuza. But according to Lake, the Clinton administration did not give Jose greater attention because his brother was a major league All-Star.

"We wanted to be very, very careful that we didn't do anything special for him compared to the others trying to get out," says Lake, who is now a professor of diplomacy at Georgetown. "Even for someone with that sweet a swing, you shouldn't play favorites."

"I limited myself to making inquiries, then getting back to him. Of course, an inquiry from the White House might have carried more weight, but I tried not to bend over backwards."

"Somebody did something. Somebody pulled some strings," says **Palmeiro**, who agreed to speak publicly only after Clinton left office last

January. "I'm not sure what happened, honestly." Jose, 49, now lives in Miami, working with the two other **Palmeiro** brothers—Rick, 37, and Andre, 34—in an electronics business.

**Rafael**, 36, left the Orioles after the 1998 season and rejoined the Rangers as a free agent. But his time in Baltimore was precious, and not simply because he produced the five greatest offensive seasons in club history. Playing for the Orioles helped bring his family together again.

**Palmeiro** first mentioned Jose to Orioles officials at a dinner in Baltimore's Little Italy shortly after signing with the team on December 12, 1993. Little did he know that Orioles owner Peter Angelos was a major Democratic contributor and that the 45-mile distance between Baltimore and Washington gave the team access to top politicians.

"We have a lot of prominent elected officials as well as prominent appointees that come up to games," says Joe Foss, the Orioles' vice chairman. "We took advantage of our proximity as much as anything to try to help out."

**Palmeiro** had a somewhat stormy departure from the Orioles, but he remains grateful to Foss and Angelos for assisting with Jose.

"Joe's efforts were genuine," **Palmeiro** says. "He wasn't doing it to score points. He was doing it to make a difference in my life. Peter was doing the same."

Foss accompanied **Palmeiro** and Cuza to the Baltimore INS office to inquire about bringing Jose and his family to the states. Cuza and **Palmeiro** later met in Washington with Diaz-Ballart, a prominent anti-Castro congressman.

"We hit a dead end everywhere we went," Cuza said. "Basically, all the congressmen and senators told us that you've got to go way above us to get permission. The waiting list is extremely long. And the INS kept changing its policy toward Cuba with regard to the waiting list."

But once the baseball strike of 1994 and '95 was settled, the countdown resumed for Ripken's 2,131st consecutive game—and a presidential visit to Camden Yards.

Cuza says it was his idea for **Palmeiro** to write a letter to Clinton. Foss says he helped **Palmeiro** draft the letter, which offered assurances that Jose would join the U.S. workforce.

"We didn't want the U.S. government to give us a handout, where all of a sudden he was on welfare," Cuza said. "**Rafael** proved that he had the financial means to take care of his brother and that his brother would be a taxpayer."

Everything was set. All **Palmeiro** needed was for Ripken to break the record, ensuring Clinton's presence at the park.

"Cal's night was very meaningful, not just for that reason," **Palmeiro** says. "That was the most incredible night in a lot of our careers. It just happened the President was in town, and I was able to push this through a little bit."

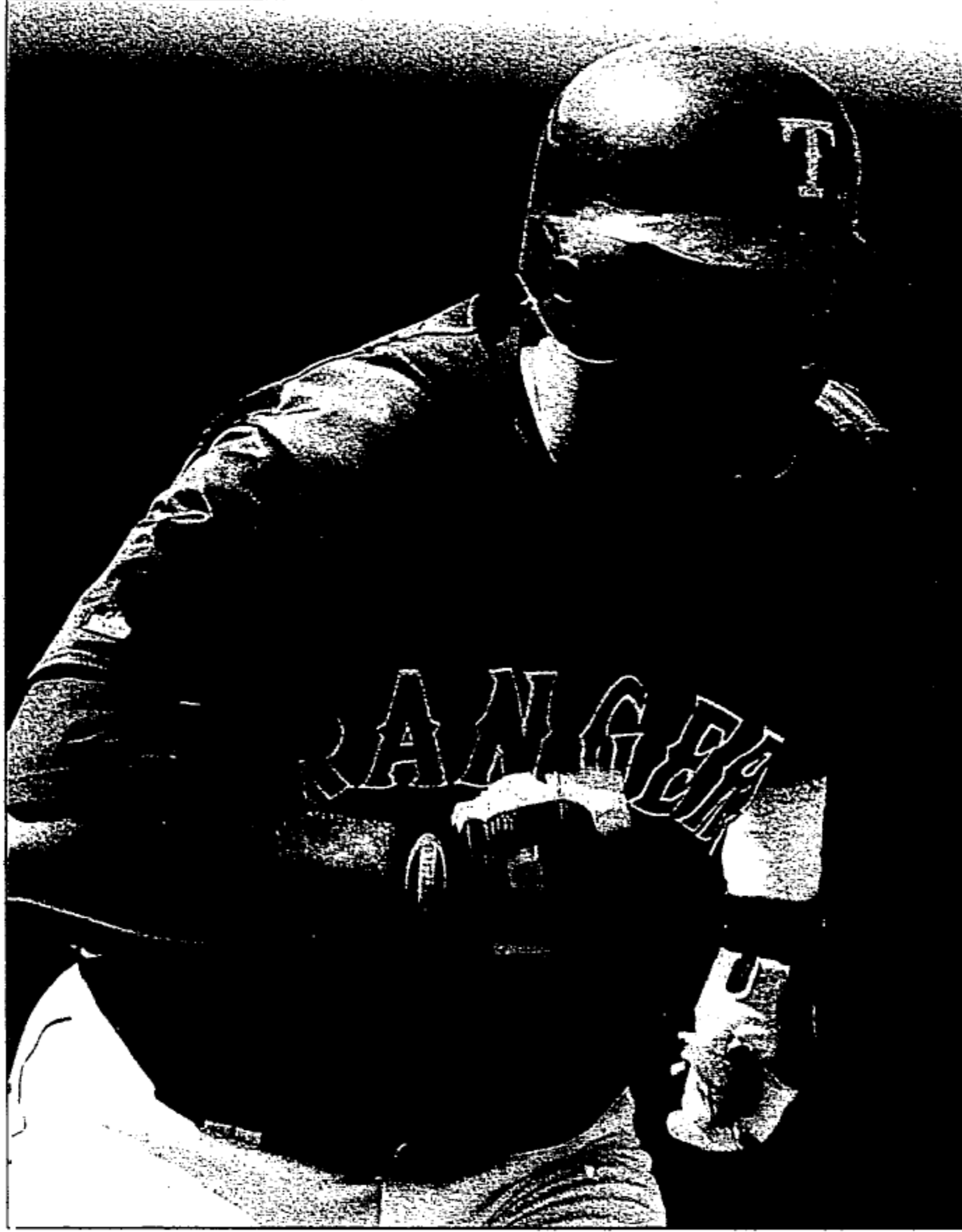
Nearly six years later, **Palmeiro** doesn't remember the exact contents of his letter or precisely what he told Clinton. But he recalls intercepting Clinton almost as soon as the presidential party entered the clubhouse.

"I met him at the door with Mr. Angelos," **Palmeiro** says. "Some of his top people were with him. I wanted to get him before he came in. All the press was inside, all the players."

"It was probably two minutes. It happened quick. It came up right away. Mr. Clinton said, 'We'll see what we can do. We'll try to handle it if we can.'"

It got handled. It became part of the legend of September 6, 1995. **TSN**

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WIDE HOUSE: **Palmeiro's** family reunion began with a presidential encounter.

ROBERT SEALE / TSN

# Raffy and Texas,

An older, wiser **Rafael Palmeiro** and a unifying rainbow mix in the clubhouse erase a leadership cloud in Arlington — and the Rangers respond

By Bob Hille

Look deeply into these deeply dark eyes and see an older, wiser **Rafael Palmeiro**. Don't mistake the telltale wrinkles for age, but consider them a road map to a most memorable Rangers season in a place chock-full of memories for **Palmeiro**, some good, many not as good.

Now and then, **Palmeiro** marvels at where he is and where this Texas team is going.

Now when he stands in the batter's box at the Ballpark in Arlington, looking out to right field, he can see a perfect match: His swing, as sweet and potent as Cuban coffee, and a short porch so close you'd swear you could reach out and touch the green.

Then he remembers a teammate bringing a pet tiger into the Rangers' clubhouse.

Now when he stands in the dugout, looking at the lineup card, he can see his name penciled in at the 5-hole and DH and wonder about August, a month as, well, august as any in the 28-year history of the Texas team formerly known as the Senators.

Then he remembers teammates gathering in the players' parking lot for a battle of the car-stereo systems.

Now when he stands up without standing out in the clubhouse, **Palmeiro** can see his way to being pleased but not yet satisfied with how very, very far this franchise has come from the days at old Arlington Stadium.

Then he remembers when the flamboyant Rangers, in his first stint with the club (1989 through 1993), never finished closer than eight games out of first place.

When the Rangers re-signed **Palmeiro** during the offseason, in essence opting for him over Will Clark (after **Palmeiro** initiated contact with Texas general manager Doug Melvin), it appeared on the surface a sound move based on baseball only. The numbers bear it out: Clark had 10 home runs and 29 RBIs for the Orioles before his season was ended last month by an elbow injury. **Palmeiro** had 15 homers and 39 RBIs ... in August.

Yet as the Rangers wind—and win—their way to their third A.L. West championship in four seasons, the alchemy of clubhouse chemistry is at the heart and soul of this team. And though **Palmeiro's** on-field production has his manager saying, "I feel like he's going to hit a ball hard every time he goes to the plate," it is a different, more subtle effect he has had that separates **Rafael Palmeiro** now (an MVP candidate) from **Rafael Palmeiro** then (the '80s, and all of the baggage that time frame connotes).

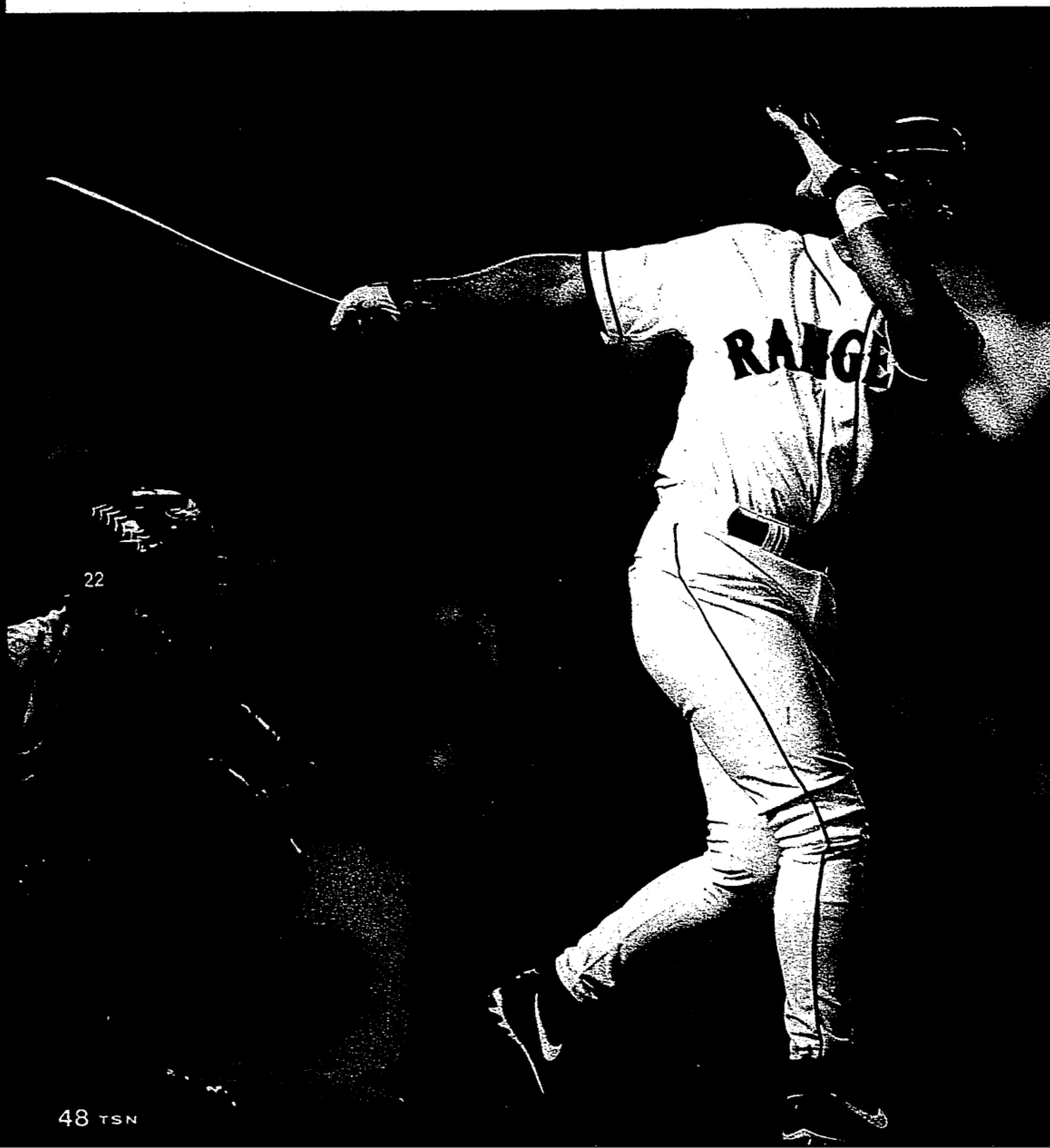
This is an ideal clubhouse for Rangers manager Johnny Oates. He likes young players—in small doses. Breaking in one or two rookies a year is the right way for Oates. Like most managers, he's more comfortable with a veteran team. He maintains a necessary distance from his team, believing a manager should be seen but not always heard in the clubhouse.

When he took over as Texas' manager before the 1995 season, he had the coffee pot removed from the manager's office and put in the players' lounge. That meant Oates would have to walk through the clubhouse to get each of his customary three cups of coffee before each game. Oates makes the same walk for the postgame spread. It's his way of not only getting to the buffet but also taking his club's pulse without being overbearing.

"I don't want to be in the clubhouse all the time," he says, "but I think it's important that the players see me."

Oates' style works only if the

**THE ROBUST RANGER:** *Palmeiro produced Texas-sized numbers in August: 15 homers, 39 RBIs.*



LOUIS DE LUCA / FOR TSN

# then and now

players can handle the responsibility. A manager is only as good as his players are on the field and in the clubhouse. And with a mandate from ownership this season to reach beyond the first round of the playoffs, this team has reached a team-record 27 games over .500 while maintaining a cool calmness in what in another time was a powder keg of a clubhouse.

**Rafael Palmeiro**, who'll turn 35 later this month, lived—and participated in—the bad old days of the style-over-substance Rangers and their raucous and poisonous clubhouse. More than anyone, he understands the significance of what goes on in this clubhouse during this winning season.

"It's been a building process with this team," says **Palmeiro**, who adds that he could see the evolution from the opposing dugout while with the Orioles from 1994 through '98. "This team was maturing, changing. It's the personalities in this room that make us a team."

A baseball clubhouse can be a volatile place. Players spend six, seven months together. A bad blend can turn the clubhouse into a snake pit. The Rangers have a Rainbow Coalition mix: young and old; Hispanics from four countries, blacks from California and whites from the South; guys whose musical tastes run from the Beastie Boys to Mana, Faith Evans to Faith Hill.

The exotic ingredients produce, Oates says, a "consistently blah" clubhouse. That is the most telling statement yet about this team. The Rangers will win the A.L. West because of a powerful offense, led by **Palmeiro**, fellow MVP candidate Ivan Rodriguez and mercurial cleanup hitter Juan Gonzalez, and a deep bullpen that overcomes a marginal but increasingly



**NO-POUTING ZONE:** **Palmeiro** (right) stabilizes what **Gonzalez** could have torn asunder.

consistent rotation. They also will win because of—are you listening, Kevin Malone?—an internal balance that reflects a good clubhouse mix.

"We have people who have been through the wars," third baseman Todd Zeile says. "It helps to have people like Raffy and John Wetteland as grounding forces. When you watch the way they conduct their business, you realize that it might be a cliché but the season is a marathon, and you have to approach it that way."

The more even the temperament of a team, the better chance it has of handling the steep rises and falls of a very long season. The Rangers didn't panic while rotation aces Rick Helling and Aaron Sele were finding themselves; they haven't gotten giddy while pulling away from the A's in the A.L. West.

All the more telling, however, they didn't let a series of pouts by Gonzalez, the two-time American League MVP, knock the team from its emotional straight and narrow. Truth be told, on some clubs, Gonzalez's actions—ranging from refusing to dress for the Hall of Fame exhibition game because of ill-fitting uniform pants to ignoring teammates' congratulations for an RBI because he grounded out—would have sparked an inferno of controversy. On this Rangers team, Gonzalez is a controlled burn.

So it was in a cramped clubhouse in Cooperstown that **Palmeiro** found himself manning the fire line. When Gonzalez threw a fit about the baggy pants, **Palmeiro** dug in simply by pulling his on.

It is by such quiet strength of personality off the field that **Palmeiro** has helped galvanize a team of disparate personalities, even though it's not a stretch to say that on the field he is the most underrated player of the 1990s—pulling off the rare feat of hitting 300 homers, driving in 1,000 runs and, give or take a point, batting .300 this decade. He has an outside shot this season of becoming the 13th player to win the Triple Crown, the first since Carl Yastrzemski in 1967. And he has done it all on a knee that required not one but two operations in spring training and forced a Gold Glove first baseman into DH status.

"Some guys are more intense than others," short-

stop Royce Clayton says, analyzing the Rangers' chemistry. "Some guys are quieter than others. Sometimes you can have a team with too many high-wire people or too many laid-back people. That doesn't work.

"This works."

**T**o understand why the Rangers' clubhouse works, reexamine the definition of baseball leadership. Again, perception doesn't necessarily reflect reality. The simple rule is this: Those players who say they're leaders usually aren't.

Will Clark clamored for the mantle of "leader" with the Rangers from '94 through '98, but he never tried to be inclusive, a mistake on a team dotted with a melting pot of stars. Notes one member of the Rangers' organization: "To be a leader, you have to have people willing to follow." The overwhelmingly lopsided statistical tradeoff notwithstanding, this

season's Clark-free clubhouse is a quieter place, a better place, and the team hasn't lost its sense of direction, despite increased expectations.

"Every club has to have leadership among its players," says Indians manager Mike Hargrove, who knows a thing or two about expectations. "But leadership is a subtle thing. It's not like one guy suddenly stands up one day and says, 'OK, I'm a leader. Follow me.'"

Who are the leaders on this Texas team? Each segment of the club has its own. The bullpen follows Wetteland, the closer. John Burkett is the point man for the rotation. Luis Alicea and Roberto Kelly, both 34, are the wise bench players. Mark McLemore is the most vocal overall, but he makes his points loudly, not necessarily nastily.

Of them all, however, **Palmeiro** illustrates best why this clubhouse works. Quiet and workmanlike, he sets the tone with actions, not words. He has an intensity and enthusiasm that Oates points to: "It doesn't have to be displayed by completely going bonkers all the time."

And, in fact, **Palmeiro** rarely shows emotion, a decided change from his first stay with the Rangers. Back then, **Palmeiro** wore his emotions—not to mention his batting average—on his sleeve. An oh-fer in a victory would throw him into a funk, triggering whispers that he was selfish.

Now, an older and wiser **Palmeiro** knows that teammates are watching, so he never changes, no matter how good (which is often) or bad (which isn't) his performance.

"It's something that I've tried to do over the years," **Palmeiro** says. "I think I'm getting better at it, but I'm going to keep working at it. To me, that's the way to be a leader."

"When you're doing the right thing on and off the field, that's being a leader." **TSN**

*Bob Hille is a managing editor of THE SPORTING NEWS. This story contains writing and reporting from Gerry Fraley, who covers baseball for the Dallas Morning News, as well as material from other news organizations.*

## In elite company

**Rafael Palmeiro** has been one of baseball's most consistent power hitters over the last decade, but he almost has been overshadowed by others. After a 15-homer August gave him 40 for the season, he became an A.L. MVP candidate. This marks **Palmeiro's** sixth season with at least 35 homers; only two lefthanded hitters have more seasons with 35-plus big flies:

### Most Seasons of 35-Plus Home Runs (lefthanded hitters only)

Babe Ruth	12
Lou Gehrig	7
Ken Griffey Jr.	6
Eddie Mathews	6
Willie McCovey	6
<b>Rafael Palmeiro</b>	6

STATS Inc.





# ANGELS

**Projected finish: 1st**  
A.L. West

## GRADING OUT

STARTING PITCHING	C
RELIEF PITCHING	B
CLOSER	A
SPEED	B
RUN PRODUCTION	B
POWER	A
MANAGER	B
FRONT OFFICE	B

## LINEUP

Name	Pos.
Erstad+	LF
Edmonds+	CF
Vaughn+	1B
Salmon	RF
Anderson+/Greene	DH
Glaus	3B
Velarde	2B
O'Brien	C
DiSarcina	SS

## ROTATION

- Finley+
- Belcher
- Hill
- Sparks
- Olivares

## SETUP

- Hasegawa
- DeLucia

## CLOSER

- Percival

\*Rookie      -Lefthanded  
#Switch hitter

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## Too many Angels in the outfield

1998: 85-77; 2nd in A.L. West

**KEY ADDITIONS:** RHP Tim Belcher, IF Jeff Huson, OF Matt Luke, 1B Mo Vaughn.

**KEY SUBTRACTIONS:** OF Gregg Jefferies, LHP Allen Watson.

**REASON TO GET EXCITED:** Mo Vaughn. The Angels have him, and the Red Sox don't. Just as important as the 40-homer, 120-RBI potential the slugger brings will be his presence come September, a month that has been cruel to the Angels.

**REASON TO WORRY:** Manager Terry Collins plans to use all four of his outfielders—Tim Salmon, Jim Edmonds, Darin Erstad and Garret Anderson—with one serving as DH. But none of the four seems too enthused about the possibility of not playing every day. Todd Greene also could pull some DH at-bats from the outfielders, further complicating the situation.

**PLAYER ON THE SPOT:** Vaughn. Because of his six-year, \$80 million contract and his reputation as a clutch hitter and team leader, big things will be expected from him. Vaughn excelled amid chaos with the Red Sox in '98, hitting .337 with 40 homers and 115 RBIs despite a contract dispute with the front office

and his uncertain future.

**OUTLOOK:** This could be the most potent Angels lineup since 1979, when Don Baylor, Dan Ford, Bobby Grich and Co. mashed their way to the A.L. West championship by scoring 866 runs. There is power from the left side (Vaughn, Edmonds, Erstad) and the right (Salmon, Greene, Troy Glaus). When SS Gary DiSarcina (broken bone in left arm) returns, and if Glaus beats out Dave Hollins at third base, the team should be excellent defensively—especially with Salmon back in right and Edmonds in center. The question, as always, is: Will there be enough pitching? Belcher, who is capable of throwing 200 innings, is a solid addition. But Chuck Finley isn't as dominant as he once was and Ken Hill needs to survive a season without elbow injuries. Knuckleballer Steve Sparks should eat up innings in the fourth spot and Omar Olivares is a competent No. 5. But the Angels don't have the pitching to match up with the Yankees, Indians and Orioles if they get to the playoffs.

**WHEN IT'S ALL OVER:** The Angels, paralyzed at the July 31 trading deadline in '98, finally will have enough talent to trade for an impact pitcher who could provide the boost needed to fend off Texas and win the West. —Mike DiGiovanna



JOHN CORDES FOR TSN

**SEPTEMBER SONG:** Just as important as his power is the proven presence Mo Vaughn will bring to the season's final month.

## TSNumber

**0**  
That's how many games Todd Greene caught in '98. If his shoulder is healthy enough for him to catch two or three times a week and DH two or three times a week, the Angels could add another prolific bat to the lineup.

## PROSPECT WATCH

**RAMON ORTIZ, RHP:** He missed most of last season because of a fractured elbow but was close to full health by the fall and hitting 95 mph on the radar gun this spring. Often compared with the Red Sox's Pedro Martinez, Ortiz can dominate hitters with his fastball or slider and also has a good changeup. Ortiz, who led the Midwest League in strikeouts in 1997 with 225 in 181 innings, will start in Class AA but could be in the big leagues by September.



# RANGERS

**Projected finish: 2nd**  
A.L. West

## GRADING OUT

STARTING PITCHING	C
RELIEF PITCHING	B
CLOSER	A
SPEED	D
RUN PRODUCTION	A
POWER	A
MANAGER	B
FRONT OFFICE	A

## LINEUP

Name	Pos.
Goodwin+	CF
McLemore#	2B
Greer+	LF
Gonzalez	RF
Palmeiro+	1B
Rodriguez	C
Stevens+	DH
Zeile	3B
Clayton	SS

## ROTATION

- Helling
- Sele
- Clark
- Burkett
- Loaiza

## SETUP

- Crabtree
- Patterson
- Gunderson+

## CLOSER

- Wetteland

\*Rookie      -Lefthanded  
#Switch hitter

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## Palmeiro is back, but is he healthy?

1998: 88-74; 1st in A.L. West

**KEY ADDITIONS:** 1B Rafael Palmeiro, RHP Mark Clark, C John Marzano, RHP Mike Morgan.

**KEY SUBTRACTIONS:** 1B Will Clark, RHP Todd Stottlemyre, RHP Xavier Hernandez, C Bill Haselman.

**REASON TO GET EXCITED:** Rafael Palmeiro is back after a five-year exile in Baltimore. The low fence and short dimensions in right field at The Ballpark in Arlington were designed with the idea that Palmeiro would regularly dump home runs there. If his numbers (nine homers in 79 at-bats) at The Ballpark while with the Orioles are an indication, it should be a big year—if Palmeiro can stay healthy.

**REASON TO WORRY:** The Rangers had the highest ERA among starters in the A.L. last year and failed in bids to land Roger Clemens or Randy Johnson. The club isn't counting on the rotation to be much better. Instead, the Rangers are counting on the defense and offense to overcome the starters' weaknesses.

**PLAYER ON THE SPOT:** Palmeiro. The Rangers have invested \$45 million over the next five years in him. After two arthroscopic knee surgeries in a month, Palmeiro hoped to be ready by opening

day. But if the knee bothers him all year and he misses a significant amount of time, the team will have a hard time replacing his bat and glove. Lee Stevens, Palmeiro's backup, never has been a full-time player, and he struggles against lefthanders (.214 career average).

**OUTLOOK:** Palmeiro may not be ready for opening day, but he shouldn't be far behind. DH Mike Simms may miss half the season, but Roberto Kelly certainly is no step down. Though slowed by a pesky ankle strain, closer John Wetteland's surgically repaired elbow is healthy. That said, April is a critical month. The Rangers have built their team for big innings, hoping the offense could cover for some of the pitching staff's shortcomings. Without Palmeiro early, they may have to be creative when it comes to scoring runs.

**WHEN IT'S ALL OVER:** The Rangers finished three games ahead of the Angels last season. In the offseason, Texas added Palmeiro and Mark Clark; Anaheim added 1B Mo Vaughn and P Tim Lincecum. In our book, that's a push. Give the Rangers a slight advantage on the field—if everyone is healthy—and a bigger one in the front office. Assuming Palmeiro can get healthy, the Rangers should again compete with the Angels for the division title. —Evan Grant



ROBERT SEALE / TSN

**POWER RANGER:** Juan Gonzalez has hit 47, 42 and 45 homers in the past three seasons. He led the A.L. with 157 RBIs in 1998.

## TSNumber

**121**  
The errors the Rangers have committed in each of the past two seasons—a rare feat for a Johnny Oates team. Only twice in his eight seasons as a major league manager have his teams made more than 100 errors.

## PROSPECT WATCH

**RUBEN MATEO, CF:** For the team to stay competitive, it must start producing some of its own talent so it can earmark some of its free-agent money for pitching. Mateo, 21, likely will start the season at Class AAA Oklahoma after hitting .314 and .309 the past two seasons. His arm is major league caliber right now, and his bat isn't far behind. In 2000, he could provide a cheap alternative to the \$3.2 million the team will pay Tom Goodwin this season.



## MAJOR LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

### Rafael Palmeiro, Rangers

Rangers first baseman **Rafael Palmeiro** gained one title this season and gave up another.

He was happy to relinquish the title as Most Underappreciated Hitter in the majors. **Palmeiro**, 35, was even happier to be named THE SPORTING NEWS' Player of the Year in a vote by his peers.

"I'm shocked, really stunned about it," says **Palmeiro**. "It's not something I ever thought I'd win. I know I can be pretty hard on myself at times, but this is amazing. To be honored by your peers makes it special."

**Palmeiro** received 74 votes. Sammy Sosa of the Cubs was runner-up with 57½, Red Sox pitcher Pedro Martinez was third with 53 and Manny Ramirez

of the Indians was fourth with 48½.

**Palmeiro**, who played for the Rangers from 1989 through '93, decided to return to Texas this year after playing for Baltimore the previous five seasons. He produced an MVP-type season in his homecoming, hitting .324 with a career-high 47 home runs and 148 RBIs.

Despite a pair of arthroscopic knee surgeries in February and March, he rushed to get back in the lineup and ended up leading the Rangers in games (158), homers and RBIs.

**Palmeiro** has been one of the majors' top hitters for much of the '90s. He led the majors with 1,527 games this decade, and was second (behind the Cubs' Mark Grace) with 1,747 hits. —Evan Grant

## THE SPORTING NEWS All-Stars



▲ PITCHER OF THE YEAR  
ROOKIE PLAYER OF THE YEAR  
ROOKIE PITCHER OF THE YEAR  
FIREMAN OF THE YEAR  
COMEBACK PLAYER OF THE YEAR

### AMERICAN LEAGUE

1B **Rafael Palmeiro**, Tex.  
2B Roberto Alomar, Cle.  
3B Dean Palmer, Det.  
SS Nomar Garciaparra, Bos.  
OF Ken Griffey Jr., Sea.  
OF Manny Ramirez, Cle.  
OF Shawn Green, Tor.  
C Ivan Rodriguez, Tex.  
RHP Pedro Martinez, Bos.  
LHP Jamie Moyer, Sea.  
Pedro Martinez, Bos.  
Carlos Beltran, K.C.  
Tim Hudson, Oak.  
Mariano Rivera, N.Y.  
John Jaha, Oak.

### NATIONAL LEAGUE

Jeff Bagwell, Hou.  
Edgardo Alfonzo, N.Y.  
Chipper Jones, Atl.  
Barry Larkin, Cin.  
Larry Walker, Colo.  
Sammy Sosa, Chi.  
Vladimir Guerrero, Mon.  
Mike Piazza, N.Y.  
Jose Lima, Hou.  
Mike Hampton, Hou.  
Mike Hampton, Hou.  
Preston Wilson, Fla.  
Scott Williamson, Cin.  
Ugueth Urbina, Mon.  
Rickey Henderson, N.Y.

## THE SPORTING NEWS'

# 1999 BASEBALL AWARDS

## N.L. MANAGER OF THE YEAR Bobby Cox, Braves

Already recognized as one of the game's top managers, Cox was named THE SPORTING NEWS' National League Manager of the Year, the third such honor of his career. Cox also was named TSN's Major League Manager of the Year in 1985, when he was managing the Blue Jays.

"There are a lot of managers out there as deserving as me," Cox says. "I'm honored because it's coming from the other managers. I'm just grateful to have a good team every year."

This may have been Cox's finest season. The Braves won 103 games and an eighth straight division championship despite losing four key members: Andres Galarraga, Javy Lopez, Kerry Ligtenberg and Rudy Seanez.

His combination of strategic and people skills, is what makes Cox an excellent manager. "He treats you like a man," says pitcher Tom Glavine, who has played for Cox since 1990. "He's very simple in what he wants. He doesn't have a whole lot of rules. You show up on time, and you show up ready to play, and you play the game the right way."

Cox received 7½ of the 13 votes cast for N.L. manager. Jack McKeon (Reds) got 2½ votes, and Dusty Baker (Giants), Larry Dierker (Astros) and Buck Showalter (Diamondbacks) each got one. —Bill Zack



## A.L. MANAGER OF THE YEAR Jimmy Williams, Red Sox

Play the schedule. Focus on the task at hand. Don't think beyond the moment. Outsiders snicker at Jimmy Williams' approach, but there is no arguing with his results—the Red Sox have made the playoffs in consecutive seasons for the first time since 1915 and '16.

The performance earned Williams THE SPORTING NEWS American League Manager of the Year Award, as voted on by his peers. Art Howe finished second in the balloting and Mike Hargrove and Johnny Oates tied for third.

"I go back to these players," Williams says. "I just enjoy watching them every day. It's an honor ... but it's a team honor. I really like this team." His fairness is appreciated by the veterans, and his work ethic and ability to teach is noticed by the young players. Consider Trot Nixon, who was hitting below .100 for much of April. Rather than bury Nixon, Williams kept him in the lineup and offered advice. He worked with Nixon for hours before games, throwing batting practice and tinkering with his stance. Nixon finished with 15 homers and became a valuable contributor.

Williams earned praise for handling a veteran pitching staff that included starters, especially Bret Saberhagen and Ramon Martinez, who had a history of injuries. By constantly giving his starters extra rest, they remained fresh through the playoffs. —Paul Doyle

