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Howie Karpin Tells Howie Made It



PHOTO: KATE QUINN MILLER

Does anybody remember the famous line in the movie “Malice” when Alec Baldwin is on trial and is asked, “Do you have a God complex?” and Alec responds, “I am God!”? Well, Howie Karpin, a former Lehman Lightning pitching star in the late 70’s, might feel the same way these days. Howie has been an official scorer for the New York Yankees for the past three seasons, and every time he scores a game, he makes history.

Howie is the first broadcast media journalist to ever become an official scorer for the New York Yankees, a job that had previously only been given to print journalists. “I’m the first one. I applied for the job not thinking I was going to get it, so when I did, I

was shocked. I was real happy,” says Karpin.

There is a good reason, though, for his being the first broadcast media journalist to become an official scorer for the Yanks: Howie’s resume reads like a menu for the perfect sports meal. Just after graduating from Lehman College in ‘79, he was hired at Sportsphone in 1980, and worked there for two years. His next sports stop was radio station WCBS 880, where he anchored sports on the air from ‘92-’98. Aside from his scoring job, he also currently works over at ABC sports and he can be seen giving his take on local sports on BronxNet every weekday morning on BronxTalk with Gary Axelbank at 11:45 a.m.

“I’ve covered all the local sports teams since ‘80 in some way: hockey, baseball, basketball, football, everything. I’ve covered a Super Bowl, the NBA Championships, and the World Series. My dream job, though, is to do play by play for the Yankees.”

Before he took to the airwaves and the scoreboards, Howie was scouted for the pros by the Detroit Tigers and the Minnesota Twins as a lefty pitcher and outfielder. Unfortunately, he never was able to live out his dream. “I decided since I couldn’t play it, I’d talk about it. I knew I didn’t have a chance, but I actually had real good tryouts. When you’re out there with the best

of the best, your game elevates to another level. It was a great experience.”

Howie’s brushes with celebrities first came not with sports players, but with a political figure. In elementary school, he went to school in the Bronx with the son of an ambassador during the time of the Shah of Iran. “The ambassador’s son went to my school, and there were bodyguards around him every day, all day long. That was interesting. I guess that was the first time I was ever near anybody famous.”

Howie’s most memorable interview came very early on in his career, and it happened on our very own Lehman College campus. On September 29, 1978, after baseball practice, Yankee great Bucky Dent came by Lehman to talk with a few players. Howie was fortunate enough to grab Dent for an interview, and just three days later, on October 2nd, Dent hit the famous home-run against the Boston Red Sox in the one-game playoff series for the rights to the division and a playoff berth.

Howie remembers two seasons ago, when Cleveland’s Manny Ramirez was chasing the single season RBI record. When the Indians came to play in the Bronx against the Yankees, Howie called a Yankee error on what seemed to the Cleveland PR man to be a Manny Ramirez single. Ramirez ended up with 165 RBI’s that season, only 26 short of the Hack Wilson’s record 191 RBI’s in 1930.

“Yeah, it is tough sometimes, but I know baseball; I’ve followed it since I was a little kid, and I have all of the rules down pat,” says Karpin. “That Cleveland PR guy was hounded by Manny, and he came to me to have my ruling switched to a hit. You have 24 hours to change a call, but it was an error, so I didn’t change the ruling. The left-fielder could have had that ball.”

Being an official scorer does have its perks, though. “Over the past two seasons I was able to meet Robin Ventura and Mike Piazza, and they always rag on me when they see me, since I work for the Yankees, but it’s all in fun. I get a kick out of it,” Karpin adds. “Also, I grew up just a few minutes from Yankee Stadium and I was always a huge fan, so it’s real special for me.” Howie’s greatest moment came last season when he scored Game 2 of the Subway Series. “Man, that was the greatest ever. They let me cover the game and I had the best time.”

Howie Karpin and Kathy Karpin ‘82 met at the Lehman College radio station and have pursued radio careers ever since. “It’s a plus to be in the same business,” Kathy said recently in a Lehman College Alumni Newsletter interview. “We understand the crazy schedules and the perseverance you need in order to get jobs.”

The Karpins, who live in Riverdale with sons Jake and Danny, celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary last summer.