



MORE THAN A SEASON

**BUILDING A
CHAMPIONSHIP
CULTURE**



Foreword by **ALEX GORDON**
Introduction by **WILLIAM F. HIGH**

DAYTON MOORE

with **MATT FULKS**

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TO MARIANNE, WHO'S A SOURCE OF CONSTANT LOVE, SUPPORT, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND WISE COUNSEL. YOU HAVE HELPED MOLD ME INTO WHO I AM TODAY. TO OUR THREE CHILDREN, ASHLEY, AVERY, AND ROBERT, WHO MAKE ME PROUD EVERY DAY TO BE YOUR FATHER. ONE OF MY CORE BELIEFS IS THAT MY TEAM IS AT HOME— I COULDN'T IMAGINE THIS JOURNEY WITHOUT THE FOUR OF YOU. TO MY IN-LAWS, JAMES AND CHRISTINE BIXLER, WHO ARE GREAT SOURCES OF FAITH, CONFIDENCE, AND STRENGTH. TO MY BROTHER AND SISTER, DUKE AND DANIELLE, WHO ARE GREAT FANS OF THE ROYALS AND MAKE ME PROUD TO BE YOUR BROTHER. TO MY GRANDMOTHER, WYNONA (RINER) MARLEY, WHO HELPED FOSTER MY LOVE OF THE ROYALS AT AN EARLY AGE. TO MY GRANDFATHER, CECIL MARLEY, WHO BECAME A HUGE ROYALS FAN AFTER I BECAME GENERAL MANAGER, AND PASSED AWAY AT THE AGE OF 98 BEFORE GAME 3 OF THE 2014 WORLD SERIES. TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER, ROBERT AND PENNE, WHO SUPPORTED AND ENCOURAGED ME TO PURSUE THIS GREAT GAME OF BASEBALL.

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Acknowledgments

As always, it seems like there are too many people to thank, because there's no way a book can be completed without a great amount of support and assistance. That said, we apologize now if we forget to mention you by name. The following people were incredibly instrumental in the authors' being able to write this book:

To the team at Triumph Books, who believed in this project, were willing to squeeze it onto their roster, and then showed the patience of Job as this book became a reality: Noah Amstadter, Jeff Fedotin, Alex Lubertozi, and Mitch Rogatz.

To Bill High of the National Christian Foundation Heartland, who convinced Dayton that this would be a worthwhile project, and then wrote the book's introduction.

To Alex Gordon for agreeing to write the foreword. You can read more about Alex later in the book, but besides being a terrific baseball player, Alex is a great person.

To each person who agreed to be interviewed for the book: George Brett, Jeff Davenport, Bill Fischer, David Glass, Rusty Kuntz, Nick Leto, John Schuerholz, Paul Snyder, Art Stewart, Gene Watson, and Donnie Williams. Thank you for your time and willingness to share your thoughts. There are many others who could've shared stories about Dayton and his time with both the Braves and the Royals, but the ones we talked with offer a solid backdrop of Dayton's time in Atlanta and Kansas City.

To Colby Curry and Mike Swanson in the Royals media relations department, for your support and assistance with photos and information. Along those lines, to photographers Don Schmidt and Chris Vleisides. To Brad Hainje with the Braves and Greg Piduch with George Mason University, for helping secure photos.

To Emily Penning, Dayton's assistant, whose contributions to this project are immeasurable, from setting up interviews, to helping with contacts, to offering suggestions, to making a mean turkey sandwich. As Dayton says, Emily has a tireless work ethic with an above-and-beyond attitude.

To Dave and Kathy Minich for giving Matt a hideaway in the middle of Missouri so he could work on this project.

Dayton would like to add a personal thanks:

To my college coaches, Joe Slobko and Billy Brown, who gave me an opportunity to continue playing and then fostered my desire to get into coaching.

To my mentors and encouragers in this business: Paul Snyder, Roy Clark, John Schuerholz, Donnie Williams, Bill Fischer, Jose Martinez, Jim Beauchamp, Chino Cadahia, and Art Stewart. As we write later in the book, it's important to have "gray-haired" influences, and these men certainly embody that for me.

To each player with whom I've shared this incredible baseball journey. It takes a lot of dedication to play this game, and I've been blessed to be around passionate baseball men who love to compete. Every player's story begins with a scout. So, I thank the scouts, who are the lifeblood of the game, as well as each manager, coach, and instructor who supports, encourages, and prepares our players to be their very best.

To Dr. Vincent Key and the entire medical team at KU Medical Center, our head athletic trainer Nick Kenney, assistant trainer Kyle Turner, strength and conditioning

coach Ryan Stoneberg, and physical therapist Geoff Blum, all of whom keep our players in the best possible shape and health to perform their best.

To the leaders throughout our baseball operations department whose hard work, dedication to the Royals, wise counsel, and passion to see players reach their ceilings is something on which I've depended, in particular: Dean Taylor, J.J. Picollo, Rene Francisco, Jin Wong, Lonnie Goldberg, Scott Sharp, Gene Watson, Mike Gropman, Mike Arbuckle, Linda Smith, George Brett, and Jason Kendall. Along those lines, thank you to the spouses and families of the people in our baseball operations department.

To the Glass family, particularly David and Dan, who entrusted me with this job of general manager and then showed patience to allow us to see the plan through.

To Tim Cash and Pastor Christian Newsome, who are spiritual mentors and friends. You are wonderful examples of Christ to me and so many others.

To Marianne and our three children, Ashley, Avery, and Robert, who are never-ending sources of joy and encouragement. Your support is appreciated more than you'll ever know.

Finally, from Matt:

Thanks to Dayton for thinking I could pull off this project. The call I received the week of Thanksgiving and the two-plus months that followed will always be one of the highlights of my career. We shared a lot of laughs, a lot of discussions, and a lot of coffee, but I'm a better writer and a better person because of our time together.

To Marianne, thank you for your hospitality, willingness to offer editorial suggestions, and encouragement during this project.

To Jim Wissel, Chris Browne, Tom Lawrence, and Tim and Amy Brown, who, as always, served as core support and guidance. Your support is greatly appreciated!

As with past book projects, based on the amount of praying I did during the writing of this, especially during the last two weeks, without Christ this isn't possible.

A final special thanks to my favorite in-laws, Todd and Pat Burwell, and my parents, Fred and Sharon. To Helen, Charlie, and Aaron, who make me thankful each day; and, to my best friend, Libby, who loves me in spite of my quirkiness and shows me that it takes a special person to live with an author on deadline.

Thank you, all.

Foreword by Alex Gordon

What a difference a couple of seasons can make. Two years after losing 90 games in 2012, we were American League champions for only the third time in Royals history and 90 feet away from tying Game 7 of the World Series in the bottom of the ninth inning. It's been an incredible roller coaster.

There were a lot of ups and downs in those three seasons alone, not to mention the years before that. We lost 91 games in 2011. So, after back-to-back 90-loss seasons, we were in range of a playoff berth in 2013 until the last few days of the season. Our record of 86–76 in 2013 was the first winning season for the Royals in a decade, and the most wins in a season for the club since 1989.

The architect behind this turnaround is general manager Dayton Moore, who's been my boss since he started with the Royals in June 2006.

At that time I was at Double A Wichita, in my first full season playing for the organization. I'll never forget the buzz around the clubhouse when he came down to see us for the first time. We drew only about two hundred people a game in Wichita, so any type of excitement around the stadium was great. Hearing that Dayton Moore was coming to see us really fired a lot of guys up.

There wasn't really a lot of nervousness knowing that we'd be meeting him for the first time and that he'd be watching us play. Initially, that's probably because we were a bunch of 20- to 24-year-old kids who didn't know any better. We were just out there having fun playing baseball. Once you meet Dayton, though, you realize there's no reason to be nervous around him—he puts people at ease quickly.

When you're around Dayton you learn pretty fast what's important to him. Sure, he's highly competitive, so winning is near the top of his list. Higher on the list, though, are his faith and people, specifically his family. Dayton is an amazing family man to his wife, Marianne, and their three kids, Ashley, Avery, and Robert.

That feeling of family extends to us as players and the people throughout baseball operations for the Royals. He is a father figure who knows how to get the most out of the people around him, and he always says the right thing at the perfect time. One example of that for me was in 2010 when I was being sent down to Triple A Omaha after being in the majors for three years. Not only were they sending me to Omaha, they wanted to convert me to an outfielder.

That was a challenging time in my life. I came up in 2007 as a third baseman but fought a couple of injuries and ended up having hip surgery in 2009. I struggled after coming back from that, and I wasn't playing nearly as well as I felt I should've been. In the minors, Mike Moustakas was tearing things up and looked like the club's future third baseman. On May 2 in Tampa Bay, Dayton and then-manager Trey Hillman talked to me about going to Omaha. During that conversation, Dayton told me that I was still part of this organization's future and turning things around. It was obvious that it wasn't just GM talk to make me feel better. It was reassuring to hear that from him.

From what I understand, the club discussed moving me to outfield early in my career when Mark Teahen was at third and I was at Wichita. For whatever reason, they left me at third and moved Mark to the outfield. Looking back now, if they had moved

me then, I'm not sure I would've become a Gold Glove outfielder. The position change was something I needed because it gave me a new obstacle to focus on. It was fun and exciting. Frankly, I'm glad Dayton decided to do it. It's definitely true that everything happens for a reason.

That moment is why I can say without hesitation that Dayton genuinely cares for each player on and off the field. He wants us to make good decisions and not embarrass the organization, but it's also about our lives as individuals. Because of the interest he shows in us, he is highly respected in our clubhouse. Everyone looks up to him.

Dayton is a strong leader who's always positive. That's a good quality to have when you're trying to lead 25 guys in the clubhouse of a sport where you're going to fail more often than succeed. Organizations—even corporations—tend to take the shape and attitude of their leader. When the leader has Dayton's positive outlook, it filters down to everyone else in an encouraging way.

But it's not only his attitude. Dayton is extremely focused. Look at the eight years it took to build our club into a World Series team. When he took the job, the team was losing 100 games a year. That's a tough situation to come into and be expected to win quickly. Dayton came in with a mindset of how he was going to do it and then stuck with the plan, even through all the naysayers. Plenty of people were saying that he was doing it the wrong way or that he was failing, but he remained focused on the process. That term—*process*—was mocked, but that's how he built the team: drafting talented players, bringing them through the system, signing or trading for major league guys, and then seeing more young players come from the minors. Even though people didn't think it was working, as players we could see it coming together.

As a player you know when you see talented players and great athletes. So we understood what he was doing when he made great trades that people didn't agree with, especially the one with Milwaukee that brought Lorenzo Cain and Alcides Escobar for Zack Greinke, and the one with Tampa Bay that brought James Shields and Wade Davis in exchange for several players, including Wil Myers. Dayton brought the right pieces in, and we all jelled. We also saw behind the scenes what was going on in the minor leagues. Everyone can now see the fruits of Dayton's hard work.

From our minor league system, Billy Butler and I were here already, and then Eric Hosmer, Mike Moustakas, Salvador Perez, and others were in that second wave. When I was sent down to Omaha in 2010, I saw the talent firsthand in the minor leagues, which motivated me to work a little harder to get back up with these guys. Now another group of players is getting major league ready in the minors.

Don't get me wrong, it's been a long process. There have been a lot of downs that Dayton and I, along with the organization, had to go through to get to the point where we are now. I had success everywhere I played growing up, through my time at the University of Nebraska, but I struggled when I got called up to Kansas City and didn't know how to deal with it. Dayton was one of the people who helped me get through it. To get to where we were in 2014, all of the struggles and negative talk about Dayton and the club seem worth it. It was an indescribable feeling to share the experience with Dayton along with guys like Billy Butler and Luke Hochevar, who were with the organization since the transformation began.

More Than a Season is the perfect title for this book because, for Dayton Moore,

life is about more than what happens during the course of a season. Obviously, it would've been incredible to win the 2014 World Series, but whether we won or lost, Dayton was going to be the same person. He is a great, humble man with outstanding character.

Not everyone is lucky enough to have a boss who is both a genuinely good person and an outstanding leader. The following pages will give you a better understanding of where he came from and how he built the Royals from a 100-loss team to American League champions.

Regardless of what happens throughout the rest of my career and after, it'll always be an honor to say that I played for Kansas City and Dayton Moore.

—Alex Gordon

Introduction by William F. High

“Why do you still enjoy doing this work after all these years?” Her question was honest and simple, yet valid. She was interviewing for a job but wanted to know why I’m still doing the same thing after nearly 15 years.

The answer was equally simple: *“It’s the stories. I love to hear the stories of people, their pain, their joy, and how those stories connect with one another and ultimately the Divine Story.”*

Dayton Moore’s story is one of those. His story is one of a simple, straightforward, Midwestern guy with a love and passion for the game of baseball. But it’s more than baseball—a lot more.

Even though he’s reached one of the highest levels in sports, been to the World Series, and he gets to hang out with world-class athletes in a multibillion-dollar sport, none of that seems to faze Dayton.

One of the best stories that illustrates what I mean didn’t come from Dayton. I was having coffee with Kevin Seitzer, the former Royals hitting coach who’s now the Atlanta Braves hitting coach. Kevin relayed how it was one of those picture-perfect days with blue sky and fresh spring breeze. Twelve-year-olds patrolled the outfield while Dayton hit lazy fly balls to an eager group. In the afternoon sun, Dayton paused, leaned in on the bat, and wistfully remarked, “It doesn’t get any better than this.”

That’s Dayton Moore—a man with a love for a game. He loves baseball but he also loves to coach, to teach, to inspire a dream—whether it’s a 12-year-old kid on a diamond or a 22-year-old in a classroom.

So when I first met Dayton, it’s no surprise that our conversation didn’t focus on him or his experiences in baseball. We probably discussed 45 things in 30 minutes, touching on family, baseball, ministry, leadership, and the community. It was a fun, fast-paced conversation.

Most of all Dayton wanted to talk about helping people—those in need, those who needed to be inspired and to live beyond what they thought possible. He talked about his goal to establish a foundation called “C You in the Major Leagues.” The foundation would help kids who wouldn’t have a chance to play competitive baseball without its support. The foundation wouldn’t just stop there, however. It was about creating opportunities for students and others in need.

So that’s what we did. We formally established the C You in the Major Leagues Foundation through the National Christian Foundation Heartland. It was an extension of what Dayton had already been doing informally, but this provided structure. In keeping with Dayton’s personality, many of the gifts from the foundation have been anonymous. In his first public launch of the foundation, more than 150 people came out to hear the dream of the foundation.

There’s more to come. Dayton thinks big. He’s been involved in the community—helping the homeless, speaking to business owners, leading camps, and encouraging pastoral leaders. He wants to make the community better. He wants to help people.

So it shouldn’t come as a surprise that when a few people, including me, mentioned to Dayton that he should write a book, he was reluctant. For him it’s about focusing on the team and on others, not on himself. When he realized he could write a book that

shares his journey and the lessons he's learned along the way, he was on board. Notably, none of his proceeds from this book go to Dayton. All the profits from the book go to his foundation, so that more good can be accomplished.

In the coming pages of *More Than a Season*, you'll read and hear of the journey of a man, and the lessons he's learned along the way in building a championship culture. You don't have to like baseball, either, to enjoy this book. Instead, you'll capture the idea that life is built so much on the ideas of persistence, character, and faith. As we all grab those ideas, then, well, in Dayton's words, "It doesn't get any better than this."

—William F. High
CEO/President
National Christian Foundation Heartland

1. 90 Feet Away

Baseball is a game of inches. It's a tough game. It's a game of failure. But it is also very rewarding.

The 2014 Kansas City Royals experienced all of these things during a 29-day postseason stretch, culminating with Game 7 of the World Series. It all started with the wild-card game against Oakland (see chapter 10 for more on that). Inches separated us from the end of the season and a trip to Anaheim on Salvador Perez's game-winning bouncer down the left-field line. There we were, though, a month later, playing in Game 7 of the World Series.

Going into the seventh game against the San Francisco Giants, I felt confident that we would win it, especially coming off a 10–0 win in Game 6 the night before. After what we'd seen during the entire postseason run, as Game 7 went on, even with the way Giants pitcher Madison Bumgarner was throwing in late-inning relief, I thought that, if we could get a runner, we could get him across the plate. Why wouldn't any of us think that way? If we learned nothing else during the postseason, it was that this was a resilient bunch of Royals that had learned how to overcome deficits late in games. The common theme of that whole group was that they absolutely loved to play baseball, which made them tough and resilient.

There was a sense early in Game 7 that the magic might continue. After the Giants scored first with two runs in the top of the second off starter Jeremy Guthrie, we came right back with two runs in the bottom of the inning. That was it for the Royals. The Giants took the lead for good with a run in the fourth. San Francisco manager Bruce Bochy turned to his ace, Bumgarner, in the fifth. But just when it looked like the Royals were finished with two outs in the bottom of the ninth, Alex Gordon drove a ball to left-center. Gregor Blanco, whom I've known since he was 16, misplayed the ball, and it rolled to the wall. Juan Perez then bobbled the ball as he tried to pick it up. At that moment, a part of me thought Gordo had a chance to make it all the way home. However, from where I was sitting, I had a direct line of the relay. Third-base coach Mike Jirschele stopped Gordo at third as shortstop Brandon Crawford was about to get the relay throw in shallow left-center from Perez. Crawford was the key person on the play for two reasons. One, he has one of the best arms for a shortstop in major league baseball. Two, because of how deep he went to retrieve the relay, it's a much tougher decision for the third-base coach.



Salvador Perez, a good bad-ball hitter, pulls a low and outside pitch from Oakland's Jason Hammel past the third baseman in the 12th inning of the wild-card game that sent us into an incredible October 2014.

As fun as it would've been to see Alex try to score there, if I'm Jirsch, I'm making the same call of stopping Alex, mainly because of Crawford's arm. I thought Salvador Perez, who was on deck, would get a hit just like he did against Oakland about a month earlier. Salvy, who was going to be aggressive, is a good bad-ball hitter, and Bumgarner's pitches were in and out of the zone. If Salvy gets a hit, Gordo ties it, we pinch-run for Salvy, and then who knows what happens with Mike Moustakas coming up. Unfortunately, it didn't happen. We were 90 feet away.

After the season, I was privileged, along with Alex, to be part of turning on the Christmas lights at Kansas City's famous Country Club Plaza. One of the local media personalities saw us backstage and razzed Gordo a little about not trying to score.

"Do you know our third-base coach's name?" I asked the TV personality.

"No, I don't."

"Well, if Alex had kept running and gotten thrown out at the plate, you and everyone else in the country would've known it for the wrong reason. Mike Jirschele, who's an excellent third-base coach, would've gone down in World Series history for making that mistake."

The other big discussion right after the series, and rightly so, was Bumgarner. He turned in one of the most impressive performances in World Series history in 2014 by winning two games, saving one, and seeing his World Series ERA drop to 0.25. Because of all of that he was selected as the World Series MVP. Bumgarner is a true "giant" with a great ability to pitch and a great heart to compete. When your best players are your team's best competitors, you always have a chance to win. That's what Madison Bumgarner brought to that San Francisco team during the World Series.

After the game, I went down to our clubhouse, which was quiet except for reporters interviewing players, and I walked around to the players and coaches and thanked each one for their hard work and dedication to the Royals. I told them how proud of them we were as an organization and as a city.

That group of men helped reignite a baseball passion in Kansas City. Frankly, one of the things I enjoyed most with that postseason run was the joy that winning brought to our city and the way it united people. We lost more than a generation of fans because we weren't winning. Kids and grandkids were becoming Red Sox and Braves and Yankees fans because those teams were winning. As a parent of baseball fans, you want your kids to experience the great things—the winning, the civic pride, the fun games—that you experienced. To see that come around and then to receive letters or hear comments from someone as I stand in line at a coffee shop, or to read of people drawing encouragement from our club as they battled cancer and other potentially deadly diseases, is incredibly uplifting.

I tried to be positive around everyone, including the players, coaches, and manager Ned Yost in the clubhouse, but it was tough to feel anything but completely dejected. My emotions did get the better of me later that night.

As I was driving home, Gene Watson, our director of professional scouting, whom I've known since our Atlanta days, called me.

"Well, it was a great season," he said.

"Great, Gene? What's so great about it? I understand what you're saying, but what's so great about it? We had an opportunity to win the World Series and we didn't."

I continued to vent. I knew it wasn't the right thing to do, but that's part of the emotions you go through after losing the World Series. For that moment, maybe I wore my emotions a little louder because of how we lost and knowing how close we were at the end. Don't get me wrong: I was grateful and appreciative toward the players and the leaders throughout our organization who helped us reach that point, but I was wrapped up in the moment. Everyone manages failure differently. As you'll read several times throughout this book, the key to baseball is who manages failure the best. You will fail in baseball. Period. But the people and teams that manage it the best are able to reach their ceilings.

I didn't handle it the way I would've liked after Game 7. There was a lot of frustration and hurt that we didn't win. And, perhaps, selfishness and pride on my part—wanting to be the general manager of a World Series championship team—made me react the way I did to Gene. It was competitiveness in me, but it was a human flaw to react that harshly to our director of professional scouting. Taking it a step further, Gene was a big reason we made a particular move that helped us get to the World Series. As you'll read more in-depth later, he was the one who orchestrated the James Shields and Wade Davis trade and then kept me motivated to make the move. We didn't want to trade Wil Myers, but based on our plan and how we needed to get there, we needed to trade Wil and others for Shields and Davis. That turned out to be a blessing for our franchise, and it's a huge credit to Gene.

Later, I called Gene and apologized for the way I spoke to him. We all need people in our lives who can be sounding boards for our true feelings and emotions, in good times and in bad. For me, Gene Watson is one of those people.

* * *

Losing a World Series, whether you're expected to be there or not, hurts. After Game 7, it felt as if Yordano Ventura or Kelvin Herrera hit me in the gut with a fastball. Working for the Atlanta Braves taught me how hard it is to get to the World Series, let alone win it. And we were doing it there with three Hall of Fame pitchers in Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine, and John Smoltz, future Hall of Fame player Chipper Jones, and Hall of Fame manager Bobby Cox. So I understood this was a special opportunity. I wanted to try to enjoy every moment, but as a competitor and a general manager, I couldn't help but gravitate toward the thoughts, *How are we going to do this again? What do we have to do next year?*

Regardless of your field, those questions apply to all of us, especially when you've been 90 feet away from your goal. How are we going to do this again? And what do we have to do to get better next year?



It was a long process from June 2006 until that word “Postseason” was on the wall behind me in our dugout in 2014, but I’m so happy for our players, our organization, and all of our fans.

There have been many times in my life when I’ve been only 90 feet away. Other times I’ve crossed home plate. The following pages are about those times for me and how we brought this once proud Kansas City Royals club from a 100-loss franchise to within 90 feet of tying Game 7 in the bottom of the ninth inning of the 2014 World Series.

* * *

As I pulled into the driveway after talking with Gene Watson a few hours after Perez ended Game 7 by popping out to third baseman Pablo Sandoval, I was reminded of the most vivid images from the 2014 postseason run: *my* home team—my family. Our first three or four years in Kansas City were difficult on our entire family. It was a challenge for us as a family to weather the criticism that was directed toward the Royals and, ultimately, me as the general manager. There were many times I wanted to fight back with and through the media, but I wisely shut my mouth and stayed focused on our long-term plan. There's no way I could have gotten through that time without a strong faith system and my wife, Marianne, who's always been a great encourager to me. To see her and our three kids—Ashley, Avery, and Robert—enjoy the 2014 postseason run after what they endured in previous years is rewarding and special.

That's where it begins and ends with me: family. As much as I love the Kansas City Royals and our people within the organization, my favorite team is at home. I've always strived to make them a priority, second only to my relationship with Christ. That love and commitment and importance of family was shown to me throughout my entire life.

2. A Midwestern Kid Realizes His Dream

Ever since I picked up a baseball, or at least since being introduced to the sport, there hasn't been a day when I didn't think about baseball. I've been in love with the game for as long as I can remember.

Growing up in the 1970s, many of us could imagine ourselves reaching baseball's biggest stage, the World Series, and getting the game-winning hit in Game 7. We all created those situations as kids. For me it was a passion as much as it was a dream. As kids in western New York, we'd play Wiffle ball, tennis ball, or one-on-one as we pitched to the strike zone painted on the side of our elementary school. We'd go through the Royals lineup as they faced the Dodgers or whichever team seemed to be a good opponent. Except the Yankees. It was never the Yankees. We read the box scores every day so we could recite the lineups better than we could Bible verses. We shared a lot of dreams about playing in the big leagues. The only way to get there, we thought then, was to win the day. Be the best you can be each day. As with life, we'd start with a fresh slate each day.

And, yes, you read that previous paragraph correctly. It was almost always the Kansas City Royals against someone else. The Royals were my team, thanks to my parents' roots and, especially, my grandmother's love of the team.

* * *

My mother, Penne, grew up in Coldwater, Kansas, which is a wheat farming community about two hours west of Wichita, Kansas. In the mid-1960s, she was attending a small business school in Wichita when some mutual friends introduced her to Robert Moore, who had served on the USS *Yorktown* during Vietnam but was working at Beechcraft, an airline manufacturing company based in Wichita. There must've been an instant attraction between Robert and Penne because they dated about three months before getting married. My brother, sister, and I were all born in Wichita a few years later. I was the oldest, followed by Duke about three years later, and then Danielle about three years after him. Shortly after Danielle was born when I was in kindergarten, we moved to Lakewood, New York, when Dad took a job with Chautauqua Airlines.

Every August we'd spend two to three weeks with my grandparents in Coldwater. That's where I developed a love for the Royals because my grandmother, Wynona, was a huge fan. With our mutual love of baseball and my love for my grandmother, baseball and the Royals became easy topics of conversation for us. If we weren't listening to Buddy Blattner, Denny Matthews, and Fred White on the radio, we were staying up late to see the score on the news. The next morning, we'd grab the newspaper and head directly for the previous night's box score. The Royals were an easy team for me to like because they were winning and made it to the playoffs seemingly every year.

One of those playoff moments remains burned on my mind. In 1976, the Royals'

first time going to the postseason, they were tied with the Yankees, two games to two, in a best-of-five series. We were watching in the bottom of the ninth, with the game tied at 6–6, when Chris Chambliss hit a walk-off home run over the right-field wall at Yankee Stadium. I started bawling. And bawling. Unfortunately, that’s one of my earliest Royals memories.

Another Royals memory that is extremely vivid for a much better reason was nine years later. I was a freshman at Garden City Community College and I had spent fall break with Dave Larson, a teammate of mine, in Illinois. Our drive back to Garden City, Kansas, happened to be on the same day as Game 7 of the 1985 World Series. Being somewhat naïve college freshmen, we thought we could stop at then–Royals Stadium and buy tickets for the game against the St. Louis Cardinals. Of course the game was sold out—and we couldn’t afford the tickets anyway—but we noticed there were a lot of people parked on Interstate 70, watching the game from a grassy area between the stadium and the interstate. So we decided to join them. From that spot we could see everything except Lonnie Smith in left field. It was an absolute blast! One of the people had a portable television, so we could tell exactly what was going on. To this day, thinking about the crowd’s electricity that we could feel near I-70 still gives me chills.

* * *

While I was attending Lakewood Elementary School, I continued to play baseball in the spring and summer, but the sport that wrested some of my attention away from baseball was hockey. I was on a traveling team that played in tournaments throughout New York and even in Canada. Of course, excitement surrounding the sport grew during that time with the 1980 U.S. Olympic men’s hockey team’s “Miracle on Ice” about seven hours up the road in Lake Placid. I didn’t have the same love for hockey as I did baseball, but it’s a fascinating sport to most people. The hand-eye coordination needed in hockey rivals that of hitting a baseball. Royals Hall of Fame broadcaster Denny Matthews, who’s a hockey connoisseur, summed up hockey perfectly: “Hockey is a fast, instinctive game. There’s also no foul territory, so once you’re on the rink, you can’t run out of bounds to avoid a hit.... The most intriguing part of it is playing on a foreign surface.”

Any thoughts I might’ve had of becoming the next Bobby Hull or Guy Lafleur were dashed after the eighth grade when Dad took a job with Mississippi Valley Airlines and we moved to Moline, Illinois, where the closest hockey league was more than an hour away in Peoria.

Each new job my father took meant a move to another city and the instability that might bring to a family. But he was doing it to improve our family’s situation. The move to Illinois certainly did that. Before going to Moline, my mother worked outside the home to help make ends meet, even though it was unusual at that time for women to work. We weren’t poor, but there were mornings we’d wake up without milk in the house. Neither of my parents had a college degree, and we were what one might consider a blue-collar family.

From the examples set by my parents, though, I learned so many incredible life lessons that molded who I am today. Although we moved a lot, my father worked

extremely hard, from morning until night. He would recite a rhyme to us kids that still rings in my head today: “Do a job, big or small, do it right or not at all.” When I first got into coaching, he would say, “You need to work every job like it’s the last one you’ll ever have.” He treated people with kindness. He was both respectful and respected, and showed what it meant to be transparent. Then there was my mother who was a very tough Midwestern woman who was never afraid to speak her mind. And she was a tough, unbelievable competitor. At her funeral, one woman said, “Penne Moore was the toughest woman I’ve ever met in my life.” That was true. She’d drop the gloves in a heartbeat. Dad was the spiritual leader of the family. He made sure we were in church as much as possible as a family, which was an important component that he was trying to instill in the family.

Dad also helped coach my teams in New York, but sports weren’t a huge part of my parents’ childhoods because both worked on their family’s farms growing up. Besides the overall passion I had for hockey and baseball, with all of the moving we did as a family, the best way for me to make new friends was through sports. As kids we get a lot of our identity and self-esteem from sports. After my sophomore year of high school, that identity came mainly from baseball. Academics weren’t high on my list, and I dropped all other sports because my passion to learn the game of baseball was so intense. When I was 15, I started charting *Monday Night Baseball* games. And then, each October I would tape playoff games on our VCR and watch them all winter.

Our teams were passionate about winning. Before my senior year of high school, our American Legion team was the first team from Moline to reach the Great Lakes Regional tournament, which was played that year in Rapid City, South Dakota. My coach told me after one of our games that a Royals scout wanted to meet me. I was stunned. In those days we didn’t see a lot of scouts, but a scout for the Royals—*my* team—wanted to meet me? That was a dream come true.

That scout’s name was Art Stewart. The way he made me feel was something I’ll never forget. He made a great impression on me. I always think back to that, anytime I meet a young player. He asked questions about my interests and about my family. He praised me for the way I played the game, hustled, and the intensity I showed on the field. I’m not sure if he remembers the conversation, but I certainly do. From meeting him that day as a 17-year-old and then crossing paths during the years I was with the Braves, working with Art was one of the things I looked forward to the most when I took the job with the Royals more than 20 years later.

I definitely remember it. Dayton was a fiery shortstop; a pepper pot. Boy, he was an impressive shortstop. He played extremely well in that tournament. After the game I stopped him and said, “Young man, you got a minute?” I told him who I was and said, “I have an information card here. Would you mind filling it out?” Needless to say, he was elated to do it.

—Art Stewart

My baseball focus has changed since those days of dreaming of a major league playing career, but there remains something magical about a bat and a ball. I was

blessed to play on good teams, which added to my obsession with winning. It's been channeled as I've matured to a passion for team excellence, doing things the right way, bringing honor to the organization and people who have believed in me, and bringing honor to God.

But my journey in the game was far from being over.

“THAT RUN’S ON YOU, MOORE!”

During my senior year of high school, with my sights set on continuing my baseball career at the University of Missouri, I went to a Cincinnati Reds tryout camp. Larry Smith, a Reds scout, came up to me and asked where I was going to school.

“I’m thinking about going to the University of Missouri,” I said with a tone that told him my options were still open, especially if I had a chance to sign a professional contract.

“You won’t play if you go there because Dave Silvestri will be the starting shortstop there this year,” he said. “There’s a junior college in Kansas I’d like you to think about instead of Missouri.”

“Look, I just want to sign.”

“We could sign you, but I can give you only about \$1,500.”

“I’ll take it!”

“Sorry, but I’m not going to send you out.”

The next day coach Joe Slobko called me and said they’d love to have me at Garden City Community College. I was familiar with the program because Jamie Allison, who was from the Moline area, had gone to Garden City, and they were recruiting Dave Larson, a player from our rival high school. As it turned out, Dave and I both went to Garden City and became roommates.

Garden City was a great experience. We played more than 100 games a year for an intense, passionate coach. My first game playing there was in the fall against Colby Community College. In the first inning I hit a double off the left-center-field wall and eventually came in to score. It was my first collegiate game—I was feeling pretty good. However, the leadoff batter in the bottom of the first grounded the ball to me... and I booted it. Joe Slobko wasn’t happy. But what made it worse was that the runner scored. Joe started screaming, “That run’s on you, Moore!” That was in the first inning of my first collegiate game. Joe didn’t stop screaming at me all fall.

I called Dad during the fall and said, “This guy’s crazy! I love his competitiveness, but he’s on my case all the time.”

My father’s response isn’t exactly what I wanted to hear. “Well, son, that means he cares. Your whole life you’ll have someone telling you that you stink. You’re going to stick it out at Garden City. We can readdress it at the end of the year.” I decided to make it work.

You have to be prepared to fail in baseball, and Coach Slobko certainly prepared us for the mental side of the game. Slobko had a “boot camp” every January to get us into shape. The conditioning circuit was so intense that just the anticipation of it kept players awake at night.

As it turned out, playing for Joe was one of the best things that happened to me in my life. He was a rough, tough throwback, but an unbelievable competitor. I wanted to win for Joe because he cared so much about competing and winning. I loved playing