



## Reinventing A Once Fallen Hero

By: Austin Rader

July 19, 2019 — In the late 20th century, America's pastime had hit a low point. The 1994 strike was still on everyone's mind. Attendance was down; TV ratings were dipping. And fan bases were leaving for faster paced sports. Major League Baseball was desperately hoping for a generational talent to help re-invigorate its fans similar to Michael Jordan in basketball.

### The Beginning

In 1996, a 21 year old Alex Rodriguez from Tampa, Florida, the greatest prospect the game has ever seen, took center stage as the shortstop for the Seattle Mariners. And boy did he provide the spark that baseball needed.

The smooth shortstop could hit for power effortlessly sending balls into the seats. He could also make jaw-dropping plays in the field. A cool part of the A-Rod story in the MLB is who he played the game with; in Seattle his teammates included future hall of famers Ken Griffey Jr., Edgar Martinez, and Randy Johnson.



The young A-Rod was able to learn from all of these greats. Especially Edgar Martinez who taught him the mental side of hitting and what his approach should be on each pitch. "One of the toughest phone calls I ever made was calling Edgar to tell him I was signing with the Texas Rangers," Rodriguez once stated.

## Fall From Grace

We all know what happened next. After an NLCS loss to the Yankees in 2000, A-Rod signed the biggest contract in sports history at the time (10 year \$252 million) with the Texas Rangers. In 2004, The Rangers ended up trading him to Boston before the 2004 season but the trade never went through. Instead he got dealt to the Yankees where he spent the remainder of his career in pinstripes.

A-Rod's reputation had always been good. He was well-liked by his team members, and always had a smile on his face. After reports surfaced that Rodriguez used steroids in 2003, he finally admitted to drug use on November 5, 2014.

He was suspended for the entire 2014 season.

The prodigal son had fallen, his reputation plummeting in the process. 3,000 hits, a .295 career batting average, a three time MVP, a 14 time all-star, 696 home runs. He looked like he was walking into the Hall of Fame.



## The Redemption

In superhero movies, the hero's "fall" usually happens in the second half of the movie. For A-Rod's case, there was still time for a redemption. Obviously there will always be a cloud over his head that people will talk about.

A-Rod starting speaking at high schools about the dangers in using steroids and what it does to your mental and physical health.

In 2018, A-Rod signed on to be a play-by-play broadcaster with Matt Vasgersian and Jessica Mendoza.

His broadcast career received criticism at first, with an article surfacing in May 2018 that he was being very strategic with his points and tried not to say the "wrong thing," whereas trusting his instincts and knowledge of the game to carry over in conversation. They ended the article by reporting that Sunday Night Baseball Ratings were down by 18% and A-Rod was the sole reason.

No matter what you do in life, experience is everything. This season, Rodriguez has been phenomenal on Sunday Night Baseball, trusting his knowledge of the game and giving the fans an in-depth insight into what the hitter is thinking at the plate at a certain point in the count. His chemistry with his colleagues is growing more and more every game. Whenever I tune in on Sunday nights, I learn so much more about the game from listening to A-Rod.

A-Rod has been keeping busy. The 2009 World Series Champ has been helping out former professional athletes turn their finances around on CNBC's show "Back in the Game." He also co-hosts the popular Barstool Sports podcast "The Corp." He works 80-100 hours per week.



I believe that A-Rod is just scratching the surface of what he is capable of doing from the broadcasting booth. He is motivated to be a better broadcaster than he was as a player. Look at what Tony Romo has done in his two years as a broadcaster for the NFL on CBS. A-Rod's curiosity and knowledge of the game will make him a better play-by-play announcer. He seems to be getting better every week.

He has also transitioned well into baseball retirement, as a successful businessman who could do for baseball what Magic has done for basketball.

Even though his story isn't close to finished, he is well on his way to resurrecting his once damaged reputation as a baseball player who fell to the dark side of steroids.

This really is an off the field redemption story of a once fallen hero.