

# KEN GRIFFEY RETURNS TO INDIANAPOLIS

MARC ALLAN SITS DOWN WITH KEN GRIFFEY, SR.

BEFORE HE BECAME KNOWN AS KEN GRIFFEY SR., FATHER OF THE FUTURE HALL OF FAMER, HE WAS SIMPLY KEN GRIFFEY, QUALITY OUTFIELDER FOR THE REDS, YANKEES, BRAVES AND MARINERS FROM 1973-91. AND BEFORE THAT, HE WAS AN INDIANAPOLIS INDIAN - FOR 107 GAMES IN 1973 (WHEN HE WAS CLUB MVP) AND 47 IN 1974.

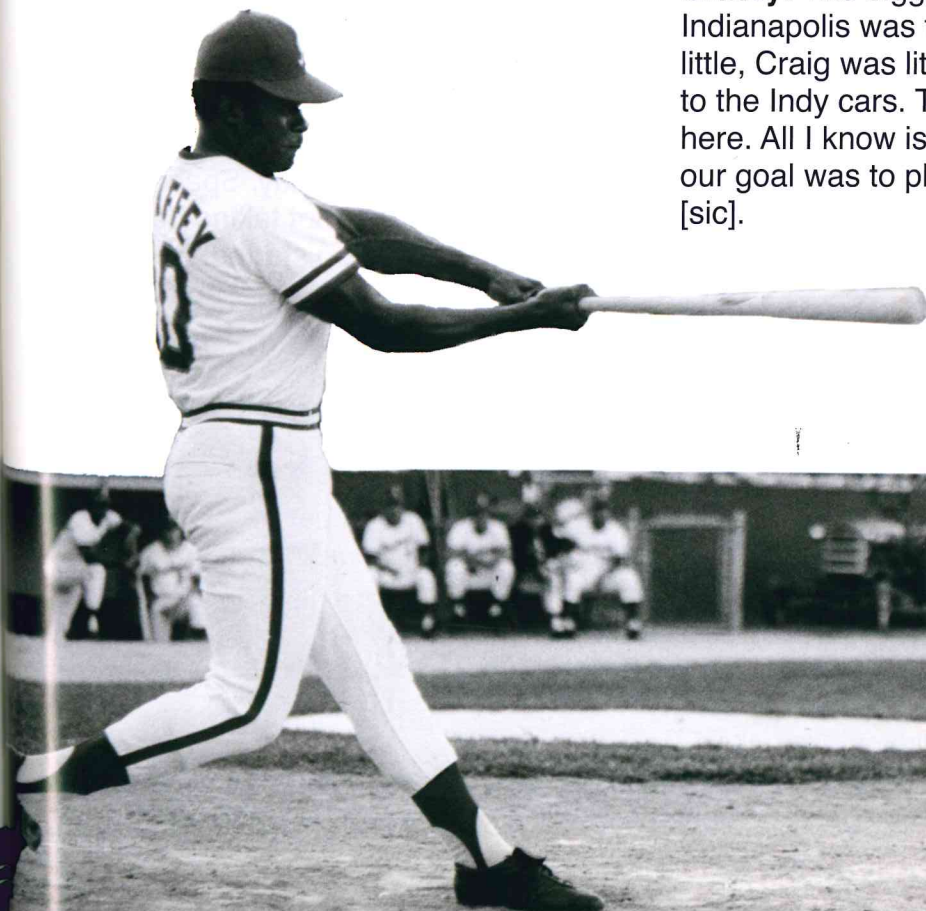
Griffey, now the hitting coach for the Dayton Dragons of the Midwest League and national spokesman for ZERO - The Project to End Prostate Cancer, came back to Indianapolis in February for the first time in years to address the Indians' Annual Hot Stove Luncheon. In an interview prior to his speech, he talked about his career, being Ken Griffey Jr.'s dad and more.

**Q: How's your health?**

**Griffey:** Pretty good, pretty good. It's been three years as a prostate cancer survivor. I didn't have treatment. They caught it early enough that I didn't have to, which was a bonus for me. I had the surgery. You had the incontinence for a long period of time, but other than that, I'm doing pretty good. I just had the PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen test) and it was 0.0.

**Q: Tell me about playing in Indianapolis.**

**Griffey:** The biggest thing I remember about Indianapolis was that the kids were little. Junior was little, Craig was little, and they always talked about going to the Indy cars. The Indianapolis 500 was the big thing here. All I know is, we were here to play baseball and our goal was to play and get to the big leagues asap [sic].





It was fun to play here. I enjoyed playing at old Bush Stadium. It was one of the better ballparks. It was unique because of the brick wall; there weren't too many brick walls in any of the stadiums. Then you had the big teepee out in center field. George (Foster) and I used to do a lot of crazy stuff in that teepee. We'd go out there and rock the teepee back and forth and act like we were fighting and dive out of the teepee and run back into the teepee. Vern Rapp would have fits. He would be going crazy trying to figure out what we were doing in there.

Those are fond memories. The minor leagues was my development, but I learned how to enjoy the game and understand the game. Coming out of high school, I thought I knew everything about baseball because there wasn't that much to know. Boy, did I get changed around real quick.

I remember the Circle. You could see the Circle coming toward downtown on 16th Street. Now, you can't see anything. That's how much it's changed.

**Q: What do you remember about being called up to the majors?**

**Griffey:** I was in Des Moines, Iowa. I was in a theater watching a movie - "Hercules Unchained." They called me - I guess one of the managers - and they say, "Is Ken Griffey here?" I got up and walked out and they said, "Your manager wants to see you." I went back to the hotel and that's when they said, "You're going to the big leagues."

It surprised me because I thought I was going to stay the full year. We were getting ready to get into the playoffs. We had won the division and I thought if I had an opportunity to go up, it would be around Sept. 1. But they called us up around the 25th or 26th of August.

**Q: You had two hits in each of your first four games. You must have been thinking this was going to come pretty easy.**

**Griffey:** No, I never thought that. The first pitcher I faced in the big leagues was Rick Wise. I got a double down the left-field line. A little blooper,

actually. I knew I had to work, no matter what I was doing. It wasn't going to come as easy. And knowing that I'm not going to hit many home runs, they're going to throw me fastballs.

So I figured that and I just played my game.

Everyone seemed to think it came pretty easy. But the next year, I got sent back to Indy.

**Q: What happened?**

**Griffey:** I came to spring training and Sparky (Anderson, the Reds' manager) wanted me to bunt. I bunted in Indianapolis; I think I had 25 bunt base hits in Indy. I knew how to bunt on grass, but it was going to take me a little while to learn how to bunt on Astroturf. You can't deaden the ball on Astroturf. So every day, Sparky had me bunting in the cage, not taking batting practice. So when the season started, I hadn't had that much batting practice, so it was almost like spring training the first month. I hit .158 and they sent me back to Triple-A.

May 14, they sent me back to Indy. I ended up hitting .333. (Reds General Manager) Dick Wagner told me not to get a permanent place - stay at one of the hotels. I was back in the big leagues in July. July 2.

**Q: It's amazing that you remember these dates.**

**Griffey:** The reason I remember that was they sent me down for five weeks and six days





instead of six weeks. They used that day against me in the big leagues. When I thought I had free agency after six years, I had five years and 171 days instead of the 172 days I needed. I had to play seven years to become a free agent. They knew that. Dick Wagner knew that.

**Q: You were in the majors permanently in 1974 and by 1975, you're on a World Series champion. Again, all these great things were happening to you right away.**

**Griffey:** '75 was my first full year in the big leagues. And to get the opportunity to play in a World Series was amazing. And to repeat in '76 was even better. But the first full year in the big leagues, you're playing in the '75 World Series, which turned out to be one of the better World Series ever played. You couldn't ask for anything better than that until Junior came into being.

**Q: When Carlton Fisk hit the home run, what was your reaction?**

**Griffey:** As soon as he hit it, I said, "Go foul, go foul!" He was pushing one way, I was pushing another. But we knew we still had one more game. Nobody was really down because of that game because it was such an exciting game, for one. The whole game was up and down, up and down.

We were confident we had a chance to win it. They played us real well, and a lot of people

don't remember that Jim Rice didn't play in that series. He broke his hand a week before. You're talking about 30 home runs, 100-something ribbies [sic], .300 batting average. If he was in that series, that might have changed the whole series.

**Q: In '76, you were contending for the batting title with Bill Madlock. What happened at the end of the season?**

**Griffey:** Everybody thinks I sat out, but what happened was, the day before, Phil Niekro throws a one-hitter against us and I went 0-for-5. So I'm thinking I've gotta play the next day because I didn't get any hits. I was at .339-something and Madlock was at .336. I come to the ballpark and Sparky said I'm not going to play. I said: "Why not? I want to play and win it outright." I think he wanted to protect me, but he had mentioned before he wouldn't sit anyone out to protect them to win something.

Then Madlock went 4-for-4, Sparky put me in in the seventh inning. I struck out twice and that was it. All I had to do was go 1-for-4 and it didn't matter what Bill Madlock did. I would have won the batting title.

**Q: People have suggested that when you were traded to the Yankees in '81, there must have been more to it than we knew because the Reds got two low-level players (Fred Toliver and Bryan Ryder). Was there a reason the Reds traded you?**

**Griffey:** The reason was, I broke my kneecap in '79. They said it was torn cartilage and I found out it was a broken kneecap. I played until the middle of August. In '80, they traded me to the Mets and no one knew about the trade. I knew about it because (sportswriter) Earl Lawson told me. We were going to play the Mets that night, but we went on a one-day strike and never went over there. I was getting traded for Craig Swan.

I came back and the Reds had to do something different because





it was my free-agent year, so they signed me to a two-year deal, '80 and '81. After that, I was getting ready to go free agent. I had two weeks before I was going to declare free agency and Dick Wagner wanted to trade me.

**Q: Fast-forward to the 1990 World Series. How did that Reds team beat Oakland? And you didn't just beat them, you swept them.**

**Griffey:** We had a heck of a pitching staff. We had (Tom) Browning and (Jose) Rijo and (Danny) Jackson, and we had the Nasty Boys in the bullpen. When we got to the sixth inning and we were up by one run, Lou Piniella was bringing in (Norm) Charlton, (Rob) Dibble and (Randy) Myers. We won a lot of games by one run from the sixth inning on.

I wasn't on that club at that point. They released me on Aug. 26 and I signed with Seattle. I ended up getting a full share and ring.

**Q: I was reading an article about you on the web and the writer said: "Ken Griffey Sr. is largely responsible for what Jr. Griffey has accomplished. Sr. taught him the ins and outs, taught him that sweet swing, and led by example through his own playing career how you can either get to the top or enjoy trying. Jr. Griffey understood that even if you are not considered the best at the time, you can still be remembered for playing the game correctly."**

**Griffey:** I learned that here, from the Reds organization. They were very high on fundamentals. We were very fundamentally sound. It's because of what I went through with George Scherger, Russ Nixon, Jim Snyder and Vern Rapp in the minor-league system. Their thing was teaching the fundamentals of how to play the game. Throwing to the right base. Making the right decisions. Playing the game the right way. That's what we did.

**Q: Sept. 14, 1990, was the day you and Junior hit back-to-back home runs. Is that the highlight of your career?**

**Griffey:** That was the highlight. We had thought about it - he had thought about it more than I did

because he was hitting behind me. I wasn't the home-run hitter. I only hit 152 in my career. But I hit the first home run that day against California. I'm rounding third and he's the first one to meet me - him and Harold Reynolds, because Harold was on base. I looked into his eyes and said: "He's going to hit a home run."

Harold looked at me and said, "Wouldn't that be awesome if he hit a home run?"

Then it hit me that it would be the first time father and son ever hit back-to-back home runs. (Kirk) McCaskill worked the count to 3-and-0. I said: They're not going to pitch to him. Then he threw him something low and away and he drove one out of left field. It went right over Dante Bichette's head.

When he came to the dugout, I was hiding on the other end. I got up and I was laughing and I hugged him. It was an amazing feeling that we accomplished that. All the pressure was on him. Even though mine went further, he had all the pressure on him.

**Q: Of all the things that are good about being his father, one has to be that here's someone who has hit more than 600 homers and has never been accused of using steroids.**

**Griffey:** I owe that a lot to his mom. She's the one who put a lot of knots on his head if he did something wrong. She raised him right. She did a heck of a job. We always talked about what's right and what's wrong and how you treat people the way you want to be treated. He tries to do the right thing, and this was one of the right things.

I look at it and think it would be kind of hard not to (do steroids). If I could get \$125 million for five or six years..

**Q: But you made good money.**

**Griffey:** Oh, I made excellent money. Playing any sport, if you're making money and that's your job, that's a bonus.