



THANK YOU, ICHIRO.

Dear Ichiro,

First off, I want to say thank you for being a great friend to me and being my favorite player to this day.

Before I made the decision to play baseball, I remember looking at you and thinking to myself, “Damn, bruh skinny like me, so if he could do it, I most definitely can, too!” You made me want to play baseball. I idolized you as a kid in Avon Park. We even named a player after you in an old video game that came out before I was born.

I met you in 2004 in Houston at the All-Star Game. I remember walking across the field with my dad around 3 p.m., and you were already there stretching and getting ready – at the All-Star Game! No one does that!

It seemed like everyone else was huge and hit homers, but you stayed true to yourself, your work, your process, and, most importantly, your culture. You showed me that I could do anything and everything I could possibly want to do in this game, even when literally *everyone* is twice as big as us!

Then, here comes 2012. The Dodgers are in Seattle playing you guys. I’m standing at shortstop watching every move you make, and I end up adding to your hit total. I got caught up paying more attention to watching you hit than actually playing defense! (Sorry, Dodgers, but that’s Ichiro, you know?)

The next day, you were traded to the Yankees before I could even talk to you about hitting. I was crushed, but then came 2015. I had just been traded to Miami, and a few days later, you signed there!

Now I’m jumping up and down, yelling to my best friend, “YO!!! I get to play with Ichi-bruh?! Like, are you serious? Me? No way!” I remember going to Jupiter early, just hoping you were there so I could watch you hit and run. When you finally arrived, I nervously walked over to you and, bro, you were so nice to me. You told me you would help me in any way possible. I swear, it hit me hard. To this day, I be saying, “Yo! I play with Ichi!? How? I’m from little Avon Park!”

People don’t know how much you’ve helped me over these last five years, Ichi. We both know I’ve had good times, bad times, ups and downs, but your friendship never wavered once. You always stuck by my side through anything, and always had my back. If I was wronged, you would stick up for me every time, even if it hurt you getting on the field.

I didn’t think a tweet or Instagram post was appropriate for this occasion, so I wanted to do it the right way and tell you how much I appreciate you as loudly as possible. Without your friendship and guidance – and if you never told me your secrets (don’t worry, bro, I’ll never tell!) – there wouldn’t be a batting champion named Dee Gordon.

Love you, bro! You’re a part of my life forever. I hope you enjoy retirement. You better come hit with me on off-days because I’m definitely gonna miss that – and miss having you around to lean on.

Your brother,
DeVaris

