

RICKEY

The Life and Legend of an
American Original



Howard Bryant



MARINER BOOKS

Boston New York

The Henderson family Christmas card appears courtesy of Pamela Henderson. Rickey Henderson's induction speech into the Baseball Hall of Fame appears courtesy of Rickey Henderson.

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The Legend of **OAKLAND** and the Great Migration



Interviews

Sandy Alderson, Bob Alejo, Fred Atkins, Shooty Babitt, Dusty Baker, Billy Beane, Jason Beatty, Paul Beeston, Jerry Blevins, Jim Bloom, Vida Blue, Bruce Bochy, Bob Boone, Pat Borders, Ian Browne, Ellis Burks, Greg Cadaret, Bert Campaneris, Joe Carter, Peter Chase, Dawn Chmielewski, Tony Clark, Michael Collazo, David Cone, Jim Darby, Brian Davis, Mike Davis, Rick Dempsey, Dennis Dixon Sr., Andy Dolich, Dennis Eckersley, Roy Eisenhardt, Steve Fehr, Dave Feldman, John Flaherty, Cliff Floyd, Dave Forst, Terry Francona, Richie Garcia, Cito Gaston, Rich Gedman, Jason Giambi, Pedro Gomez, J. J. Guinn, Jim Hague, Mike Hammock, Jeff Hammonds, Rickey Henderson, Pamela Henderson, Pat Hentgen, Bob Hohler, Daniel Horowitz, Jeff Horrigan, Willie Horton, Johnnette Howard, Art Howe, Chad Huss, Jeff Idelson, Reggie Jackson, Kathy Jacobsen, Steve Karsay, Jim Kascinski, Pamela Kenn, Steve Kettmann, Bob Klapisch, Ken Korach, Kent Korser, Mark Kotsay, Carney Lansford, Tony La Russa, Joe Maddon, Buck Martinez, Don Mattingly, Lee Mazzilli, Walt McCreary, Tim Mead, Bob Melvin, Gene Monahan, Jackie Moore, Mickey Morabito, Lloyd Moseby, Lonnie Murray, Phil Nevin, Mike Norris, John Olerud, Detra Paige, Dave Parker, Gary Pettis, Renee Pinson, Pamela Pitts, Monte Poole, Mike Port, Tim Raines, Willie Randolph, Harold Reynolds, Bip Roberts, Dave Roberts, Andrew Robinson, Jimmy Rollins, CC Sabathia, Billy Sample, Mike Scioscia, John Shea, Buck Showalter, Mark Simon, Ken Singleton, Susan Slusser, Claire Smith, J. T. Snow, Terry Steinbach, Charles Steinberg, Dave Stewart, Todd Stottlemire, Mike Thalblum, Mo Vaughn, Randy Velarde, Steve Vucnich, Suzyn Waldman, Ron Washington, Devon White, Ernie Whitt, Glenn Wilburn, Ralph Wiley (1995), Willie Wilson, Dave Winfield, Peter Woodfork, and Michael Zagaris.

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- 318 "Rickey's so cut": Interview with Jason Giambi.
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 364 "I was analyzed": Interview with Rickey Henderson.
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- 374 "I think he would be": Interview with Billy Beane.
 375 "A lot of today's players": Interview with Rickey Henderson.
"The WBC?": Interview with Jeff Idelson.
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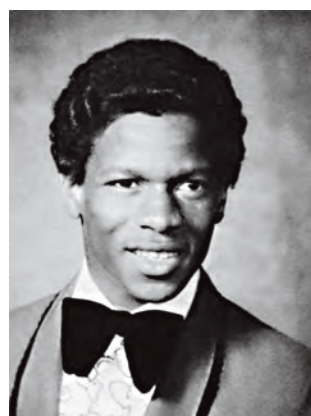
The Black version of Ellis Island: The violence and lack of opportunity in the Jim Crow South led Black people in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas to flee the South in record numbers. Many chose Oakland as a destination. *Russell Lee / Library of Congress*



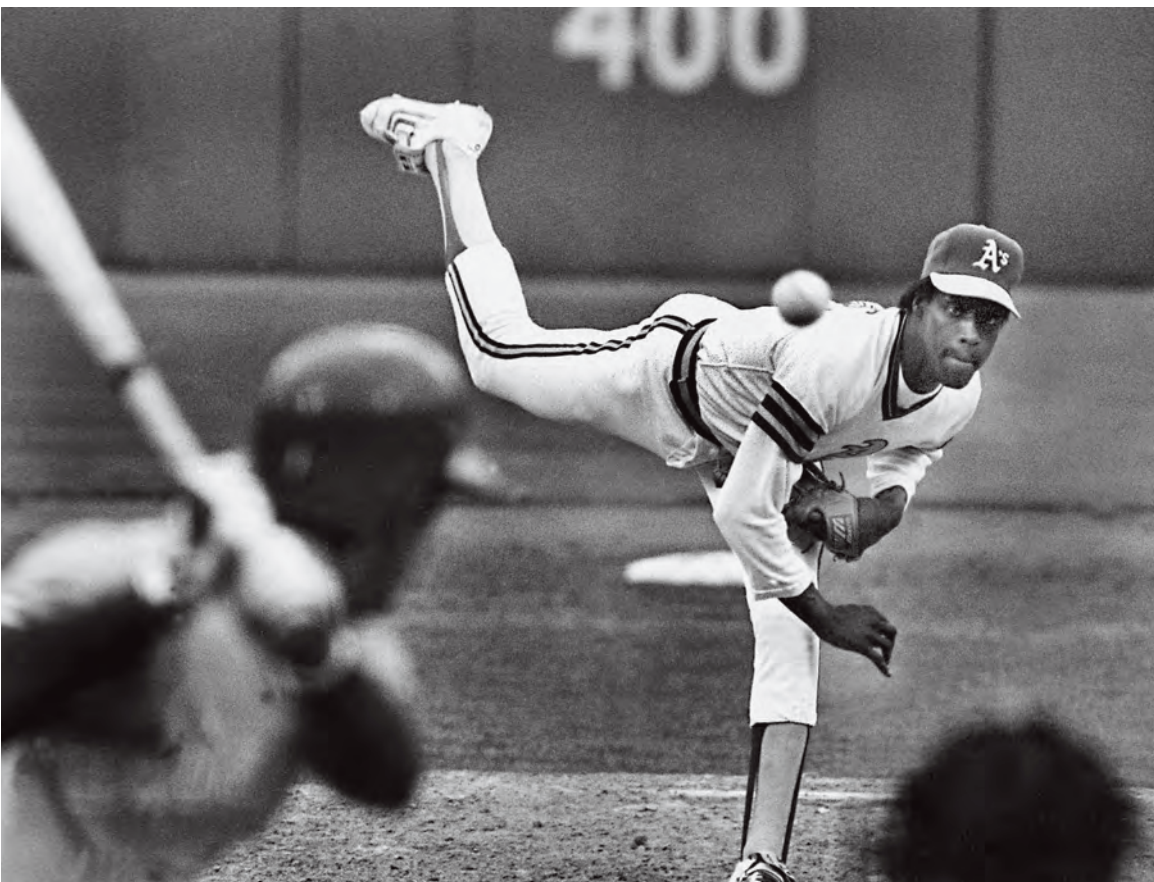
In 1940, Oakland was 2.8 percent Black. By the end of the decade, the Black population would increase by nearly 2,000 percent, forever transforming the city. *Dorothea Lange / Oakland Museum of California*



Known as “the Football Kid,” Rickey was once placed on the Oakland Tech junior varsity baseball team—until he told the varsity coach, “You must not know who I am.”
Oakland Technical High School



Senior Year, Oakland Technical High School, Class of 1976.
Oakland Technical High School



Mike Norris was a 22-game winner in 1980. Unlike Rickey, Norris was unfazed by the constant battles with A's ownership over money. He once said of salary arbitration, "I was going to either wake up rich—or richer." *Ron Riesterer*



No manager connected with Rickey like the explosive Billy Martin. Rickey called Martin a "father figure," and even in his first full season with Rickey, Martin was already calling him the greatest leadoff hitter of all time. *Ron Riesterer*



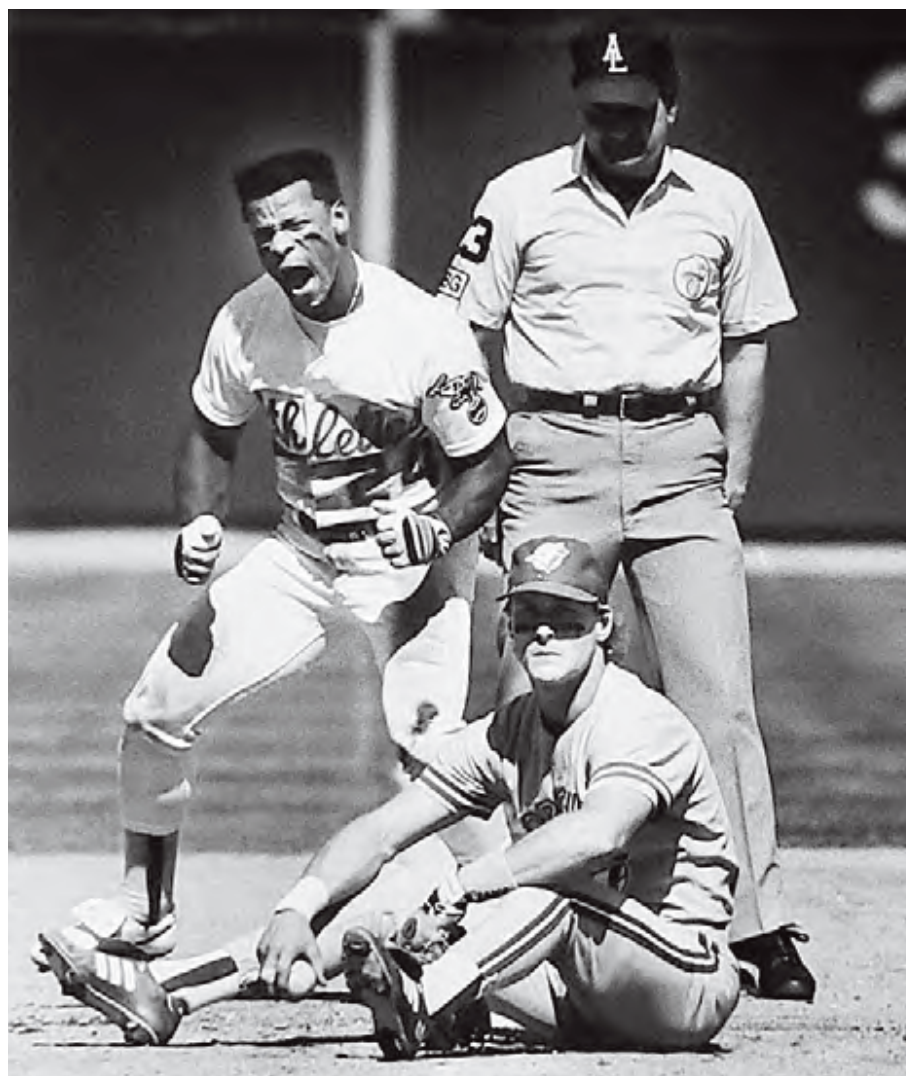
Unconvinced by their own scout's enthusiasm, the Oakland A's did not draft Rickey until the fourth round of the 1976 draft. The slight was magnified when none of the A's players drafted ahead of him ever reached the majors. *Michael Zagaris*



Coined by the writer Ralph Wiley, "the Rickey Run" became a feared part of Rickey's game: walk, steal second, steal third, and score on a fly ball without even getting a hit. *Michael Zagaris*



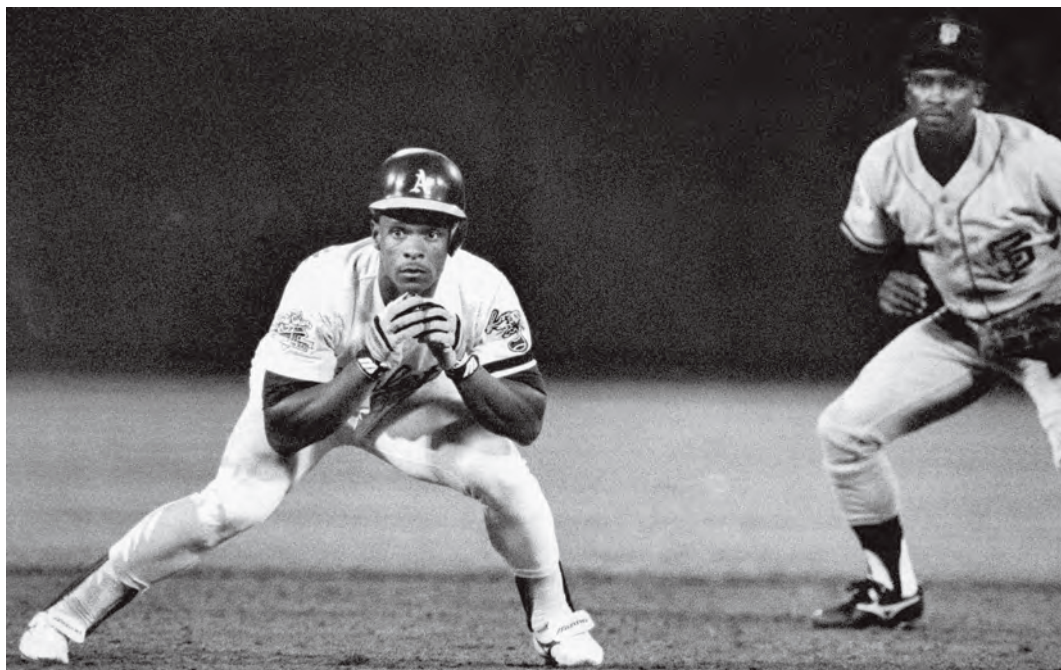
At the 1984 All-Star Game with Eddie Murray (left) and Chili Davis (right), Rickey was now a perennial All-Star—but fumed about not being paid as much as the game's home-run hitters. *Ron Riesterer*



Rickey at supernova: The 1989 American League Championship Series. *Matthew J. Lee*



No player instilled more fear in a pitcher starting a game than Rickey, who tortured pitchers with not only a keen eye but astounding power. He led off games with a home run a record 81 times. *Brad Mangin*



Rickey was nearly traded to the San Francisco Giants in the spring of 1989, but by fall he was hitting .474 against them in the World Series and capturing his first World Series title. *Ron Riesterer*

Two legends of Oakland:
Dave Stewart and Rickey
were childhood friends
who played Little League
together and would make
the majors and win World
Series titles together in
Oakland and Toronto.

Michael Zagaris



Over 25 seasons Rickey would play for nine different teams—but Oakland would always be home. He would play for the A's on four separate occasions, for a total of 14 seasons.

Brad Mangin



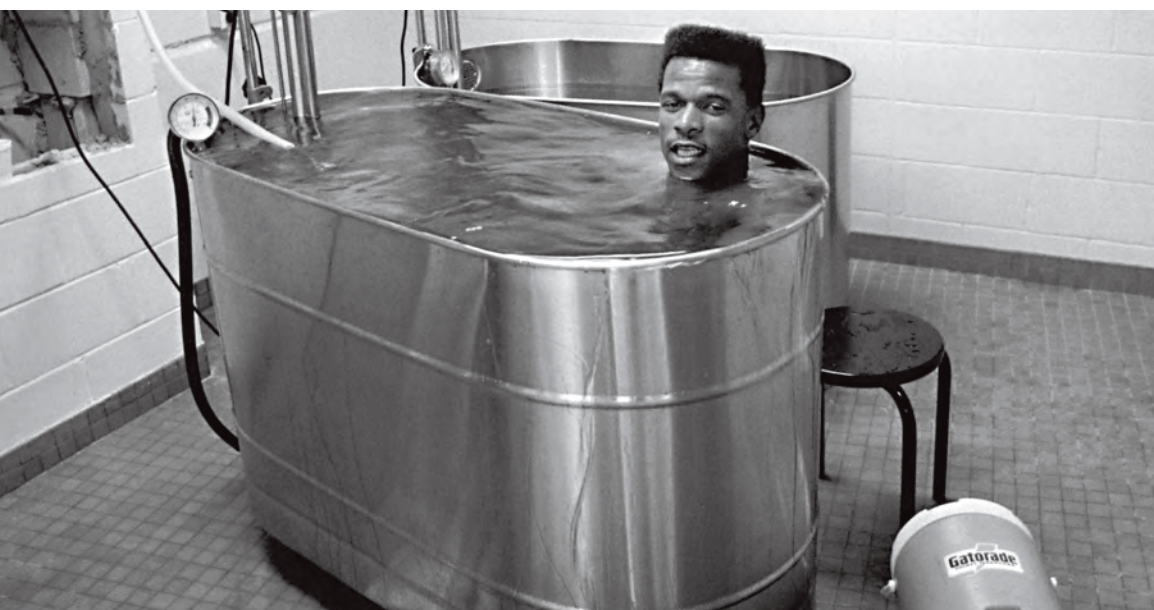
Most all-time records are broken late in a career. On May 1, 1991, Rickey broke the all-time stolen-base record at 32 years old. In a feat virtually unheard of, he would hold the record as an active player for a decade. *Brad Mangin*



Rickey always credited his mother, Bobbie, with making him choose baseball. The legend was that he wanted to play football, but she believed he would be injured. *Brad Mangin*



Rickey and the 1990 American League All-Stars. *Michael Zagaris*



Dave Stewart would say that no player played the game more physically than Rickey, but the demands of stealing bases did not garner him sympathy from a sport and public that believed he should have played injured more often. Rickey would eventually be vindicated by his longevity—and staggering statistics. *Michael Zagaris*



Rickey would always be seen as a singular figure in his drive to be great. As teammate Terry Steinbach once said, “The things Rico could do, you had to see it to believe it.” *Michael Zagaris*



Pamela (second from left) and Rickey began dating as high schoolers in the early 1970s. Being the wife of a famous baseball player was never easy, and she cherished the rare family times away from the ballpark. *Michael Zagaris*



Two American philosophers: Rickey Henderson and Yogi Berra. *Walt McCreary*



A 43-year-old Rickey, as a member of the Boston Red Sox, waves to the crowd on Rickey Henderson Day in 2002. But it was not a fare-well: Rickey would join the Dodgers the following year. *Brita Meng Outzen*



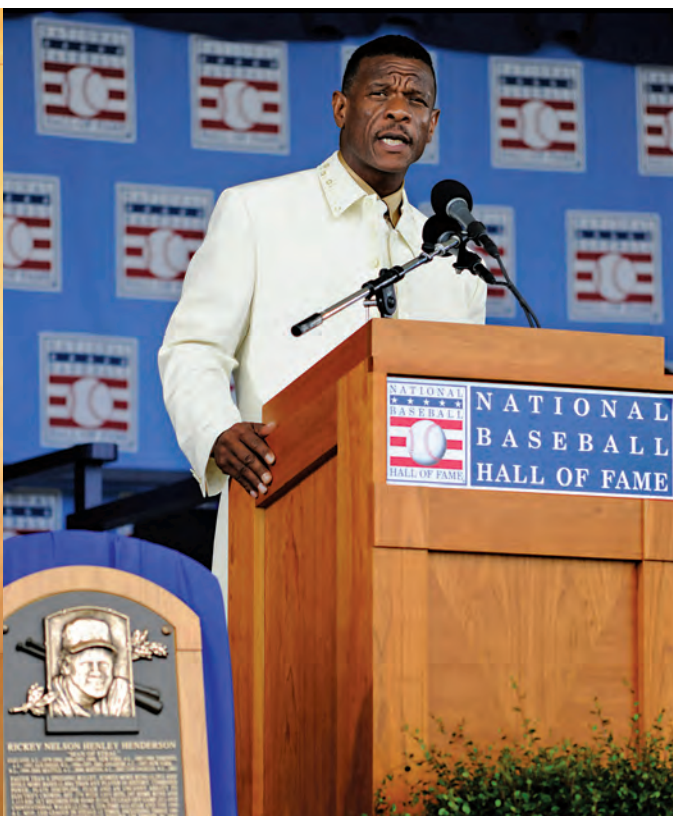
Another day, more victims: Rickey at the card table with Ariel Prieto (center) and Yoenis Cespedes (right). *Michael Zagaris*



Rickey at Cooperstown: Flashing the number-one sign in front of Ty Cobb's plaque, having broken two of Cobb's hallowed records. *Walt McCreary*



Devoted superfan Kent Corser's homage to Rickey: The Man Cave of Steal. *Kent Corser*



Fearing the public's expectation that his 2009 Hall of Fame induction speech would be self-absorbed, Rickey took a college course to perfect it—and finally won over the public.
Milo J. Stewart / National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum



“Today, I’m the greatest of all time!”: Rickey shatters the all-time record. This statement would eventually be a fondly recalled part of his legend, but he was criticized at the time as classless for making it. “Once I said it,” he said, “I knew I’d never live it down.” *Michael Zagaris*