

Doc Gooden to Celebrate Career with Fans at GrillHampton

BY KELLY LAFFEY

Thirty-one years ago this Friday, on July 10, 1984, then 19-year-old Mets pitching phenom Dwight Gooden took the mound at Candlestick Park in San Francisco to become the youngest player to ever play in an All-Star game, putting together a dominating performance in the fifth inning to strike out all three batters he faced.

The next year, he pitched a season for the ages, winning the Cy Young Award and posting numbers that are still marveled at 30 years later. Gooden will kick off the anniversary celebrations for his historic 1985 season at Dan's GrillHampton on July 17 with a special

meet-and-greet with guests before he heads in to be a judge at the grilling competition, and he's looking forward to celebrating his history-making year. "When you're playing, you're not able to enjoy it as much as you thought you should. But once you retire, you look at your accomplishments and everything and really understand and appreciate what you did," says Gooden on his career year.

Gooden made his much-heralded debut with the Mets on April 7, 1984 and was selected for the All-Star Game just three months later. "I think I was more nervous during the All-Star Game than I was during my first start," recalls Gooden. "Because now, the world is watching. You're playing against the top players in the



The legendary Dwight Gooden comes to GrillHampton

league and here you are, just a year and a half out of high school."

Gooden recalls that his knees buckled when he got the call to pitch that day, but the game became the catalyst for his explosive career. The nickname "Doc," short for "Dr. K" (K is the scoring abbreviation for strikeouts), was soon officially coined, a tribute to Gooden's natural, almost-poetic command of the ball, and a career Gooden notes was bolstered by support from his father and Mets catcher Gary Carter.

"[It's] not that I didn't have confidence the first half of the [1984] season," says Gooden. "But after pitching an All-Star Game where there are so many big-name guys and future hall of famers, that gave me so much confidence the second half of that season, and to go onto 1985. That [All-Star Game] really got me over the hump."

Later that year, Gooden went on to become the youngest player ever to receive the Rookie of the Year award. The following season, 1985, proved to be Gooden's career year, as he finished with 20 wins—the youngest player ever to win that many games—and earned pitching's Triple Crown distinction by achieving the rare feat of leading the league in three statistically significant categories—wins, strikeouts and ERA (earned run average). That year, Gooden took home the National League Cy Young Award, which recognizes the best pitcher in each league. And the next season, he was a key part of the pitching rotation that led the Mets to their 1986 World Series win, the team's last championship to date.

"[1985] was very special to me, not only winning the [Cy Young] award, but I finished second the year before to Rick Sutcliffe [of the Chicago Cubs]. And then to come back the next year [with] the season I had, I couldn't ask for a better season," reflects Gooden. "It was a career year. [The late] Gary Carter, my catcher, he played a big part of that, with his leadership and the experience he has behind the plate.

"Some of the days, if I didn't have my best stuff, [Carter] would make you think you had your best stuff, until (Continued on page 64)

Let your inner celebrity smile.

Affordable. Stress-free. Ultra-Modern Dentistry.

Come experience Cosmetic and Implant Dentistry in spa-like comfort.
Because you don't have to be a celebrity to have a Pure Celebrity Smile™.

<p>MINI DENTAL IMPLANTS Less Money. Less Time. Less Discomfort. Replace missing teeth, & secure dentures.</p> <p>COMPLETE MINI DENTAL (or regular) IMPLANT PACKAGE INCLUDES: STANDARD OR MINI DENTAL IMPLANT, ABUTMENT, AND CROWN</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">\$39*</p> <p>PER MONTH</p>	<p>Mini Dental Implants Traditional Dental Implants Teeth in a Day Sleep Dentistry Invisalign 6 Month Smiles Full Mouth Reconstruction Cosmetic Makeovers Simply Natural Dentures Porcelain Veneers General Dentistry Endodontics Oral Surgery Periodontal Care Teeth Whitening</p>	<p>Fully Computerized State-of-the-art Technology Digital X-Rays Digital 3D Scanning Full Dental Lab Relaxing Amenities Caring Knowledgeable Staff</p> <p>Financing available with a 95% approval rate</p> <p>Low Fee Guarantee</p> <p>Complimentary Consultation, Including Exam & 3D Cat Scan</p>
---	--	--

PURE DENTAL
COSMETIC & IMPLANT DENTISTRY

496 County Rd. 111, Bldg. F, Manorville / puredentalimplants.com / 631-929-5855

**Must be used for next treatment. Must mention ad. Expires 8/31/15. Not valid for currently scheduled appointments or treatment.

HURRY! Make an appointment & receive a Gift Card valued at up to 50% OFF ANY DENTAL TREATMENT!**

Gooden *(Continued from page 56)*

your stuff came around," says Gooden of his friend, reflecting on the season.

Looking at the Mets' current roster of young aces, a lineup that begs comparisons to Gooden and fellow pitchers Ron Darling and Sid Fernandez of the 1986 World Championship team for both their age and collective talent, "I would tell [the current Mets pitchers] to keep working hard," Gooden offers. "Don't get comfortable with the success you're having now. Remember what got you there, and enjoy it while you can," says Gooden, echoing advice his father gave him. "Careers go fast. They fly by. [Former Met] Rusty Staub told me that my rookie year, and I'm like 'yeah right, I'm only 19.' But before you know it, in the blink of an eye, your career is over, and I played 16 years."

Gooden attributes his passion for baseball, his talent and his drive to succeed to his father. The two would spend Saturdays in Gooden's Tampa-area childhood home watching whatever game was on television, and simultaneously listening to the Atlanta Braves, the nearest team at the time, on the radio. Gooden recalls his mom telling a story of when he was five years old and he was watching baseball with his dad. "She came in there and asked if I was ready to eat, and I said 'no, I'm watching the baseball game, because I'm going to be on TV one day.'"

As Gooden got older, his dad would quiz him on games and pitches. "I didn't know he was actually giving me knowledge," Gooden says. "I was very lucky and blessed to have my dad as my coach...because he was such a fan.

"The only thing I regret is before he passed away, I didn't have a chance to ask him where he got his knowledge about baseball from."

Once he made it to the major leagues, Gooden would call his dad after every start. "He would find things that could be different. Even in a shutout, he'll find something. He was doing that so...I would always have something to work on," says Gooden. "Stay hungry." Gooden has also become a proud father, conducting this interview from a hotel in Maryland after watching his 10-year-old son Dylan dominate the state basketball championships in Maryland, in Washington, D.C. and then go onto Nationals, finishing fourth in the country. "He plays basketball and football. He plays baseball also, but he says baseball is boring," laughs Gooden.

Fifteen years into retirement—Gooden played with the Mets (1984–1994); pitched a no-hitter while with the New York Yankees (1996–1997, 2000); and played with the Cleveland Indians (1998–1999); Houston Astros (2000); and Tampa Bay Devil Rays (2000)—Gooden appreciates the time that a more relaxed schedule offers him to

interact with fans and to reflect on his career.

"I like to do meet and greets...because these are the fans that were rooting me on. They had the extra energy I needed while I was playing, even when I had my ups and downs. They were still there, [even] when they could have turned their backs, and I would have understood," say Gooden, who battled the demons of drugs and alcohol off the mound, an experience he talks openly about in his 2013 book *Doc: A Memoir*. "But they're there. As a player, when you meet a fan, everything is so quick...But meet and greets, there's no rush."

Events post-retirement also allow Gooden to interact with fellow players and former rivals, specifically outfielder Chili Davis, who played with the San Francisco Giants in the 1980s and who Gooden says was consistently his toughest opponent. "He just wore me out," says Gooden. "If I gave up six hits, he probably got three of them...Once I retired, I saw him at some event and I talked to him about that and he said for some reason, he just saw the ball well, coming out of my hand."

At GrillHampton, Gooden will interact with fans prior to the event, as well as judge the grilling competition, which pits chefs from New York City against chefs from the Hamptons. As a former Yankee and a former Met, Gooden is well-versed in cross-town rivalries. "With the Mets and Yankees, [the competition] was incredible. It was a lot of fun," says Gooden. "I wish they had interleague play when I was at my prime with the Mets; [when the Yankees] had Don Mattingly and Rickey [Henderson], all those guys. It would be a lot of fun.

"Now, I get to judge food," Gooden continues. "I like all types of food... I'm not going to be biased because I live on Long Island," the Westbury resident jokes. As far as giving an edge to the competitors, Gooden notes that he particularly likes brats.

"I think the first time I ate a brat was when I went to Milwaukee with the Yankees," says Gooden. "I had never actually heard of them until then. Those are great on the grill." 🍷

The special meet-and-greet celebration with Doc Gooden at GrillHampton begins at 7 p.m. on Friday, July 17, at Sayre Park in Bridghampton. Tickets start at \$185 (all include meet & greet, autograph and photo opportunities, and GrillHampton admission) and are extremely limited. Visit GrillwithDoc.com for details.

The Beach Will Not Cure Anxiety and Depression

Call The oldest Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Center in the U.S.

Drs. Lubetkin and Fishman and Staff
Institute for Behavior Therapy
20 East 49th St., 2nd Fl., NY, NY



(212) 692-9288
www.ifbt.com

42437

Listen Weekdays at 1 PM to
The Afternoon Ramble
with host Brian Cosgrove



Long Island's
Only NPR Station



43845

TWIN FORKS
PEST CONTROL
SOUTHAMPTON
631 287 9020
CUTCHOGUE · EAST HAMPTON
631 298 0500 631 324 9020

40875