

New York Yankees Jose Treviño: Promises Kept Between a Father, a Son, and a Coach

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Somewhere along the middle of the Gulf Coast of Texas, in the home of a legendary Corpus Christi high school baseball coach, lies a blistered baseball locked away tight in a safe. Although one can easily assume it has found its forever home, it is far from reaching its final and intended destination.

Collecting and preserving baseballs is a widespread hobby among baseball enthusiasts, especially for a successful baseball coach saving keepsakes from seasons past. Still, the extraordinary story of this baseball and its journey embodies the shared love of America's greatest pastime between a father, a son, and a coach, and their promises kept.

That baseball is currently in the care of Coach Steve Castillo, who amassed over 700 wins in his five-decade storied career as a head coach, taking his Corpus Christi teams to seven state baseball tournaments and winning two state championships. It was the fulfillment of a promise between him and the first and only of his players to play Major League Baseball, the New York Yankee from Green Acres in Ben Bolt, Texas, Jose Treviño.

The All-Star catcher and 2022 Platinum Glove award winner is arguably one of the hottest players in Major League Baseball today. Coming off a storied season rich in individual accolades and achievements, the South Texas native helped lead his team to the American League Championship Series, falling to the eventual World Series Champion Houston Astros this past season.

“Shortly after I was drafted, I made a promise to Coach Castillo that whenever I got my first big league hit, he'd get the baseball,” said Treviño with a smile. That first hit came the day after his major league debut as a member of the Texas Rangers as they visited the Colorado Rockies on June 16, 2018, where he recorded an RBI single. Realizing the significance of that baseball, Treviño made sure to recover it to make good on his word to his beloved high school baseball coach and mentor. “It might have cost me some money, but even if I'd hit a home run, which would have been crazy, I would have still been determined to recover it for him,” said Treviño.

Registering your first hit as a major leaguer is a monumental moment in every player's career; however, Treviño's big moment was bittersweet. Although he proudly gifted the ball to his old coach, who has always served as a second father to him, his fading smile during the interview tells another story of how much he wishes he could've given it to the man who first inspired and instilled his love of the game. “I know how much my Dad would've loved to have that ball, and he would've displayed it proudly,” said Treviño through his tears. “He would have loved to show it off to anyone and everyone who entered our home.”

Treviño's father, Joe “Bugé” Treviño, died on Oct. 20, 2013, at the age of 60. Although he never got to watch his son play in the major leagues, he did witness his son's college debut for Oral Roberts University when they played the Baylor Bears in the first game of a three-game series at the start of the 2012 season.

Due to a passing storm, the series' second game with Baylor was rescheduled to be played as a doubleheader

the following Sunday. Bugé and his family planned on attending the remaining games as they prepared to settle in at a hotel in Waco Saturday night. While visiting with his dad that evening, Treviño noticed that Bugé seemed not quite himself. His concerns were warranted since his father had recently battled pneumonia and had still not recovered completely. To reassure his son, Bugé said, “I’ll be fine. I’ll be good, and I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Treviño’s family took their dad to the emergency room later that evening. Bugé had suffered a heart attack while waiting in the parking lot for the storm to pass before the start of Saturday’s game. Treviño pushed through it despite his father’s condition and played the doubleheader on Sunday without his father in the stands.

As had been a tradition dating back to his t-ball playing days, Treviño reached out to his dad to go over the highs and lows of his performance during the game as he and his teammates headed back to Oral Roberts University in Tulsa. While on the phone, Treviño recalls telling his dad that he had just played the worst series in his life, noting that Baylor did not take it easy on him as a freshman.

To comfort and reassure his disappointed son, Bugé said, “No matter what happens, you’ve always made me proud. I’m proud of you, and I love you, man.” Treviño recalls crying in his bus seat after getting off the phone with him. “I couldn’t tell you why, but something was telling me that might have been the last time I would ever talk to him,” said Treviño. As it would turn out, his gut feeling was right, and those would be the last words Treviño would hear from his dad as Bugé fell into a coma for almost two years, never to recover.

“My Dad was my hero,” said Treviño. “He loved baseball and our family and cared so much about people. He loved to coach and loved every one of the kids who played for him like a son. He was a good person, and he was special.” Treviño says his dad was the best coach he ever had. He felt they had finally reached a point in their relationship where they could carry on deep conversations about baseball, life, and everything else.

As a result of his dad’s passing, Treviño contemplated walking away from the game he and his dad had invested everything into, and both loved. It took a joint effort by his mother, Patsy Treviño, and Castillo to refocus the devastated Treviño as he mourned his father’s passing.

Treviño recalls his mother telling him she couldn’t let him walk away because if his dad were still here, he would say he didn’t want him to walk away from baseball. Castillo also did his part to help convince Treviño to stay the course. He convinced him to keep going and told him that the best way to honor his dad’s memory was to get back to the ballpark. “Do it for your dad,” said Castillo. He knew that was what his dad would’ve wanted for him, no matter how impossible the gravity of the situation made it seem.

Treviño listened, and since that day, Castillo, who vowed to remain by his side, has kept his promise. Castillo was there when the Texas Rangers drafted Treviño. Castillo was there for his first major league hit the day after his son Josiah Cruz was born. Castillo was there for his first walk-off single on Father’s Day in 2018. Castillo was there for his first home run of the season in 2021 on Josiah’s birthday, and Castillo was there for his game-ending single in the 11th inning against the Baltimore Orioles on what would have been his dad’s 69th birthday. Castillo was there and continues to be there for Treviño. As his dad would’ve been, he’s there for every milestone and achievement on and off the field.

As Treviño wraps up a banner year with the Yankees, his dad’s favorite team, you can’t help but believe that Bugé has continued to deliver on a promise he made to his son long ago from above. “My dad said he would always be with me, and I know he still is. He always wanted me in pinstripes, and here I am.” Treviño believes that the best way to pay homage to his late dad is to emulate him as he raises his sons. He’s promised posthumously to his dad to do everything they used to do with his boys and handle things the way he knows he would’ve done.

There will come a day when that baseball that’s been tucked away safely in Coach Castillo’s safe will be freed and head for its final and intended destination. Castillo’s sons have strict instructions to remove it from the safe and place it in his coffin on the day he’s laid to rest. This will ensure that he can take the baseball with him into Heaven, where he will immediately find Bugé and place the ball that endured Treviño’s first major league hit in the hands of its rightful and intended owner. To some, that core made of cork and rubber, wrapped in yarn and

covered in cowskin and red threading may be another baseball, but to Bugé Treviño, his son Jose, and Coach Steve Castillo, it's a series of promises kept between a New York Yankee and the men who love him.