



Rick Cerrone

Rick Cerrone's amazingly diverse career in sports and media has spanned more than 30 years -- from the youngest editor and publisher of a national publication to Major League Baseball executive to talk show host to being at the helm of public relations for the greatest sports franchise in the world.

For 11 of the most successful and tumultuous seasons in New York Yankees' history, Rick manned what *Sports Illustrated* called, "*The Hottest Seat in Sports*." As the team's Senior Director of Media Relations from 1996 through 2006, he worked side-by-side with some of the biggest names in sports and entertainment. He counseled perhaps the most powerful and controversial owner in the history of professional sports, George M. Steinbrenner; worked closely with the game's most-respected manager, Joe Torre; and guided and supported the most-recognizable players for the sports industry's most-valuable franchise in the nation's number-one media market.

Rick was the senior public-relations counsel with the Yankees for an incredible run of 11 post-season appearances, six World Series and four world championships as well as during the horror of 9/11 and numerous crises and controversies. Single-season attendance records at Yankee Stadium were established six times in the 11-year span, increasing nearly 150 per cent (from 1,705,283 in 1995 to 4,248,067 in 2006).

An entrepreneur from the beginning and a graduate of Northern Illinois University, Rick was the youngest editor and publisher of a nationally-distributed publication in the nation when—at 23 years old—he founded *Baseball Magazine* in 1977. He significantly increased the publication's stature and visibility by a creating a unique, high-profile awards program which included the presentations of the official "Most Valuable Player" awards for the American and National League Championship Series (1980) and "Player of the Year" awards (1978, 1979 and 1980) as selected by Major League managers. Among those recognizing his accomplishments was the legendary Frank Sinatra, who wrote that Rick was "an inspiration to young people everywhere."

Still in his twenties, Rick was then an integral part of the public relations staffs for two Baseball Commissioners, Hall of Famer Bowie Kuhn and Peter Ueberroth, from 1982 through 1986. He was intimately involved in the development of many high-profile decisions and policies, including those related to labor negotiations and work stoppages, drug programs and penalties and potential franchise shifts.

In 1987—with co-host Richard Neer—he created a groundbreaking three-hour, nightly sports talk show—*The Sports Connection*—for New York's 50,000-watt WNEW-AM. The show's unique format, which included co-hosts and news/score updates every 20 minutes, remains the model for sports programming on radio.

As Vice President of Public Relations for the Pittsburgh Pirates from 1987 through 1993, Rick's mission—as stated by team President Carl Barger—was simple: "Help us convince Pittsburgh that the Pirates will be an important part of the community for the next 100 years." To accomplish this, Rick worked tirelessly to enhance the organization's image in the aftermath of previous public-relations crises—including the drug trials of the mid-eighties and the near-move of the franchise. He developed and supervised numerous high-profile programs and activities which played key roles in establishing three franchise attendance records in a four-year period (1988-'91).

In 1988, Rick initiated and conducted the first-ever Media and Fan Relations Seminars for Major-League-Baseball players and authored a 12-page booklet, *Succeeding with the Public and the Media*, which has been widely distributed throughout professional sports.

As a Senior Vice President for Dan Klores Communications from 2007 to 2009—and now as a public-relations consultant and media-crises specialist—Rick has developed and implemented sports-related public relations programs for a diverse portfolio of sports, business and entertainment clients. He has also had significant involvement in crisis management and image enhancement for highly-visible clients.

Rick also served as a Technical Advisor on the motion picture *The Natural* starring Robert Redford (1984) and was a consultant on Director Billy Crystal's *61** (2001). He was elected to the Board of the Alumni Association of his alma mater, Northern Illinois University, in 2009.