

Interview - Ken Rosenthal - FOX Sports

Written by Maury Brown
Monday, 22 January 2007 16:00



For more than 20 years, Ken Rosenthal has been covering baseball. Whether it has been with the *Baltimore Sun* (he was the Maryland Sportswriter of the Year five times while with them), *The Sporting News*

, *Sports Illustrated*

, or now on FOXSports.com as a senior baseball writer, Rosenthal has been reporting breaking baseball news, and publishing columns at a staggering pace. His ability to cover nearly every breaking news story has given him the label "Robothal" by some.

Not content to report and write columns on baseball, he has authored or contributed to three books. *Chicken Soup for the Baseball Fan's Soul*, was released in 2001, while *Best of the Best-35 Major League Superstars*, which was produced in partnership with and licensed by MLB Properties, Inc. was published in 1998. His third book, *I Remember Dean Smith*, was published in 2001. Rosenthal is also the lead field reporter for MLB on FOX Television, and now reports for *MLB Home Plate XM 175*. He seems to be everywhere at once these days.

Somehow in the midst of his schedule, he was nice enough to conduct an interview for The Biz of Baseball. Topics range from Barry Bonds and his contract stalemate with the Giants; J.D. Drew and his contract issues; why he isn't voting for any players within the steroid era on the first ballot for the Hall of Fame, and how that impacts Roger Clemens; George Mitchell and the steroid investigation; Daisuke Matsuzaka and the posting process; what he thinks of being called "Robothal", and much, much more.

Maury Brown for The Biz of Baseball: *Lot's of people read your articles, but what does Ken Rosenthal read? What are some online sites, books, etc. that you take in?*

Interview - Ken Rosenthal - FOX Sports

Written by Maury Brown
Monday, 22 January 2007 16:00

Ken Rosenthal: ESPN's Buster Olney is one of my best friends; we worked together at the Baltimore Sun. I also think he is one of the best baseball writers; I read his blog faithfully, as well as everything else on ESPN.com; they're the standard. SI's Tom Verducci is also one of my absolute favorites.

I start the day by going to two sites – prosportsdaily.com and baseballnewsstand.com (the old-school newsstand). From there, I read as much as I can about all 30 teams. This generally takes a few hours. I also check out baseballprospectus.com and baseballamerica.com on occasion. I'm aware that there are several excellent sabermetric sites, but I generally don't go to them. It's strictly a time factor.

As for books, I wish I could say I was more of an avid reader. I rarely read during the season. Again, it's a question of time. However, in that brief period when the off-season slows down, I'll read as many books as possible, just devour 'em. I read all the major baseball books, of course. I also like suspense novels and books about politics and the media. Carl Hiassen and my old Sun colleague Laura Lippman are among my favorites.

BizBall: *Barry Bonds has created a unique situation in terms of how a player contract will be structured. There's talk of language that will keep Bonds' "posse" out of the locker room, and protections for the Giants in case he is indicted at some point. Because of that, a contract has yet to be reached. Who bends first, Barry or the Giants,*



and why?

Rosenthal: Based on their track record, I think the Giants will bend; they always have before. The day the amphetamines story broke, I wrote that they should quash the deal,

Written by Maury Brown
Monday, 22 January 2007 16:00

just say enough is enough. They obviously couldn't use the positive amphetamines test as a reason, but they could cite all the other language issues and Bonds' injury history as insurmountable obstacles. Let Bonds sue, file a grievance, whatever. I'd fight that fight. And at least the Giants, in my opinion, would be taking a proper stand. Yes, they'd miss Bonds' offense greatly, but not the rest of it. And the rest of it is quite distracting, to say the least.

As for the legal concerns, If Bonds hasn't been indicted by now, I doubt he ever will be. I don't think that's a particularly major issue as far as the contract is concerned. The greater issue is that the Giants, according to published reports, have tried to insert Bonds-type language into all of their free-agent contracts, lest they be accused of singling out Bonds. If true, that would be just another example of how this one player – while a great player – disrupts and divides his team.

BizBall: *J.D. Drew has yet to be signed by the Red Sox. Do you think the Red Sox would have offered a preliminary agreement if they had known about his shoulder injury?*

Rosenthal: Good question. The Red Sox had to know it was possible that such an issue might surface, given Drew's injury history. To me, their pursuit of the player was curious from the start. Drew's numbers are impressive, and he probably will benefit from being part of a powerhouse lineup. But his overall approach—real and/or perceived—is far too passive for such an intense market. I think that will create problems, maybe big problems. We have seen that some players are not suited for markets such as Boston and New York. Drew, from what we've seen, would appear to be Exhibit A. It will be fascinating to see how he fares.

BizBall: *This year's Hall of Fame voting is in the books, and unsurprisingly, McGwire didn't get enough votes. You, like many others, wrote of why you wouldn't be voting for him, and you made it clear that you won't be voting for any suspected steroid users on the first ballot. My question is this... Has the specter of steroids in baseball created a level of undue suspicion in MLB? Has it created an environment in which any player that is homerun prodigious is now "suspected of steroid use"?*

Rosenthal: The answer is yes, and I'm not happy about it; it's as if the pendulum has swung too far the other way. People ask all the time, "Where were you guys" – meaning reporters – "in '98?" It's a fair question. My friend Buster has written several times that we should have done a better job, should have

Written by Maury Brown
Monday, 22 January 2007 16:00

"In my opinion, most of us were not nearly as educated on the topic [of steroids] as perhaps we should have been, and that's another reason why the reporting—during that period—was weak."

"I will not vote for Clemens on the first ballot."



"I like the Brewers and Diamondbacks as potential surprises"

