

Will Nolan Ryan Head to the Astros? Here's 8 Questions to Answer

Written by Maury Brown
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Nolan Ryan, who was a key figurehead during the bankruptcy sale of the Texas Rangers; who nearly left the club at the beginning of the season when GM Jon Daniels was promoted, and a Hall of Fame icon, announced today that he will be retiring as CEO of the Rangers on October 31.

"This is the right time for me to step down from my role of overseeing the Rangers organization," said Ryan. "I am extremely proud of what this organization has accomplished. On the field, we have enjoyed great success at the major league level. The fans have supported us in record numbers the last two years and we have been able to upgrade the ballpark and enhance the in-game experience to reward that loyalty.

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"We have a group of talented and passionate employees who have helped make this success possible. This organization is in good hands. I am leaving with a lot of great memories from my tenure here and I know the organization will continue to thrive in the years to come."

Commissioner Selig said in a statement that, "On behalf of Major League Baseball, I thank Nolan for his service to the Texas Rangers since 2008, a successful era that has been most memorable to the Club's fans. During times of significant change for the franchise, Nolan has been a constant - accessible, dedicated and an icon to his fellow Texans who love our game."

But, almost immediately talk about whether Nolan Ryan would go from one Texas franchise to another surfaced. Ryan is retiring, but no one other than he knows what that means, and whether it's something that is short lived. Even Selig's statement led to reading tea leaves: the commissioner never spoke about his service to "league", but just to the Rangers. Could it be that this is just a transition?

If Ryan's retirement is more of a way to move out of the Rangers without acrimony and into another organization, clearly the Houston Astros come up as the most logical location as his son Reid Ryan is now the club president.

So, could Nolan unite with his son? When the announcement came, Reid Ryan was out of the country and Astros owner Jim Crane was not in Houston. A couple hours after the announcement by Nolan, Reid Ryan released a statement through the Astros:

"As his son, I am extremely proud of what he has accomplished as both a player and as a front office executive. He was an integral part of all three of the World Series appearances by Texas teams, in 2005 with the Astros and in 2010-11 with the Rangers.

"He has always treated the game with dignity and respect and has appreciated those that make our game great: the fans, players and employees."

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Here's what could—repeat **could**—happen with Nolan Ryan, and possibly his move to the Astros.

If “Retirement” is Just a Way for Nolan to go to the Astros, Can It Happen Now?

The easy answer is, no. He's with the Rangers until Oct. 31 and until then, he's CEO of the organization. At the earliest, Nolan likely wouldn't budge until after the World Series knowing MLB's unwritten rule not to upstage baseball's postseason.

If Reid Ryan is President of the Astros, How Could Nolan fit in with the Astros?

There's no rule in baseball that says you can't have two presidents of a club. In fact, one only needs to look at the structure of the Astros when Drayton McLane owned the club to see it (Tal Smith was president of baseball operations while Pam Gardner was president of business operations), so it could easily be done. The father-son tandem would see continue to see Reid run the business while Nolan would be president of baseball operations. But, even if that didn't work, there's a host of titles you could give Nolan Ryan. He could be made CEO, or Special Advisor could be done.

Are the Astros Interested?

Sure, we can all speculate whether the Astros are interested, but are they? The answer is, of course, [yes](#) . "I like Nolan, and at some point if Nolan wanted to do something, we're all ears," [said Crane](#) later today.

[Adding](#)

, "To me, Nolan Ryan's it," Crane said. "He's one of the best pitchers ever. He's from our neighborhood. He grew up here. He's probably the biggest name in baseball in Texas. He means a lot.

Since Reid is Nolan's son, Have They Talked about the Elder Ryan to the Astros?

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No one but Reid and Nolan know the answer to this. One can't think that Reid didn't know his dad was about to announce his departure from the Rangers. But, who knows if those two have talked about Nolan possibly coming to the Astros?

Has Jim Crane Talked to Nolan Ryan About Possibly Coming to the Astros?

As mentioned up front, Nolan is still with the Rangers and until Oct 31, he will remain there. Astros owner Jim Crane has not approached him to come to the club. "Certainly he's always welcome as a family member of Reid's," [Crane said](#). "I like Nolan, but I haven't talked to him about anything. There's been no discussion whatsoever."

If Nolan Ryan Came to the Astros How Would It Affect GM Jeff Luhnow?

Jim Crane has said that he wants to model the Astros after the St. Louis Cardinals with a strong farm system. But Crane never said whether he needed to go the heavy analytics route and given the chilly relationship Nolan had with Jon Daniels—as well as his old-school scouting background and Nolan's likely want to mold his own vision—Luhnow could see a fairly quick exit. That doesn't mean the day Nolan Ryan walks in the door, but Ryan is a pretty particular man. Don't believe me? Ask former Rangers owner/CEO Chuck Greenberg.

Will Nolan Ryan Have to Sell His Share of the Rangers if he Goes to the Astros?

The answer is, yes. In fact, he's already sold his ownership stake to the majority owners selling his stake in the team to Ray Davis and Bob Simpson. League rules would forbid Nolan from owning his Rangers ownership equity if he went to the Astros, or any other club.

Could Nolan Ryan Really Be Retiring?

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After all this speculation, could it be that Nolan Ryan is really just retiring? Could be, but it doesn't strike me that way. He seems to be too interested in baseball operations to hang it up. Of course, that doesn't mean he has to go to another club immediately. He might take a season or two off before deciding to jump back into the ring.



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