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ROSE

er, 28-year-old Pete Rose finished a season that saw him lead the National League with a .348 batting average, his career high, and 120 runs scored.

The elder Rose, a Cincinnati native, was the most popular player on the Big Red Machine teams that won the World Series in 1975 and '76 with stars such as Johnny Bench, Joe Morgan and Tony Perez.

His son, dressed in the home white Reds jersey with Dad's No. 14 on the back, helped share the clubhouse with other players' sons, such as Ken Griffey Jr. and Eduardo Perez, future Reds.

"We were just always at the ballpark," Rose Jr. said. "And if we weren't watching the game, we were in the tunnel playing pickle, getting jacked up for the father-son game, all this other good jazz. You just remember all the guys being in the clubhouse. They were always there, they were always together, they were always having fun."

Rose Jr. was hooked.

A ROUGH START

It didn't take long for Rose Jr.'s childlike view of the game to transform into an intense passion – like his dad's.

The younger Rose didn't have the same physical gifts but was equally driven. He was drafted by the Baltimore Orioles in 1988 and debuted the following year, just in time to be caught up in his dad's gambling scandal, which was approaching a resolution.

Once the most popular figure in the game, Rose Sr.'s name had become a punch line. That meant, as far as strangers were concerned, so had his son's.

"I visited him a few times in the minor leagues and (saw) the pressure that was put on him," said Rose Jr.'s mother and Rose's Sr.'s form-

er wife, Carolyn Rose. "(Fans were) waving dollar bills at him and saying, 'Who'd you bet on?' It broke my heart. Again, I saw the strong man that he was."

The experience toughened Rose, though it may not have prepared him for two more decades of similar treatment.

"I can sit here and tell you that in 21 years of playing in the States, I don't think I've ever not heard something derogatory toward my family when I played," Rose said.

FINALLY IN THE SHOW

Rose toiled during an exhaustive minor-league career, playing Class-A baseball for seven years before advancing to Double-A in 1996.

"My dad said, 'What are you going to do, quit?' If (so), pack your bags and get on a plane. Go and play." Rose said.

After the '96 season, Rose signed with the Reds and played most of 1997 in Double-A, hitting 25 home runs with 99 RBIs after changing his from his dad's familiar crouch to an upright batting stance.

The Reds noticed and promoted the 27-year-old Rose to Cincinnati in September.

"I had goosebumps," Carolyn Rose said. "It was the thrill of my life to see Petey make it into the big leagues."

Rose was similarly giddy. He wore No. 14 – the last Reds player to do so – and collected his first hit in his debut in Cincinnati on Sept. 1 against Kevin Appier of the Kansas City Royals. His parents, sister Fawn and wife Shannon were in attendance.

"And probably 39,000 of my closest friends," Rose said. "You look to the left, you look to the right, you see a familiar face. Whether it's the grounds crew, the police officers in the dugout, people sitting on the third-base side, you can't describe it. I knew everybody."

STILL TRYING

Rose spent the next 12 years unsuccessfully trying to get back to the highest level. He competed in spring training with several major-league organizations but was invariably sent back to the minors.

He played on an arthritic knee for the final seven years of his career. He was arrested in 2005 for distributing performance-enhancing drugs to teammates and spent a month in jail, but when he got out he began playing independent baseball for the Long Island Ducks.

Rose ended up playing for 26 professional teams.

Rose retired at 39 after the 2009 season.

The logical next step was for Rose to become a coach and a manager, which he did with the Chicago White Sox organization. After a year as a minor-league hitting coach, he managed the club's rookie-league affiliate in 2011.

"He has a good feel for the game," said Nick Capra, the White Sox manager of player development. "It was an easy transition for him. More than anything, it was just his experience he had as a player coming into player development."

THE NEW NORMAL

Rose's goals haven't changed – he wants more time in the major leagues, only now as a manager. He and Shannon have two kids, Isabella and Peter III.

He hasn't totally accepted his limited time in the big leagues but has come to terms with it, and while he may not remain in awe of his dad, that appreciation has never subsided.

"We're best friends, and what son wouldn't want their dad to be their best friend," Rose said. "It's normal, man. I know why other people don't think that. If you go to Cincinnati, that's our guy. That's the Babe Ruth of Cincinnati. If you're from Cincinnati, you wore No. 14, you slid head first...."

"That's our guy, so I get it. But we're just a normal west-side Cincinnati family."