

# sports



**Holy Angels' Jay Barriball earns metro hockey honor C10**

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## A1 ON OUR COVER

Read Kirby Puckett's obituary, and columnist Jim Souhan weighs in on our baseball legend.



## S1 SPECIAL EDITION

Wrapped around today's Sports section is a four-page Kirby Puckett memorial section.



BRIAN PETERSON - bpeterson@startribune.com

**HAPPIER TIMES** Kirby Puckett and Kent Hrbek, shown in 2002, were key players — and clubhouse mischief-makers — on the World Series championship teams in 1987 and 1991.

# REMEMBERING KIRBY

- News of Puckett's death sparks memories of the skill and exuberance with which he played.
- The usual enthusiasm surrounding spring training acquires an overwhelming feeling of sadness.

### KIRBY THE ICON

## Bubbly personality allowed superstar to connect with fans

By RICHARD MERVINEW • richm@startribune.com

Joe Reis didn't want to believe it. Bad as Sunday's news was, Monday's was worse.

His longtime friend and all-time favorite Twins player, Kirby Puckett, was gone, dead at the age of 45 because of a stroke.

"It's just so sad," said a somber Reis, who met Puckett after catching the future Hall of Famer's game-winning home run in Game 6 of the 1991 World Series. "He was quite the guy."

As baseball fans across the region mourned No. 34, Reis and other Minnesotans tried to focus on happier days, when the bubbly kid from the Chicago projects roamed center field for the hometown team and lit up a state.

For those who saw Puckett chase down a line drive, slug a winning home run, flash his famous grin or sign an autograph or 200 for young fans, the memories were mostly good ones.

"He's just this very special person," said Reis, a 49-year-old real estate executive. "He was very giving, very personable, very humorous, just fun to be around."

"His talent level and his exuberance, those two things together made him stand out more than anyone I've ever seen play."

**Icon continues:** He wasn't built like a typical athlete, but was extraordinary on field. **C6 ▶**



JIM MOORE - Associated Press

Former Twins manager Tom Kelly sat alone on the bench during workouts Monday. He managed Puckett on two World Series-winning teams in 1987 and 1991.

### WITH THE TEAM IN FLORIDA

## Twins devastated by Puckett's death

By LA VELL E. NEAL III  
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PORT MYERS, Fla. — Twins manager Ron Gardenhire awoke at 5 a.m. Monday and immediately turned on the television. There was no news about Kirby Puckett.

"Once I didn't see anything," Gardenhire said. "I figured he made it through the night, and I felt pretty good."

That all changed once he got to the ballpark and spoke with Remzi Kirati, the director of team travel.

"Remzi told me that it wasn't looking good," Gardenhire said.

About the same time, Torii Hunter got a call from former Twins teammate Eddie Guardado, who was at the Phoenix hospital where Puckett was a patient. Guardado, now with the Seattle Mariners, told him, "It's not good."

Nothing was official, but Hunter, Gardenhire and other Twins personnel soon knew that Puckett's outlook was bleak and that they would never see his perpetual smile again.

**Florida continues C7 ▶**

### AT THE HOSPITAL IN PHOENIX

## Visitors check in right up to the end

By JIM SOUHAN • jsouhan@startribune.com

PHOENIX — Twins legend Kirby Puckett died in a Phoenix hospital far removed from the sites of his fondest baseball memories and greatest baseball achievements, but close to many of the baseball figures who revered him.

And so, over the two days Puckett spent at St. Joseph's Hospital, he received visitors worthy of a red carpet.

Twins great Harmon Killebrew stayed by his side. The Reds' Ken

Griffey Jr., who often sought Puckett's counsel, on this occasion lent his support.

Former Twins players Jacques Jones, Eddie Guardado and Dan Gladden ventured to the fourth floor of the Barrow Neurological Institute at St. Joseph's to see their friend.

Former Twins infielder Cory Koskie called a reporter on the scene for an update, his voice quavering when told the news wasn't good.

**Phoenix continues C6 ▶**

**Sid Hartman: There was never a better Twin, and everyone knew it C5**

**The type of stroke Puckett suffered is rare and dangerous C5**

**Reactions to Puckett's death pour in from around the league C7**

**MORE ONLINE**  
Check out [startribune.com](http://startribune.com) for updates and additional coverage of the life and death of Kirby Puckett.

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