

RIGHT: In his first major league game, Hrbek homered in the 12th inning to defeat the New York Yankees.

Associated Press

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Staff Photos by Bruce Bishop



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The "Three Amigos" during the 1987 AL playoffs.

Staff Photo by Brian Peterson

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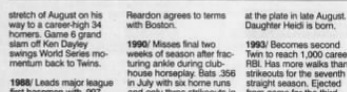
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at first base.

Instead, he told his agent, Ron Simon, to get the Twins close to his other suitors, then sign him.

"When it reached the boiling point, I told Kent that it would be resolved in the next day," said Simon, who teased Hrbek and his wife, Jeanie, with champagne after Thursday's news conference. "I said, 'Kent, this is probably going to be one of the biggest moments in your life. I want you standing by.'"

"He said, 'Well, Ron, I hit the fast ball and you handle the business. I can't be available — I'm bowling with my buddies in Sullweiser.'"

When Simon got the Twins to agree to five years, guaranteed, Hrbek wrote off the million or so he could have signed in another city and signed.

How much money does Hrbek need, anyway? At the news conference, held at the Halsey Hall Room on Thursday afternoon at the Metrodome, he dressed for a party, not a wake, wearing sneakers, jeans and a polo shirt. He did not wear socks. His concession to the formality of the occasion was that he did not bring a beer bottle or engage in any of his beloved and unavowed habits.

"It's not that I wanted to retire, but that I had to," he said. "I can still hit — the problem is getting there after a hit."

Hrbek says he feels better now than he has in the past two or three years, but that's relative. Walking the stairs from dugout to clubhouse has become a chore. When forced to round first and head for second, he looks tempted to hail a cab.

For all the talk about his weight, currently about 260 pounds, he has never been completely healthy. Work-inmates who questioned his willingness to play with pain.

"The first time up in spring training, my first at-bat in a pro uniform, he swung at a ball and dislocated his knee," Brophy said. "We had just given him \$30,000, which in '85 was a lot of money, and I said to myself, 'My Lord, what did we do?'"

"But it turns out he had a great temperament for the game. He approaches life as a game, rather than the game as life."

Said Twins general manager Andy MacPhail: "He is a delightful person. He plays the game like it is a game, and you come to admire that today. Sometimes he exaggerates you, but he never really has changed, and you come to realize he is what he is, which is a fact."

Now for the next question: What will he become? Twins owner Carl Pohlad, who sat to Hrbek's left at the news conference, has offered Hrbek "anything he wants — full time, part-time, involved, whatever" — in the Twins organization.

Hrbek, not surprisingly, said he'd love to represent the Twins with an occasional speech or appearance, but that he's not quitting his new day jobs, which include hunting, fishing, bowling, baby sitting, lawn maintenance and channel-switching.

"Maybe I can cook," Hrbek said jokingly.

Will he revisit his dream of becoming a pro writer, and terrorizing a new generation of Koop Gazette "Nah," he said. "My wife's not very impressed with the way I look at things."

Hrbek has two small wishes remaining. He wants to finish the season with all of his limbs intact. "So long as I get off the field without an ambulance, it'll be OK," he said.

His career has been better than that. Once you get past the wrist pain and the one-liners, it is easy to recognize Hrbek as an entertaining, champion-ship-winning, team-inspiring player. "I won't ever pat myself on the back," he said, laughing. "I don't have to — too many other people are doing it."

Turning more serious, he talked to a small group of reporters after finishing the more formal part of his news conference. "I feel decent, but it's still not there. I can't play first base like I used to."

"Anybody can be a good first baseman. (Not everybody) can be a great first baseman. I consider myself a great first baseman."

The lean-and-hungry Bloomington youngster who grew up in the shadow of the Met Stadium announced his retirement from the game and the team he loved Thursday afternoon at the downtown Metrodome.

Hrbek recognized this cycle of life.

"I was a Twins fan, then a Twin player, and now I'm a Twins fan again," Hrbek said. "I won't make myself irrevocable. You'll see me in the stands at the games, cheering on the Twins. As long as I can get up and down the stairs."

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### Hanging 'em up

Kent Hrbek's career statistics (through Wednesday's game):

Regular season													
Year	Avg.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	HR	SO	BB	CS	SF
1981	.275	74	27	5	18	5	1	4	23	92	84	0	0
1982	.321	140	532	82	160	21	4	23	92	84	80	0	0
1983	.299	141	512	73	153	41	5	18	84	57	71	4	0
1984	.311	149	559	80	174	31	3	27	107	85	87	1	0
1985	.278	158	583	78	165	31	2	21	93	67	87	1	0
1986	.287	148	530	85	147	27	1	29	91	71	81	2	0
1987	.295	142	477	85	128	26	1	34	90	84	83	0	0
1988	.312	143	510	75	159	31	0	25	75	67	84	0	0
1989	.272	138	476	68	122	17	0	20	73	53	65	0	0
1990	.287	143	492	61	141	26	0	20	79	69	45	0	0
1991	.287	143	492	61	141	26	0	20	79	69	45	0	0
1992	.244	112	394	52	96	20	0	15	58	71	56	0	0
1993	.282	123	395	80	86	11	0	26	82	71	57	0	0
1994	.280	74	252	31	88	10	0	8	43	39	23	0	0
Totals	.282	1,742	6,170	900	1,741	311	18	201	1,078	833	793	27	0
Playoffs													
Year	Opp.	Avg.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	HR	SO	BB	SF
1987/Detroit	150	5	20	4	3	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	0
1987/Minnesota	143	5	21	0	3	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0
Totals	146	10	41	4	6	0	0	1	4	4	0	0	0
World Series													
Year	Opp.	Avg.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	HR	SO	BB	SF
1987/Detroit	258	7	24	4	5	0	0	1	0	5	3	0	0
1991/Minnesota	115	5	45	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	180	14	69	6	8	1	0	0	0	5	3	0	0

treasure was his fielding. He never won a Gold Glove, but baseball people think he deserves one for career achievement, like John Wayne's Oscar.

"In my opinion he's one of the great gloves at first base I've seen in 40 years of pro ball," said the proudly bearded Angelo Guianini, the scout who signed Hrbek after he was drafted out of the — get this — 17th round.

"He was a lucky break for me. I was tipped off by a concessions manager whose son played against him."

"He reminded me of Babe Ruth, Jimmy Foss, Mickey Martin, those guys. He hit 34 homers into the upper deck in the Dome, something no one will ever match."

Guianini noted one other unmatchable accomplishment: The retired

stretch of August on his way to a career-high 34 homers. Game 6 grand slam off Ken Dayley swung World Series momentum back to Twins.

1988/ Leads major league first basemen with .287 fielding percentage, but doesn't win a Gold Glove, an honor that eluded him throughout his career. Moves past Houston's Jim Wynn to become baseball's all-time indoor home run king. Batted .312, another career best.

1989/ Becomes fourth Twin to hit 200 career homers, reaching that milestone against Bert Blyleven, who was pitching for California at the time. Misses six weeks of season with dislocated left shoulder. Only full season without a stolen base. Agrees to a five-year contract in December on the same day relief ace Jeff

Reardon agrees to terms with Boston.

1990/ Misses final two weeks of season after fracturing ankle during clubhouse honolululou. Bats .268 in July with six home runs and only three strikeouts in 30 at-bats.

1991/ Reaches 200-homer mark for the eighth season in a row. Only Killebrew has a longer streak for Twins. Bats only .115 in World Series, but is well remembered for doubling Ron Gant off first base in Game 2 and suspects that he pushed Gant off the bag.

1992/ Dislocates left shoulder in exhibition game on the same day the Twins traded his backup, Paul Sorrento, to Cleveland. Has career lows in runs, homers and RBI. Injures his right shoulder in a collision

at the plate in late August, with Boston. Daughter's face is born.

1993/ Becomes second Twin to reach 1,000 career RBIs. Has more walks than strikeouts for the seventh straight season. Ejected from game for the third time in his 1,741-game career. Starts dropping broad hints that he would play one more year and retire.

1994/ Plays errorless ball at first base until last Saturday in Kansas City. Moves past Rod Carew into third place on the team's all-time doubles list and ahead of Tony Oliva into second on games-played list. Going into last night's game, needed 59 total bases for 3,000.

BELOW: Hrbek crowded with Al Newman during batting practice in 1991.