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SPORTS

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### TOM KELLY RETIRES



Tom Kelly releases following the 1986 season. He took over for the fired Ray Miller on Sept. 12, leading the club to a 12-11 record in the end season.

#### KELLY FROM C1 Kelly says he felt a little worn out at times this year

Kelly said a combination of fatigue and personal reasons led to his stepping down. "I just feel right now that it's a good time for me to step aside and let someone else take over. I have a lot of reasons why, some of them are very personal that I'm going to keep to myself. A couple of reasons will be shared. At times this year, I felt somewhat tired, a little bit worn out. I tried to stay in the best shape I could for the most part. There were days where that just wasn't good enough. I felt a little worn out, whether it was the travel catching up to me or the stress of the job. I was more tired, worn out about it. Maybe it was all the young players that were last three years. Maybe they took a toll on me."

He revealed his intentions in his typical incoherent style — wearing a red velvet and sweat as he spoke to the media. Kelly finished with two World Series titles and a career record of 1,140-1,244. His one-year contract expired after the end of the regular season.

Owner Carl Pohlad approached Kelly in August about returning next season, even telling Kelly he could have anything he wanted. Kelly decided to negotiate at the time. Once he decided to quit, only a few people in the organization — including Pohlad, Twins President Jerry Bede and General Manager Terry Ryan — were made aware.

Pohlad said he made several attempts to talk Kelly into returning for 2002, but realized

#### In the record books

Year	W	L	ERA	Rate
1986	13	11	3.52	6th Best
1987	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1988	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1989	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1990	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1991	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1992	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1993	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1994	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1995	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1996	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1997	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1998	16	11	3.52	6th Best
1999	16	11	3.52	6th Best
2000	16	11	3.52	6th Best
2001	16	11	3.52	6th Best
Total	140	124	4.07	6th Best

Kelly wasn't changing his mind. "I was really surprised," Pohlad said. "I was more surprised, as I worked on him a little more, that he was convinced that he had made up his mind."

Pohlad purchased the team from the late Calvin Griffith in 1984 and watched his investment pay off three years later when he and Kelly stood together in the clubhouse with the first of two World Series trophies.

Pohlad said he will miss the times he met with Kelly to talk about the team. "Tom and I after all these years, became close friends and I'm going to miss him," Pohlad said.

Ryan suggested that Kelly talk the players through his decision last Sunday, after the Twins defeated the White Sox in the season finale. But Kelly wanted the players to enjoy the moment. That falls in line with his emotions through the years, as he was last seen on the field in 1987 when the Twins won the

World Series, and even in 1999 in the playoffs mobbed Eric Milton after his no-hitter. "The game is about the players," he said. "It's not about the manager. It's not about the coaches, the trainers, the umpires. I tried to express this to Terry that this press conference wasn't all necessary, but I got overruled."

Kelly was approached several times over the final weeks of the season to reconsider his decision. Pohlad, willing to give Kelly a multi-year contract, made one last attempt about 30 minutes before the group headed for the press conference. But Kelly had made up his mind. "The team I could have filled in any amount. I wanted and I didn't even let him talk about that," Kelly said. "I didn't want that to influence my decision and what I was going to do or wanted to do. I didn't want to have money involved in it."

Kelly is ending a career in which he gained the respect of his peers for fielding fundamentally sound teams that played hard from start to finish. It is a career in which he won at least 90 games three times, but lost more than 90 games five times.

Kelly also was criticized that he was too hard on young players. "I heard, more than once, that some people thought the game had passed my by," Kelly said. "If you hear that more than once... that really upset me some. I knew I wanted to do it one more year to see if we did the right things with the people we invested our time in. I could do it, I could do it."

For now, Kelly's plans are simple. "I'm going to try and manage my bank account and my golf score," said Kelly, who says he will continue to be in Minneapolis. "No, I'm not going to manage any more. I was going to do that, I would just stay here."

— *La Velle E. Nord III at baseball@startribune.com*

#### REUSSE FROM C1 Kelly emphasized playing game way it was intended

Billboarder owner. Player with a chance. It was no contest, Kelly chose the player. On Friday, Kelly announced his retirement after 15-plus seasons as a big league manager. And, he opened his remarks with this: "The game is about the players. It's not about the manager, it's not about the coaches, the trainers, the umpires. It's about the players."

Tom Kelly was not a player's manager in the sense that he wore them out with praise or tried to be a buddy. He was a player's manager in that he knew they were the game — and their best chance for success was to play the game right. In Kelly's view, there were two types of players in the big leagues: first-division players and second-division players. A manager could win if the majority of players he had in the lineup were first-division players. A manager didn't have a chance if he was loaded down with second-division players.

Kelly knew he was getting first-division players in 1987, since he had managed most of those Twins in the minor leagues. Through the '90s, the farm system kept adding Kelly second-division players as a nucleus: Scott Sabloski, Rich Becker, Javier Vazquez, Todd Walker. The result was eight consecutive losing seasons. The result was Sandy Lyle turning shock waves. A year ago, the Twins had the worst record in the American League and Kelly fought to keep his job. This time, the Twins were loaded with surprise teams for four months, finished 85-77, and Kelly walked away with a big open-ended contract offer.

On the surface, it seems a riddle. In truth, it's clear: Kelly. This is a man with intractable convictions. You're looking at a baseball writer, and you're going to come out of nowhere and, a few months later, get Tom Kelly fired as manager. That happens, and the reason is going to be from Kelly's neck, and he's going to fight for his job. A year later, many of the fans are back, and so is hope, and the owner wants Kelly to sign for two years, since, wherever that when Kelly can walk away on his terms. There's nothing more important for a blue-collar guy from Iowa than to have a function on his terms.

"I heard more than once that some people thought the game had passed me by," Kelly said. "That really upset me. I knew I wanted to do it one more year, to see if we did the right things with the people we invested our time in. I could do it, I could do it." In 2000, people in and out of the Twins' organization said Kelly made a commitment, so he had to stay. In 2001, a Twins team picked to finish fifth was managed to second place, and now Kelly can leave.

This is certain: The new manager will be more enthused on his radio call-in show. The new manager will offer more platitudes for a rookie who goes 3-4 in his first game. This also is certain: The new manager will not be able to manage the team as well as Kelly did. The new manager will not be able to manage the team as well as Kelly did. The new manager will not be able to manage the team as well as Kelly did.

— *Patrick Reusse is at pr@startribune.com*

#### COVERING KELLY

Star Tribune baseball beat writers, past and present, share their memories of the Twins' retiring manager

#### Manager was successful despite being thin-skinned.

By Dennis Brackley

Brackley chains and angry words. Those are the personal memories of Tom Kelly that linger. There was almost always an uncomfortable working relationship — "like walking on eggshells," he borrows the description Doug Mientkiewicz used so eloquently in 1989 to describe his relationship with the manager.

I admired Kelly for being a knowledgeable manager who crossed boundaries and insisted that his team play hard. But I found him to be one of the most thin-skinned people I've encountered in this profession. He disliked any question that hinted of second-guessing. The difference of perspective led to two memorable blow-ups, one on the field before the national media prior to Game 6 of the 1987 World Series, the other within the bowels of the Metrodome clubhouse in the 1989 that ended with him smashing chairs against the clubhouse wall and yelling obscenities. As I said, we didn't always see eye to eye.

And yet, for all his grumpiness, I've always felt there was more to him than the dour persona he so often displayed to the media. Some players I greatly admire as people — Ken Hillenkamp and Gene Larkin come immediately to mind — loved playing for Kelly, and had great respect for the man.

Once, in the midst of Gary Carter's religious conversion, he called me into his office knowing that Carter and I were close. He shared his concerns about Carter, and I saw that he had many feelings in his eyes. I wish he could have shown his compassionate side more often. On his humorous side, Gary said that wasn't so frequently tinged with bitterness.

I covered the team when Billy Gardner and Ray Miller managed the Twins. It was a pleasure coming to the ballpark, cracking jokes with the manager around the batting cage and freely discussing gossamer decisions after the game. I seldom found it fun to cover baseball with Tom Kelly as the manager. Some of his players, especially younger ones, had the same attitude. It's too bad it had to be that way.

#### Didn't show his sense of humor often enough.

By La Velle E. Nord III

Tom Kelly is the most prepared baseball man I've encountered since I began covering the game in 1983. Had he been clearly one of the top managers of his time. There were games in which he has out-managed opposing managers. Kelly always had a punchy, funny ready on the bench and rarely ran out of pitchers.

As much as Kelly was known for demanding sound fundamentals from his players, he respected reporters who covered his teams to be just as sharp. You couldn't just ask him before a game why Jacques Jones wasn't in the lineup, you had to know Jones' numbers against the opposing pitcher, know recent at bats or if the opposing pitcher was better against left-handed hitters or right-handed hitters.

If you did, Kelly would jump on your case. I was warned that by critics across the land when I joined the Star Tribune staff before the 1998 season. But there's a better teacher than experience, and I got schooled a fair amount of times. You know what? My career as a baseball writer is better off for it.

Outside of several pre- and postgame moments in which he was curt and biting with some of his responses, Kelly could be witty and downright hilarious. He was at his best this past spring training in Fort Myers, Fla. I had just finished a discussion with Bob Anson, the Twins' minor-league coordinator, and was walking from the minor-league complex to the main field about 100 yards away. Anson asked me to take a host of supplies along with me that were earmarked for assistant general manager Wayne Krivsky.

I latched the bag on my shoulder and headed for the stadium. Suddenly, Kelly's voice shot across the complex, from about 50 yards away. "Hey, La Velle, is that your lunch? Kelly yelled as players turned and laughed. Anson who knows me knew I carry a good sized nut. I laughed, too. In his office after the workout, I said to him, "Man, you do it right anything." He grinned while chomping on a cigar and replied, "That's why I got paid the big bucks." Tom Kelly is a great person. I just wish he would have shown more of that side.

#### Was determined not to go out as his predecessor did.

By Howard Sinker

My wife Tom Kelly remembered how Ray Miller went down and didn't know that happening to him. It wasn't until the first week of a sorry 1986 season that Kelly reported to work and found out he was going to be named interim manager. The overmatched Miller didn't find out he was cooked until a couple of hours later, when he was called out of one meeting and called into another, where he was fired.

Kelly received no promises. It was assumed he would continue to be in Minneapolis. "No, I'm not going to manage any more. I was going to do that, I would just stay here." The Twins offered the job to Fry, who said he turned it down because he was only offered a two-year contract instead of a three-year deal. Fry took a broadcasting job in Chicago. Kelly took a broadcasting job in Chicago. Kelly took a broadcasting job in Chicago.

I heard Kelly once forget how those cross-played to players and front-office types — that Kelly showed in get out on his own. The mean streak he showed with callers to his radio show. The conflicting loyalty he showed to pitching coach Dick Suck as when others sought his firing.

What do you do? Fry? Of course, after eight consecutive losing seasons (1993-2000), the lister of his previous accomplishments was fading. There were calls for going home, from inside and outside the team. But Kelly could have managed for as long as Carl Pohlad wanted the team. He kept the job long enough for a real estate. The Twins were one of baseball's best stories this year despite their late-season collapse. And there it was in time to go. "Hill at leasting one day, leave the rest. So long farewell, the door wasn't hit me on the way out."

Kelly's final day as manager was a result of what he saw on his first day. Kelly's final day as manager was a result of what he saw on his first day. Kelly's final day as manager was a result of what he saw on his first day.

#### He could be awfully hard on young players.

By Jim Smeaton

Tom Kelly painted himself as a simple man. Yet he was one of the most complex people I've ever met. He believed in quashing his emotions — rarely arguing with umpires or celebrating a victory — yet possessed a temper that he would wield anytime within earshot.

He was known as a player's manager, yet one of his loudest voices often told me, "I've never had a personal conversation with a player. He pretended he wasn't very smart, yet stands up to him in a heated way, and he shrewdly navigated the temperamental sea of manager or head coach to no effect."

He pretended to have a limited vocabulary, yet spoke with eloquence when moved. He managed two rosters of the year, and presided over a good batch of young players in 2001, yet many young players complained about him.

I took the Twins back in 1993. During the previous two years, the Twins had received praise as the best run organization in baseball. Nobody knew, but it would serve as the transition from the championship season to the long dormancy of the mid- and late '90s. I had realized that this could become a problem for a prospect in the spring of 1993.

The Twins spent their first-round draft choice on David McCarty, a first baseman from Stanford, in 1991. The front office and the media expected McCarty to become the next Ken Griffey. Kelly did not. On March 27, 1993, Kelly included McCarty among his early crop of cuts. "These cuts were easy," Kelly said. "The media is McCarty's worst enemy. If he learns how to deal with that, then he might be all right. If he doesn't, then it's Stanford, Florida, books, books, books." Stanford, books, books, books. Books who won Kelly's heart stand long-standing loyalty. Players he dished became human herbivores. McCarty might still have a hole in his chest.