



Rangers fans will never forget Oct. 27, 2011, the night the baseball gods crushed their dreams. BY DAVE SESSIONS

AT APPROXIMATELY 10:53 P.M. CENTRAL TIME ON THURSDAY, OCT. 27, 2011, I aimed my phone at the TV and pressed the record button. I have a feeling plenty of Texans did the same thing. We wanted to document for posterity exactly where we were at the moment the Texas Rangers won the World Series.

Well, they hadn't won it yet. They were just one strike away.

In the early '80s, when I was just big enough to wear an adjustable replica helmet, my dad would take me to Arlington Stadium and I'd strike up conversations with Rangers relievers in the bullpen. He bought season tickets in 1993. We spent the '90s watching Pudge, Juan and company take the team to a point where winning the World Series was theoretically possible, but they were never closer than 10 wins away.

In 2007, I was the Star-Telegram's Rangers beat writer. I covered nearly every game — spring training, home and road. When you get paid to cover a team, you have no allegiance to it. You don't care who wins as long as you beat deadline. You have to leave your fandom at the press box door.

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I moved across the country for another job for a couple of years after that season, but I got home in time to see the Rangers' amazing 2010 campaign. During the spectacular postseason runs that year and in 2011, I sat at Rangers Ballpark with my dad and rooted for the home team again — something I thought I had lost the ability to do.

Perhaps another epic postseason looms again. So this month, I finally summoned the courage to watch the grainy cellphone footage I shot in a bar next to my apartment in Austin, where I had moved temporarily.

In the top of the seventh inning, moments after Adrian Beltre's go-ahead home run, I turned on the camera, panned and added one line of narration.

"This is where I think I'm going to watch the Rangers win the World Series."

As victory neared, I thought about my dad and my oldest friend, two people with whom I've attended hundreds of Rangers games.

I thought about how my oldest friend called me during Nolan Ryan's seventh no-hitter when we were 12. I didn't have cable, so we sat on the phone in silence while I listened to radio and he watched TV until Nolan got that final out.

I thought about how my buddy and I went to the last game in Arlington Stadium and scooped up cups full of dirt from the warning track when the security guards weren't looking after the game. How we saved our ticket stubs from the first game in Rangers Ballpark and slept in line for extra All-Star Game tickets. How we waited out all three hours of the rain delay in Game 3 of the ALDS in 1999, collecting discarded souvenir cups to pass the time before the Yankees finished off the shutout and the sweep. How we hung pictures of Rusty Greer on our dorm room walls. How we spent my 21st birthday at a Rangers-Diamondbacks game in Arizona with my dad.

I also thought about him. The guy who took his kid to Bat Night almost every year even though he knew I'd bang it on the metal bleachers all night. He took me to Glove Night, and Helmet Night, and countless other nights. He took me to see Oddibe McDowell hit for the cycle.

My dad still loves to tell me stories about watching Gaylord Perry pitch in long sleeves in July. My father was one of the 8,375 hardy fans who went to the last game of the season in 1984 to watch the Rangers lose their 92nd game — and see Mike Witt throw the 11th perfect game in major-league history. My dad shows up to games wearing Rangers jerseys he's had for decades.

A dad who loves baseball that much, who teaches his son to love it that much, deserves to see his team win it all.

"One more strike! One more!" I'm hollering on the video. Mostly I was thinking, nothing will ever top this for a Rangers fan. This is the moment. This long-suffering franchise won't have to suffer any

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Neftali Feliz stares in for the sign. David Freese readies the bat.

A few shocking seconds later, if you listen closely, you can hear somebody say what sounds like, "Did this really happen?" Somebody screams, "He missed it!" Then the screen goes black. I dropped the phone.

Thirty minutes after that, I started recording another last strike. Except it wasn't. After the Cardinals tied it again, and the Rangers didn't score in the 11th, I walked across the street to my apartment to watch the end alone.

I knew what was coming. My old buddy sent me a text: "I can't handle this."

I unlocked my door, turned my TV on, watched Freese hit a walk-off homer and turned off the TV, all in the span of about 45 seconds.

The next day I got another text from my friend: "This is still the worst feeling ever." He told me weeks later he was still having nightmares. Postseason traumatic stress disorder, I guess.

My dad and I avoided discussing Game 6 in much detail, but he told me shortly afterward that at 67, he didn't think he'd ever get that close to seeing the Rangers win the World Series again.

I hope he lives to see them win this year and the next 30.

I hope this is the year that he and I and all my friends, who have devoted so much of our lives to watching one team play baseball, will finally have a night to remember forever. But we'll never forget where we were on the night of Game 6, 2011.

One strike away.

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THE ALMOST CELEBRATORY VIDEO BY DAVID SESSIONS

