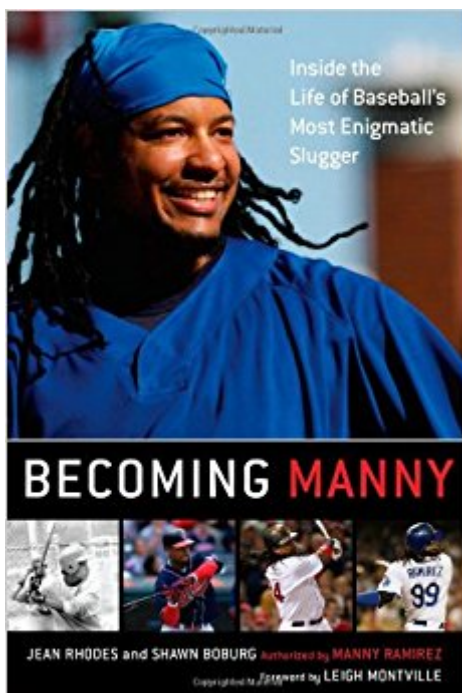


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Becoming Manny: Inside The Life Of Baseball's Most Enigmatic Slugger



Synopsis

Authorized by the future Hall of Famer himself, and written by a clinical psychologist and an award-winning investigative journalist, *Becoming Manny* is the incredible story behind one of the greatest baseball sluggers of all time. Manny Ramirez ranks seventeenth in career home runs and eighth in career slugging percentage -- the only players above him on both lists are Barry Bonds, Jimmie Foxx, and Babe Ruth. *Becoming Manny* brings an unusually thoughtful analysis to the territory of sports biography, examining Manny's life through the lens of larger issues such as mentoring and immigration, while also telling the story of a great career. Manny has perplexed the baseball world for years now with his amazing hitting and his unique approach to life and to the game. Incredibly focused at the plate yet carefree everywhere else, Manny has become a constant topic of discussion on national sports radio and television, on sports websites, and in print. With unprecedented access, Jean Rhodes and Shawn Boburg have uncovered fascinating stories and family photos spanning Manny's early years to the present. This is an authorized inside look at the roots, development, and career of an individual and player on his way from the Dominican Republic and Washington Heights to the Hall of Fame. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Manny Ramirez has terrorized major-league pitchers since 1994, first with the Cleveland Indians, then with the Red Sox (where he played a starring role in their two World Series wins in 2004 and 2007). In 2008, in a contract dispute with the Red Sox, he pouted his way out of town and landed

with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Ramirez is arguably the best hitter of his baseball generation, but his career has also been notable for indifferent fielding, mysterious ailments, and various confrontations with owners and players. Rhodes, a professor of psychology, and Boburg, a reporter, use interviews with Manny's teammates, family, coaches, and friends to flesh out the details of his life—especially the poor New York childhood dominated by his mother and sisters and the close relationship he maintains to this day with his Little League coach and mentor. This is an authorized biography, but it's not the whitewash one might expect. The authors don't dwell on Ramirez's shortcomings, but neither do they ignore them. On balance, an interesting biography of a baseball lightning rod. --Wes Lukowsky

PROLOGUE
Selfish Slugger? Who is Manny Ramirez? Reduce Manny to a series of stats, and it's easy to see who he is: one of the best batters in history. A twelve-time All-Star and nine-time Silver Slugger, Manny ranks seventeenth in career home runs and eighth in career slugging as of this writing. The only players above him on both lists are Babe Ruth, Jimmie Foxx, and Barry Bonds. Manny is also second all-time in grand slams, behind only Lou Gehrig, and has hit more postseason home runs than anyone in the history of professional baseball. He still appears to have several years of baseball ahead of him. But if you skip the stats, the question "Who is Manny?" gets confusing, controversial, and cultural. A favorite target of reporters and talk show pundits, Manny's every misstep is exhaustively analyzed and then reduced to "Manny being Manny." This oblique phrase has come to provide a shared wink of explanation for a player whose laser-beam focus at home plate seems irreconcilable with his periodic gaffes (or "Manny Moments") in left field and outside the ballpark. The history of the phrase "Manny being Manny" in the popular press provides a series of thumbnail portraits of Manny at his most bizarre and intriguing, and a catalogue of the baseball world's struggles to understand him. Its first mention in a major publication came in 1995, when Cleveland Indians' manager Mike Hargrove was asked about the young slugger's carefree-bordering-on-careless approach to money. How do you explain Manny and Dominican teammate Julian Tavaréz asking a Cleveland sportswriter to loan them \$60,000, so they could buy a Harley-Davidson motorcycle? And what about forgetting a paycheck in a pair of boots he left behind in the Texas Rangers visiting clubhouse? "That's just Manny being Manny," Hargrove told a Newsday reporter. Several years later, a Cleveland sportswriter used the phrase to account for why Manny's old New York City neighborhood still adored him -- because of how he showed up at his old high school cafeteria unannounced almost daily in the off-seasons to eat lunch with kids, and in spite of how he forgot promises to childhood friends to leave game tickets at the stadium box

offices. But the phrase became less clearly defined after Manny moved to the Boston Red Sox in 2000, and its use grew with the city's fascination and ultimate disillusionment with their star slugger. It has been invoked in print and online tens of thousands of times since 2000 as a shorthand explanation for Manny's mysterious injuries, his absences, his tardiness, his indiscriminate use of other players' bats and clothing, his silence in the clubhouse, his quiet acts of kindness to friends, his choice of an expletive-riddled song to play over Boston's Fenway Park sound system, his childlike playfulness, his midinning break inside Fenway's left-field wall, his failure to show up at the White House to meet President George W. Bush after the Red Sox won the world championship, and, yes, his towering home runs and unparalleled work ethic. Manny is partly to blame for the mystery. He rarely grants interviews, and reporters who manage to breach his defenses are rewarded with little more than clichés or incendiary oneliners. So, with little to go on but fielding miscues, baggy uniforms, flowing dreadlocks, big hits, and tired anecdotes, the public is left with caricatures of Manny as a carefree goofball and spoiled superstar. Yet the question of who Manny really is endures, baffling his most ardent admirers and even some of his teammates. In fact, it was never more pressing than during the 2008 season, in the days before the Boston Red Sox traded Manny to the Los Angeles Dodgers, his third team in seventeen years as a professional. Manny's dispute with Red Sox ownership over his future -- and questions about his commitment to the team -- convinced many once-adoring fans that he was selfish. The day after the trade, Red Sox third baseman Mike Lowell told the Providence Journal, "For me, he's a sure first-ballot Hall of Famer, and when he gives his speech, he'll probably give it via satellite because he'll be in Brazil. That's him and that'll be perfect. He'll be wearing a Brazilian National Team hat when he does it." Lowell's distinction between malice and oddity is insightful. On many levels, Manny and Boston were a mismatch from the start. Nothing excuses Manny's shoving of sixty-four-year-old traveling secretary Jack McCormick, and perhaps Manny didn't give the Red Sox his best in 2008. Still, there were reasons for his frustration. And one could argue that if Manny had behaved this way in 2004, the Red Sox front office, not yet emboldened by two championships in four seasons, would have found a way to weather the storm. If Manny had finished his career in Boston -- or simply departed under more amicable circumstances -- the grandchildren of today's vociferous fans might have even driven through the Manny Ramirez tunnel. That may sound farfetched, but Manny's comments in advance of his exit are comparable to those of Red Sox legend Ted Williams, whose name graces the recently constructed highway that runs under Boston Harbor. In fact, Williams was so embittered by his years of acrimony with the Boston press, Red Sox management, and fans that he refused to even tip his cap after his final hit. Manny's "enough is enough" comment, directed to the Red Sox

management in the middle of the 2008 season when tensions were at their peak, was less acerbic than Williams's vituperations. As Leigh Montville described in *Ted Williams*: [Williams] said he wanted to be traded. He said he hated Boston, hated the fans, hated the newspapers, hated the trees, hated the weather, hated, just hated. The word "fuck" or some derivative was woven into most sentences. He wanted out. And for most of Williams' tenure on the team, Boston hated him right back. Manny's badmouthing was mild by comparison. Moreover, there is consistency in his teammates' and coaches' characterizations of him as a hardworking team player. He was, according to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, "everybody's little brother" in his early years and, recently, has been more of a role model and source of support to younger players than he's generally credited for. "He was a mentor to me," says Red Sox shortstop Julio Lugo, three years his junior. "When I went through tough times, he knew that I had trouble sleeping so he would call me early in the morning, when he knew I'd be awake, and he'd say, 'Look, don't worry about it, man. You're going to do good today.' That meant a lot to me. There's no one like Manny." "To be honest," says Pedro Martinez, "I don't have enough kind words to say about Manny. I think he's misunderstood." But Manny's teammates are not the only ones capable of shedding light on the vexing question of who Manny is. Conversations with Manny and his coaches, agents, mentors, parents, wife, sisters, and childhood friends, as well as side trips to his neighborhoods, show that he cannot be reduced to a caricature. They illuminate a nuanced, if inscrutable, man who defines himself by what he is least known as -- a dedicated athlete, a well-regarded teammate, and a beloved father, husband, and son. Among the mentors in Manny's life were his sandlot coach, Mel Zitter, and his then Triple-A manager, Charlie Manuel. But none have been more influential than his former Little League coach, Carlos Ferreira. In his neighborhood, Ferreira is endearingly known as "Macaco" -- Spanish for little monkey. A thoughtful, charismatic man who left a medical career in the Dominican Republic to immigrate to the U.S. in 1979, Macaco, now fifty-nine, has coached several Little League teams in the baseball-crazed Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City. He was -- and he remains -- a de facto father to many aspiring Dominican players. The story of how Manny came to rely on this gentle, unassuming coach -- from their first encounter in the basement of a Washington Heights housing project to their ongoing, daily conversations -- is a window into Manny's development and his hidden essence: his vulnerabilities, his values, his uncomplicated worldview, and what it really means to be Manny. But to understand the story of Manny and Macaco, we first need to understand another story: that of Manny's early life with his parents, Aristides and Onelcida, and his three sisters. Copyright © 2009 by Jean Rhodes and Shawn Boburg -- This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

What makes this book so special is that its co-written by a psychologist and an investigative reporter and authorized by Manny Ramirez himself. So it blends psychological insight, with tremendous detail, and uncommon access to Ramirez. So, in other words, unlike so many sports books this one is intelligent and carefully crafted. The writers take us through Manny's childhood in Santo Domingo, describing Manny's family origins and earliest years. When we read about his immigration, it's linked to Dominican immigrations more generally. When we read about him being shy, we learn about shyness and anxiety. When we read about Washington Heights, we learn about what it's like to grow up in poverty and the importance of mentoring. When we read about how he got drafted, we learn about the whole world of professional scouting. We also learn about the man himself---his personality, work ethic (he took 200 swings a day), his narcissism--but not just about what it means to be Manny, and what its like to be an immigrant ballplayer, but how every life is shaped by many forces.

inspirational reading

The first thing any potential reader should be made aware of is that Manny Ramirez *AUTHORIZED" this biography. So many "star" based biographies are written without the subjects' approval and assistance. The reclusive Manny participated in the creation of this book... even though he was late... or missed... some of the meetings. There are in depth interviews with Manny's Grandmother, Mother, sisters, teammates, coaches and managers... and so much of the subject matter revolves around Manny's greatest confidant... his friend to this day... and former Little League coach, Carlos Ferreira... known by all who know and love him... as "Macaco"... Spanish for "Little Monkey". As all baseball fans know... Manny is a surefire Hall Of Famer... and perhaps the greatest right handed hitter of all-time. His complete baseball career from Little League to YSL to George Washington High School in New York... to his meteoric rise through the Cleveland Indians farm system... to his Major League All Star career with the Indians... Boston Red Sox... and Los Angeles Dodgers... is all covered within these pages. But what makes this book so much more than simply a baseball book... is the outstanding in- depth look... at this world-renowned player... who is so well described by the phrase: "THAT'S JUST MANNY BEING MANNY!"... when he's off the field. Manny's family's story... before he became a baseball star... could just as easily been about any of the hundreds of thousands of other Dominican families that immigrated to New York. The authors peel back the character traits that now define Manny... and dig deep... historically...

culturally... and environmentally... and the reader... perhaps for the very first time... learns how Manny "really" became Manny. Most fans probably don't realize how shy and timid Manny was. Among other things... the language barrier... heaped on top of his natural shyness... made him stand offish. His Mother worked all day in a factory... and his Father was not an instrumental part of his life. And this next statement will probably make most baseball fan's head snap back... Manny didn't have any confidence in himself. Even when he was a teenager with scouts saying he was the greatest player they ever saw. Most of today's fans just see the funny and controversial Manny. Some wonder how he hits so well? After reading this book... no one will have even the slightest doubt... as to why he's so successful. **MANNY WORKS HARDER... AND IS MORE DEDICATED... THAN ALMOST ANY PLAYER I'VE HEARD ABOUT IN MY LIFETIME...** and he's been that way since childhood. Living amidst the poverty... in Washington Heights New York... he would get up 4:30 in the morning... rain... shine... or snow... and run up Snake Hill... **DRAGGING A TIRE FROM HIS WAIST!** "Snake Hill rose more than two hundred feet from the western edge of Washington Heights, near sea level, to one of the highest points in Manhattan." If he had a game at 5:00pm... he was there taking hitting practice at 10:00am. Every coach and manager he has had throughout his career... said he was the hardest worker they ever had. Manny would beg his coaches to work with him after games. In 1991 when Manny was nineteen he was named New York City Public School High School Player of the Year. His family didn't even know. It wasn't until 1993 when Manny was playing for the Canton Indians, Double-A team... that his Mother and three sisters ever saw him play baseball. As one former manager said: **"MANNY SPENT HOURS HITTING BALLS. THIS GUY WAS DRIVEN. UNBELIEVABLY DRIVEN TO SUCCEED, FROM DAY ONE. BUT INCREDIBLY HUMBLE. HE ALWAYS DEFLECTED PRAISE AND ATTENTION, AND WANTED TO PRACTICE WHEN NOBODY WAS AROUND."** The true baseball fan will enjoy the discussions of the All-Star Seasons... the Championships won... and yes the base running blunders... and the fielding mishaps... but the true essence... of the experiences... of Manny's personal life... is what will deeply permeate... your heart and soul. This is where you will truly learn... and appreciate... why... *Manny is just being Manny!* P.S. As a true-fanatical-statistical-baseball-fan... one thing that disappointed me is the mistake that was made on the page near the end of the book dedicated to Manny's lifetime statistics. It listed his lifetime batting average as .341 instead of the correct .314. P.S.S. There is also an historical mistake on page 271 when the authors state: "He now had 495 career homers and had just passed Ted Williams and Lou Gehrig on the all-time list." This is a mistake. Ted Williams had 521 career home runs... so Manny didn't pass him until later on. These statistical mistakes in no way take away from the overall book, and I recommend it highly.

If you are a Manny Ramirez fan you will love this book. I bought this for my nephew and he just loved it!!

If you are a Manny-hater, a Manny-lover, an Indians fan, or a Red Sox fan you will enjoy this book. I have at one time or another been all of the above, so much of this book was a review, however, the chapters on Manny's early life tied together with the last chapter made this read quite worthwhile. No matter where you fall in the Manny saga you will learn why Manny is Manny.

Wasn't necessarily a fan of Manny Ramirez before reading this book. I liked him when he was in Cleveland but after a while his antics got a little old for me, but I have to say that this book turned it around for me. Authors Jean Rhodes and Shawn Boburg did a good job detailing Ramirez's life and how he got to be "Manny being Manny" The book is basically broken into three parts. Ramirez's life in the DR, His life in Washington heights and his minor and major league career. One of the interesting things about "Becoming Manny" was the authors description of Ramirez's life in the Dominican Republic. In general Rhodes and Boburg discuss the life styles of Dominican families, young men wanting to be the next Roberto Clemente. With the exception of family the passion to play baseball on the Dominican Republic supersedes just about everything including school. Life in the D.R. From a very young age Ramirez was driven to be the best hitter he could be. Rhodes and Boburg did an excellent job of painting a picture that was Ramirez's and any one of a million other Dominican youth's lives. Children dreaming of being drafted by a major league team. Ramirez's parents moved to the U.S. but Ramirez was left behind with relatives. Unfazed by this Ramirez continued to immerse himself in baseball. Life in Washington Heights, Starting his social life over again in the US was hard for Ramirez; starting his baseball life over was easy. His excellence in the game was his way of endearing people to him including Carlos "Macaco" Ferreira who became his mentor and in many ways his father. Who advises Ramirez on many things inside and outside of baseball to this day. Life in Washing Heights was tough though, drug dealers on every corner, crimes committed in broad daylight. Ramirez walked by this every day to get to the ball field like the safe spot. Life after being drafted by the Indians, The latter part of the book is my favorite though. Rhodes and Boburg detail Ramirez's rise through the minor leagues to the major leagues. There are some funny anecdotal stories that Ramirez did involving players that would eventually make it to the majors. The book doesn't always paint a rosy picture of Ramirez, the authors discuss some of the bonehead things Ramirez has done. His poor fielding and lack of concentration at times in the

field. Because this book was published before Ramirez was suspended for using a banned substance it is not discussed. Ramirez is a very private person. His family never really took much interest in baseball and that according to the authors was ok with him. I think his drive to be a ball player was very personal and private to him. Whether you're a fan of Manny Ramirez or not you will appreciate and enjoy this book.

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