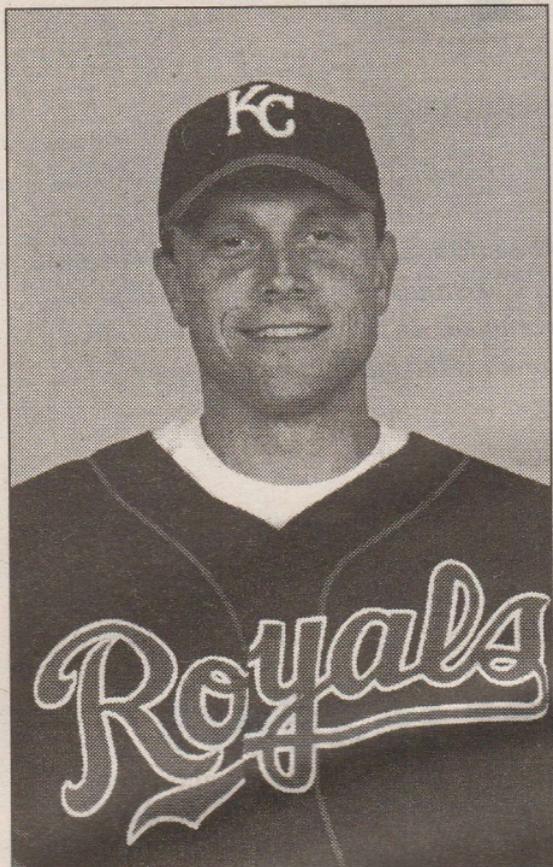


Joe Randa: KC Royals blue collar third baseman

By Lee Warren
Staff Writer



*Joe Randa, third baseman,
Kansas City Royals*

Joe Randa was born into a blue collar, middle-class family on the outskirts of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1969. Fans who follow his career as the starting third baseman for the Kansas City Royals would tell you that he takes a blue collar approach to the game of baseball.

Last season, he committed just seven errors in 347 chances and his .976 fielding percentage over the past two seasons is higher than any other Major League third basemen. He does not have any Gold Gloves to show for his efforts, but such is life for a player on a small market team like the Royals.

Ironically, Randa never had big dreams about playing professional sports. Growing up, he played tennis, baseball, basketball and football simply because

age), but it was what he calls "low key" so he had knowledge about Jesus, but he did not have a relationship with Him.

Several current and former teammates helped Randa through that difficult time in 1996 and pointed him to Christ. "Kevin Seitzer was very instrumental in leading me in the right direction," he said. Mike Sweeney and Keith Lockhart helped him as well.

Joe's wife, Bethany, who did not know Christ either, went through Joe's spiritual journey with him and they both became Christians.

Joe and Bethany have two children now, Jacob, 5, and Justin, 3, and they live in the Kansas City area. Having two young children at home has helped Randa remember what is really important.

"The game of baseball has always been important, but as I get older and [as] my kids get older, baseball files down on the important list and they jump up," he said. "The older they get, the harder they take me leaving to go on road trips."

When Randa retires, his family may decide to make Kansas

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he loved to play them. "Tennis and baseball were probably my two best sports," Randa said.

He helped his high school baseball team win the state title when he was a senior and he went on to play college baseball for Indian River Community College in Florida and then the University of Tennessee. The Royals drafted Randa in 1991 and he made his major league debut with them in 1995, after making brief stops with the Omaha Royals in 1994 and 1995.

In 1996, tragedy struck. Randa's mother was killed in a car accident and it sent him on a search for meaning. As a young child, his mother took him and his two older sisters to church (his parents divorced at an early

City their permanent home. "I'm not going to write anything in stone but, as of right now, this is where we are comfortable," he said. "This is where we want to be. We belong to a wonderful church and we've just been growing like weeds there."

Royals Chaplain Mike Lusardi has seen Randa's desire to grow first hand. "In the off season he is a regular, growing part of our Bible study," Lusardi said. During the season, he attends team chapel meetings.

Placing a high importance on family life, playing baseball to the best of his ability and getting involved with his family in his local church—if his life sounds blue collar, Joe Randa won't complain one bit. †

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