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Rio Gomez, his Latin Heritage, and his Father's Legacy

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The story of Rio and Pedro Gomez has been one filled with struggles, hard work, and an insatiable mindset of never giving up, both on different fronts but with the same mentality of smiling through adversity and always working toward their dreams.

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For Pedro Gomez, Rio's father who was born in Miami just after his parents immigrated from Cuba, it was a long road working in sports journalism before joining one of the biggest media outlets in the world, ESPN.

There, Pedro quickly won the hearts of fans, colleagues, and even players themselves. Associated with the sports network for 18 years, he interviewed legends of the game, such as David Ortiz, Pedro Martínez, and several others.

For Pedro's son Rio Gomez, when his dreams of becoming a professional baseball player seemed to come to an end after being cut from his varsity baseball team, Pedro encouraged him to keep trying at the collegiate level, where he was a walk-on for both Mesa Community College and the University of Arizona. The struggles of that 18-year-old boy in high school transformed him into the 36th pick by the Boston Red Sox in the 2017 MLB Draft.

"Whenever anything happened in baseball I turned to my dad." Rio said. "He was always the one who I would've always been like, 'Hey, I'm struggling here.' He was always there to walk me off the ledge."

That's how Rio remembers his dad, who passed away on February 7, 2021, at the age of 58. Rio, today a 28-year-old left-handed pitcher for the WooSox, is one step away from achieving the goal any professional baseball player dreams of, and of course, his father's wish: The Big Leagues.

Due to his father's job, Rio had the opportunity to get unique tips from major league legends, a resource that later on will pave his way into professional baseball. For instance, Greg Maddux, Hall of Fame pitcher, gave tips to Pedro for Rio's changeup, who at an earlier age had been interested in baseball.

"I was so fortunate that my dad had so many connections in baseball," Rio said. "I remember as a kid having a conversation with Greg Maddux just working on the changeup grip, having a conversation with Nomar Garciaparra on how to handle pressure when it comes to baseball. At the time when you're a little kid you don't

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think much about it, but when you get older you're like, 'Wow.' Just these small tips stick in your brain, you remember and you carry it throughout your career."

Pedro, who was always there following his son's path as an athlete and suffered through every outing due to nerves, seems to continue following in his footsteps from above. Rio credits two of the most important outings of his career to days that reminded him of his dad-Father's Day and the day of Pedro's birthday-which both occurred during the first year of his departure.

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