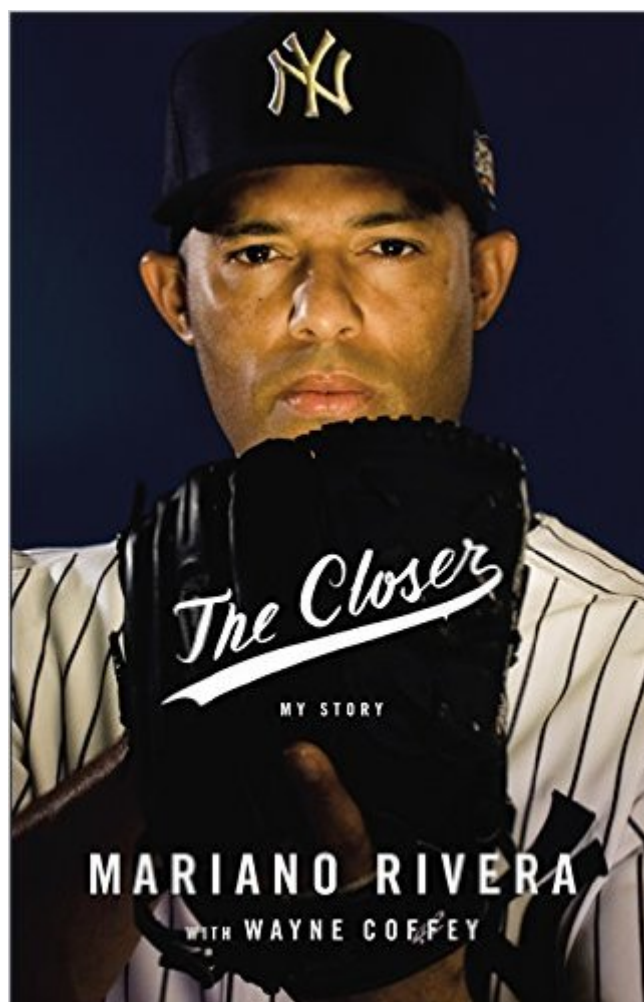


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The Closer



Synopsis

The greatest relief pitcher of all time shares his extraordinary story of survival, love, and baseball. Mariano Rivera, the man who intimidated thousands of batters merely by opening a bullpen door, began his incredible journey as the son of a poor Panamanian fisherman. When first scouted by the Yankees, he didn't even own his own glove. He thought he might make a good mechanic. When discovered, he had never flown in an airplane, had never heard of Babe Ruth, spoke no English, and couldn't imagine Tampa, the city where he was headed to begin a career that would become one of baseball's most iconic. What he did know: that he loved his family and his then girlfriend, Clara, that he could trust in the Lord to guide him, and that he could throw a baseball exactly where he wanted to, every time. With astonishing candor, Rivera tells the story of the championships, the bosses (including The Boss), the rivalries, and the struggles of being a Latino baseball player in the United States and of maintaining Christian values in professional athletics. The thirteen-time All-Star discusses his drive to win; the secrets behind his legendary composure; the story of how he discovered his cut fastball; the untold, pitch-by-pitch account of the ninth inning of Game 7 in the 2001 World Series; and why the lowest moment of his career became one of his greatest blessings. In *The Closer*, Rivera takes readers into the Yankee clubhouse, where his teammates are his brothers. But he also takes us on that jog from the bullpen to the mound, where the game -- or the season -- rests squarely on his shoulders. We come to understand the laserlike focus that is his hallmark, and how his faith and his family kept his feet firmly on the pitching rubber. Many of the tools he used so consistently and gracefully came from what was inside him for a very long time -- his deep passion for life; his enduring commitment to Clara, whom he met in kindergarten; and his innate sense for getting out of a jam. When Rivera retired, the whole world watched -- and cheered. In *The Closer*, we come to an even greater appreciation of a legend built from the ground up.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had high hopes for "The Closer" being an inventive, literary baseball memoir, because Mariano Rivera hired Wayne Coffey as his ghost-writer, and because Coffey two years ago was responsible for R.A. Dickey's brilliant *Wherever I Wind Up: My Quest for Truth, Authenticity and the Perfect Knuckleball*. Rivera has had a longer and more successful (although, admittedly, a much less colorful) career than Dickey, with much higher highs, so I thought, going in, that this book could be something extra special. The first couple of chapters do deliver, similar to Dickey's autobiography. Coffey takes us back to Rivera's exceedingly modest childhood in a small fishing village off the west coast of Panama. One early chapter is full of harrowing moments of life on board Rivera's father's fishing boat, with near-death experiences, the actual death of a beloved relative, and a seemingly miraculous escape from drowning. Another chapter features several moments of horrifying abuse at the hands of Rivera's brutal tyrant of a father. Rivera's (again) miraculous escape from Panama to become a pitcher in the Yankees' minor league chain -- when Rivera hadn't really done much pitching in local ball and had already been passed over by scouts as a shortstop -- leads also to some nice moments of him getting by in the low minor leagues, speaking hardly any English and being overshadowed, early on, by higher-rated prospects such as the Yanks' ill-fated #1 draft pick Brien Taylor. After that, though, the book becomes merely standard.

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