

# SPECIAL DELIVER

## Roger Clemens Takes His Heater — and Newfound Assortment of ‘Stuff’ — to Toronto

By Rick Weinberg

**T**he number is jeopardizing the deal. Not the *numbers*, mind you, but the number.

The contract numbers of Roger Clemens' new blockbuster free-agent deal with the Toronto Blue Jays had already been worked out between the Hendricks brothers—Clemens' representatives—and Paul Beeston, the Blue Jays' CEO. The snag involves a uniform number. The Rocket wants number 21 on the back of his new Blue Jays uniform, the same digits he wore during his 13 brilliant seasons with the Boston Red Sox.

But Blue Jays designated hitter Carlos Delgado happens to wear 21, and although Beeston assures Clemens the number will be his, Rocket isn't comfortable with swiping it off his future teammate's back without first talking to him.

"The number situation has to be worked out," Clemens tells Beeston inside the living room of his home in Katy, Texas.

"You've got the number, it's yours," Beeston replies.

"Wait a minute," Rocket says, shaking his head. "You don't understand. Carlos is probably wearing 21 for a reason. He's one of your best up-and-coming players, and—"

"Roger, you've got the number," Beeston says. "Period."

The Rocket is flustered. "No sir, you don't understand. I'm not going to a new environment and ruin team unity over a

jersey number. That's the last thing in the world I'll do. The number is important to me, but I won't jeopardize team unity over it."

Beeston grins, unable to fully comprehend how a \$32 million deal—and a

A large, stylized number '21' in a dark blue, blocky font with a white outline. The '2' is composed of several thick, parallel lines, and the '1' is a single thick vertical bar.

major news conference scheduled for the following morning in Toronto—could be in jeopardy over a jersey number.

"I'll tell you what," Rocket says. "Have Carlos call me. Or get me his phone number and I'll call him. I'm sure there's a reason he wears 21, and I just won't feel comfortable holding up that jersey at the news conference without Carlos' blessing."

Early the next morning, Beeston telephones Clemens: "Roger, you're right. Carlos wears 21 in honor of Roberto Clemente."

"See, I told you!" After a pause,

Clemens adds softly, "So what's Carlos' feeling about 21?"

"He says he'll do it. He told me he's excited about you coming, that having you in Toronto means more to him than the number."

Clemens flashes a warm smile. "Great. But before the press conference, I still want to talk to him privately and ask him for it myself."

Several hours later, Clemens and his entourage are whisked from the airport to SkyDome, where a mass of reporters awaits the historic news conference. "Is Carlos here?" Clemens asks a Blue Jays official. "He's on his way," he's told.

"Then let's wait."

The Blue Jays' public-relations staff is in stunned silence, having to hold up the news conference while Clemens waits in the Jays' executive offices for Delgado. Finally, with bodies frantically rushing back and forth, Delgado arrives.

"Carlos," Clemens says, embracing his new teammate before pulling him into a private executive office. "I know how much the number means to you. Are you sure you want me to have it?"

"Yes," Delgado replies, smiling. "We always hated facing you. Now we have you. That's what's important."

They chat for several minutes about the Jays' new look and their quest to win a World Series together. They embrace. Blue Jays executives breathe a