

Yankees Event
South Lawn
June 10, 1999

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND THE FIRST LADY

AT THE WORLD CHAMPION NEW YORK YANKEES EVENT

The South Portico

5:45 P.M. EDT

MRS. CLINTON: Please be seated—oh, good, the power came back on—and welcome to the White House. And we're not going to call this because of rain, so we're just going to relish this moment together, and welcome all of you.

And it's my great pleasure to be able to skip everything I was going to say, so we get to the main attraction. And that means that I am going to introduce someone who has been a stalwart supporter of not only his team, but has been a great friend to the President and me. He's given us a lot of encouragement over the last six and a half years, both verbally and by letters, and that has meant more than I could ever say.

In one of those letters, he sent one of his favorite sayings that he had taken from his wall. It said, today's might oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground. (Laughter.)

Well, that's sort of a classic, a classic remark from this gentleman, and I want to thank him for holding his ground, for standing up for this franchise, for helping to create one of the greatest baseball teams of all time. It's my honor to introduce the New York Yankees' owner, George Steinbrenner. (Applause.)

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THE PRESIDENT: I'm up—and we're not rained out yet. (Laughter.)

Let me say to all of you how delighted I am to see Joe and George, and the entire team here. As you might imagine, this has been a very happy day at the White House, because of the peace agreement in Kosovo. (Applause.) And it's a happy day in New York. One of our friends, who has a business in the Bronx, came through today and said that a lot of his customers are Albanians who have relatives and friends who will be able to go home now.

And I think, if you look at the composition of the Yankee team behind us, and you look at the composition of the city and state they represent, the United States should be proud that at this moment in our history, we were able to stand against the proposition that any people should be killed or uprooted, or abused, because of their race, their ethnic heritage, or their religious faith. It's a good day for America. (Applause.)

I also want to thank David Cone for coming up here and making this presentation. I understand that he got his first hit in several years last night -- (laughter) -- and I feel like that some days around here. (Laughter.) So congratulations. It's never too late to start making hits.

I also was glad to hear the spirit of the team, that we're not going to come down here in second place, but for all of us who are genuine baseball fans, it's nice to see that the Yankees are at least getting a little competition this year -- (laughter) but still winning and doing very well, thank you.

You know, last year was a season—for those of us who've loved baseball all our lives—that clearly, irrevocably restored baseball as America's pastime. And once again, the Bronx Bombers—heavy emphasis on Bronx, for Congressman Rangel and others -- (laughter) -- proved themselves to be America's greatest team.

You know, this was a team that reminded a lot of people of the Yankees that made the Yankees America's team—of Ruth and Gehrig, of Mantle and Maris, of DiMaggio—who threw out the first pitch at Yankee Stadium in the last season.

And for lifetime baseball fans, I can't help saying a word, since he's passed away, that I'm awful glad that he was able to see one last championship season for the Yankees. (Applause.) You know Yogi Berra said a lot of interesting things. I've tried to commit a lot of them to memory, and they always get a laugh, and I won't bother you with any of them today, except he said one thing that I think is worth repeating, because I think it is the motto of this team and it reflects the spirit that I hope we have when we come to work here every day.

He said, you give 100 percent in the first half of the game; and if that isn't enough, in the second half, you give what's left. (Laughter.) Well, last year, that's what the Yankees did all year long. More victories in a year than any other team in Major League history -- 125. I understand that even George Steinbrenner was impressed. (Laughter.) Although, I think he still wants to know what happened to the other 50 games. (Laughter.) Joe Torre inspired America with his leadership, his character and his comeback. (Applause.) But I can tell you, after having been President now for six and a half years, the leader can't win without good players.

I was glad to see Donna Shalala acknowledge Mr. Steinbrenner, and now I know where she got her grip. We all remember the clutch hits of Paul O'Neill and Derek Jeter. You remember David's 20 wins, Bernie Williams's battle title captured in the very last day of the season. Tino Martinez's game-winning grand slam home run in the first game of the World Series; and of course, World Series MVP Scott Brosius' two homers, six RBIs, and steady defense in the four-game series. (Laughter.)

Now, I don't know how long America will have to wait for another baseball season where two guys hit over 60 home runs, but the New York Yankees defied every conventional wisdom about what a professional baseball team could achieve in a highly competitive league, with more and more teams and more and more talented players.

But, again, I say to all of you, all Americans—Yankee fans, and even the couple of guys in the press who waved their hands when I said it was a good thing there was a little more competition this season—everybody who's loved baseball from childhood will never forget that Yankee

team, and what it did to clearly, clearly make baseball our national pastime, and remind us that New York Yankees are America's team.

Thank you, and God bless you. Welcome. (Applause.)

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6:00 P.M. EDT