

KEN RAVIZZA

# 'Godfather' of sports psychology

By Mike DiGiovanna

**D**r. Ken Ravizza, a Cal State Fullerton professor who was among the leading sports psychologists in the nation and a guru of sorts for dozens of major league baseball players, died Sunday night, six days after suffering a heart attack while driving in Orange County. He was 70.

Ravizza's wife, Claire, posted a statement on the website CaringBridge.org confirming his death.

A professor of kinesiology, Ravizza taught classes at Fullerton on stress management and applied sports psychology for nearly 40 years, and his mental skills training helped the Titans baseball team and women's gymnastics teams develop into national powers in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Ravizza worked with the Angels for about 15 years, from 1985 to 2000, where he developed a close relationship with then-Angels coach Joe Maddon, who went on to become manager of the Tampa Bay Rays in 2006 and the Chicago Cubs in 2015.

Maddon retained Ravizza as a mental skills coach for several years in Tampa Bay, and Ravizza followed Maddon to Chicago, where several Cubs players credit Ravizza for his work in helping them win the 2016 World Series.

Chicago slugger Kris Bryant once referred to Ravizza as the "godfather" of sports psychology. Ravizza worked individually with players on other teams and often maintained ties with former Cal State Fullerton players such as Dodgers third baseman Justin Turner.

He also worked with several U.S. Olympians, the New York Jets, the USC and Nebraska football teams and the Cal State Long Beach and UCLA baseball teams, developing exercises and strategies to help athletes reach peak performance levels under the stress of competition.

"This morning the sports



Chicago Tribune

### 'ONE OF THE BEST MENTAL GAME COACHES'

Ken Ravizza, a Cal State Fullerton professor, was a guru of sorts for dozens of major league baseball players. Above, he talks to Chicago Cubs players in 2016.

world lost one of the best mental game coaches to ever do it," Turner said in a tweet Monday morning.

"There's no doubt in my mind I would have never made it to the big leagues without Ken Ravizza. He always had a different perspective, and I'll never forget his voice!"

That voice often boomed throughout the clubhouse

when the mustachioed Ravizza saw a player, coach, team official or media member he hadn't seen in a while, a warm smile, a firm handshake and a "Heyyyyyy, how ya doing?" usually accompanying such greetings.

"His impact on so many is immeasurable and his legacy will be a lasting one," Angels Vice President of Com-

munications Tim Mead said in a tweet. "Ken Ravizza used not only his professional skills, but his genuine compassion, honesty and caring for each individual he connected with."

Ravizza wrote a book called "Heads-Up Baseball: Playing the Game One Pitch at a Time." He focused on traditional mental preparation and visualization skills

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— TIM MEAD, Angels vice president of communications

and sometimes resorted to the unorthodox.

When the 2004 Fullerton baseball team got off to an awful 15-16 start, Ravizza placed a miniature toilet in the dugout for players to "flush" their mistakes and move on to the next pitch.

The Titans turned around their season, going 32-6 the rest of the way and winning the College World Series title over a Texas team coached by Augie Garrido, who died this year. Garrido was the Fullerton coach when Ravizza started working with the Titans baseball team in 1979.

"In sport, you have to deal with the reality of the situation that you're in," Ravizza told the Orange County Register in 2014. "As the Greeks used to say, ancient Greek tradition, you go and you stand naked before the gods."

Ravizza is survived by his wife, Claire, and daughters Monica and Nina.

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## Online posts spark inquiry

[Prosecutor, from B1] shot this bitch by now..."

The newspaper also reported that Selyem got into an online argument with someone over the shooting of a civilian by police, writing that the person "got exactly what he deserved.... You reap what you sow."

It was unclear which police shooting he was referring to.

"As the district attorney, I was really concerned with comments regarding officer-

## Primary turnout signals progress