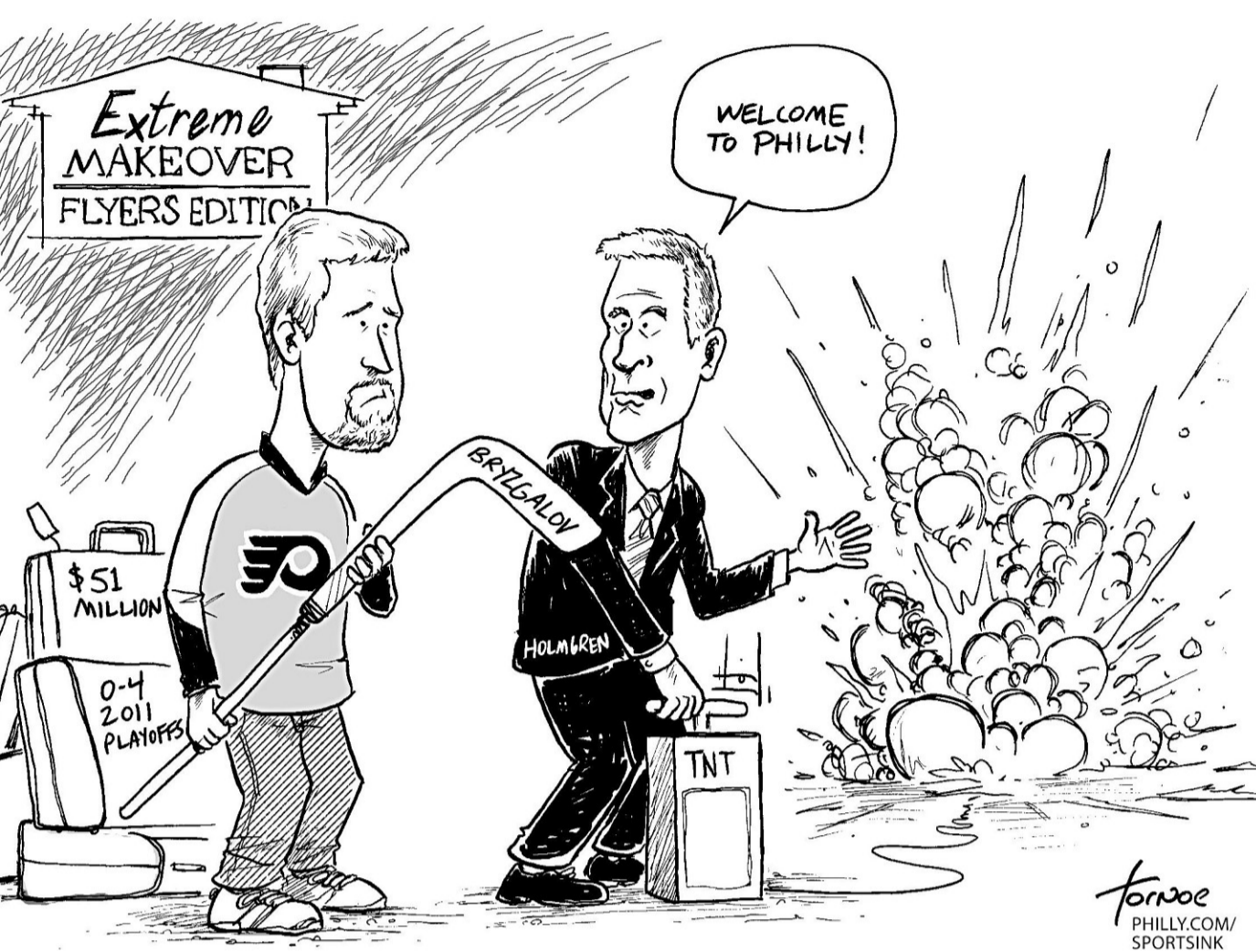


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Sports Ink

By Rob Tornoe / For The Inquirer



Riggleman: American hero

On Thursday, the same day the Flyers traded Mike Richards to Los Angeles and Jeff Carter to Columbus — while the team's fans swapped their calcified loyalty for shock and, in some cases, open anger — a different and even more compelling drama was developing south of Philadelphia. How fitting that the saga unfolded in our nation's capital. There, in Washington, on a soupy summer day, an American hero was born.

Until recently, Jim Riggleman was merely the manager of the Washington Nationals. Today, he's so much more — he's a symbol to the mistreated masses, a national inspiration who stood up for himself and refused to be pushed around and taken for granted any longer.

If he ran for office, I'd vote for him. If his visage flew atop a flag pole, I'd salute.

Riggleman had the Nationals playing pretty well of late. On the fateful day in question, his club beat the Mariners, 1-0. It was Washington's 11th victory in 12 games, and it moved the Nationals — surprising owners of the best record in the National League to that point in June — above .500 for the first time in six seasons.

After the victory, Riggleman did what so many Americans have fantasized about after a difficult stretch at work: He marched into his boss' office and quit. If July 4 is a national holiday, June 23 should be as well.

Riggleman's Individual Independence Day doubled as a blow landed on behalf of everyone who never had the guts to take that sort of bold swing.

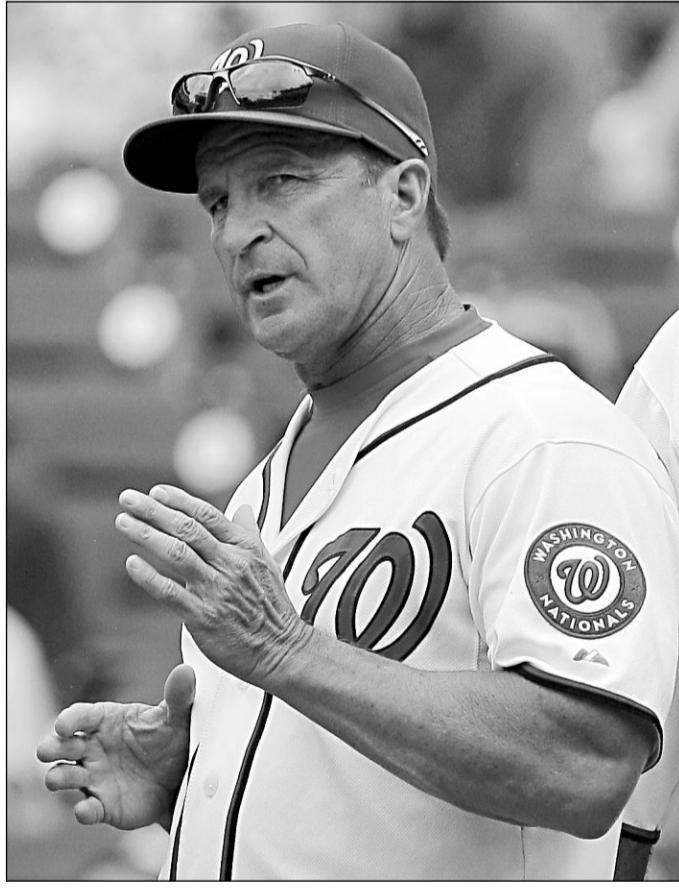
Riggleman told reporters that, before the game, he asked general manager Mike Rizzo to "just have a conversation" about the manager's contract.

Riggleman was working on a meager one-year deal worth \$650,000 this season, with a club option worth \$700,000 for 2012. Riggleman said Rizzo refused the request, at which point the manager felt he wasn't "the guy they want to go down the road with." And so he quit.

"It's been brewing for a while," Riggleman told an assembly of stunned reporters. "I know I'm not Casey Stengel, but I do feel



JOHN GONZALEZ



ROB CARR / Getty Images

Not going to take it anymore: Jim Riggleman resigned as Nats manager when GM Mike Rizzo refused to rescind his contract.

like I know what I'm doing. It's not a situation where I felt like I should continue on such a short leash.

"To do this job, you have to feel there's a commitment to you. I didn't feel that. I just wanted to have a meeting in Chicago [on Friday]. They wouldn't do that."

Riggleman said that he realized there might be fallout from his decision, and that he may "never get another opportunity" to manage at the major-league level. ESPN reporter Buster Olney confirmed Riggleman's fear, tweeting

that "there's no doubt Jim Riggleman's decision to resign in the middle of the season damages perception of him in eyes of some rival executives." Olney reported that one front office higher-up told him he "wouldn't hire [Riggleman] for a double-A or triple-A job."

Which might very well be true, but self-respect and worthwhile causes come with a heavy price. To borrow from well-known Nationals fan Thomas Jefferson, the tree of liberty must be refreshed from

time to time at the expense of a baseball manager's wallet. Riggleman may be financially poorer today, but so many others — those who have always wanted to tell their bosses where to go and how to get there — are spiritually richer for what he did. He has given hope to the workingman, even if the workingman never rises up and follows Riggleman's lead.

And here I will shamelessly plagiarize myself — sadly, it's come to that — and recast some of the words I originally crafted during a drink-fueled Twitter session after the news initially broke: I nominate Riggleman to lead a still-embryonic but promising political grassroots movement with a simple universal dogma: Don't Mess With Me. I want to buy his self-help audiocassettes and buy his infomercial Ginsu knives. I want to subscribe to his newsletter and regurgitate his teachings while swathed in the American flag and perched atop a milk crate outside Target or, in extreme cases, Wal-Mart. I want to follow him if/when he mobilizes his party and marches on Washington. If Glenn Beck can surround the Lincoln Memorial's reflecting pool with his minions, surely Yankee Doodle Jimmy could do the same.

Riggleman might disappear for a while, but his incredible and rousing tale will remain. The man's legend will grow large. He's Davy Crockett without the creepy coonskin cap. He's George Washington without the cherry tree. He's Paul Bunyan without the blue ox. He's Johnny Appleseed without the, uh ... what did Appleseed do again? Eh, it will come to me.

Riggleman is a folk hero now, and one day our children's children will tell their children the incredible story of the day one largely anonymous baseball manager did something that would have made Howard Beale blanch.

Gather 'round, kids. I have a story you may not believe, but it's one you'll never forget ...

Contact columnist John Gonzalez at 215-854-2813, gonzalez@phillynews.com or @gonzophilly on Twitter. Read his past columns at philly.com/gonzo

Philadelphia Insurance Triathlon



Andy Holder, of Skippack in Montgomery County, learned in 2005 that he has Type 1 diabetes. He was 36 at the time.

Illness inspired him to become a triathlete

By Phil Anastasia
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Andy Holder couldn't swim. He wasn't a bike rider. He wasn't a distance runner, either.

So naturally, when Holder learned at age 36 that he had Type 1 diabetes, one of his first thoughts was, *I'm going to become an ironman triathlete.*

"People laugh when I tell that story," said Holder, who will compete Sunday in the Philadelphia Insurance Triathlon in Fairmount Park. "But I wanted to do something extreme. I wanted to prove to myself but also to others that you shouldn't put any limits on yourself."

Holder's diagnosis came "without warning, without family history," he said, in the spring of 2005. At the time, he was in the investment business for a firm on the Main Line.

He was driving to his home in Skippack, Montgomery County, that same day when he decided to pursue the most demanding of sports.

"I have two young sons," Holder said of Nico, now 8, and Luka, now 6. "I didn't want them to grow up and see me limited in any way. I didn't want them to think they could be limited in any way. I didn't want kids who have diabetes to think they could be limited in any way."

"I was driving home from the doctor's office that day and I'm telling my wife [Jude] on the phone, 'I'm doing this.'"

Within six months, Holder was competing in half-ironman competitions, shorter versions of the sport's three-event format — swimming, bike riding, and distance running.

By the spring of 2006, Holder was finishing his first full ironman event, which features a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, and 26-mile run.

"Andy is amazing," said Holder's trainer, Bill Hauser of Mid-Atlantic Multi Sport, a Philadelphia-based coaching service that specializes in endurance sports. "He was determined. He made it happen through his hard work and determination."

The Philadelphia Insurance Triathlon uses Olympic distance — 1.5-kilometer swim, 40-kilometer bike ride, and 10-kilometer run.

This will be Holder's first time competing in the seven-year-old Philadelphia event.

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PHILADELPHIA TRIATHLON

In the last three years, he has participated in an ironman event in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, on the same weekend.

"It's going to be great to compete in Philly with family and friends around," Holder said.

Holder, who grew up in New York and graduated from Syracuse University, was a wrestler and football player as a youth. After college, he stayed in shape by lifting weights, occasionally competing in bodybuilding events.

He says his diagnosis changed his life, and not for the worst. He says he found renewed purpose, both in his training and in his determination to inspire others.

"First time I tried to swim a lap, I was hyperventilating and swallowing water and I was like, 'How on earth am I ever going to be able to do this?'" Holder said.

Through the Philadelphia chapter of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Holder hooked up with AmeriSourceBergen, a Chesterbrook-based pharmaceutical firm with Good Neighbor Pharmacy as its retail brand.

Holder is the national spokesman for Good Neighbor Pharmacy. He travels the country as a motivational speaker. He also has established the Iron Andy Foundation, which this year will send 72 children with diabetes to camps.

Holder has finished seven ironman events in the last four years. His participation is complicated by his condition, since he wears an insulin pump and sometimes must check his blood sugar as many as 75 times during a triathlon.

"I love racing. I love competing. I love crossing the finish line," Holder said. "But for me, the biggest thing is to try to have a positive impact on other people's lives."

Contact staff writer Phil Anastasia at 856-779-3223, panastasia@phillynews.com, or @PhilAnastasia on Twitter.

philly.com Online Sports Poll

Which team are you more excited about for next season based on their moves last week?

- 1. Flyers.** They traded Mike Richards and Jeff Carter and signed goalie Ilya Bryzgalov.
- 2. 76ers.** They drafted center Nikola Vucevic and Temple's Lavoy Allen.

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