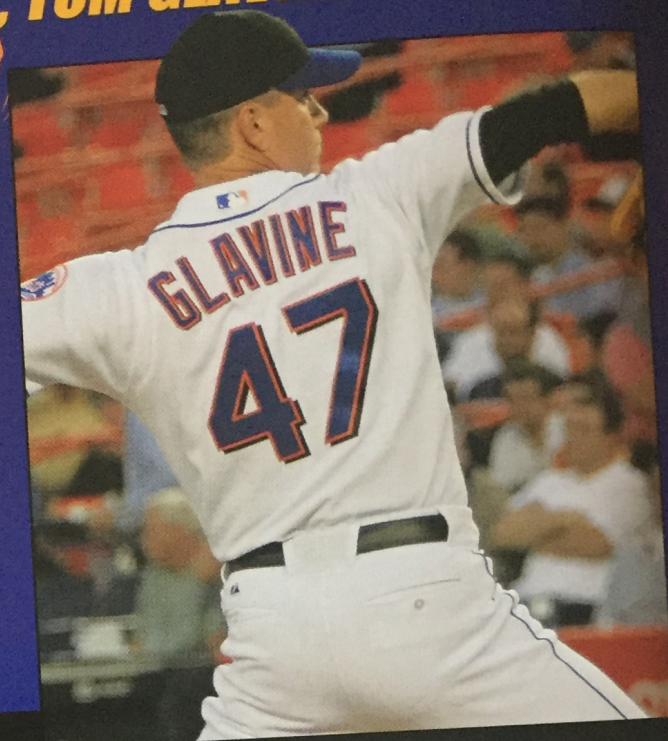
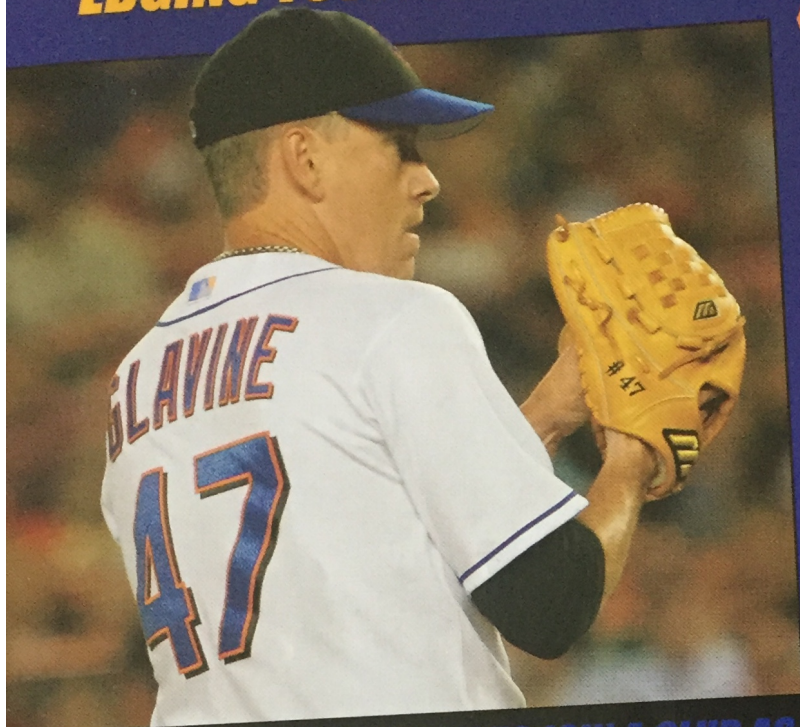


# GRAND FINALE

EDGING TOWARD RETIREMENT, TOM GLAVINE COULD END



**TOM GLAVINE IS ABOUT TO JOIN A CLUB AS ENDANGERED AS IT IS EXCLUSIVE.**

**I**N AN ERA OF FIVE-INNING STARTERS, RIGID PITCH COUNTS AND RAMPANT ARM INJURIES, THE METS' ACE IS ON THE VERGE OF BECOMING THE 23RD PITCHER IN MAJOR-LEAGUE HISTORY TO EARN 300 WINS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE COULD BE THE LAST PITCHER EVER TO REACH THIS MILESTONE.

Mike Mussina is drawing near, but the 38-year-old Yankee remains behind Glavine's career pace. If he averages 15 wins over the next four seasons, he'll still be one victory short. Randy Johnson, 43, entered 2007 only 20 wins shy, but his gangly left arm may not have enough pitches left in it to reach 300 victories.

Beyond the Moose and Big Unit, it's anyone's guess which pitcher possesses the durability and dominance to make a credible run at 300.

"It's quite possible he may be the last one for a long, long period of time, if ever," said Mets pitching coach Rick Peterson. "When you think about the longevity of winning 15 games for 20 games, it's phenomenal."

This year, no less than five sluggers began the season needing 40 or fewer round-trippers to join the 500 home run club, a group whose elite status could soon be diminished by rampant overpopulation. While 500 home runs may no longer be good enough to guarantee automatic entry into Cooperstown, the standard of excellence for pitchers may actually have to be lowered in the coming years.

Granted, the 250-win club doesn't exactly have a great ring to it, but these days the 300-win pitcher is a rare animal, indeed.

"I think it is a dying breed. I think you will have to change the measuring stick in terms of how you look at pitchers," said Glavine, who at 41 is playing in his 21st major-league season. "So much of

the game now is big power pitchers and I just find it hard to believe that those guys are going to stay healthy for 20 years."

Nevertheless, Glavine wasn't about to dismiss the possibility that some promising young phenom or able-bodied veteran could one day make a credible run at 300. After all, "I guarantee you the first five years of my career nobody looked at me and said, 'Well, that guy's going to have a chance to win 300 games someday.'"

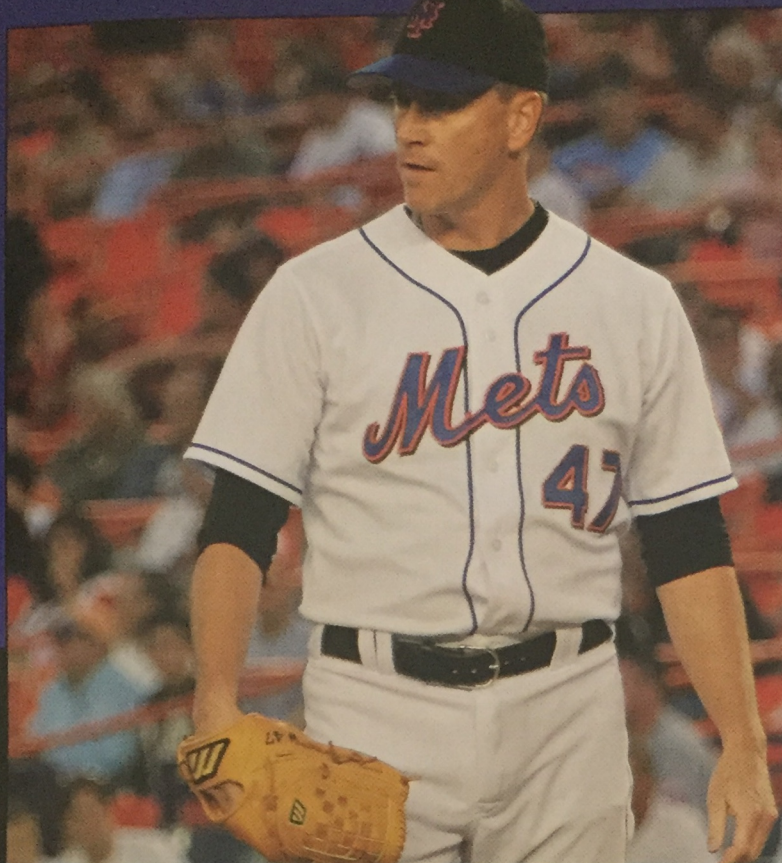
Maybe his first four years, anyway, when the future Hall of Famer amassed a rather unimpressive 33-41 record from 1987 to 1990. But for the next 12 years, Glavine bedeviled the National League with his pinpoint control and maddening changeup. In that time, he claimed five 20-win seasons, five All-Star appearances, 11 division championships and a World Series championship before shifting his allegiance to the Mets in 2003.

At first, the surprising change of address took its toll on Glavine and his quest for 300. Struggling with his new surroundings and a shrinking strike zone, Glavine floundered early in his New York career. Unable to find the plate, the pitcher who was once so masterful at painting the outside corner kept painting himself into a corner, falling behind batter after batter. After compiling a 20-28 record in his first two years with the Mets, Glavine looked as if he would fall short of his 300-win dream.

Fortunately, throughout his infrequent struggles, Glavine had access to two of baseball's premiere pitching gurus: first, Leo

# HIS CAREER AS BASEBALL'S LAST 300-GAME WINNER

BY BRAD BARTH  
PHOTOS BY PETE BORRIELLO



Mazzone with the Braves and then Peterson with the Mets.

"Leo is much more of a fiery guy, and much more into the mechanics of pitching and then ultimately out-executing the hitter," said Glavine. Mazzone "enabled me to go out there and be my own pitching coach in a sense, which turned me from a mediocre pitcher with some talent to a guy that won 20 games."

## THE SECOND HALF OF THE 2005 SEASON PROVED TO BE A TURNING POINT FOR THE VETERAN.

Peterson, on the other hand, "breaks things down more. He's quieter. He uses a whole lot more analogies and life lessons with you, and spends a lot more time breaking hitters down with video on how you want to attack guys."

According to Glavine, Peterson's shift in approach came at the perfect time.

"It was at a stage in my career where I needed to start making some changes, making some adjustments," said Glavine. "The physical stuff was still there, but I had to break my thought patterns in terms of how I went out there to pitch games."

Peterson said that his rapport with Glavine goes "way beyond a pitching coach relationship; it's a deep-seeded friendship out of respect and honor for what the person is about."

To escape his rut, Glavine started throwing inside more and mixed in his curve ball as a legitimate third pitch. The second half of the 2005 season proved to be a turning point for the veteran. He pitched to a 2.22 ERA after the All-Star Break — third best in the majors among starters — and then performed like a genuine ace in 2006, finishing with a 15-7 record.

## TOM GLAVINE: HOCKEY HALL OF FAMER ?

It's hard to imagine Tom Glavine floating wrist shots at goalies instead of flinging change-ups at hitters, but the future baseball Hall of Famer could possibly have been a hockey star if he had chosen another path for himself.

A two-sport star at Billerica Memorial High School in Massachusetts, Glavine was selected in the second round of the 1984 Major League Baseball draft by the Atlanta Braves, and in the fourth round of the '84 National Hockey League draft by the Los Angeles Kings.

Despite Glavine's myriad baseball accomplishments, New York Sportscene couldn't help but ask the 41-year-old pitcher if he ever thought about how his sports career would have panned out had he opted to play with the Kings.

"Of course I do...I was drafted ahead of Luc Robitaille and he's a Hall of Famer, so naturally it means I would have been a Hall of Famer," joked Glavine.

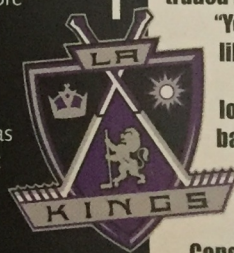
And while Glavine's been teammates with the likes of Greg Maddux, John Smoltz, Pedro Martinez and plenty of star sluggers, there's one very special teammate he missed out on having.

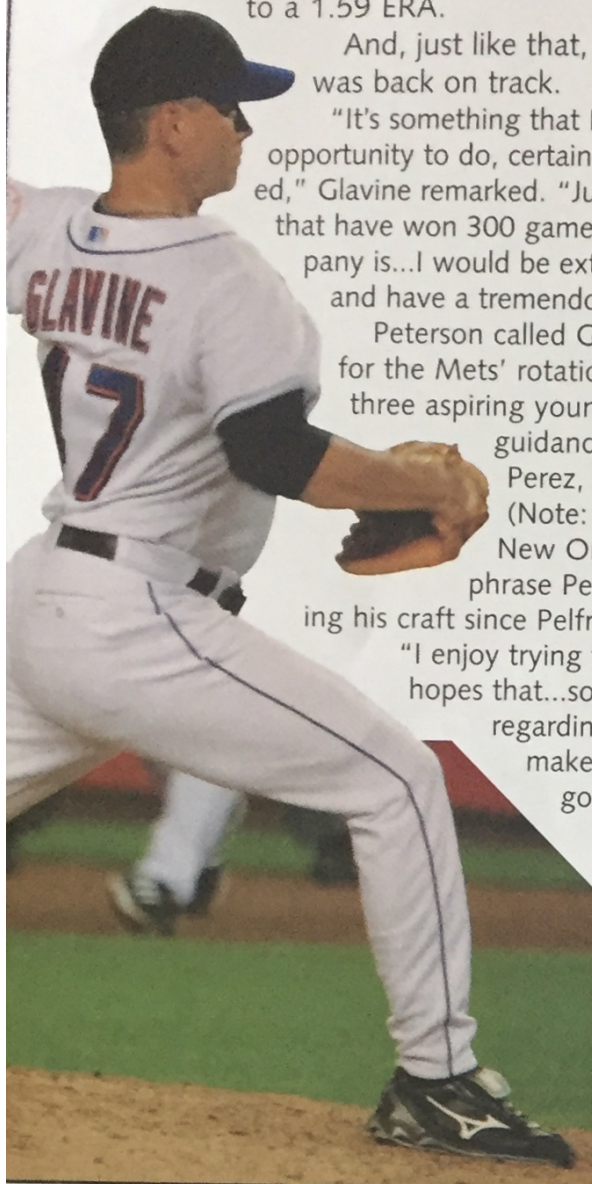
"Shortly after I got drafted by the Kings, they traded for [Wayne] Gretzky," recalled Glavine.

"You think, 'Man, what would it have been like to play with that guy?'"

According to Glavine, hockey was "my love as a kid. I loved hockey, more so than baseball — maybe not if I was pitching, but playing any another position in baseball, forget it. Put me in a hockey game in a second."

Considering how successful and lucrative his baseball career has been, however, "it's easy for me not to second-guess my decision," Glavine added. "But I'll always wonder what would have happened."





In his first postseason as a Met, Glavine went 2-1, pitching to a 1.59 ERA.

And, just like that, the hunt for 300 victories was back on track.

"It's something that I never envisioned having the opportunity to do, certainly not the way my career started," Glavine remarked. "Just to be mentioned with guys that have won 300 games and knowing what that company is...I would be extremely proud to be a part of it and have a tremendous sense of accomplishment."

Peterson called Glavine an ideal "role model" for the Mets' rotation, which currently features three aspiring youngsters in need of veteran guidance: John Maine, 26; Oliver Perez, 25; and Mike Pelfrey, 23. (Note: Pelfrey was optioned to AAA New Orleans on May 14). To paraphrase Peterson, Glavine's been perfecting his craft since Pelfrey was in diapers.

"I enjoy trying to talk to somebody in the hopes that...something clicks," said Glavine, regarding his mentoring. "And if...that makes us a better team, then that's good for me too."

Despite owning a player option for 2008 that's worth at least \$9 million, Glavine has acknowledged the possibility of retiring after this season, assuming he collects his 300th victory. A husband and father of four — he has three

sons and one daughter — Glavine is anxious to start spending more quality time with his children.

Nevertheless, "I'm not naive. I know that when the season's over it's not like, if I've won 300 games, it's going to be, 'Okay I don't want to play anymore.' I know I'm still going to have the desire to play," said Glavine. "I teeter-totter on that, and I guess I've come to the conclusion that that question will answer itself much more clearly when the season is over."

Ideally, Glavine's decision will have to wait until very late October.

"We got a taste for the playoffs in this town last year and it was pretty remarkable. And I can only imagine what it would be like to take it to that next round and then ultimately to the championship," said Glavine. "That's ultimately what I want. I want to win a World Series and hopefully be a big contributor to that, which would mean I would also be able to achieve my personal goal along the way."

For a pitcher as accomplished and respected as Glavine is, it's hard to imagine a better way to go out. 🏆

## THE 300 WIN CLUB

PITCHER	WINS
CY YOUNG	511
WALTER JOHNSON	417
GROVER CLEVELAND ALEXANDER	373
CHRISTY MATHEWSON	373
PUD GALVIN	364
WARREN SPAHN	363
KID NICHOLS	361
ROGER CLEMENS	348
TIM KEEFE	342
GREG MADDUX	333
STEVE CARLTON	329
JOHN CLARKSON	328
EDDIE PLANK	326
NOLAN RYAN	324
DON SUTTON	324
PHIL NIEKRO	318
GAYLORD PERRY	314
TOM SEAVER	311
HOSS RADBOURN	309
MICKEY WELCH	307
LEFTY GROVE	300
EARLY WYNN	300