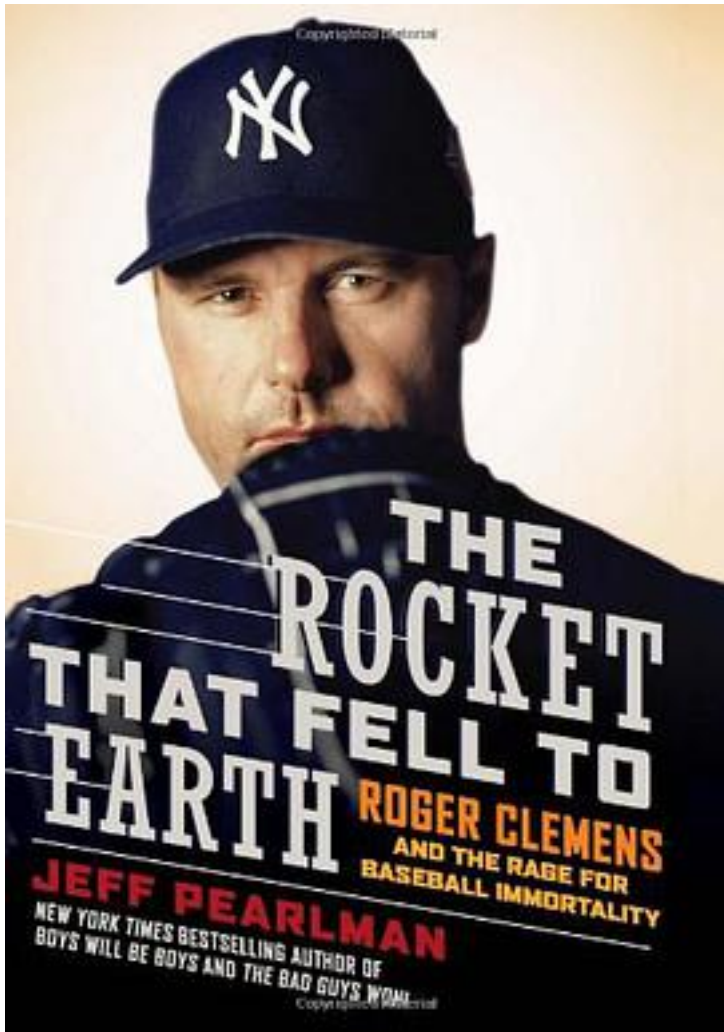


The Rocket That Fell to Earth



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He was supposed to be the next Nolan Ryan: Roger Clemens, the fearless, hard-nosed

Texan with a 98-mph fastball and a propensity to throw at the heads of opposing hitters. Yet shortly after his arrival in the major leagues in 1984, it became apparent that the Ryan comparisons were simply unfair—Roger Clemens was significantly better. Over 24 seasons, the Rocket would go on to win 354 games, an unprecedented seven Cy Young Awards and two World Series trophies. In 1986 he set the major league record with 20 strikeouts in a nine-inning game, then matched it a decade later. He would be routinely praised for representing the game in a just and righteous manner—a living, breathing example of the power of determination and hard work. "Roger Clemens," a teammate once said, "is an American hero." But the statistics and hoopla obscure a far darker story. Along with myriad playoff chokes, womanizing (including a 10-year affair with then-teenage country singer Mindy McCready), a violent streak (most famously triggered by former Mets star Mike Piazza) and his use of steroids and human growth hormones, Clemens has spent years trying to hide his darkest secret—a family tragedy involving drugs and, ultimately, death. The author of the New York Times bestsellers *Boys Will Be Boys* and *The Bad Guys Won!*, Jeff Pearlman conducted nearly 500 interviews with Clemens' family, friends and teammates to present a portrait that goes beyond the familiar newspaper stories and magazine profiles. Reconstructing the pitcher's life—from his childhood in Ohio to college ball in Texas and on to the mounds of Fenway Park and Yankee Stadium—Pearlman reveals the real Roger Clemens: a flawed and troubled man whose rage for baseball immortality took him to superhuman heights but ultimately brought him crashing to earth.

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