

A COMPLETE NEW CAREER



NEW YORK YANKEES PITCHER **GERRIT COLE** AND HIS WIFE, **AMY**, ARE FINDING WAYS TO GIVE BACK WHILE SOAKING UP THE CALIFORNIA SUNSHINE WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

BY ASHLEY RYAN

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rom spring training to—hopefully—a postseason run in the month of October, baseball players are a slave to the game, spending the better part of the year on the field training, traveling the country and playing games. They sacrifice their time for their love of the game: time with their families, time enjoying their hobbies, even time just relaxing.

But in the offseason, time is plentiful. For Gerrit Cole of the New York Yankees, that means heading west to Newport Beach—where he was born and spent time surfing in his youth—to enjoy the endless sunshine, warm weather and picturesque beaches with his family in tow. We caught up with him and his wife, Amy, to learn more about their history, what they like to do in town and the Gerrit and Amy Cole Foundation, which the couple launched during the pandemic.

A STORIED START

After graduating from Orange Lutheran High School in Orange in 2008, the Yankees were eager

to draft him, but Gerrit ultimately decided to attend college instead. He went to UCLA on a baseball scholarship, studying political science and theater.

As fate would have it, that is where he first met Amy, also a student as well as a member of the university’s softball team. “We were friends for about a year and, the more I got to know Gerrit, the more I appreciated about him,” Amy says. “He’s always been a little bit of an old soul. He used to cook for our friends in college with Frank Sinatra playing.”

Their friendship eventually evolved into a relationship and they’ve been together ever since. “He’s always made me laugh and he’s got the biggest heart of anyone I know,” she adds.

Gerrit played at UCLA for three years—including the 2010 season, when he and former Los Angeles Dodgers player Trevor Bauer helped give the university its best season in the school’s history—before entering the 2011 draft, where he was the first overall pick by the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Amy, however, stayed in California after

accepting a job in business-to-business sales before transitioning to become a career coach for Athletes to Careers (then called Athletes to Business).

“I worked for schools in Southern California,” she recalls. “... I met with the seniors that were graduating, as they were approaching graduation, and helped them connect with different businesses that they might be interested in.” Responsible for setting up interviews for the students and prepping them, as well as recruiting, Amy says the job was very rewarding as she got to be a part of their first jobs out of college and see them succeed in a new career.

But working on separate coasts didn’t do anything to stop the couple’s love and commitment to one another. In 2015, after his first appearance in the MLB All-Star Game, Gerrit proposed to Amy and they were married at The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara in November of the following year.

ON THE FIELD

Throughout their engagement, Gerrit continued to pitch for the Pirates, putting up impressive stats each year. His rookie season, he was voted Rookie of the Month for the National League in September, ending the year with a winning record and a postseason run that ended in the divisional series.

Playing in the MLB was a major win for Gerrit, who grew up playing baseball nearly his entire life. “Just like any kid, I played a lot of sports growing up [in Southern California]—not having a harsh winter, you can play all year round,” he notes. “I just kind of fell in love with baseball specifically.”

After starting out with Tustin Western Little League, Gerrit went on to play for St. John’s Lutheran School in Orange before playing travel ball at campuses like Foothill High School. “I was pretty good at it and just had a passion for it,” he



Gerrit Cole and his wife, Amy, with their sons, Caden, 2 1/2, and Everett, who was born early this year; opposite page: Cole pitches for the New York Yankees.

explains. “I think it was a game that I understood right away and had some initial success in, so both of those things kind of sparked my interest.”

Gerrit remained in Pittsburgh until early 2018, when he was traded to the Houston Astros. He was once again selected for the MLB All-Star Game, this time as a player from the American League, and finished his first of two seasons in Texas with a career-high 276 strikeouts—61 of those in his first month as an Astro.

In both 2018 and 2019, Gerrit and the Astros achieved more than 100 wins and advanced to the playoffs. The second year, they made it all the way to the World Series before losing to the Washington Nationals.

After his second year in Houston, Gerrit’s dreams came true when he signed a nine-year

contract with the New York Yankees, a team he had rooted for since childhood. The \$324 million deal was the largest ever signed by an MLB pitcher. Following his opening day start, which took place in July due to the pandemic delaying the 2020 season, he went on a 20-game win streak that led the team to a playoff run.

The team has returned to the playoffs in the years since, but has yet to win a World Series since Gerrit joined the team. “My biggest goal is to win a World Series with the Yankees,” Gerrit notes. “[That’s] kind of where all my chips are right now. I haven’t thought a whole lot past that.”

It’s been more than a decade since Gerrit started playing for the MLB, but he says his most memorable moments were while playing in, and ultimately losing, the World Series with the Astros. “That was



TOP: MEREDITH BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY

COURTESY OF GERRIT COLE

“WHEN I FIRST SIGNED MY CONTRACT WITH NEW YORK, THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME WHERE WE TOOK OUR CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES AND TRIED TO ... TURN IT INTO SOMETHING THAT WAS GOING TO LAST FOR A LONG TIME.” - GERRIT COLE



Gerrit and Amy Cole with Joanna and Mike Irwin at A Culinary & Musical Experience

my favorite part of my career, I think. That's what I look back on the fondest."

GIVING BACK

Now that Amy and Gerrit are living on the same coast, they've been able to channel their time, energy and financial gain into good with the launch of the Gerrit & Amy Cole Foundation in 2020.

"When I first signed my contract with New York, that was the first time where we took our charitable activities and tried to ... turn it into something that was going to last for a long time," Gerrit explains. "I felt really fortunate and grateful to be able to help

out people in our communities, especially in New York with COVID, and just being able to watch that evolve over the last couple years ... has been really awesome and really rewarding."

The couple initially focused on helping those in need during the pandemic, supporting humanitarian charity Direct Relief as well as local food banks in the New York City area. But now, they have been able to expand their efforts into the things that matter to them most: education, pediatric cancer, childhood hunger in America, culture and arts education, and athletic opportunities for children.

"The main theme is we work with kids and the needs in our communities," Amy explains. "You can make a big impact with kids when you set up a good foundation for them, and we believe it's important for kids to have a chance at a positive future no matter what their circumstance is. So our mission is that every child has an opportunity to be healthy, educated and safe."

Before officially launching the organization, Gerrit and Amy hosted some one-off fundraising events in Pittsburgh and Houston to support local children, but the creation of the foundation has helped them expand their work. In fact, Amy now works full time to run the charity and has found the experience extremely rewarding.

"One of the schools that we support in the Bronx had a hard time with attendance after 2020," she says. "... We were able to be involved this past year with some incentives to attend and to see some of the changes that the school made to increase attendance. And this past year, ... they actually ended up having a 100% graduation rate, which is incredible. So just seeing that progress [and] being able to make a difference, no matter how small, [has been great]."

The Gerrit & Amy Cole Foundation also hosted A Culinary & Musical Experience at The Ranch at Laguna Beach on Feb. 4, raising more than \$400,000 for the Pediatric Cancer Research Foundation. Taking place on World Cancer Day, the fundraiser held special meaning for the couple, as their friends Joanna and Mike Irwin lost their 8-month-old son Will to an undiagnosed cancer in 2019. "They've done a lot of great work with PCRF and we've seen the impact they've made, but it's still so underfunded," Amy adds. "So we really just wanted to support them and support pediatric cancer research in general."

In the future, they hope to grow and evolve based on the community's needs. Amy says they'd like to expand into making their own donations as a way to fund research or support families directly. And it likely wouldn't be possible without



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Gerrit's baseball career. "I'm just super thankful for the opportunity that I have to play baseball to be able to do this," he says.

AROUND TOWN

While Gerrit and Amy spend baseball season near New York, at their home in Greenwich, Connecticut, the couple happily enjoy winters at their Newport Beach house with sons Caden, who will be 3 in June, and Everett, who was born in early 2023.

"Thankfully, our toddler is just so sweet and really enjoying being a big brother and helping, so it's been really special to see him step into that role," Amy notes.

"Becoming a mom, watching our kids learn and grow and just knowing what a responsibility that is, has been so rewarding for me," she says. "To bring it back to our foundation, it's important to me to

instill in our kids the opportunity that we have as a family to give back to our community."

The offseason brings endless relaxation and family time here in town. "I always dreamed of living in Newport Beach, so I moved here right after college and it's a tough place to leave," Amy says. "It's just so beautiful. The weather's incredible. There's just so many ways to stay active and be outside. ... It's just a place that has always felt like home to us."

Because Gerrit grew up in Orange County, he spent plenty of his leisure time in Newport, soaking up the sun and surfing local waves. Now, they enjoy spending time along the coast with close friends and family nearby.

"I play catch at a few of the local parks and Crystal Cove. We like hiking there," Gerrit notes. "And the beach—we're down at Corona del Mar with our toes in the water or we're up at the

peninsula hanging out, catching a Duffy ride. [We're] pretty much like all other Newporters—staying outside, enjoying the weather."

You'll also find them enjoying delicious fare at local restaurants, from classic French at Pescadour Bistro to sushi at places like San Shi Go and Sota Sushi. "We love Javier's. We love ... A Market, Louie's [by the Bay], The Cannery—we have a lot. Right out of college, we spent a lot of time on the peninsula, right by 32nd Street."

And, for shopping, Gerrit says you can't go wrong at Jack's Surfboards, a shop he frequents whenever he's in town.

For now, spring training has already begun and the family is on the move, but, next winter, you're sure to find them with their toes in the sand, enjoying the Endless Summer sunshine here in Newport Beach with their little ones in tow. **NBM**

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