

Jose Canseco - A Red Sox Player Profile

The Red Sox Years

In one of the better trades the Red Sox made in the 1990's, the Red Sox traded speedy, defensive minded outfielder Otis Nixon and infielder Luis Ortiz to the Texas Rangers for outfielder Jose Canseco. Obviously, it was a bit of a salary dump, with the Rangers clearly thinking they could replace Canseco's bat with defense. To be honest, anyone with a brain at that time probably saw this wouldn't work out.

Otis Nixon actually had an OK year for the Rangers in 1995, although Total Zone metrics didn't love his defense (-4 runs below average). He did, however, post a very good .354 OBP, and stole 50 bases - albeit being caught 24 times. He was worth 1.3 WAR, which isn't terrible, of course. Luis Ortiz was... awful. Nixon would move onto the Blue Jays for 1996, so really the Rangers just saved some money.

Jose Canseco's Solid 1995 Season with the Red Sox

With one year left on Canseco's contract, the Red Sox were happy to take on a guy who hit 31 HR in just 111 games during the strike-shortened 1994 season. They wouldn't be disappointed as he would help anchor a Red Sox lineup that included Mo Vaughn, John Valentin, Tim Lincecum, Troy O'Leary, and Mike Greenwell (who was in his last season as an above-average regular). Canseco would hit 24 home runs with a .306 batting average, his highest since 1988. Canseco also reached an important milestone, as his final home run of the season off of Jesse Orosco was the 300th of his career.

The Red Sox would make the playoffs, making it Canseco's first postseason trip in five years. However, Canseco would go 0-for-13, with 2 walks, in the 1995 American League Division Series. It was a disappointing end to an otherwise good season.

Jose Canseco's Hot Start to 1996 Season, Followed by Back Trouble

The Red Sox would re-sign Canseco in 1996. It all started off well, and in 96 games he would hit 28 HR and hit .289/.400/.589. Back troubles would cause Canseco to miss all of August and

most of September. In fact, Canseco hit 26 of his 28 homers before the All-Star break, and he wouldn't even hit a home run after July 17th.

Still, in just 198 games between 1995 and 1996, Canseco was worth 5.6 WAR. I'd say that was more than worth a year of Otis Nixon and Luis Ortiz...

Canseco Reunites with McGwire in Oakland, Red Sox Get Cash and John "Wayback" Wasdin

After the 1996 season, Canseco would be reunited with "Bash Brother" Mark McGwire as he was traded back to the Oakland A's for "Wayback" John Wasdin & cash. While that sounds like a terrible trade, it actually would work out for the Red Sox in the long run. Despite his longball issues, Wasdin would overall be a useful pitcher. He'd eventually be a key part of a trade that brought Rolando Arrojo, Rick Croushore, and former Expo All-Star Mike Lansing to Boston. Lansing would be awful, and Croushore was ineffective in 5 games, but Arrojo was a nice find and put the Sox in the positive for that trade.

Of course, Canseco's back troubles would linger in Oakland, but he'd still hit a few home runs along "Bash Brother" Mark McGwire. Then, of course, he'd put together a few more decent seasons, along with a monster season in Toronto in 1998, a very good season in Tampa Bay in 1999, and hung on in 2000 and 2001 to hit a few more home runs and still be a productive hitter when healthy.

My Thoughts on Jose Canseco's Legacy

Of course, Jose Canseco is a very controversial figure in baseball. **Canseco and his two books** revealed the extent of the use of Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs) in baseball, which understandably upset a lot of people. Despite hitting 462 HR in his career with a very good 132 OPS+ over 17 years, Canseco will likely never get near the Hall of Fame for reasons that stretch beyond his own use of PEDs.

However, Jose Canseco remains a very popular figure in the baseball card hobby. Many collectors have created a sort of Cardboard Hall of Fame for Canseco and his cards are still highly sought after. Since his career began in the Junk Wax era and he was such a massively popular player in his time, there's no shortage of **Jose Canseco baseball cards** to collect. Heck, Canseco continues to appear in current baseball card sets as recently as 2025! While he may never get a plaque at Cooperstown, Canseco will never be forgotten by the game of baseball.

~ Amelia Desertsong

P.S. Fun fact: Jose Canseco made his Major League pitching debut against, guess who, the RED SOX, in May of 1993. He gave up three runs on 2 hits and 3 walks...

Not so fun fact: Because of that pitching appearance, [Canseco would need Tommy John surgery](#) (elbow ligament replacement surgery) and miss the rest of the season. It also didn't help his back issues... Missing the rest of that season, and the extra damage to his already ailing back, also likely cost him the chance at 500 HR. What do you think?