

BASEBALL SEPTEMBER 28, 2016 5:08 PM

# Fans, teammates say goodbye as Jose Fernandez funeral procession leaves Marlins Park



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BY LANCE DIXON, GEORGE RICHARDS, JENNY STALETOVICH AND DAVID SMILEY  
[dsmiley@miamiherald.com](mailto:dsmiley@miamiherald.com)

José Fernández has left Marlins Park for the last time.

At 2:16 p.m. Wednesday — the time in homage to his number 16 — a hearse carrying the superstar pitcher’s body departed from the stadium he called home for four electric seasons, playing his way into the hearts of Miamians and the heights of baseball stardom. A crowd of fans chanted his name — JOSE! JOSE! — as his teammates walked behind him in white RIP T-shirts, stopping at Felo Ramirez Drive and Marlins Way to pray around his body one last time.

Fernández, 24, died early Sunday morning when his boat, Kaught Looking, crashed into the north Government Cut jetty a little after 3 a.m. Emilio Macias, 27, and Eduardo Rivero, 25, were also killed.

Miami has mourned in the days since. On Wednesday, the team and Fernández’s family held a public procession and viewing to give the community that embraced him a chance to say goodbye.

“He’s like my blood,” said Ben Carcache, among the dozens of fans who flocked to the Little Havana stadium around 2 p.m. to send Fernández off. “I really feel sad for his family.”

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Posted by **Miami Herald**

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Wednesday’s memorial began at the Caballero Rivero Woodlawn Funeral Home in Westchester, where Fernández’s close friends and family gathered in Marlins garb to begin the procession. Eight pallbearers, all wearing black Fernandez jersey shirts, walked his oak-colored casket to a hearse with their free arms flexed in a show of strength.



Fernández's abuela, Olga, walked behind them in a white Fernández jersey, holding a handkerchief to her face.

As small crowd stood in the parking lot, watching and snapping photos. The hearse drove off with a police escort around 1:30 p.m. and headed north up the Palmetto Expressway toward Marlins Park, where a small crowd of fans waited. On the 836 Expressway, the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority posted a "Jose Fernandez #16 Forever" over highway between Le Jeune and Northwest 17th Avenue.

Many fans and families in Fernández shirts and Marlins gear continued to sign a memorial wall in the stadium's west plaza and shake their head in quiet conversation about the 24-year-old pitcher. Some waved Cuban flags, representing Fernandez's native country, which he fled eight years ago on a speedboat with his mother, Maritza Gomez Fernández.

The fallen athlete's teammates, who will play a game Wednesday night against the New York Mets, dressed in white RIP T-shirts, and waited as well after spilling out of the stadium's Diamond Club entrance.

The "I" in their shirts was depicted as Fernández, looking down with a gloved hand softly pressed to his hip and one foot seemingly kicking the infield clay.

When the hearse arrived at the stadium, it pulled in from the east and turned onto Felo Ramirez Drive, where it stopped midway. Owner Jeffrey Loria gathered with the team and they circled the vehicle and prayed.

Loria and Manager Don Mattingly then huddled in an intimate moment with Fernández's mother, and handed her a Fernández jersey. The hearse pulled to the northwest corner of the stadium, where a large crowd encircled the vehicle before it left and headed south. Tony Perez, the only Cuban in the Baseball Hall of Fame to play in the majors, was among a handful of Marlins players and officials who placed their hands on the hearse before it departed Marlins Park.

As it pulled away, the Tercer Cielo song "Yo Te Extrañare" — I Will Miss You — began to play from the stadium speakers as part of a video tribute displayed from the stadium's west plaza video screen.

The procession headed to Ermita de la Caridad (Shrine of Our Lady of Charity) located at 3609 South Miami Ave for a private blessing.

Afterward, a public viewing will be held from 5 to 11 at St. Brendan Catholic Church, 8725 SW 32nd St., Miami.





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