

PostCARDS from HOLLYWOOD

A heart-to-heart with entertainment industry stars and insiders who are citizens of Cardinal Nation

To “Days of our Lives” fans, actor Drake Hogestyn will always be John Black, the stubborn ISA agent with a heart of gold. But years before Hogestyn became a television star on NBC’s long-running daytime drama, his thoughts weren’t of protecting his “Doc” (Dr. Marlena Evans) and defeating villainous rival Stefano DiMera.

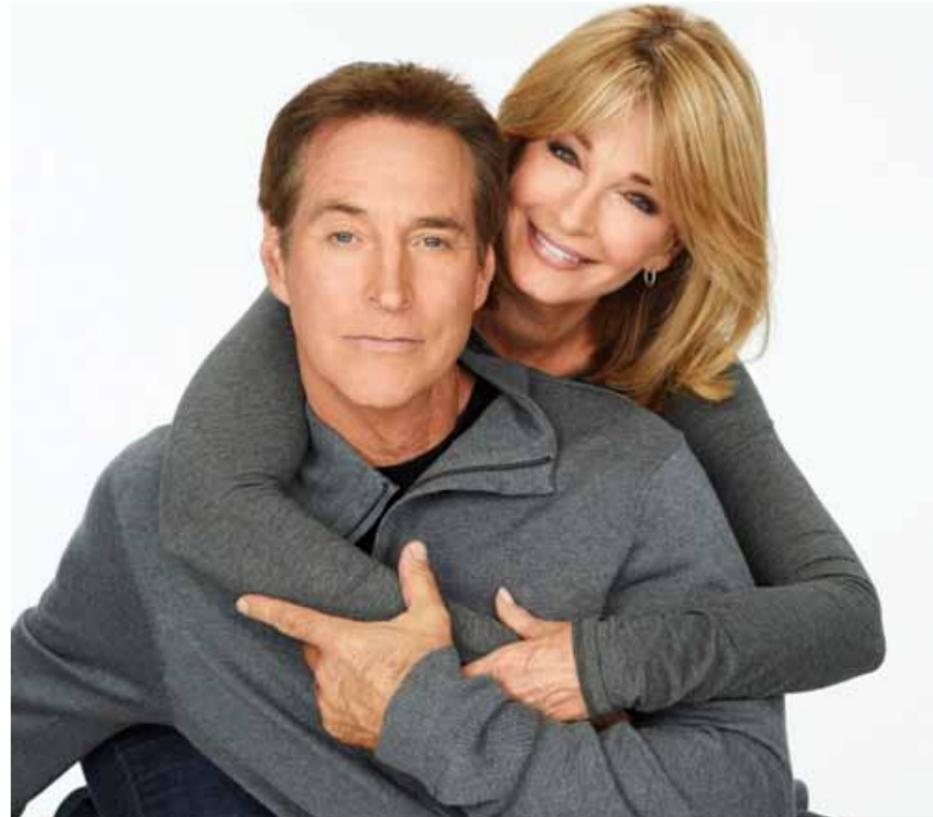
Growing up in Fort Wayne, Ind., he was Donald Hogestyn, a kid who dreamed of playing professional baseball. In 1973, the Cardinals offered him the chance. Drafted by St. Louis that January, Hogestyn never made it to his mother’s hometown team; he wound up signing with the Yankees three years later and was an infielder at the Class A level for two seasons before injuries and reality sent him toward his ultimate role.

Drake Hogestyn – his middle name became his go-to handle when a Columbia Pictures talent scout called him “Draker” – first showed up on the “Days” set in 1986 and, now 58, remains just as serious about his craft. He lives in Malibu, Calif., with his wife of 25-plus years, Victoria, and their four children, and currently is working on a project about baseball scouts called “Rough Diamond.”

But Hogestyn the actor still loves to tell stories about Hogestyn the baseball player, as *Cardinals Magazine* learned when he invited *Glamour* magazine entertainment contributor Jessica Radloff, a St. Louis native, to Salem, the “Days of our Lives” fictional Midwestern town, to talk about life on and off the field – and the set.

I’m guessing you never considered acting when you were young.

Hogestyn: I never went to one play in high school. I never hung out in the drama department. I just wanted to play baseball. My dad was a big Yankees fan, and my mom was from St. Louis, so she was all about Stan the Man. Back then, radio was your imagination, and I’d go to sleep



Before he became a daytime-drama favorite opposite Deidre Hall on “Days of our Lives,” Donald “Drake” Hogestyn hoped to star on the diamond for the Cardinals.

with it on my chest, listening to the games, the sounds. On clear nights, I could get St. Louis, Detroit, Chicago.

How did you go from a normal kid playing Little League to realizing there was actually something more there?

Hogestyn: I got an invitation to play for Sam’s Institute (a semi-pro team in Indiana), but I had to fake my age because I was too young. Then I met Dick McComb, who owned McComb Construction and was a coach, too. He was the biggest Cardinals fan in the world, and took me under his wing and became a mentor to me. I tried out for Sam’s Institute, even though you had to be 19 – I was 17 – and they made me their shortstop. I was playing

with these men who I really idolized. It was there that I realized, “Wow, this could really happen.”

Tell me how you wound up on the Cardinals’ radar.

Hogestyn: It was 1973 and Harry Hayes was the Cardinals scout. Various scouts would say, “We want you,” but back then if you went to a four-year school, you could not sign a professional contract until you graduated. If you went to a junior college, you could sign any time you wanted. The junior-college system in Florida is amazing. I went to Broward Junior College, and Harry Hayes noticed me, and was pretty much like a surrogate dad. Scouts were different back then – the relationship was based on getting to know your character,

and whether I was the right moral fiber to play the game. Harry then drafted me.

What was that like?

Hogestyn: The call from the Cardinals – what a great call to get! After calling my dad, I called Dick McComb. You could just hear Dick in the kitchen with his wife going crazy.

What happened that prevented you from signing with the Cardinals?

Hogestyn: They wanted to sign me right away in the January draft. They said, “Let’s not mess around. Sign, come to spring training.” I said, “Well, junior college is a short season and we’re done in April. I can be playing and then come right into the organization.” And they said OK. First game of the season in junior college, I got injured running into the catcher. I had to have arthroscopic surgery, which I probably came back from too early. The Cardinals felt that I was too damaged. They made me an offer that was basically saying, “If you want to” They weren’t going to invest a lot of money in me. I ended up not signing and was back in the draft pool again. The Yankees ended up drafting me in ’76.

At that time you were playing college baseball on scholarship but clearly had a backup plan.

Hogestyn: I was a last-round draft pick at the University of South Florida (where Tony La Russa received a degree in industrial management). But I was serious about majoring in biology and applied sciences and actually becoming a dentist. I figured if I’m going to get a free education, I’m going to study and get something that I can build on.

How did Hollywood come calling?

Hogestyn: A bunch of guys and I wrote an essay detailing why we should all be

movie stars for the Columbia Pictures National Talent Search. This was in the middle of one of my baseball seasons. I ended up being one of 30 people flown out to California by the Columbia Pictures folks. I had never been to California before. When I got there, they told me how quickly I picked up on everything and how coachable I was.

As an athlete, you constantly have to make adjustments throughout a game, and the same is true with acting, right?

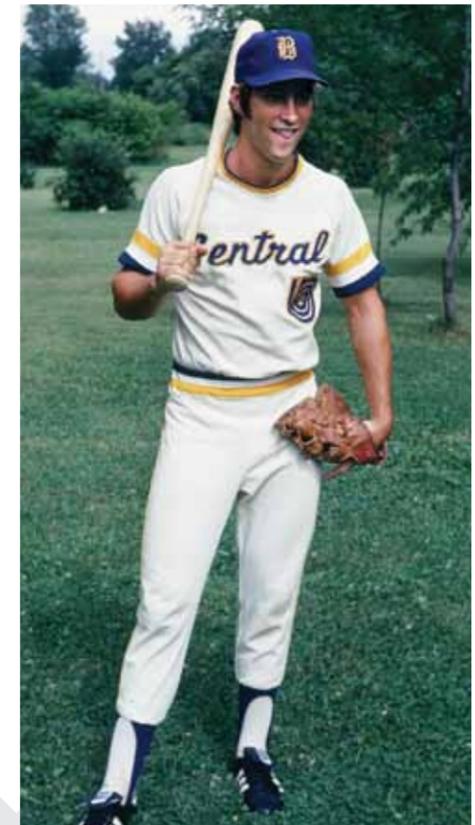
Hogestyn: All. The. Time. It’s you and the pitcher. You’re constantly making adjustments, you’re constantly learning, you’re constantly stealing, you’re constantly watching other people and processing information.

Looking back now, are you glad it turned out that way – you got to live out a childhood dream as a ballplayer and star on one of the most popular daytime dramas ever?

Hogestyn: I am happy the way things turned out. I don’t want to ever sell myself short, but I played with some really great athletes (in the Yankees’ system) – Willie Upshaw, Damaso Garcia, Mike Heath, Randy Niemann, Doug Melvin, Buck Showalter. Do I wish I had better physical ability? Absolutely. But what I lacked in ability, I made up for in hustle and desire and heart. But that will only get you so far.

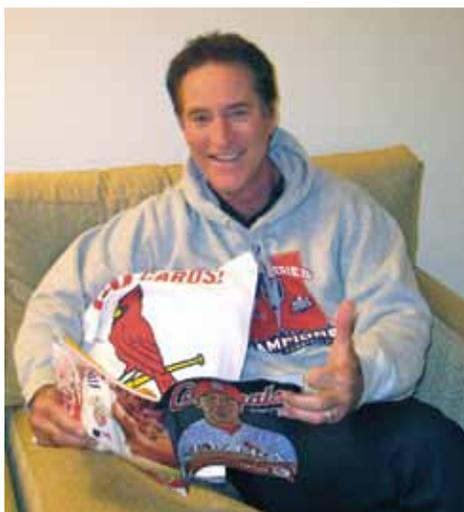
As soon as you started on “Days of our Lives” in 1986, you skyrocketed to popularity as the presumed dead Roman Brady. Did any of your former teammates start reaching out asking to come on the show, or at least meet Deidre Hall (Marlena)?

Hogestyn: (Laughs) Yeah, I had a lot of fellow ballplayers that eventually made it up to the bigs, so when they played the Angels or the Dodgers, they’d want to



The Cardinals drafted Hogestyn out of Broward Junior College (above) in the second round of the January 1973 draft. After enrolling at the University of South Florida (below), he was a 25th-round pick of the Yankees in June 1976.





Though Hogestyn never became a Cardinal, he gets major props for looking the part.

only as good as your last game. Still, it's such an honor.

Have you ever been to Busch Stadium?

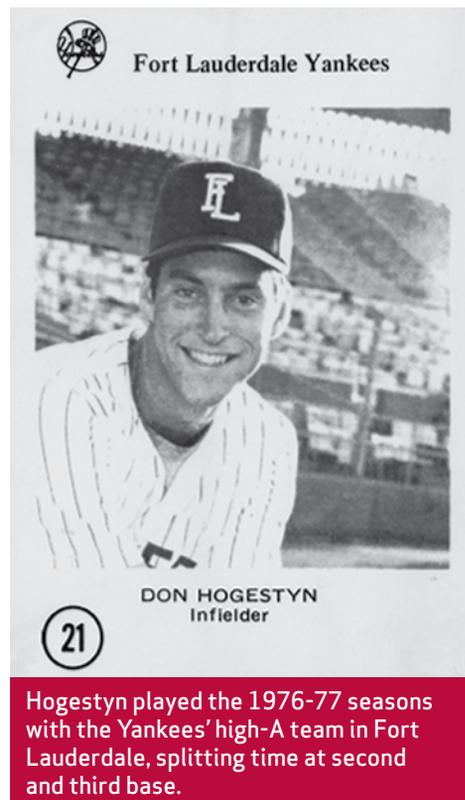
Hogestyn: Yes, Busch Stadium II in the early '90s. Matthew Ashford (Jack, on "Days") and I had a layover, so we asked to go to the game, which was against the Mets. It caused kind of a stir because they got us seats near home plate, and fans kept approaching us. Didn't see a lot of the game, I have to admit, but I just really liked the ambience and the people around us. I really liked the arches in the old stadium.

Which players do you find fascinating to watch?

Hogestyn: A couple years ago I would say Jim Edmonds, because he basically created all the highlights you see on ESPN. He proved it can be done. Will it shorten your career? Absolutely. But wow.

And now?

Hogestyn: I enjoy watching David Freese. I mean, Game 6, what the heck was that? The hardest thing in baseball is to get a hit when you need it. And to have him come up and do that with such confidence? What was even more impressive, from a character standpoint, was when they came to him (after the game) wanting his Game 6 bat for Cooperstown, and he said, "OK, here." I was like, "No, no, no, this is



Hogestyn played the 1976-77 seasons with the Yankees' high-A team in Fort Lauderdale, splitting time at second and third base.

Game 7 of the World Series coming up!" He's probably like, "I got another stick." Anybody who says that and has that much confidence in his stroke and his swing and his focus at that point ... it's like, "Oh kid!" And what does he do? They're down 2-0 in Game 7, and his first time up – boom (a two-run double)! You know baseball is in good hands when you hear stories of what a great guy someone like Freese is.

come here. They went crazy for Deidre. I was also working with Genie Francis, and a lot of them were big Luke and Laura fans. (Francis, a "Days" member from 1987-89, had shot to stardom on "General Hospital.") They'd come to the set and sit there and couldn't say a word.

Now, more than 25 years later, you're still one of daytime's biggest fan favorites.

Hogestyn: We have done personal appearances where the decibel rating is like some airport – all of the sudden (you) can't hear. It's pressure to perform better, and in many ways just like baseball. You're

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