

# GIANT AMONG GIANTS

By Michael Shapiro

» **San Francisco Giants broadcaster** Mike Krukow pushes himself to a standing position and gingerly puts one foot in front of the other, moving from the broadcast booth to the suite at Oracle Park where we'll talk. "This is warp speed," says the beloved announcer, joking about the condition that has made it harder for him to climb stairs, play music and travel.

A former pitcher for the Giants, Philadelphia Phillies and Chicago Cubs, Krukow has been a Giants color commentator for nearly 30 years, working alongside Duane Kuiper, who handles the play-by-play. The two became best friends when they were teammates with the Giants in the 1980s, and their camaraderie is evident in the booth. Affectionately known as Kruk and Kuip ("Kruke" and "Kipe"), the friends complement each other. Kuiper is Midwest low-key; Krukow is California exuberant. And both are passionate about their profession.

"There's a responsibility to tell the story of the team," Krukow says. "You have to make players come to life to the listening audience."

Krukow, 67, began to notice his strength declining several years ago. Initially, he attributed this to aging, but when he started having difficulty with stairs, he went to see a neurologist. He feared that he had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease), which is fatal. So he was relatively relieved when he learned he had inclusion-body myositis (IBM), a rare inflammatory ailment that's not curable but not fatal. Krukow can no longer call every game, but he works almost all home games and goes on some road trips. "I'm not able to do 162 games a season," he says. "I can do 110 now."

Krukow says the most indelible moments of his broadcasting career have come in playoff games, especially in 2010, when the underdog Giants won the World Series for the first time since the team moved to San Francisco in 1958. The Giants won titles again in 2012 and 2014.



*Mike Krukow is shown here broadcasting a San Francisco Giants game in June.*

At the victory celebrations, fans cheered Kruk and Kuip as loudly as the players.

"We were able to convey the feeling and the wonderful story that we were watching," Krukow recalls. "And we got to see the players give back the ultimate gift to the audience."

Kuiper compares Krukow to old ballplayers in their approach to life: "They're stubborn; they don't like to ask for help; they think they can accomplish anything, even though their body is not [cooperating]. He's like that, as tough as anybody. He never, ever complains."

Krukow's best moment as a pitcher was a complete-game win over the St. Louis Cardinals in the 1987 National League playoffs. "No question," Krukow says, "that was the pinnacle right there." He also had a 20-win season and an All-Star Game appearance, both in 1986.

Krukow retired from playing before the 1990 season. He eased his way into broadcasting soon after by appearing on sports talk shows on KNBR in San Francisco. Then he began to work with legendary Giants announcer Hank Greenwald—an experience he greatly appreciated. "When I started, I was just a wild animal. I was talking so fast." Krukow says. "Hank would

always tease me: 'I need to pour a little water on you. Go drink some milk. Calm down.'"

Krukow tempered his excitement and is now regarded as one of baseball's best broadcasters, known for witty turns of phrase. During a game in April, he described San Diego Padres infielder Manny Machado's easy grace, saying: "If he were any more relaxed, he'd be asleep."

Marty Lurie, who hosts Giants pre- and post-game radio shows, admires Krukow's ability to face his condition with humor and professionalism: "He's an inspiration to everyone," Lurie says. "He's meeting the challenge and staying at the top of his game."

Asked how long he hopes to continue, Krukow says his goal is simple: "Stay on the horse, keep going, keep showing up," he says. He looks out at the field where the Giants are taking batting practice and at San Francisco Bay shimmering beyond the fences. "C'mon," he says, marveling at his life and the work he loves. "How lucky are we?"

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