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Maybe these Rangers lead majors by design

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SURPRISE, Ariz. -- The Rangers might lead the majors in the number of players in spring training with tattoos. Each tattoo carries a story. A look at some of them.

Josh Rupe

Pitcher Josh Rupe believes tattoos should be about personal expression. His tend to involve religion. With the exception of his first, all of Rupe's tattoos involve religion and the Bible.

A lion and verse from the Book of Revelations decorates the outside of his left arm. A guardian angel is on the inside. The idea for the lion came from a painting that Rupe's in-laws have. The guardian angel was done after his son, Tucker, was born at the end of 2006.

A tattoo of Jesus is on Rupe's right arm. A cross stretches across his back. Rupe's next tattoo is likely to pertain to the Bible. It could involve the story of Abraham or a representation of good vs. evil. "There are a lot of religious stories," Rupe said. "It's just a personal expression. Tattoos are about what you like and this is what I like."

Rupe's ink is also some of the most detailed in the clubhouse. The colorful Jesus depiction took around 13 hours to complete. The two works on his left arm took almost 10 hours.

"My dad hates tattoos," said Rupe, whose love of tattoos came from his grandfather, who was in the Navy. "He's an old-school Southern Baptist man. I'm sure he doesn't mind that they're religious. My mom doesn't mind them."

German Duran

German Duran thinks it is time his parents found out that he has tattoos.

And because Duran is from Fort Worth and his parents, Maria and Julian, still live there, he's going to let this article break the news.

"They told me to never get tattoos," said Duran, an infielder who played at Fort Worth Paschal and TCU and is one of the Rangers' top prospects. "They thought it meant you were in a gang or something. They're going to be surprised."

Duran is pretty sure his parents will be understanding. They'll also know why Duran hasn't removed his shirt around the house since he was 17.

"I was young and all my friends had them," said Duran, 23. "I wore long-sleeve shirts and got it done in the fall. That gave me more of a reason to wear sweaters."

That's when he got the first of his three tattoos, a tribal symbol on his left shoulder with a baseball and bats around it. He followed with one on his back and then one on his right shoulder.

"I still want to get some more," Duran said. "Maybe I'll get one this weekend after I'm free and clear. I plan on adding some more."

Jarrod Saltalamacchia

Catcher Jarrod Saltalamacchia carries a constant reminder of what's important to him. He has to look no farther than his forearms or his ring finger for family support.

On his left arm is the name of his 14-month old daughter, Sidney. The right arm bears the name Hunter, his 2-month-old son. A tattoo wraps around his ring finger to honor his marriage to his wife, Ashley.

With all that going for him, you'd think his wife would be a tattoo fan. That's not exactly true.

"She doesn't like tattoos, but that doesn't mean I'm done," Saltalamacchia joked. "I don't really think she has a favorite. She obviously prefers the family ones, but that doesn't mean she likes any of them."

The tattoos honoring Saltalamacchia's children might have painted him into a corner. There's a chance for more children, which means he would have to find more room for children's names.

"If we have another kid, I don't want to leave anybody out," said Saltalamacchia, who has seven tattoos. "If we just have one, we can have some more, so we can even out the work."

C.J. Wilson

C.J. Wilson's most painful tattoo also carries the deepest message.

Wilson, who has the inside track on the closer job, has the words *STRAIGHT EDGE* emblazoned across his right rib cage.

"It means a lot to me to be straight edge and be a positive role model for kids," Wilson said. "That's what I view it as. You have a choice to pay attention to celebrities or whoever parties a lot. I'm the exact opposite. That's what it means to me."

Being straight edge means Wilson doesn't drink or do drugs. It comes from the California punk rock scene and is a commitment to a lifestyle.

He said he has never done drugs or had a drink of alcohol. A Japanese character on his right shoulder translates to "poison free."

Wilson also has a tattoo honoring his late grandfather on his left arm. It's his most visible tattoo because Wilson said he wants people to know how much he loves his grandfather.

"A tattoo has to look good or it's just stupid," he said. "If it looks good, then it's OK to have one, to a point. Me personally, I want them to mean something. I have a whole design aspect of what I like about it."

Kameron Loe

Kameron Loe has a constant reminder of a former teammate on his right shoulder.

Emblazoned on the pitcher's arm is the Latin phrase *Carpe Diem*. It's a tribute to a former teammate at Cal State Northridge who was killed in an automobile accident while Loe was in the minor leagues.

"Before every game or every practice, he said 'Carpe diem, boys. Let's go seize the day,'" Loe said. "This guy really lived by that motto. He wanted to get better."

Loe had the tattoo put on to honor his friend, a tradition he follows with all his work. His first tattoo is an image of Nolan Ryan on his shoulder. He also has one on his wrist that says 'Bing,' in honor of his grandmother.

He'll add one "when something else comes along that I really know I'm going to love for the rest of my life," he said. "They all really mean something special to me."

Ryan Roberts

There are Rangers with tattoos and then there's Ryan Roberts, who has more tattoos on his body than any Ranger.

How many?

"I have no idea," said Roberts, a utility player who played at Hurst L.D. Bell and UT-Arlington.

While Roberts is loaded with ink, he does have limits. He has no tattoos below the waist and he has no tattoos on his face. The face will stay the same, but the legs will be done as soon as Roberts, who got his first tattoo when he was 18, decides on a theme.

Roberts isn't afraid to branch out. A hanger was used to brand a large star into his chest.

"It didn't hurt that bad getting it because it burns the nerve ending so quickly that it was really painful for just a second," Roberts said. "It goes away. The healing hurt because it didn't go away for a month."

Despite the large number of tattoos, Roberts put thought into each one and they were all custom done.

"I like a different one every day," he said. "I didn't take any of them off a wall. I went in and told my guy what I wanted. Each one is something I thought about."

Kason Gabbard

It's doubtful any Ranger put as much research into their tattoo as pitcher Kason Gabbard did.

The left-handed pitcher spent two months studying his family heritage before having a shield put on his left arm.

The shield has a pair of animals, a German eagle and a double cross to represent his Czechoslovakian roots. The shield also symbolizes Gabbard's Irish heritage.

"I planned on always getting it, but there was never the opportunity," said Gabbard, whose work was finished about two weeks ago. "During the off-season I did the research on it. It turned out really good."

Gabbard did the legwork and found out about his family roots.

"My parents thought it was a good idea," said Gabbard, who used Ryan Roberts' tattoo artist to have the work done. "They thought it turned out really good, too. The research was the best part of it."