

I want to start by saying thank you.

I know they say that when you dream you eventually wake up. Well, for some reason, I've never had to wake up. Not just because of my time as a New York Yankee but also because I am living my dream every single day.

Last year was a tough one for me. As I suffered through a bunch of injuries, I realized that some of the things that always came easily to me and were always fun had started to become a struggle. The one thing I always said to myself was that when baseball started to feel more like a job, it would be time to move forward.

So really it was months ago when I realized that this season would likely be my last. As I came to this conclusion and shared it with my friends and family, they all told me to hold off saying anything until I was absolutely 100% sure.

And the thing is, I could not be more sure. I know it in my heart. The 2014 season will be my last year playing professional baseball.

I've experienced so many defining moments in my career: winning the World Series as a rookie shortstop, being named the Yankees captain, closing the old and opening the new Yankee Stadium. Through it all, I've never stopped chasing the next one. I want to finally stop the chase and take in the world.

For the last 20 years I've been completely focused on two goals: playing my best and helping the Yankees win. That means that for 365 days a year, my every thought and action were geared toward that goal. It's now time for something new.

From the time I was a kid, my dream was always very vivid and it never changed: I was going to be the shortstop for the NY Yankees. It started as an empty canvas more than 20 years ago, and now that I look at it, it's almost complete. In a million years, I wouldn't have believed just how beautiful it would become.

So many people have traveled along this journey with me and helped me along the way: I want to especially thank The Boss, the Steinbrenner family, the entire Yankees organization, my managers, my coaches, my teammates, my friends, and of course, above all, my family. They taught me incredible life lessons and are the #1 reason I lasted this long. They may not have been on the field, but they feel they played every game with me, and I think they are ready to call it a career as well.

I also couldn't have done it without the people of New York. NY fans always pushed me to be my best. They have embraced me, loved me, respected me and have ALWAYS been there for me. This can be a tough, invasive, critical and demanding environment. The people of this city have high expectations and are anxious to see them met.

But it's those same people who have challenged me, cheered for me, beat me down and picked me back up all at the same time. NY made me stronger, kept me more focused and made me a better, more well-rounded person. For that I will be forever grateful. I never could have imagined playing anywhere else.

I will remember it all: the cheers, the boos, every win, every loss, all the plane trips, the bus rides, the clubhouses, the walks through the tunnel and every drive to and from the Bronx. I have achieved almost every personal and professional goal I have set. I have gotten the very most out of my life playing baseball, and I have absolutely no regrets.

Now it is time for the next chapter. I have new dreams and aspirations, and I want new challenges. There are many things I want to do in business and in philanthropic work, in addition to focusing more on my personal life and starting a family of my own. And I want the ability to move at my own pace, see the world and finally have a summer vacation.

But before that, I want to soak in every moment of every day this year, so I can remember it for the rest of my life. And most importantly, I want to help the Yankees reach our goal of winning another championship.

Once again, thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Derek Jeter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Derek" being more prominent than the last name "Jeter".