

Jim Kaat Press Conference 7-23-22

Craig Muder: Tell me a little bit about what you are feeling now. 24 hours before your induction.

Jim Kaat: The toughest time for a starting pitcher is between starts to begin to get worked up about your next start. And then that day and night before a start, particularly if it's an important one. That's usually a one you don't get as much sleep. So, I'm trying to use the experience that I had as a player and to kind of slow things down and not to get too amped up about it.

CM: It is our honor to welcome you here to Cooperstown in the Hall of Fame. It's an honor to be here. If you have a question for Jim please raise your hand and wait for the mic to come state your name and affiliation.

Question: What's it like for you to be here not just because like Tony, but the David Ortiz rather Minnesota century Hall of Fame class this year. What's it like being part of that?

JK: Well, I think that makes it you know, a little more special. And obviously I didn't have any experience with David in Minnesota but Tony is very special because I know Tony's backstory from when he came up and got released in spring training in 61 and then Rookie of the Year in 64. So, you know, I got to see him really developing as a player that could miss the entire fly ball without getting any leather on it in the instructional League in 62 and then four years later wins a Gold Glove. So you know it's an honor to enter with Tony because his road to the big leagues was much more difficult than mine.

Question: There was a time not too long ago Minnesota's future was a little uncertain in Major League Baseball. What's it mean for you and Tony and David to kind of go in and represent the Twins now that the future has been solidified for the franchise and obviously the team is in the first place now and it's been in the playoffs a bunch of times last 20 years. What's it mean to you guys that kind of gotten through that? Thank you.

JK: Yeah, I think what's special going on, as a Twin I reported to the instructional league on October 26 1960. And I had Senators on my uniform, front of my uniform. By the end of the day, we were the Minnesota Twins. So, you don't have to go up there. And we knew how the Braves were, you know they were so happy going from Boston to Milwaukee. To come to Minnesota when the expectations to win a pennant were not high because we weren't that good then. But just the way they welcomed us because it was big league baseball. And, you know, raise my kids there in their early years. It was such a great atmosphere in the old country ballpark atmosphere of Metropolitan the stadium. I'm sure glad that the Twins didn't lose their franchise and I'm able to go in as a Twin.

Question: When I talked to you in April, you were practicing your speech in your car as you would drive around trying to get the timing down. Have you got the timing down? And what will we hear tomorrow that will be special.

I had it down in practice to 11 and a half minutes. But they even told me I have a little leeway. There were a couple of things that cut out but the main two would be my dad and Jack McKeon who will be there tomorrow as my minor league manager in 1958. And I wanted to tell the story about how without your support and encouragement I probably wouldn't be here.

Question: What are been some of the standout moments for you just since you've gotten here to Cooperstown? I know there are more to come. But any people who have said something meaningful or things you've learned in the last few days,

JK: I would say you know, I got some nice calls. The day after the announcement Jim Thome it was my first call no surprise. And then I got a nice call from Sandy Koufax and that meant a lot to me because Sandy and I have, you know, become acquaintances, acquaintances over the years, he stays very private, but that was so nice to him to call that but that one stood out. So that was the first moments. I think the orientation was a great experience to find out, you know, how we're being prepared for this and then go through the things that I actually have to say. One other thing the day after I got elected. I got a call from Willa Allen. And Willa Allen is Dick's widow. Dick Allen and I were joined at the hip you know. We were teammates and in Philadelphia and Chicago. You know, he learned the game from Gene Mauch. We used to sit and talk baseball, watch the horse races together and you know if they could have voted for five of us, I think Dick would have got in. He missed by a vote. I said, think about it. If it came down to that last voter, and he had a choice of voting for Dick or me and he voted for Dick, I said, I'd be calling you.

Question: Obviously you have a connection to Ted Williams dating back to facing him at Fenway as a kid with the Washington Senators but you we spent a ton of time in the league of over the years. Just speak to that?

JK: When I first faced Ted Williams in 59, I remember turning around and looking at my second baseman John Shively and I had seen Ted Williams and Tom Yawkey, the owner, and Johnny Orlando, the clubhouse guy, they played pepper every day before the game. I had walked out early and watched them play pepper. And then I face Ted Williams. Well, he rips one off the monster off me and then the following year, I did get him out once but I'm going up to play golf in Central Florida years after that. And I went in the pro shop that's where his hitting museum was for a while and I walked in the pro shop I said Ted Williams ever come out here and play golf. He's around the 17th hole right now with Eddie Feigner, the famous softball pitcher. So, they give me a card I drive out he comes over the green. I have my friend Doc Gallagher with me. I want to introduce you to Ted Williams. And he walks off the green and I went over to see said Mr. Williams, don't give me that Mr. Williams, I know who you are trying to throw me that overhead curve, you know, so that was the kind of guy he was and when I was honored to speak at the dedication of his Tunnel. I think that was 97 the Ted Williams Tunnel. So yeah, it was it was fun to get to cross paths and talk baseball.

Question: Earlier this year you took telling me how much Bobby Shantz meant to you. I'm just wondering will he be here and talk about how he meant what he meant to you and also how does it feel to be going into the locker room as well?

JK: Bobby Shantz got a very clever story if it's accurate and I may mention it, but he was my boyhood hero. He's 96. Now, when he was 93, and I was at I gave him a Legacy Award of the Rawlings Gold Glove dinner. And then this year after I got voted into the Hall of Fame, he wanted to come to the induction but Steve kind of his guy that drives around said Bobby's gonna be watching but you know, he can't make it. I heard that he fell, pushing a runner chasing a runaway grocery cart in a supermarket parking lot. I said that's gotta be a hero of mine in 96. But, you know, when I was a kid, it was a radio game. And my dad was a big Philadelphia Athletics fan drove here to Cooperstown to see Lefty Grove's induction. And so I would hear the announcers say and here's Bobby Shantz the best fielding pitcher pitcher in

baseball, you lands on the balls of his feet. He's ready to go left or right. He's always ready for a ball hit back at him. I go in my backyard. I mimic Bobby's motion against the spring training. We do pitchers drills for a couple times. Coach that kid you like to say body shins. So I'm six five he was five, six but he was my boyhood hero and was the best feeling pitcher of his era. And that's inspired me to try to feel my position properly.

QUESTION: Hey, Jim, congrats. Hi, Brian. Thank you. Thanks. Times August in barre, Vermont. Jim, I know one of the questions I asked Bob Costas, a few years ago when he was on the stage was your name and what about the possibility of either being in as a player a broadcaster or the Buck O'Neil award for all you've done as an ambassador for the game? And he thought all three of them fit your category at that point. I just wanted to let you know I mean, between the broadcasting and the playing days, you have great memories from both Is there anything you can share from a broadcaster standpoint?

Right. I just think like Jack Buck told me when he first saw me I was doing good. Morning America reports for David Hartman in 83. Jack Buck sees me and he calls me over, you get into this business. And I said, I don't know. I'm just, you know, my career just ended. I'm trying it. I thought he was gonna give me some sage advice. He said Don't ever tell anybody how easy it is just cash the checks and smile. So, you know, it's been a great ride. I think that the highlight probably was when I covered the twins in 91 as well as their local broadcaster, and then was the sideline reporter in 91 during that great series from Kirby hit the home run and Game six and then watching smalti and Jack Morris go at it and game seven that was I wasn't in the booth but that was quite a treat getting an up close look at that. And then the Yankee games for years, doing boomers perfect game and I know as you guys have followed the 80s during that time when Derrick came up, I mean, is the easiest job in baseball because they're winning all the time. So it was a real treat, particularly the 98 team, which might be the best team I've seen in the last you know, 3040 years.

QUESTION: Spencer Davidson from WKTV and congratulations. You know, you've known for months about your election. But you know, the weekend here in Cooperstown, just you know, first off, what are your impressions of the village kind of walking around here and also, you know as a as a sunk Indian, what is taking place this weekend and that you're a member of

JK: Well, I've been to the village many times. You know, my first trip was in 1956 runners are college freshmen and my roommate was from Herkimer, and we came over on a Thanksgiving break. I still have a frame postcard a postcard I sent to my parents in 1956. And then I came here for Harmon's induction in 1984. So I've been about seven or eight of my teammates and very familiar with the village I just think I'm so impressed. You know they just treat you like you're royalty. And now I have in my grandkids who have played golf with them today and a lot of family members here are seeing a lot of the Hall of Famers. You know, I understand how special it is. But I'm not trying to get too amped up because I'm probably more humbled by it than excited by it.