

Scott Rolen Media Availability 1/27/23

Jon Shestakofsky 00:00

Well, thank you, Brian. And good afternoon, everyone. My name is Jon Shestakofsky. I'm Vice President of Communications and Education for the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum and it is my pleasure to welcome everyone here at MLB Network Studio 42 for the Baseball Hall of Fame and Baseball Writers' Association of America press conference to introduce the newest member of the Class of 2023. I'd also like to welcome all those watching on MLB Network and online. And up here with us today from your right to left, it's my pleasure to introduce Jack O'Connell, secretary treasurer of the Baseball Writers' Association of America, 2023 Baseball Hall of Fame electee Scott Rolen and the President of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Josh Rawitch. And now I'd like to invite Jack O'Connell of the BBWAA, a to say a few words. Jack?

Jack O'Connell 02:50

Well, I'm gonna take you back in time. 26 years ago, when Scott here was a candidate for the National League Jackie Robinson Rookie of the Year Award, this was 1997, the 50th anniversary season of Jackie's debut. And Scott was the overwhelming favorite that year. In fact, he eventually was elected unanimously and about, we might say, a day or two, before I was going to make the call to him. His agent called me and said, I don't want to be presumptuous, but if you're gonna make the call to Scott, we wondered if his parents could listen in on the on the phone call. I was relatively new to doing this then and I said, well, it sounds good. Yeah, I guess we could do that. Just let them know that the announcement isn't for another hour. So kind of keep it in the family. And so when I did make the call, I could hear the click of another of another line coming in. And it was it was it was a meaningful, really meaningful call one that I remember. And I mentioned to Scott Tuesday, when Jane Clark and I called him to make the official Hall of Fame call. And I wasn't sure if Mom and Pop was still around. But I mentioned it to Scott. And he said Well, I'm here with my, my wife and son and daughter and when I go over to my brother's to give my parents the news. So it came full circle. And now you and your family are in another larger family and a special family, the one in Cooperstown, New York. Congratulations.

Scott Rolen 04:25

Thank you very much.

Jon Shestakofsky 04:28

Thanks, Jack. And now I'd like to invite Josh Rawitch President of the Baseball Hall of Fame to say a few words.

Josh Rawitch 04:34

Well, on behalf of Jane Forbes Clark, who Jack mentioned, our whole board of directors all the staff in Cooperstown just want to extend our congratulations and our welcome to Scott as a new member of the Hall of Fame family. Also want to thank Jack and all the baseball writers who take part in this process. It is, it's an impressive process and we know that every writer takes great care in their vote. It's debated. It's discussed and, and we really believe in the process. And we think you guys do a

tremendous job. So thank you for your work on that. As well to Ernst and Young, who does a great job in helping us really certify the vote and spend quite a bit of diligence on that. So when you think of all the kids who have played Little League, we were reminiscing a little bit today with Scott about his journey to this day. But when you think of all the millions and millions of kids who play this game, and the love that they have, and how hard it is to just play in high school, and then to play in college, or to make it to the pros, that only 22,000 have ever gotten to play just around 22,000, who've gotten to play Major League Baseball, you really understand just how difficult it is to do that. And then just to make it on the ballot is an incredible honor for the greatest players who ever played the game. So to be one of the 1% that Scott is now part of this incredible family, I think you really understand what this means and how hard it is to get to that point. And so rather than dive into a bunch of stats and things of that nature, I just want to share one quick story that gives you an idea who Scott is, because I think it's in line with what Jack just said. So we actually have a mutual friend in Bloomington, Indiana, where Scott lives, that's where I went to college. And so before he before last year's vote, we spoke on the phone for a little bit. And he said, look, I this would be an incredible honor for me, if I got this call, I can't tell you how much it would mean. But I'm still going to be the same guy one way or another whether I get this call, or I don't. And I appreciated it. It it sounded very downhome Indiana humble as you're known to be. But then as soon as the announcement was made, he didn't get the call last year, one of the very first texts I got was from him congratulating me on the process and telling me how good it looked on TV and, and was hoping that I was gonna get a drink later that night to celebrate what had happened. And it just tells you all you need to know about this guy and what this means to him. And I think it for those you that saw the video of him telling his parents the news. I know it brought tears to my eyes and everybody else's. And we talk a lot about how the Hall of Fame connects generations, it's one of the biggest things that we focus on. And when you hear the story of Scott after the news was broken to him, he gets the call and he goes outside and has a catch with his son, man, that just doesn't get any better than that. So congratulations to your whole family. We're excited that they could be here with us in studio today as well. And, and and welcome to the greatest team you'll ever be a part of, the Hall of Fame team.

Scott Rolen 07:17

Thank you very much again very humbly.

Jon Shestakofsky 07:21

Thanks, Josh. And now I would like to ask if Scott, you'd like to make any opening remarks as well.

Scott Rolen 07:25

Well, you didn't tell me that earlier. But I got it. No, absolutely. Thank you guys all for being here. And the Baseball Writers' Association for sure the process was fun and interesting. You guys have been great. Everybody at the Hall of Fame and everybody here at Major League Baseball Network. And like I said, the baseball writers, the interviews everybody's been, you know, they've been very respectful of the interviews and the process and, and, you know, my parents and my family, it's just a, that's who we are. And it kind of stays there. It starts there. And it's gonna stay there for, you know, the duration of our lives. So I appreciate you appreciate everybody here. And like I said, the baseball writers, and it's a real honor.

Jon Shestakofsky 08:09

Thank you, Scott. And ladies and gentlemen, we are now ready to begin the Q&A portion. So if you do have a question, please raise your hand and wait for a microphone. And then when you have that microphone, we'll ask that you state your name and affiliation and to whom you are asking your question so we can begin right down on the side.

Dan Schlossberg 08:29

I'm Dan Schlossberg from Forbes. I want to ask you two follow-up questions. Number one, who did you idolize as a kid growing up, what baseball player did you idolize. And number two, talking about idols. You stepped into the shoes of Mike Schmidt at Philadelphia. I know there was a slight gap there., but did you feel any pressure doing that?

Scott Rolen 08:49

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. On the second question, I'll go to your first question again. Again, I don't want to over overplay everything. But I grew up and we talked about earlier, I didn't really grow up watching a bunch of baseball because we were always playing. We had a neighborhood and we were playing different sports at different times and I kind of grew up idolizing my dad, my brother. They were older than me, they were better than me at everything. You know, so we were competing, and I could never beat my brother. He's, he's 5' 10" right now. and I got to about 6' 3" and he quit playing me in basketball. So I don't know that I've ever actually beat him. So that was kind of just what we were doing. We're just kind of competing in Jasper, Indiana on our own in our own world, you know, and having a great time. That being said, I had a picture poster of Don Mattingly hanging above my bed. He's from Evansville, Indiana it's an hour away. So I loved to watch him play. He was you know, certainly a celebrity and a legend in our area for sure. And then when I started getting into and watching the game a little bit more, I don't know if I've never crossed paths with him so to speak, but Kirk Gibson was a guy that I really enjoyed watching him. Kind of take a football approach to a baseball game and be kind of a running back you know on a baseball diamond. So I guess I emulated a little bit those two guys growing up, you know, a style of play, and then what I knew about Don Mattingly, and we still stay in contact. And the second part is, you know, going into Philadelphia, you know, what you mentioned, you know, with Mike Schmidt, that was never reasonable to me. So I never went in with a bunch of stress and a bunch of pressure that I was going to be Mike Schmidt. I mean, this is the best third baseman that's ever played the game, you know, arguably, or whoever somebody wants to put in there, but it's certainly, certainly worth talking about. And I was never going to be Mike Schmidt. And I didn't want to be Mike Schmidt. I think it's a recipe for failure. You know, if I'm gonna go in and try to be somebody else, and I'm not gonna be genuine, who I am around my teammates in the way that I play the game. So I had to get my feet under me learn how to play the game, have my eyes and ears open and my mouth shut and learn from some very great players and great coaches that I played against and and with in Philadelphia.

Jon Shestakofsky 11:08

Question on this side, Sweeny.

Sweeny Murti 11:09

Scott, Sweeny Murti, congratulations. But that said, has hit you that you're in the same room, you're in the same conversation, and you're gonna have a plaque neck, not far from where Mike Schmidt is that that's part of who what your legacy now is?

Scott Rolen 11:24

No, it hasn't. And I mean, this, like, we were talking about earlier, I haven't put a suit on for probably 11 years, so and I had to cut my own hair. So a lot of things have changed here in the last three or four days. That that isn't going to it's going to be a fun six months, you know, that realization hasn't come up yet. You know, again, I was never, never thought I was going to be, you know, a Hall of Fame player. But, you know, I never thought I'd get drafted. I never thought I'd make it through the Minor Leagues, Major Leagues and get a chance to win a World Series with the Cardinals. So this wasn't, I wasn't born and raised in Jasper, Indiana, to be a baseball player, to be a major league baseball player, to be a Hall of Famer, you know, we were, we were we're doing our best and we're trying to be respectful of people and be accountable for who we are, and grow up and treat people well and, and get a good job and a good education. And then I enjoy playing basketball, baseball, football, tennis, you know, all the sports and played with our buddies and played pickup ball and, and, you know, I get drafted. And that's fantastic. And I start playing and I start learning what work ethic is, and how it how you work. And then, you know, I have coaches that fine tune what I'm actually trying to do, I'm not just running around trying to sweat, like I'm actually focused in on some things that I'm trying to get better in my game defensively and learn how to run bases and who I'm going to be as a player. So it was it was a way that I could take just a hard work ethic maybe that I got back from Southern Indiana and, and learn how to do it and focus on my work that takes me to the game and realize that if I'm gonna stay here, and Major League Baseball, if I'm gonna be here, I have a little bit of ability, but I can outwork everybody on this field every single day. So let's give that a shot.

Sweeny Murti 13:15

If I can ask you one more. You played your entire career and basically the interleague play area era so that there were opportunities to play in the American League cities and chance to DH. Yet you never played a game as a DH and I think someone who played as many games you I think that's pretty rare. Does that speak to how much you value your contributions on defense and what you thought of it, maybe what your coaches and managers thought of it, that they didn't want to give you that rest day, so to speak, and wanted you in the field.

Scott Rolen 13:50

I, I went through my whole career, and I never asked for a day off and that was kind of I was never going to not that I didn't need it. Not that I didn't accept them. You know, but I figured a quick story and he may, he may not remember this, but I was I was young and we were playing exhibition game against the Orioles. And I went over knocked on the clubhouse door and asked if I could speak to Mr. Ripken or whatever I called him was probably ridiculous at the time. And he came out and he'd broken the record and done everything and in my head I wanted to play every day. I wanted to play every game I didn't want to break his I want to break his record obviously that wasn't the thing but I wanted to know like this is hard. What are we dealing with here and he gave me some incredible advice that you know that you know I hold the place on my team in the lineup whether I'm going to be good or not good. And that doesn't matter and there's some accountability to have for your position on the field and your position in

the lineup and even if you know that you're going to go 0-3, 0-4, you may have to that other manager may have to make a move around you even though you know you have no chance. So you can have a have a result in the outcome of a game by just being there and showing up and doing your job, you know, and playing. And, you know, I developed that, you know, you should probably expect to work when you go to work. You know, you go do your job when you go do your job, you know, and if and if you're not in the lineup that day, and you get a pinch hit that comes in, you know, you think it's a day off, and but you're asked to work when you're at your job. So it was, it was one of those things where DH-wise, I can't I won't be able to come up with specifics, but it did come up about DH-ing and at that time, you know, I was asked about it, and I always I just felt like I was more valuable fielding than not fielding you know, I took a lot of pride in defense and baserunning. And like I said, I was, if I asked probably like, can I just play the field and somebody hit for me, you know, because that may be a lot better for us instead of the other way around.

Tom Verducci 16:00

Scott, Tom Verducci, congratulations. What's now a Hall of Fame career began in Martinsville, Virginia. 18 years old. I'm curious, you did have a basketball scholarship to Georgia. How much thought that you have to go into college to play basketball? What did it come down to and what expectations did you have as a baseball player then at 18.

Scott Rolen 16:21

That was an interesting process as well. I was recruited to play baseball at different spots. My brother and sister were both in college at Indiana University and I had an opportunity, you know, to play basketball for free basically to get a full ride. And I got full ride offers from different spots Indiana State and Indiana IU, Oklahoma State, Georgia in some different spots. So I was kind of focused in on on that it would it was kind of what we needed to do and what I wanted to do. Mom and Dad never pushed me in any way they wanted me to go where I wanted to go and do what I wanted to do. But I kind of leaned towards Georgia, they were coming off a national championship not too far beyond that, and I got to go down and some warm weather and maybe play some baseball. And so yeah, I signed the basketball scholarship. And that was my, that was my plan. I was gonna go to Georgia play basketball. They were gonna allow me, Hugh Durham was there at the time. And Steve Weber was a baseball coach, they were gonna allow me after the season to start playing baseball immediately. And I could do some double workouts along the way. I don't know if that would have worked. In retrospect, but I got, I got drafted by the Phillies, obviously. And then that changed everything. And that became the best opportunity for me, certainly to further my baseball career, I thought, not just because I can go play baseball, but it was just it seemed like a good fit and a good setup. And like I said, my parents traveled in their motorhome and followed me everywhere. So I got through some of the homesick part too.

Jon Shestakofsky 17:53

We have time for one or two more questions, if there are any. Yes, right.

David Adler 18:01

David Adler, just wondering, with all the Scott Rolen highlights that have been, you know, going around over the last few days, have there been any moments from your career that you've gotten to enjoy reliving?

Scott Rolen 18:14

Yeah, I get to, I get to watch it with my son a little bit. You know, we don't sit around our house and watch me. You know, we're doing other things. And so this is all coming on. And they they're doing a lot better job of finding things than I do. Because I still text with my right thumb with the phone up. It's not good. I still call people. But yeah, we get to go back through and see some World Series stuff. And you know, home run off of off of Roger Clemens, and game seven and eight. And LCS is always a thrill and and you know, he's, he's heard defensive stuff, defensive stuff, and they've just been a lot of things that are going on there. And they're talking about barehanded plays, and yeah, I'm reliving. I'm like, oh, yeah, like that hurt. You know. And so to answer your question I have and it's been, it's been fun with, like I said, my, my son is, so he enjoys baseball so much, which is my goal to keep him enjoying it, you know, and just keep playing and enjoying what he's doing. And so we can kind of we've been enjoying those things together seeing some of those highlights. Did I answer your question?

Jon Shestakofsky 19:23

And unless there are any more questions, we'll close out the session. And I want to thank everyone for joining us. And we're looking forward to seeing everyone here, especially Scott at Hall of Fame Weekend, which is coming up July 21st to 24th in Cooperstown. It's going to be a wonderful Induction Weekend, and we can't wait to have you there. So thank you very much, and thanks for being with us.

Scott Rolen 19:49

Thanks, everybody.