

2021-12-05 HOF Electee Tony Oliva Media Availability

Jon Shestakofsky

Well hello everyone and welcome to tonight's very special media availability with class of 2022 Hall of Fame inductee, Tony Oliva. My name is Jon Shestakofsky. I'm Vice President of Communications and Education at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Earlier today, Tony was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame by the Golden Days Era Committee along with Gil Hodges, Jim Kaat, and Minnie Miñoso. These new electees from the Golden Days Era join Bud Fowler and Buck O'Neil who were elected today by the Early Baseball Era Committee, and they will all be inducted into the Hall of Fame on Sunday, July 24th in Cooperstown alongside any elect these may result from the ongoing 2022 voting process from the BBWAA, the results of which will be announced on January 25th. So this is the last of our two conference calls with today's era committee electees. And please note that these sessions are being recorded, and that transcripts will become available to media within the next 48 hours or less at the Hall of Fame's website baseballhall.org. With that, Tony, we say congratulations, and thank you for joining us. And before we open for questions, would you like to share any opening remarks about how you're feeling today?

Tony Oliva

Well, I feel great today after I heard the news, because before that the last 15 or 20 minutes, I was waiting for the phone call. I was wondering if the phone calls were coming today or not. Because you know that several people are here in the house, and I don't want to disappoint them one more time. You know, I've been waiting for this moment for 45 years. And it's a great it's a feeling great. And it's special, I never dreamed that something like that will happen to me – to be able to be in the Hall of Fame.

Jon Shestakofsky

Thank you so much, Tony. And we are now ready to begin the question and answer portion. So if you'd like to ask a question of Tony Oliva, please click reactions at the bottom of your screen and then click the raise hand button. And we will start with Pat Borzi. Pat, you can unmute yourself now.

Pat Borzi

Tony congratulations I know this day has been a long time coming and I'm incredibly happy for you and your family. I wanted to ask you, I mean you mentioned that you've got a bunch of people over at the house – how many people are there?

Tony Oliva

A lot of my friends are here, people who said "I'm pulling so hard" for me and encouraging me. I don't have the right words to express the way I'm feeling.

Pat Borzi

Is there anyone that could not be here today that you wish was here celebrating?

Tony Oliva

I think of my mother, my father and my brothers, sisters. They never saw me play; I wish they had this opportunity. My father, my mother, and they'd be very, very proud that little boy from Cuba is in the Hall of Fame today.

Pat Borzi

Congratulations Tony.

Tony Oliva

Thank you. Thank you.

Jon Shestakofsky

Thanks, Tony. Our next question comes from Betsy Helfen. Betsy go ahead and unmute yourself now.

Betsy Helfen

Hey, Tony. Congratulations. I was wondering have you had a chance to talk to Rod today since you were elected and if so what was that conversation like?

Tony Oliva

No, I don't have a chance to play speak to him yet.

Jon Shestakofsky

Next question will come from Do-Hyoung Park. You can unmute yourself now.

Do-Hyoung Park

Tony congratulations it's great to see you get in it kind of building off of that. What did it mean to you to have your roomie and friend and brother Rod Carew on the committee voting for this and how much have you guys talked about the possibility of this day?

Tony Oliva

It's funny because Rod Carew has not talked too much about the Hall of Fame. We don't talk about the Hall of Fame too much. But today I know he'd be very proud, very happy that I finally made the Hall of Fame.

Jon Shestakofsky

Jesus Ortiz is next. Jesus you can unmute yourself.

Jesus Ortiz

The first question is, did you ever talk to Minnie Miñoso what advice did he give you when you started playing baseball? And what does it mean to join him in the Hall of Fame together two Cubans one from Havana?

Tony Oliva

Minnie Miñoso for us, especially for (players) from Cuba, was like Jackie Robinson was for the Black American ballplayer because he was like a Jackie Robinson for us. He was the first one who played. He was a great ballplayer. He helped us as ballplayers, gave us advice.

Minnie Miñoso helped me a lot because he also talked to us a lot. He would give us advice on how the system was here in the United States. That helped one a lot.

I'll tell you, Minnie Miñoso, we thought he was the idol for us.

When they voted the Negro League players in the Hall of Fame together. I gave him a hug and told him this is your chance because there's nothing better than going to the Hall of Fame when you're alive so you can thank and say hello to people.

Jesus Ortiz

Muchas gracias. Felicitates.

Jon Shestakofsky

Next up, John Shea you can unmute yourself.

John Shea

Did you did you know Buck O'Neil or are you familiar with the story and how he you know he's had a couple of missed calls so far and he finally got in today.

Tony Oliva

Yes, I have an opportunity to go to meet him many times.

John Shea

Thank you. Congrats.

Jon Shestakofsky

And the next question comes from Willie Weinbaum. Willie, you can unmute yourself.

Willie Weinbaum

Thanks, Jon. Hi, Tony. Congratulations.

Tony Oliva

Thank you.

Willie Weinbaum

Tony. How would you describe yourself as a hitter and what made you so successful?

Tony Oliva

I tried to prepare myself for the ballgame. Do the batting practice, or you won't play the games. I prepared myself. I watch the pitcher pitch and I was able to hit it all over the ballpark.

Jon Shestakofsky

We have time for a couple more. Barry Bloom is up next. Here. You can unmute yourself.

Barry Bloom

Thanks, John. So, Tony, congratulations. And tell me about what you think of the fact that you're going to be going up there and being inducted on the stage at Cooperstown with Jim Kaat. You're one of your great teammates.

Tony Oliva

We played together for many years. He was like, you know, like my buddy.

Jon Shestakofsky

Thank you from all of us, Tony and congratulations again. We are looking forward to celebrating your exceptional career at the 2022 Induction Ceremony which will take place in Cooperstown on July 24th. And thanks to all the media members who joined us on this call. This concludes this evening's Hall of Fame conference calls.

Tony Oliva

Thank you. Thank you