

20221205 - Fred McGriff Media Availability

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Jon Shestakofsky 00:20

Well hello everyone and welcome to tonight's media availability with class of 2023 Hall of Fame inductee Fred McGriff. My name is Jon Shestakofsky. I'm Vice President of Communications and Education at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. And earlier today, Fred was unanimously elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame by the Contemporary Baseball Era Committee. He will be inducted into the Hall of Fame on Sunday, July 23rd in Cooperstown alongside any electives that may result from the ongoing 2023 BBWAA voting process, the results of which will be announced on January 24th. Please note this session is being recorded and transcripts will become available to media within the next 48 hours, at the Hall of Fame's website, which is baseballhall.org. With that, I want to say congratulations to Fred, thank you for joining us on this special day. And before we open for questions for media, would you like to share any opening remarks?

Fred McGriff 01:26

Thank you. Hello to everyone. And what an honor, it's a beautiful night here in Tampa and I finally did it, I got in there and it's beautiful, I've been totally blessed my whole life and I continue to be blessed. So it's quite an honor to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. I want to thank the committee, and so forth. I know it's tough, deciding who to vote for and who not to vote for and so forth. And so it's a great honor to be unanimously voted in.

Jon Shestakofsky 02:03

Thanks, Fred. Now, we are ready to take questions from the call participants. So if you would like to ask a question of Fred, please click reactions at the bottom of your screen and then click raise hand. And the first question is going to come from Bill Ladson. Bill, go right ahead.

Bill Ladson 02:24

Congratulations, Fred.

Fred McGriff 02:27

Thank you.

Bill Ladson 02:29

Tell me your reaction when you received the news that you were elected. And my second question, it's strange that only 38% of the writers voted you in and your peers were unanimous. What was your reaction to that?

Fred McGriff 02:44

It was awesome to hear that I was voted in unanimously and over the years, Bill, I run into some a lot of ex-players and so forth, and teammates and everything and they all say, you know, Fred, you had a great career, you know, you need to be in the Hall of Fame, and so forth. And so it's one of those things, but it's just, it's just a great honor. And I'm enjoying myself and go from there.

Bill Ladson 03:11

And what was your reaction you know, when you heard the news and your family's as well.

Fred McGriff 03:17

Oh, it was just awesome. Like I said, the last month or so, you know, you you trying to play all you had different scenarios and find out who's involved in the voting committee and in the process, and so forth. You try to get as much information as you can. But as the time ticked down to this day, you're just thinking, okay, you know, will I get enough votes, you know, who's voted da-da-da. So, it's just beautiful, very honored.

Jon Shestakofsky 03:52

Next question will come from Marc Topkin. Go right ahead, Marc.

Marc Topkin 03:58

Congrats, Fred.

Fred McGriff 04:00

Thank you, Marc.

Mark Topkin 04:02

Two part question. One just to join the Tampa legacy here, Al López, Tony LaRussa, Wade Boggs to be the next one in the Hall of Fame. What does that mean to you? And then I'll have a follow up.

Fred McGriff 04:13

It says a lot, Marc, about Tampa. I mean, over the years, there's been so many great players that have made it to the big leagues. I mean, it's kind of staggering the numbers of players from the Tampa area got to be at least 50 or 60 big leaguers. And you still got guys now performing well though, the Preston Tuckers and so forth and McCullers with the Astros and so you got great weather here in Tampa. And so now I get to join Wade and the crew.

Marc Topkin 04:43

Gotcha. The other question, Fred is I know over the years, you've kind of bit your tongue when I and others would ask you what you thought of not getting in when players associated with performance enhancing drugs did get in. Now that you're in, do you have any further thoughts on that? Did you think you got treated unfairly or compared unfairly to guys who had an advantage or something?

Fred McGriff 05:03

Well, you know, Marc over the years, for me was always about consistency. And I know that, you know, I put a lot into this game, I worked hard to get to this point and going back like I was saying, to me to

just play one day in Major Leagues exceeded all expectations. And so I went out and I just played the game, like it was supposed to be played, and you went out there hard, every single day. And that's really all you can do. You control what you can control. If you can't control it, you, you go with the flow. And so over the years, you know, you have people coming up to you. And, you know, imagine you're going around town and you travel and everybody's like, Man, Fred, you know, you put up some good numbers and because I will say, okay, so if I hit 500, I'm a great player. And if I hit 493, I'm a good player, you know. And so now, but it's a great honor tonight to be elected to the Hall of Fame.

Marc Topkin 05:58

Thank you.

Jon Shestakofsky 06:00

Next up, Scott Miller, you can unmute yourself.

Scott Miller 06:06

Hey, Fred, congratulations. Tell me about what tonight is like, and what's the wait been like? You waited a long time for this.

Fred McGriff 06:17

Yeah, it's just it's a special moment. Scott, to call myself a Hall of Famer. Now it's Fred McGriff, Hall of Famer. And over the years, like, like I said, people coming up to you and so forth. And guys that you played against, come up to you and they say, Fred man, you know, you're a great player, you play, you went out there and play the game, right? And so forth. And you always have to like, ah, thank you. Appreciate it. You know what I mean, just keep going on. And so now, you know, so it's not the way now, I can, I don't have to hit I don't have to answer that question. Are you playing golf? The guys are people, you know, play a lot of charity, golf tournaments and so forth. And, you know, you get these guys, they Google you and everything, right. So they Google your your stats, your numbers, and so they come ready aimed like, hey you hit 493 home runs. And now, it's awesome.

Scott Miller 07:13

Yeah. Congrats Fred, see you tomorrow.

Fred McGriff 07:17

Appreciate it. Thank you, Scott.

Jon Shestakofsky 07:18

Next up, Gabe Burns. Gabe, you can unmute yourself.

Gabe Burns 07:25

Congrats, Fred.

Fred McGriff 07:27

Appreciate it, Gabe.

Gabe Burns 07:29

If you could just, could you share just a couple of your favorite memories from your time with the Braves and especially when it comes to that 95 season?

Fred McGriff 07:38

Well, my biggest moment is just opening night, my first day in Atlanta, when the stadium caught on fire and so forth because I think people forget that when I was in San Diego, we had a brawl so forth with the San Francisco Giants. And I had bad ribs, and so I get traded, and I can't play right away. And I was talking to Mr. Schuerholz. He's like, well Fred, when you come here you gotta be ready to play. So on purpose. I went to, I flew to Tampa from San Diego. I hung out in Tampa for a few days, and my ribs can heal up. And then I drive to Atlanta, but I left Tampa like 12 o'clock. So I figured by the time I get there six hour drive is no way I'm gonna be in the lineup. So I get there and I go into locker room. And my name is in the lineup. And I'm like, oh, boy, you know what I'm telling you. And sometimes the man upstairs, you know, just the stadium catches on fire. So now the game is delayed. So I got two hours and so forth for the trainers to work on my ribs and so on, so forth to end up playing. And then I'm hitting a home run my first night in Atlanta. And so that's stuff that you you don't forget, and the World Series is always special. Because as a team the Braves, kept coming up a little bit short. And so the pressure was always on us to get over the hump, and win and to finally win in 1995 it was awesome. And now just the great, great guys on that team the Maddux's, the Glavines, and Mark Lemkes and so forth.

Jon Shestakofsky 09:18

Thanks, Gabe. Next up, Ed Randall, you can unmute yourself.

Ed Randall 09:22

Thanks, Fred. Congratulations, uh, a wrong has been righted. There's this line of demarcation, as you know, about 500 home runs and you're in and you're at 493. But in 1994, you're having arguably your greatest, one of your greatest seasons. Season ends on August 11 and then the next season starts late, 144 games. You miss 66 games. There's no question about the fact you're going to hit seven home runs in 66 games. Have you ever thought back to that time, and if none of that had happened that you would have been in already?

Fred McGriff 10:01

Well I think about it and I think about those home runs that I hit that I thought were fair that the umpires called foul. Right down the foul line and they called them foul. If they called them fair, I would've been fine. No, because I just like I said, I always tell people, I mean, it's hard making it up to the big leagues, just hitting homeruns. And it ain't that easy and for me to have 493 homeruns. It was I mean, I was, I was very blessed. It was outstanding, getting cut from my high school team, you know, and then making it up to the big leagues. I mean, it was, it's been a beautiful ride.

Ed Randall 10:33

It's like Michael Jordan getting cut in high school, as well. And I just want to follow up for just a second. Did you ever fear that this was never going to happen?

Fred McGriff 10:46

Oh, no, I was gonna keep keep fighting and you just have to all you can do because I mean, with me so many things in life. You got the family, you got so many things going on. I don't have like, neck surgery, back surgery. Many things are going on, I'm playing golf, enjoying myself. So it's, it's all good. It's been it's been well worth the wait.

Ed Randall 11:09

Congratulations.

Fred McGriff 11:11

Appreciate it.

Jon Shestakofsky 11:15

Next up, John Shea. Go right ahead.

John Shea 11:20

Yeah, hi, Fred. Congratulations to you.

Fred McGriff 11:23

Thank you.

John Shea 11:24

Your career paralleled Barry Bonds' career. You played against him. You played with him on All-Star teams. Do you believe Barry Bonds should be in the Hall of Fame, Fred?

Fred McGriff 11:35

Honestly, right now, I'm going to just enjoy this evening. And we can discuss that. But tonight, you know, I have to enjoy the moment, I think give it some thought I haven't really given a whole lot of thought, but give it some thought.

John Shea 11:56

Yeah. I mean, you're a guy who waited a long time before you got in. I mean, you think it'll eventually happen with him? If not now?

Fred McGriff 12:03

You know, that's because that's that's up to right now. And it's up to the voters. You know, like myself, it was up to the it's up to the voters and the committee. And so, the same way again, it's gonna be up to the committees.

John Shea 12:16

Okay, Fred, what do you remember about the 1993 season beyond what you just recall from that first, you know, a few days, because it was you and the Giants down to the final game 104 to 103. Before the wildcard you're either a division winner, or you weren't going to play in the postseason? How intense was that? Memorable?

Fred McGriff 12:39

I thought it was the greatest pennant race. Probably maybe not the history, but it's, it's close because you had two great teams. And when I got traded to the Braves, we were 10 games out of first place, and we end up catching the Giants and the Giants were awesome. Will Clark and Kevin Mitchell and Barry and the rest of the guys. They're awesome. And so for me, it was like we would catch them and take over first, then we would kind of like start playing not to lose, then they'll take over first and they'll play not to lose and we'd catch them and then it came down to fortunate for us. The other teams, you know, the Dodgers beating the Giants last game of the season, Dusty Baker started Salomon Torres, and Mike Piazza and those guys, they killed Torres and think about it. What else being we played. Our last game was in Atlanta, and we were able to watch the last game on a big scoreboard after our game was over and we had won, but it was it was just two awesome teams.

John Shea 13:41

Well, thank you very much. Congrats again. Thank you.

Jon Shestakofsky 13:46

Next up, Bill, Francis. Bill. Go right ahead.

Bill Francis 13:51

Fred, congratulations,

Fred McGriff 13:53

Bill, appreciate it.

Bill Francis 13:55

You're joining a heck of a team in Cooperstown. I was wondering if you've ever been up here Cooperstown before.

Fred McGriff 14:01

Not yet. But yeah. I can make some plans to go there. It's awesome.

Bill Francis 14:08

I'm sure you must have seen Inductions and friends talk about it. What do you what's the vibe you're getting? You've the Hall of Fame and Cooperstown? The whole scene and stuff like that?

Fred McGriff 14:19

Oh, well, one of my buddies Mark Lempke, he tells me he's been there a couple of times. And it's awesome and so forth. And so I'll take his word for it. And we'll see how it goes. And over years they were trying to get me to come up there for autograph signings and so forth. They say that goes on. A lot of players go up there and sign autographs and I heard this. It's real tiny. I'm not sure the actual population of Cooperstown, but I say it's tiny. Not many hotels.

Bill Francis 14:50

You're going to be writing probably maybe your most important speech ever this summer for the Induction Ceremony.

Fred McGriff 14:57

Exactly. It's gonna be a beautiful thing.

Bill Francis 15:00

Thanks, Fred.

Fred McGriff 15:01

Appreciate it.

Jon Shestakofsky 15:04

1800 people in Cooperstown for the record.

Fred McGriff 15:06

Okay, 1800.

Jon Shestakofsky 15:10

Next Carroll Walton. Carroll, go right ahead.

Carroll Walton 15:14

Hey, congratulations, Freddy. I was Carrol Rogers last time I saw you, I think but I'm happy for you, man.

Fred McGriff 15:21

Appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Carroll Walton 15:23

Yeah. I I wondered having Maddux and Chipper both on the committee vote you in what did that mean to you?

Fred McGriff 15:31

I'm not sure. I think they say Chipper was ill. So I'm not sure if Chipper voted or not. I think, yeah, yeah. But he has a great, great. They're just great teammates over the years and, and good people, and it was there. They had they had it's tough being on that committee and having a vote. For the players. It's a tough job. And so I appreciate them and all the other voters for voting me in.

Carroll Walton 15:36

Okay. And have you, what did you hear from Limmer tonight? I'm sure you've heard from them.

Fred McGriff 16:03

Man, you know me and Limmer, we talk every day. But my phone's been blowing up. So I haven't talked to him. I haven't talked to him since eight o'clock. But I talked to him earlier in the day. And you know, we always were talking all the time about baseball, football. He was a he was my bud, man.

Carroll Walton 16:21

What was it about your friendship with him? Do you think that I mean, that seemed to come out of your time in Atlanta, something really special.

Fred McGriff 16:28

Oh, it was great in the sense where I played first, he played second base and so we had always constantly communicate all the time on the field. I'm shifting over here, so you need to go play over here. If this guy bunts, you go cover, I go to first lot of stuff like that. So over the years of just communicating and so forth, and we just developed a nice friendship.

Carroll Walton 16:53

Thanks, Fred.

Jon Shestakofsky 16:56

And just to follow up, Carol's note, Chipper Jones was originally scheduled to be a member of this Contemporary Baseball Era Committee but was replaced by Derrick Hall after being diagnosed with COVID. So Chipper was not here and was replaced by Derrick Hall of the Diamondbacks. Next up, Jerry Beach go right ahead.

Jerry Beach 17:20

Evening, Fred, congratulations, kind of earlier question. I wondered what you thought of your chances tonight when you saw the electorate with Chipper and Greg, obviously your teammates, Paul Beeston, who I believe you were with in Toronto, as well as three Hall of Famers who got in via, you know, Modern Day Veterans Committee, Jack Morris, Lee Smith, Alan Trammell. Three guys who'd have a special appreciation for how long does it take to get here and maybe a second look at careers that were overlooked? I wonder if you thought your chances were improved once you saw the electorate. Thank you.

Fred McGriff 17:53

Oh, thank you why I gave it a lot of thought. But the thing about it is, each voter they just get three votes, they get a max of three votes. And so you've tried to figure out the math and you're like, Okay, 16, but I gotta get 12 I gotta get what 75% of the vote to get in. So you still kind of like I think so. You know, I think I'm in good shape, but I just don't quite know. You know, like I said, it's tough for the voters to decide which way to go because you're dealing with some great players that are trying to vote on and so you think you're okay, but you just, you're not sure. And I did I get a lot, a lot, a lot, a lot of thinking.

Jerry Beach 18:39

That's great.

Jon Shestakofsky 18:40

We have time for just a few more questions. Next up, we'll have Jake Garegnani. Jake, go right ahead.

Jake Garegnagi 18:49

Hi, Fred. Congratulations, first of all, and I'm out here in San Diego. Just curious your thoughts of your time here in San Diego, maybe some of your favorite memories and what you have to say to the Padres fans. And congratulations again.

Fred McGriff 19:02

Thank you appreciate it. You know when I was at the Padres, we had a good ballclub and teams were scared to play us and it's so funny because we had Gary Sheffield and the great Tony, late Tony Gwynn and Benito Santiago, Gary Sheffield, so we just had a great team and then what hurt was they end up Tom Werner was the owner at the time and he said baseball ain't gonna work and everything and so then they they traded everybody away. Because they said baseball ain't gonna work in San Diego da-da-da. So they trade everyone away right? And so now about two or three years later, I'm reading the paper and they're like Tom Werner is a part owner of the Boston Red Sox. Wait, wait, wait, time out. I thought you said baseball wasn't gonna work and da-da-da-da-da now here you are, part owner of the Boston Red Sox and then on cuz when I got traded to the Braves, those guys they were coming up to me man, right? You know, y'all had a good club man. We were you know, we were scared to play you guys, you know because y'all were a good team and so that part hurt but now Padres are back. Now they had a great year, a great little run this past year and with the new stadium and everything and the fans were wild and crazy this year.

Jake Garegnagi 20:24

And just a quick follow up. What do you remember about the fans here when you were playing for the Padres?

Fred McGriff 20:30

You know, back in the day we played in Qualcomm, you know, so we were, we were playing in a football stadium back back back in the day that they converted, you know, for baseball and so forth. But now, that new stadium is very nice. It was great. You know, Qualcomm was it was nice, but it had its day. It was time for a new stadium. So, but San Diego was awesome, great weather. Can't beat the weather.

Jon Shestakofsky 20:58

Next up, Jay Cohen go right ahead.

Jay Cohen 21:04

Hi, Fred. Congratulations. I'm wondering is you know this is this is this hall of fame honor is added to your legacy if you have any thoughts for something else that you've been known for all this years with the Tom Emanski video is that what is your thoughts on the enduring legacy of that commercial and video?

Fred McGriff 21:23

Now, you know, come Cooperstown I got to wear my blue hat, you know, for the my Tom Emanski hat in Cooperstown. Now, see, that video is gonna make a revive now it's gonna it's gonna come back. Because I mean, I was, I was amazed at that video stayed on for 20 years. And in that clubhouse every single night, it was coming on, and I may be in a training room or something like that. And the minute they come home, they head out the training room, you know, because because the guys are gonna ride me every, every single day for so for 20 years, I had to deal with that video and think about it. I tell people all the time, I never seen a video. Never seen it.

Jay Cohen 22:03

Thanks, Fred. Congratulations again. Thank you.

Jon Shestakofsky 22:06

And our last question will come from Robert Grayson. Go right ahead.

Robert Grayson 22:13

Yes, Fred, congratulations.

Fred McGriff 22:15

Appreciate it.

Robert Grayson 22:16

I wanted to ask you, you seem to get traded to different teams, and you were like the piece of the puzzle they were looking for? Did that put an extra pressure on you going to those teams and knowing that you are the guy that could make the difference?

Fred McGriff 22:36

Yes, at times, you know, and I look back over my career and the one hurt me the most was getting traded to the Cubbies, you know, because I wanted to be on that team that when that, you know, that Cubby World Series that they had wanted for years and years, and we didn't quite pull it off. And so that because that, you know, got traded to Atlanta, and we end up winning the World Series there. And we lost in 96. But getting traded to the Cubbies you know, because you know, because if you want a World Series in, in Chicago, you it's you're set for the rest of your life. And so that one kind of hurt me a little bit to not help them over the hump. But I was I went out there. And like I said, it's just tonight's a great honor. But just to go out there every day and just play the game like it should be played. And try to be consistent.

Robert Grayson 23:25

I just want to follow up with that. That 94 season. Do you ever look back at that? And, you know, feel what what could have been. Do you think about that? Or you just just move forward?

Fred McGriff 23:41

Oh, yeah, you think about it here and there at times. Think about because I was having an outstanding year, then and then the strike. But also, you know, I was gonna be a free agent that year in 1994 and then so once that they wiped out the whole season. And then spring training started late. And so it

wasn't a good time to be a free agent, man, but so you think about a little bit but other than that. You always say you just got to keep going forward and just keep looking ahead.

Robert Grayson 24:15

Thanks so much.

Fred McGriff 24:17

Appreciate it.

Jon Shestakofsky 24:19

Well, Fred, thank you so much for joining us. We do look forward to celebrating your exceptional career at the 2023 *Induction Ceremony* which will take place on July 23rd in Cooperstown, thanks to all the media members for joining us on this call. And as one final note, Fred McGriff will be available to credentialed media here in person in San Diego tomorrow at 4pm Pacific Time at the Manchester Grand Hyatt in the MLB Winter Meetings work room, which will be the Grand Ballroom so we hope to see you there and we hope to see everyone here in Cooperstown. Again, congratulations, Fred.