

# Pat Hughes Zoom Call

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**Jon Shestakofsky** 00:06

Well, hello everyone and welcome to the National Baseball Hall of Fame's conference call with Pat Hughes. My name is Jon Shestakofsky, Vice President of Communications and Education at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. And as you all know, moments ago, it was announced by the Hall of Fame that Pat Hughes was selected as the 2023 Ford C. Frick Award winner for broadcasting excellence. Congratulations to you, Pat, and thank you for joining us on this call. Pat will be formally honored in Cooperstown at Hall of Fame Weekend's Awards Presentation on Saturday, July 22 2023, along with John Lowe, the 2023 BBWAA Career Excellence Award winner. Now before we open up for questions, I'll turn it over to Pat for a brief opening remarks, Pat?

**Pat Hughes** 01:00

Well, first of all, congratulations to John Lowe, I saw that he was named the Sports Writer Award go into the Hall of Fame. And I actually called him. I talk every once in a while about maybe once or twice every offseason. And I congratulated him with a brief call. And he answered on an email and got right back to me. And so he's a special guy, and it's well deserved. He was a great writer and a great person. So I'm happy for him.

**Jon Shestakofsky** 01:33

That's wonderful. And are you happy for yourself? How do you feel?

**Pat Hughes** 01:38

I'm excited. It's one of the great days of my life. When I was lucky enough to be inducted into the Cubs Hall of Fame back in September, I made the point of saying, who wouldn't want to be in the Cubs Hall of Fame. And I feel that same way today, who would not want to be in Cooperstown recognized for their broadcasting career? So yes, I'm elated to say the least.

**Jon Shestakofsky** 02:07

That's great. Thank you, Pat. We're now going to take some questions from the call participants. So if you would like to ask a question of Pat Hughes, please click reactions at the bottom of your screen and then click the raise hand button. And the first question, we'll go to Craig Muder here in Cooperstown? Craig, go right ahead. We're having trouble hearing Craig, so let's go quickly, we'll go to Paul Sullivan and get back to Craig.

**Paul Sullivan** 02:44

Hi, Pat. Congratulations,

**Pat Hughes** 02:47

How you doing?

**Paul Sullivan** 02:48

Great. Much better now.

**Pat Hughes** 02:52

Now you didn't have to get all dressed up for this thing.

**Paul Sullivan** 02:54

I know. I know, I thought, what should I wear? And then I thought, well, I'll get a t-shirt that was recently ironed.

**Pat Hughes** 03:02

And the shirt says?

**Paul Sullivan** 03:05

Boise Art Museum? Solid.

**Pat Hughes** 03:08

An expensive item, I'm guessing.

**Paul Sullivan** 03:10

Well, you know, if you're in Boise, Pat, just mention my name and things will probably work out for the best for you.

**Pat Hughes** 03:17

I'm sure they will. I'll keep it in mind.

**Paul Sullivan** 03:21

Um, just being on the ballot before and not making it. I mean, how did you react to that, and does that make this even sweeter, or does that really matter to you that it was that difficult the last couple of times?

**Pat Hughes** 03:38

This is one of those things. So you just hope it happens in your lifetime. And I think naturally you'd like to get in as soon as possible. But it's it's nothing that you're ashamed of. Because just to be a finalist for an award this lofty is a great accomplishment. So you don't feel any shame or any bitterness. You just think well, maybe next time and that's the way I tried to think about it. And I just kept working hard. And I tell people you know we have such a good situation here in Chicago with Ron Coomer and Zack Zaidman and myself on Cubs radio and then I do some Cubs television and work with people like Jim Deshaies and Rick Sutcliffe and Ryan Dempster and Doug Glanville a game or two. They're all such good guys. It's so much fun to broadcast the games at Wrigley and the audience we have is incredible with the Cub fans. So I'm really just a pretty happy guy doing my job day in and day out. And you know, you don't think about the Hall of Fame. I didn't think about the Cubs Hall of Fame. Because it's

something so big that you think you know what there's a strong likelihood you're never going to get into those things. So why spend a lot of time thinking about it? You just work hard, just work hard and sometimes good things happen.

**Paul Sullivan** 04:57

And were you able to even go to the Hall of Fame. I mean, you're usually working during that weekend. Have you been there?

**Pat Hughes** 05:04

Well, I've been there a couple of times. Yeah. I was there when Ron Santo was inducted. I was there for a Cubs Hall of Fame Game back in 2008. It got rained out by the way. We started the day and as I recall, Toronto, Canada flew to Cooperstown sat around there for about four hours, rain out. Now you get on the plane again and go down to Tampa. It was a long day, as I recall, and no game but it's a special place. It's a quaint little town. It really is tiny. I looked up the population of Cooperstown the other day, it says 1807. That's it. But it's paradise. It's baseball heaven. And it's where every ballplayer and every broadcaster and writer aspires to possibly end up someday.

**Jon Shestakofsky** 06:01

Well, Said, Paul. Next up, we'll go to Jeff Agresti. Jeff, go right ahead.

**Jeff Agresti** 06:09

Thank you. Pat, congratulations. All the best. It's just such wonderful news. Can you talk about what you... let me start over. What is it you've always tried to bring to a broadcast? You know, technically as a broadcaster, and just from an entertainment standpoint, information standpoint, what has always been your goal in calling a baseball game?

**Pat Hughes** 06:31

Jeff, I think really good question. You try to be true to your radio audience. I'm kind of old school in that regard. I've done television, but I prefer radio. It's more fun. You do exactly what you want to do. Nobody is telling you to do this, or you don't have to follow what's on the screen. So that freedom I love. You try to prepare. I try not to kill a broadcast with too many stats. And there are so many statistics these days that are available. It's easy to overdo it. I try consciously to not use too many. Ernie Harwell told me one time he said when you use a statistic, try to tell a story with it. So for example, the guy has been a red hot hitter. He's hitting 390 Over the last 11 games. Now there's a statistic and you can easily see that for the last 10 or 11 games. He's been hitting the ball sharply hitting 390. So instead of just laying a bunch of numbers out there, give some stats, but not too many. Make sure to get Ron Coomer involved. Ronnie is sometimes more prepared than I am. He always has done scouting reports on the opposing pitcher that the Cubs are going to play that day. So I always say Ron, what's the plan for the Cubs hitters? How do they get their hits against Adam Wainwright of the Cardinals tonight, so always get Ron involved. I believe in description on every single play: fly ball to right caught by Suzuki 10 feet off the line and 15 feet shy of the warning track. I want you to be able to see exactly where he was when he made the play. So description, some statistics, work with your partners as well as you can. I feel like my job is to get Ron Coomer's knowledge on the air every day. And that's one of the one of the aspects that is involved in doing play by play I think. And then there's also the element of fun,

sometimes silly fun, play on words, stories about a play that just happened that reminds you of a play that happened 10 years ago at Yankee Stadium, or a Ron Santos story that you know, sparks a laugh or a moment that will make you giggle. So I believe in having fun. I love going to the ballpark and that has been the case for me since I was about seven or eight years old. I still remember the first big league game I saw Felipe Alou of the San Francisco Giants hit a grand slam to right centerfield against the Pirates. I think it was a Saturday afternoon. Many many years later, then Felipe is managing the Montreal Expos. He's at the batting cage, and I had to go up and tell him Felipe my first big league game I ever saw, you hit a grand slam before I even finished the sentence, he looks at me with a little smile and says slider. He remembered the exact pitch all these years later. So anyway, I love going to the ballpark. And it's an amazing way to go through life and I'm just very, very fortunate.

**Jeff Agresti** 09:35

If I could follow up you mentioned Ron Santo. And as far as Cubs fans are concerned, that's where you really became one of their own and your connection with Ron and it was such great entertainment not even just forget the game just the two of you interacting was so entertaining. How did that come about? How did you guys click so well?

**Pat Hughes** 09:57

I would say it was just kind of a natural evolution, you know, you have a lot of time when you're a baseball announcer when you and your partner are on the air live. Games these days are averaging I think over 3 hours, 3 hours and 10 minutes. Even back in the day, they were still 2 and a half to 2 hours and 45 minutes every single day. Now if it's a good ballgame, Jeff, you focus on the action and the pinch hitters and the bullpen guys and the strategy is he going to steal a bag or they're going to bunt here, they're going to try and hit and run whatever. But if it's 11-2 in the seventh inning, unlike a fan who has the option of just clicking to another station on their radio dial, we are there until the end. So at that point, as my old basketball announcer Alan Maguire used to say, Pat, it's time to go to plan B. And Plan B would be you know, telling stories, laughing telling jokes, teasing each other, teasing each other about your clothing, or your food or your spending habits or whatever it might be. And I've been very lucky with both Ron Santo and Ron Coomer. I've been pretty lucky with guys named Ron, because it seems like there's always something that you can bring up and I try not to rehearse any of those things. People think that we rehearse these lines and these stories, no. Part of the fun, part of the terrifying part of broadcasting is that you have no idea what you're going to say, I find it equal parts terrifying and exhilarating. And because you're adlibbing the whole thing, it's all spontaneous. And I think if you can have fun under those circumstances, I think the audience likes it, and they appreciate that.

**Jeff Agresti** 11:45

That's awesome. Congratulations, Pat. We're so happy for you.

**Pat Hughes** 11:48

Thanks, Jeff.

**Jon Shestakofsky** 11:50

Just as a reminder, if you do want to ask a question, please click reactions at the bottom of your screen and then the raise hand button. I do have a question that came in via email from Craig Muder, who was

unable to get his microphone to work. So asking on behalf of Craig. Pat, you've always expressed your love of history. Can you put into perspective what it means to now be in the same fraternity with folks like Mel Allen, Vin Scully, Harry Caray?

**Pat Hughes 12:22**

I wasn't real nervous, Jon until you just said that sentence. No, I, again, it hasn't sunk in yet. I'm so pleased and proud. I know, I worked very hard, but sort of a lot of other announcers. And there's so many talented guys out there. To think that I was the winner any year this year. And, you know, for the rest of my life, this is going to be a special day a special feeling for me, but no, I, I just, it's almost hard to put into words. And I speak with words I live by being able to express myself and put things into words. This is a challenge because it is so much beyond what you could ever realistically expect. In a career when you start out. Here's the story. I was thinking about this. You get something like this and you go back over the years, I was doing a California League game, San Jose at Lodi, in Lodi, California. There was one media member attending the game. Me and I was doing a tape delay broadcast it was going to be played on a small station in Los Gatos, California The next day, the press box consisted of a card table that had a wobbly leg and a chair. That was the press box. And that was me broadcasting with a tape recorder and my scorecard all nine innings. I'm doing radio, I'm doing play by play. I'm doing color, I'm doing commercials. And it's just very humble. But that kind of background and practice is invaluable to you. You feel like if you can do this and make it sound even reasonably good. It'll help you later on. So I did a lot of practicing. I don't take any game lightly. I never have, and I hope I never do.

**Jon Shestakofsky 14:15**

That's great. One more. Craig says thank you. And if there's time for one last question, we have it but if not up, I see Paul's looking to ask one more question. Paul, go right ahead.

**Paul Sullivan 14:30**

Pat, hopefully you have many more years left of this. I don't know what your thinking is as far as an end game for you. But how? How are you looking at that? And also, how difficult is it when you're? I mean, obviously Cubs aren't in like the upper atmosphere as they were a couple of years ago. How hard is it to do a team that's kind of rebuilding as opposed to a team that's contending all season?

**Pat Hughes 14:58**

So before I answer. 10 minutes ago, since then, have you combed your hair?

**Paul Sullivan 15:04**

Uh, no. No. Should I?

**Pat Hughes 15:06**

None of my business. It was an observation. I don't know when I'm gonna retire. It may not even be my decision. I just know that I'm happy right now I try to take care of myself. And I have a great situation. Again, Ron Coomer, Zack Zaidman, Mitch Rosen, Crane Kenney, Tom Ricketts, they all are great to work for and with and Wrigley Field and the fans and the Cubs organization and the players, there would be no reason for me to quit right now. I enjoy it too much. So I'm 67. I know that I won't last

forever. But as long as I feel like I'm reasonably effective and relevant as a broadcaster, I'm going to keep on going. If I start making too many mistakes, I'll know. And then I'll have to step away.

**Paul Sullivan** 15:56

And how about broadcasting a good team as opposed to a rebuilding team.

**Pat Hughes** 16:01

Well, I've mentioned that a little bit ago, I want the team to be good. It's much more exciting and enjoyable to cover a winning team, a contending team, a team that could go deep, maybe even all the way and win the World Series. That's a given. Every announcer dreams of that. But even if they're not, you still have a job to do. And it's a challenging job. And it's a great job, and I love the game. So even when they do not win, you still have a job to do, you're being paid very well to do that job. And you owe that to your audience and to yourself and your family. So I don't really have a major problem. I want the team to win. Don't get me wrong, but win or lose I'm still going to approach it pretty much the same way day after day after day.

**Paul Sullivan** 16:01

Thank you.

**Pat Hughes** 16:33

And last but not least, we will go to David J. Halberstam? David, you can unmute yourself.

**David J. Halberstam** 16:59

Okay, can you hear me?

**Jon Shestakofsky** 17:01

Yes, indeed?

**David J. Halberstam** 17:02

How are you? Congratulations, Pat. Delighted for you.

**Pat Hughes** 17:07

Thanks. Thanks for the great column you put out every single week, sometimes twice a week. Thank you.

**David J. Halberstam** 17:12

You know, I enjoy doing that. And I do it on a total voluntary basis. And I couldn't be in a better retirement, if you will.

**Pat Hughes** 17:21

Good for you.

**David J. Halberstam** 17:22

Yeah, I was gonna ask you a couple of questions, if I may. One of them is really where you got your start. And I know that Bob Uecker. You worked with him and he could be a tough, tough sort of taskmaster, if you will. And what did you learn from him?

**Pat Hughes** 17:45

So much, so much about baseball, it's so big league baseball, Bob was the first ex-player that I spent five hours a day because you figure you get to the booth about two hours before the game and you get your scorecards, scorebook ready, and you do your reading of notes about pitchers and how they did their last time out and how have the hitters done against the pitcher historically, and things like that. So you're there two hours before the game, then the game is three hours. So that's five hours worth of knowledge that you have a chance to absorb and acquire and register working with a guy like Uecker and I tried to learn as much as I possibly could. But just little things. I mean, he was a catcher and he caught in the 1960s in the National League, which was an amazing era of big league ball when you think about the great players with Maz and Aaron and Clemente and Koufax and Gibson and Marichal and, and Ernie Banks and Ron Santo and Billy Williams not to leave people out, but it was a great great league, the National League of the 60s. Uecker caught for six of those years. But working with a pitcher to try to get a batter out. How do you set him up for a pitch outside? Why does a runner at second base get picked off when a guy trying to bunt bunts at a pitch and misses it? It's because from second base, you're trying to get a jump going to third in the event that the bunt is laid down and if you're not careful, you can get picked off at second base. But just little baseball things and I feel like working with Uecker I learned a tremendous amount. And I still feel like I learned every day since I did not play the game. I will never have the knowledge of a Bob Uecker or Ron Coomer my great partner now because they played the game. This is this is how they had to make a living grinding out big league careers is a very difficult thing. Not that I would know. But I can only imagine I was good enough to play college basketball. And it's hard to play college basketball when you're not a scholarship guy. When you were in high school, you could drive to the bucket and you know figure out a way to maneuver around the big guy and throw something up against the glass and maybe it goes in. In college that shot gets blocked. Now you got to go to plan B and C and D. So, these guys know so much more about the game than I ever will, that I still feel like I learn. And you're always learning, especially in a sport like baseball, which constantly is evolving itself. It's a different game now than it was when I started and a much different game than it was 100 years ago.

**David J. Halberstam** 20:23

And, John, if I may ask one more question.

**Jon Shestakofsky** 20:26

Sure and then we'll wrap it up, David.

**David J. Halberstam** 20:27

Okay, so the question would be, one we can't have any meeting or any presentation like it's not presentation, but we can you know, what announcing the formal winner is, without mentioning the death of Vin Scully. He was alive a year ago, when the current winner was named. And you know, that's important. And most importantly, after that would be how do you feel about guys you grew up with you always told me about Bill King, a member of our, our Ford Frick list of a list of winners. So question is,

how do you who did you grow up with? What little things did you learn from a guy like King? And, you know, remembering Scully. And that's it.

**Pat Hughes 21:28**

Those are great, great questions, David. And I love both of those guys love listening to them, and felt honored to know them and they knew my name and they'd say, hey, Pat, how you doing? Bill King? I would call him up in the offseason, we talked for a half hour he loved jazz music. But what I learned from Bill King, the descriptive radio call, his great vocabulary, the rapid-fire delivery, always under control, never getting too excited. Knowing not to have too many, what you would call peak moments on a broadcast reserve, those real special moments for maybe two or three per game, if possible. You don't want to get excited in the first inning and act like you're winning the World Series on a on a play on the first inning. Save the dramatic climactic moments for the eighth and ninth inning if possible. So those are some of the things I learned from Bill but the preparation as well. And just his delivery, always under control and talked quickly, but clearly, and that's a gift and an art. Vin Scully is the greatest baseball announcer ever lived across the board, and no one else is even close. I learned a lot from Vin. I would listen to him when I was a kid in the Bay Area. He was on 670 AM KFI, you couldn't hear the station, David, in the daytime. You could only pick it up at night, which was a quirk of the 1960s radio broadcasting. But I love listening to Vinny and just the way he would deliver a game and one thing I learned from him would be the base runners on a three run double. He would not just say one run in, two runs in, three runs in. He would say Wills is in, Gilliam is in, here comes Davis they all score on a three-run double by Frank Howard. And I thought now that's really good. He concentrated on who the base runners were so that he could identify each man as he scored on a three-run double, just a little thing like that. But it was a joy at Dodger Stadium to walk into the booth and know that you were broadcasting the same game that Vin Scully was broadcasting right next door and, and he was nice to me and he would always give you that big smile and hey Pat, how are you? How are the Cubs doing? And he couldn't have been nicer and I wish that he was alive. Bob Costas though, Bob told me a while back he said one of the coolest things about winning the Ford C. Frick Award was you would get a call from Vin Scully and he would say congratulations, welcome to The Club. Well bless Bob Costas' heart about an hour ago after the announcement today. He said congratulations, Pat, on a text, richly deserved, welcome to the club. Yeah, I called him I called Bobby right away and what a great guy and there's never been a more talented broadcaster than Bob Costas in my opinion in radio, television sportscasting he's, he's in a class by himself.

**David J. Halberstam 24:45**

Without a doubt, never groped for a word that he doesn't the Scully obviously never did Musburger to a degree, but we can get into this all day because we love it but, congratulations,

**Pat Hughes 25:01**

David. Thank you.

**Jon Shestakofsky 25:03**

Thanks, David and incredible stories incredible career path. Thank you for joining us on a very special day and once again, the 2023 Ford C. Frick Award winner Pat Hughes. We look forward to celebrating his career during Hall of Fame weekend this July. Hope you all can join us.



**Pat Hughes** 25:21

Oh, no Jon! In my second hour....

**Jon Shestakofsky** 25:27

You'll have that coming up with the Cubs, the larger Cubs media group coming up later, so save something for them.

**Pat Hughes** 25:35

Okay, thanks, Jon.

**Jon Shestakofsky** 25:38

Thanks, everyone, for joining us.