

Fred McGriff and Scott Rolen Media Availability

Sat, Jul 22, 2023

Fred McGriff

Thank you, thank you, and I'll start off by saying don't ask me about my golf today. It wasn't very good.

Fred McGriff

It's beautiful. I'm feeling real good right now. Later tonight and in the morning, that may be a different story. But right now, it's awesome. Just a great blessing and being here with Scott. It's awesome.

Scott Rolen

Getting nervous? Now that goes without saying, but it's been an unbelievable experience. The whole Hall of Fame, everybody's been great to our families. What Fred said us going in we talked about it a few times, our families are linked forever at this point, which is great. We really appreciate that.

Scott Rolen

I wouldn't know how to do that. I just enjoyed all the sports, you know, playing I mean, I wrestled I ran track. I played basketball, baseball, football tennis like in an organized fashion, not just running up and down and playing. But we spent our whole childhood and everything outside. We always played the next sport, and I firmly believe that one transitions into the next one sports wise, whether you're moving laterally or strength-wise or whatever it is. So I'm a big proponent. I know it's hard today and I think I can speak for Fred that the travel baseball really wasn't a thing that was going on, so we didn't have that pressure. But I have a 15 year old right now and we're pretty conscious of making sure that we're out playing golf and he's playing tennis and we're playing some basketball and some baseball because we don't just go down that one channel.

Fred McGriff

When I was growing up, little league cost about \$35. Travel ball now \$3,500.

Scott Rolen

Well, the first five years, there wasn't much pressure at all. The first year, you know, you're trying to trying to get to a spot, and I told some stories that my son was paying attention but he was younger, and we were just trying to hang on, trying to hang on. We were at basketball practice actually and sitting there waiting to go in and we heard the first time through I was at the, what was it 10 point something or seven point something or whatever it was. Oh my, you know, gave a high five and went into basketball practice. So that kind of feeds into that, too. But, my son the older he got, the more he paid attention to it. So it became a process that I actually quite enjoyed because he was following it and he would get texts from his friends and different things and tell me where I was. I didn't follow it that closely, but he was always telling me. So anytime you can do something like that with your son, your family, it's worth it.

Scott Rolen

This last one was. Yeah, there was a fighting chance on this one. Obviously, thank you, everybody that that I get this opportunity. But this last one, it caught up to me really the day of I guess when I thought it might be a real thing. Chest gets a little tight. But then you hear the news and there it all goes.

Scott Rolen

Well, I was at my house. I had my whole family at my brother's house, and they were waiting on us there, and we're just a four wheeler ride away. So I was at my house with my family, my wife and two kids, and we got the phone call there. Phone rings and says National Baseball HOF on it and that's pretty cool. Trying to screenshot, and I thought I better not do that. So they're like answer it. So it was great. We really had a great time.

Fred McGriff

Honestly, like if it's a playoff game or during the regular season, you're fine every night for the most part. But when you get into the playoffs and the World Series, that first inning, you've got the butterflies and so forth. And then once you get that ground ball hit to your or you have that first at bat, now it's just another baseball game. So I'm pretty sure tomorrow, you know, even later tonight, you started getting butterflies. I'll rehearse and go over my speech again. And then once I board that bus to head over to the Sports Center tomorrow, it's going to start like, 'Oh boy, Fred'. It's almost game time.

Fred McGriff

Without a doubt. When I was growing up less than a mile from the complex and everything, so being able to go to the games. And Tampa Tarpons the minor league team, they played it at Lopez field, so getting free tickets to go to those games. And so at that time, the Big Red Machine, I mean they were it. They're winning championships and so forth. So to be able to watch them play, learn, hang out, try to get bats and balls and so forth, etc. It was just great.

Scott Rolen

Well, everybody's been phenomenal, first of all. I know that I'm sitting on the back patio pretty starstruck with everybody that's walking around. And everybody's been cordial, welcoming and giving some advice. They've been great. Jim Bob Thome was here last night and we hung out a little bit, so he's always a good icebreaker.

Fred McGriff

I'm probably gonna get in trouble, but Wade gave me like a serious hug and Wade wanted to kiss me.

Scott Rolen

Wade kissed me, too.

Fred McGriff

I talked to Dave Winfield. We had lunch, and we ended up having a two-hour conversation. And we were talking about hitting and so forth. And he was like, Yeah, Fred, our approach was similar because you stood off the plate, and I stood off the plate. And we feel like yeah they talk about Ohtani and

everything. But me coming out of college, I was a stud pitcher, getting drafted by I think three different sports and everything and I could do it all. I was a stud pitcher, but when I got to the Padres, they asked me. I had to make a decision. I chose to be a hitter, but man, I could do it all. And so it was like two hours. Finally I was like I think I better get the bill and try to sign it. It was great.

Scott Rolen

I don't think it's hard to be a decent teammate. We just try to be ourselves and treat people well and respect the game, respect people and our opponents and whatever. And as you go, you just kind of try to keep your eyes open, ears open, keep your mouth shut and see where you land in the game and see how long you can stay in the game. That's really what you're after. But as you transition into later spots in Toronto and Cincinnati, a little different role picked up. I just tried to be honest with people about it's okay, this game is hard. Like it's really hard, and I was really bad today and it's okay. But let's just tell the truth. Tell it. Show it. We have a job to do. Our job is to come out here. Our job is not to hit doubles, or home runs. Someone's bet that we will hit doubles or home runs. Our job is to prepare, go out and play the game. Take your position, go to the post and be accountable. That's how I viewed it. And when guys were asking me, that just that's my opinion and you don't have to take it but that's what I saw.

Fred McGriff

And myself, when I came up to the big leagues with the Toronto Blue Jays, I had great veteran ballplayers. Jesse Barfield, Lloyd Mosby, George Bell and those guys. And they taught you how to be a professional, go out there and play the game. And so that's what I tried to instill on younger players. Play the game the right way and lead by example. Go out there and play. Because a lot of guys laugh, but they're on the bench talking all kinds of noise and screaming, and then they go out there and they don't do nothing. So just go out and play the game right. Play the game as a professional. I laugh watching games now on TV, because now with social media you got guys they're doing stuff just to get on social media. Let me see. Let me see if I can do this and that. It's a whole different game now. But when I was coming up, it's like, treat people like you want to be treated. Go out there and play the game and play it hard. Play it the right way. And so you try to teach that to the younger guys.

Scott Rolen

What's social media?

Scott Rolen

I feel like I've always cherished my time in Philadelphia. I still have lifelong friends that came from Philadelphia. I have people here that I've invited, you know, my neighbors in Philadelphia, John Brasier. People have been texting me back and forth. So I still have a ton of friends there. I truly believe I learned to play the game there. You have to be real honest out on the field and real genuine with your effort when you're playing the game there. And there's a toughness instilled in you to go out there and play it the right way and play it hard. And physically, that just kind of carried me through my career in different spots, so it's as good a spot as... Where I started is the best spot for me.

Scott Rolen

You were in the middle of your prime right there in Atlanta and going through. So I was always enamored by him. Just how strong he was. How he threw the bat head. We'd get to first base and I'd

be scared to death and he'd talk to me and I'm just like 'Oh no.' But I always looked up to Fred and his career for sure.

Fred McGriff

I just think just watching Scott across the diamond. Played the game right. If you hit it to third base, you're gonna be out. He was gonna make all the plays and just came in with big hits. He was a professional. Just one of them who played the game like it should be played. No hot doggin'. And when he hits a home run, he was flying around those bases.

Scott Rolen

Yeah, I learned about the process a little more in the last two years and what's going on. I'm certainly not up on a lot of the metrics and numbers and the advanced stats and stuff. But apparently they helped me, so I love them. But that's how I played I felt like. I'm not saying that I was consistent, but I tried to play on both sides of the baseball. I tried to run the bases. I always felt like base running is an offensive weapon. You know, that's how we were taught in Philadelphia, that you run the bases. That is offense. And we were taught you drive runs in or you score them. That's what offense looks like to us at the time and to go out and give your best at-bat and try to put the ball in play. Don't take it out in the field. And like you said try to be consistent. Hal McRae always told me to try to put something in the basket every day. No matter what it was, put something in the basket that they can't take away from you. Whether it's a walk or an RBI or a run scored or whatever, do something every day and then tally it up at the end of the year. That helped me.

Scott Rolen

Albert Pujols? I think he's got a chance. Going back, I know there's a case for Bobby Abreu. He was just a solid right fielder. You know, he just made the plays out there. He threw guys out. He was clean really, really strong hitter. I'm on the spot a little bit, so I don't want to miss anybody, but he I know he comes to mind. Larry Walker is in. But he was always one I always say I thought he was the best player I'd ever seen. Just the way he played the game, how he ran the bases, threw ball, his instincts. And I don't know anybody that hit the ball that hard, you know? So that would have been a guy right there.

Scott Rolen

Abreu is what we're talking about. He was a consistent player. He came out and he played every day and put the numbers up. I mean, you got Yadi who speaks for himself behind there. And then Albert's one of the best hitters that's ever played the game I would think offensively, power-wise and average-wise. So those are pretty easy ones. The conversation is I think about Bobby and he was real consistent, great player. I'd love to see him in.

Fred McGriff

I gotta say I got a few teammates already in Hall of Fame. But for me, Gary Sheffield. Sheffield, he put fear into many of pitchers. When he was up at bat, I think most players will tell you and it's like, 'Oh boy, I don't know where he's gonna hit this ball at.' But he was very good hitter man. Good player.

Fred McGriff

At the Randy Johnson exhibit.

Scott Rolen

I was scared of him at the photography exhibit.

Fred McGriff

When I faced Randy, because being a left-handed hitter, so left on left, you were telling yourself, 'I'm not gonna let this guy hit me in the head tonight.' I'm gonna get somebody tomorrow night. But tonight, I'm not gonna be in the hospital tonight. But you also know that the game is on TV, so you're like just try to make contact, put it in play. So if you do make contact, no matter if you hit it to the second baseman, you're running down to second base like, 'Yes.' They can get me out, it's alright. He didn't get me, I'll get somebody tomorrow.

Scott Rolen

Yeah, I think it's pretty easy, too. Randy and I were talking last night about some stuff and my son was there so it was a great conversation. And there's no telling how many times Randy struck me out but he's throwing that slider on my back knee, and I told my teammate at one point, I said 'I'm not buckling. I'm not.' I just keep swinging. He hit me with 97 on the kneecap and I'm like, 'Man, I've gotta figure something out.' So my whole approach off of Randy, and I told my son this, was he's got to get me out four times. He's gonna be out there all four times. He's gotta get me out four times, and I'm gonna try to put the barrel on one ball today and ruin his night. And we'll see how it works out. So I hit a few home runs off him and a lot of strikeouts. But that's was a game plan that was not very winning.

Fred McGriff

I never feared a right-handed pitcher because the balls always coming in to you and you can see the ball very good. So it wasn't a right-hander but lefty, okay different ball game.

Fred McGriff

Yes, I mean at the time, it was great coming out of high school, getting drafted by them was outstanding. My first year I had rookie ball down in Bradenton, Florida. My coaches were Mickey Vernon, Joe Pepitone, Hopalong Cassidy. He played football, but he was tight with Mr. Steinbrenner and so those were my three coaches. And just the coaches that the Yankees had, that I started out with, it was outstanding because George always had some great ex-coaches and ex-players coming around. Then they had the strike in '84, something like that. When they started the season back, they invited the rookie ball team up to play the Yankees right before they was gonna get ready to start the season again. So that was my first time, here I am growing up in Tampa, Florida, and we're going to the Bronx. And that was a serious eye opener for me coming from Florida and then taking that bus to the Bronx like, 'Oh, really?' I've heard about the Bronx. I'm 17 years old. This is what they're talking about. So it was awesome. But that little short porch in right field, that probably would have been a beautiful thing for me. But still, that stadium they got now, oh boy. That is really a little bandbox they got now. That place this unbelievable.

Scott Rolen

We're not finished with it yet so I think there's still a lot to do. But that party last night was pretty cool. It was laid back and that Jane threw and with Randy's photography there. You have your whole family

here, you know everybody here. You think it's gonna be a family reunion, you know those are hectic. And what I didn't anticipate was how calm and how well done everything was. I don't mean it like that. But it really was. We were able to sit and relax and enjoy time with my mom, my dad, my brother, sister, everybody was here. Just got off the course playing with my son in the golf tournament and I'm thinking 'Oh, we're gonna rush through it.' But I was trying to be conscious of, we're not going to rush through this. Let's play golf. Let's really go out and play golf together. And so I played my brother, brother-in-law and my son. So we came straight here. And when you think of everything's going to be hectic, I think if we try to slow it down a little bit. And I think I've been able to slow it down a little bit, but I really enjoyed those experiences and there's plenty more to come. I will try to, I don't know if we're gonna be able to slow this one down tomorrow but tonight too, with the parade and party, we're going to enjoy it.

Fred McGriff

Yeah, because everybody tells you before you get here, and you're talking to Hall of Famers on the phone, or they may text you and so forth, but they're telling you, 'Look forward to the parade.' And then tomorrow, and they all keep saying, 'Just enjoy yourself, enjoy it. Take it all in.' And then they say, 'Oh, next year, you're gonna love it. Come back next year. It's gonna be great.' So just deal with it. Just go ahead. And so I'm looking forward to the parade tonight and then the party after.

Fred McGriff

It was awesome because I get the chance to play, at the time, you didn't have the Tampa Bay Rays. We didn't have the Miami Marlins or Florida Marlins. So Atlanta was the closest thing to my home. So being able for my parents to have a better opportunity to see me play a lot more, it was great for me at a time. And then joining a great team with great players, great management. So everything about the Braves and that's when they were just getting hot. And they lost a couple of championships. But just the quality of people. Bobby Cox, he ran everything. He was the manager, boss man. He kept everybody in line and better than a good team, you had good people. From Maddux, Glavine and David Justice, just good people. So my time there was outstanding. And playing with Deion. Deion still cracks me up to this day because when I see him, and now he's with Colorado, but the stuff that he says, he's saying way back a long time ago in the clubhouse, so you're laughing all the time. Deion will make you laugh. And to this day, now he's taking it to another level. It's all on YouTube and everything else with Deion. But he made you laugh every single day. It was just a great time being there in Atlanta with the guys and of course winning. We had a really good ballclub for a number of years.