

NATL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

Moderator: Jon Shestakofsky
January 21, 2020
7:35 pm CT

Operator: Greetings and welcome to the Larry Walker Hall of Fame Conference Call. During the presentation, all participants will be in a listen-only mode. Afterwards, we'll conduct a question-and-answer session.

At that time, if you have a question, please press 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone. Should require operator assistance at any time, please press star zero. As a reminder, this call is being recorded today, Tuesday, January 21, 2020.

I would now like to turn the conference over Jon Shestakofsky, Vice President of Communications and Education. Please go ahead.

Jon Shestakofsky: David, thank you. And hello and welcome to the National Baseball Hall of Fame's conference call with newly elected Hall of Famer, Larry Walker. We are thrilled to have you all joining us on a very special day for the Hall of Fame.

As you all know, it was recently announced on MLB Network that Larry along with Derek Jeter has been elected to the Hall of Fame via the Baseball Writers' Association of America Ballot.

And now, before we open up for questions. I want to first say congratulations to Larry and offer him the opportunity to make an opening statement. Larry, feel free to go ahead.

Larry Walker: Thanks, Jon. Thank you. I appreciate it. Hello everybody. I guess first of all, thank you all that are on this call and for those of you that either voted for me or didn't vote for me, it's – I'm appreciative of it all. And I'm grateful for the opportunity and huge congrats to Derek obviously for his nomination and Ted and Marvin as well. And, you know, looking forward to the next few days of what's trying to be a life changing moment.

Jon Shestakofsky: Thank you, Larry. And now, we will have about 15 minutes for questions from the call participants. So Dave, we are ready to open for questions.

Operator: Fantastic. Thank you. First question comes from a line of Ronald Blum with the Associated Press. Your line is opened.

Ronald Blum: Hey Larry, congratulations.

Larry Walker: Thank you Sir.

Ronald Blum: You tweeted four or five hours before the vote, you didn't expect to make it. And what led you to do that and give in your mindset what happened when Jack or Jane called you, what did you say?

Larry Walker: Well, the tweet was kind of me just being opened. I'm not a big social media person. I have been following a lot on Twitter with the accounts that Ryan Thibodeaux I believe has. And so, he kind of keeps a lot of this up-to-date on how it's going.

So, I was religiously following along with that and, you know what, I just want to give my honest thoughts and then that's how I felt. I had said it to other people and stuff and I just want to share it with people, you know, keep asking me, what do you think? What do you think?

So, I try to just want to put it out there honestly, how I felt from past elections and how it ended up the last 100 or so ballots with the private ballots and all the percentages that were lost. And where I was at that moment? You know, at that moment, it took me down to about a 73.3 is what I calculated in my head, so.

And that was just how I felt and just share that with all honesty and so. And then the call comes, I was literally 90 seconds from probably saying okay because I had it, you know, when they're going to call around about time and at that time it come and gone.

And there's a, you know, a few minutes after that when the call actually came. I supposed I was to say okay, let's just go watch the rest of the induction stuff on TV. And then that number popped up on the phone and, you know, I think I uttered the words, oh shit.

And just went off, you know, then maybe, oh my god at all, you know, whatever it was, before I actually answered the phone. And said, hello and then just to hear them asked if they could speak to Larry Walker and yes, but like I said, the rest was just like, you know, almost in disbelief to hear him say that you didn't come up short this year, you pass a 75% threshold and walk into the Hall of Fame. Pretty amazing.

Ronald Blum: Was it Jack, Jane or both?

Larry Walker: They all came on different times. Jack was the first one to call and then Jane came on after that.

Ronald Blum: Thank you. Congratulations.

Operator: And also...

Larry Walker: I'm hoping I get that right. I was so just lost in the moment when the phone rang. I'm not screwing up the names and who called and who I talked to. It was a surreal moment.

Operator: As a brief reminder to all our participants to register for question, it is 1, 4 on your telephone keypad. Next question comes from the line of Derrick Goold with St. Louis Press Dispatch.

Derrick Goold: Larry, congratulations from St. Louis, I guess.

Larry Walker: Thank you.

Derrick Goold: Two things real quick. I wonder what event to finish your career with the cardinals and have in the October experiences that you did? And then my other question is you just use the word religiously for how you watched the voting. How much agon— how agonizing was that for nine years to watch?

Larry Walker: For the first part, you know, finishing with the St. Louis Cardinals, yes, I don't – I'm not a baseball historian but when you talked about organizations, you know, you usually talked about the –you know, the Yankees the, Dodgers, the Cubs, the Cardinals. You know, it just iconic organizations that people know about around the world, a uniform that is recognizable around the world.

And, you know, I'll never forget that first day walking in the clubhouse and putting that white birds on the bat uniform on over my head. And a very incredible moment to have such a special uniform on in such an amazing organization. So, you know, it was a great way to go out.

Unfortunately, I'm not involved with World Series Championships but playoffs, and the World Series appearance was, you know, it was quite gratifying.

The other part, I guess, religiously watching is, you know, this year had a chance, the other years didn't. I didn't watch it like what happened this year. The last two weeks, three weeks watching that - the tracker and seeing what was going on and watching people's votes come in and just sitting there and looking at it and watching the number stay around 85 past 200 votes.

And, you know, it obviously got me interested because there was a chance in past years, that never existed. So, even in the last year, I still had a – I had a blast following along and was so joyful to speed up around 65 and then end up around 54, it was incredible.

And honestly, if this year would have come a little short, I'd probably be saying the same thing, just how incredible that many people think I was good enough to come this close. You know, but fortunately, I'm saying enough thought I was good enough and I didn't come that close. So, I made the last hurdle.

Derrick Goold: Thanks, Larry congratulations again.

Larry Walker: Thanks Derrick.

Operator: Next question comes from a line of Thomas Harding with MLB.com. Your line is opened.

Thomas Harding: Hey, Larry, first of all, congratulations on getting.

Larry Walker: Thanks Thomas.

Thomas Harding: And secondly, you've talked about the iconic St. Louis Cardinals vbird on the bat uniform, all the history there. Not much with the Rockies. What does it mean to you kind of break through the first guy who's ever played a single game with this franchise to be in the Hall of Fame? And do you feel it sort of validates the franchise because of all the talk about Coors Field and the Coors Field effect?

Larry Walker: Yes, no, like I said, I have talked about it when the question is asked. And I think it's definitely a big help especially in the here and now with the Todd Helton, the Hall of Fame and down the rows with maybe Nolan Arenado, you know, guys have spent a bulk of their time there.

Thomas, as you know you're right about it and we talked about it. And it's a – you're on this side of the fence with it or you're on that side of the fence. And there's a lot of people that are forth and can justify it. There's just others that just won't even sniff it.

And that's fine. I accept that all along every year forever. I'm good with people that are maybe against it because they feel the advantages you get, I guess. But I think in the long run, it's a major league baseball team, it's a franchise just like every other one.

You go up there, your battle with the rest of your teammates to try to beat the other guys across the way. And I've never looked at it past that.

So, to answer these questions is, it's a fine line of right and wrong and good and bad and fair and not fair or whatever the right wording is, I don't even know. You know, I think it's such a weird subject to talk about, because I think you can really go I guess the other Hall of Famers or players or

whatever it is, that played in other ballparks that affected their goods and their bads.

And it's just a conversation that really could probably never end, that would go on and on, when you're bringing up players in their home and road split, so. But like I said, I did really, really well there and I'm grateful, I did really, really well there because it probably helps getting to where I'm at right now.

Thomas Harding: Okay, thank you, Larry.

Larry Walker: You're welcome.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of (unintelligible) San Francisco Chronicle. Your line is open.

Woman: Hi Larry, congratulations.

Larry Walker: Thank you so much.

Woman: As someone who's had to wait your entire eligibility period for this honor, what's your view of some of the other guys who has had to wait a long time, particularly somebody that you signed off a lot of over the years in Barry Bonds and some of the other guys who ran, you know, rightly along with one way kind of tarred with that whole steroid thing?

Larry Walker: Well, it's like I said, another one of the subjects that we can go on and on about and who's right, who's wrong and what side do you want to take. You know, obviously what Barry and Roger have done in the game is pretty incredible, the numbers they have and the successes they have.

I don't think I know enough about everything they've done or haven't done as far as when you talked about the steroids stuff. I don't watch much about it. I don't read anything about it. It's just something I just don't delve into.

So, I guess in a way, that's why you guys are voting on it and it's up to you guys to decide that, you know, I'd like to call them all friends, we're all part of the big fraternity. And I really wish the best for everybody no matter what the situation is.

So, you know, we'll see what happens here in the next couple of years with Barry and with Roger and, you know, and that's obviously going to be up to you guys. And we'll see what happens. Hopefully, I answer that.

Woman: Great, thanks so much. Yes, you did. Hey, congrats again.

Larry Walker: Thank you.

Operator: Next question comes from the line of (Fred Dave) with Canadian Press. Your line is opened.

(Fred Dave): Yes. Thank you, Larry. Congratulations on your election today. That was a close call, but you did expect it to be a close call either way. Were you anymore, you know, the last few times we talked about this, we're taking this in stride saying, you know, I don't have any control over it. Were you a bit more nervous today knowing that you were so close, but yet so far?

Larry Walker: I don't know if I'd be lying, if I said I wasn't that nervous because there really was times today where it didn't – I didn't feel much. You know, I just kind of went about my day. You know, I did some stuff out in the yard, did some work outside and that was it.

I just – it was a pretty normal day for me just hanging out, you know, that I got my brother and my best friend here, hanging out with me. And other than that, it was – I woke up and the only thing I didn't do today was workout.

I didn't get up and do any kind of exercise. I've been doing every day, today it didn't happen. But yes, no nothing out of the ordinary until probably around 4:00 Eastern Time. That's when some other friends and people started arriving over the house and then try to start to get real after that.

(Fred Dave): How many people you have there?

Larry Walker: Just about 15, 17 somewhere in there.

(Fred Dave): There were about 50 people in the restaurant here in (Levalo) waiting and watching the show live and rooting for you. So, Montreal is really happy about this election day today.

Larry Walker: I'm extremely excited. I've heard about a lot of little gatherings that were taking place in different places around Canada and the U.S. And I'm looking forward to seeing videos of actually pop up online of people celebrating this for their team or for the organization, for me or for the country. You know, it's a pretty cool thing.

(Fred Dave): Yes, I'm pretty sure. You've been tagged up a lot on social media as of yet. So congratulations again. See you in Cooperstown.

Larry Walker: Thank you so much.

Operator: Next question comes from Shi Davidi with Sports Night. Your line is opened.

Shi Davidi: Hi Larry, congrats again.

Larry Walker: Thank you.

Shi Davidi: I was wondering if you would have a chance to reflect maybe on how easily your career might have taken a different turn if you'd made the Regina Pats those two times earlier in your life.

And, you know, now that's - you've gotten this crowning achievement at your moment, I'm wondering how you feel about, you know, the path that ended up leading you to baseball as opposed to taking down the hockey road.

Larry Walker: Well, like I said, I think, I would probably be missing a few more teeth was one thing. And I don't know the success would have been there in hockey as it turned out in baseball.

So, there's probably a better chance that I would be maybe back home in Maple Ridge doing some kind of a job there and this conversation would never be happening honestly. It just – it was a decision I made pulling into town in British Columbia.

I'm deciding I just didn't want to do it no more. You know, I don't know how I think I was 16 years old at the time makes that decision, but it was the decision I made him. And then baseball kind of found me and the way it went.

So, just a couple lucky nos and some good eyes that were watching me at the right time. And then got the chance to play him on the Montreal Expos signed me and I got that chance and I just kind of rolled with it.

Man 2: At that point in time, the pathways for a Canadian to the majors wasn't as established and as it was right now. I mean, did you have a sense of what the odds that you are facing were at that point?

Larry Walker: I have no idea. As I signed that contract and drove down to Florida to go to spring training and play baseball, I never knew really the rules of the game or much about the game or history of the game.

You know, I'm a hockey player. You grow up in Canada. You're born into hockey and that's what in your – between your blood and veins and just it's – so, baseball is something I had to learn all the ways.

And, you know, once I figured it all out and learn how to play and got better and became more successful, then the road became a little bit clear of what the possibilities were, if I was to be able to be successful.

Shi Davidi: Thanks again for the time.

Larry Walker: Yes sir.

Operator: Next question comes from the line of Tracy Ringolsby. Your line is opened.

Tracy Ringolsby: Being talked with the hurdle, you know, with different conversations that people had about injuries or whatever. He said one of the things that he remember is he would go to full batting practice every day in the cage.

And you won a batting title with one and half arms. Which batting title was that? And he said throughout the thing there were days you couldn't move your arm and directions and you would come up with new ways to hit. You remember that?

Larry Walker: I do. I remember wearing that godforsaken thing on my elbow that would stop it from extending out to cause the pain. But it was – yes, it was, you know, a lot of guessing went on that year as far as pitches.

You know, because I could cheat on some pitches that maybe I thought were coming. And I'd get to them a lot easier and then others were just living with the fact that the base hit is going to – is all I can do right now.

So, there was a lot of hits to the left field I believe and being able to just stop at first base, because that's – it was more of a singles type year and instead of having the power.

Tracy Ringolsby: Which one you're batting titles was that? Was that the third one then?

Larry Walker: Gosh, don't quote me - well I guess you can quote me because I'm saying it, but I think '99 does that sound right? I don't know if I won a title in '99 but I think that might have been it.

Tracy Ringolsby: Yes, you won one in '98, '99 and 2001.

Larry Walker: Okay, yes. Possibly that one Trace, I don't recall.

Tracy Ringolsby: Okay. Thanks Walker.

Larry Walker: I'm at that number where I'm having trouble remembering last week. So, it's getting a bit of time.

Tracy Ringolsby: Yes, well, you got a few years before you forget last month.

Larry Walker: Yes.

Jon Shestakofsky: And we had time for one more question.

Operator: Thank you. That'll come from line of Kyle Glaser with Baseball America.
Your line is opened.

Kyle Glaser: Larry, first of all, congratulations.

Larry Walker: Thank you.

Kyle Glaser: With you coming out to Utica and your first Pro Season, you really struggle. You came back the next year in 1986 and with kind of a different header. What change for you that first Pro Season into your second Pro Season in the minors?

Larry Walker: Well, yes, that's going way back to and to go up the last question where I'm saying forgetting stuff but, you know, I remember that year because I know how bad I was. And I think the Expos knew how bad I was too. You know, that year, I got sent to a co-op team with five other organizations. And the following year I got to set to a co-op team as well.

So, I was so raw at the game and was still learning so much on how to hit, how to field, how to throw base run, get you name it and just the rules of the game. But to come back after that year, my next year in Burlington, you know, I don't know if I've been asked that question to that extent.

But it's –I think may be moving to the outfield possibly had something to do with that. I believe J. R. Miner who was the coach in Burlington at the time was the one that kind of spearheaded that. And just said my arm was too strong for me to be in the infield, I think I was playing third base at the time.

So, to the outfield I went and I just, you know, you feel a lot less stress, I guess, out in the outfield. You're not involved in almost every play, you know, there's a lot going on up there. But it's not to the extent where you're 90 feet, 110 feet away from guys hitting rocket that you saw. I think that kind of, you know, roundabout way help my hitting.

And then just, you know, the biggest thing for my whole career is that thing between your years and mentally, I was able to beat the game at a young age and I carry that with me. And for me, that was the my biggest strength through my career was badly beaten the game.

Even when I was injured and having to come back from some of the damn injuries, it was, you know, the worse thing is getting injuries in doing rehab. I was so tired of doing rehab by the time I retired, it was - I was calling Uncle on that. So just the mental part of the game even at that stage was big in my career.

Kyle Glaser: Awesome, thank you. Congratulations again.

Larry Walker: Thank you sir.

Jon Shestakofsky: And Larry, thank you again for joining us and again, congratulations on your election to the National Hall of Fame. As a note to media, Larry along with Derek Jeter will be available tomorrow at a press conference taking place at the St. Regis Hotel in New York City at 3:00 pm Eastern, which broadcast live on MLB Network.

And media planning to attend the press conference that are asked to email the Hall of Fame Communications Director Craig Muder at cmuder@baseballhall.org. Again that's CMUDER@baseballhall.org. Thank you all for joining us.

Operator: And that does conclude the conference call for today. We thank you very much for your participation and ask that you please disconnect your lines.