

NATL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

**Moderator: Brad Horn
January 6, 2015
4:27 pm CT**

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. And welcome to the Hall of Fame Introductory call for Craig Biggio. During the presentation all participants will be in a listen only mode. Afterwards, we will conduct a question and answer session. At that time if you have a question, please press the 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone.

If at any time during the call you need to reach an operator, please press star 0. As a reminder, this call is being recorded Tuesday, January 6, 2015. I would now like to turn the call over to Brad Horn, Vice President for Communications and Education. Please go ahead.

Brad Horn: Thank you, (Ash). And ladies and gentlemen, this is our fourth and final call with our Hall of Fame Class of 2014 electees. Welcome to the line Hall of Famer, Craig Biggio. Craig, welcome to the call and if you'd provide an opening statement before we get to some of the questions.

Craig Biggio: Sure. Thanks Brad. I appreciate it. First off, I want to thank the Baseball Writers' Association for this huge honor. This is something that is very overwhelming and humbling. You know to be part of an organization for 20

years is something for me was really special and would love to be part of. But obviously getting an opportunity to go into the Hall of Fame as an Astro is something that I'm very, very proud of for you know my family, the organization and most of all for the fans.

Twenty years is a long time in one city. And you develop many, many relationships and a big fan base and be able to give that back to them at the end here and to be able to get a guy in the Hall of Fame, I'm very honored and humbled to be able to give that to them.

Brad Horn: Thank you, Craig. And (Ash) will go ahead and begin taking the reporter questions for Craig.

Operator: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, if you would like to register a question, please press the 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone. You will hear a 3 tone prompt to acknowledge your request. If your question has been answered and you would like to withdraw your registration, please press the 1 followed by the 3. If you are using a speakerphone, please lift your handset before entering your request.

Our first question comes from the line of Tom Haudricourt with Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Please proceed with your question.

Tom Haudricourt: Craig, congratulations.

Craig Biggio: Thank you, sir. I appreciate it very much.

Tom Haudricourt: Hey, I saw some of your TV interviews today and you were - you sounded quite emotional about getting the news. After falling two votes short last year,

you know history sort of indicated you would get enough this year. It sounds like you were taking that for granted.

Craig Biggio: Oh, no sir. You know - you know last year, I was totally fine. I - you know, I just kind of - I think I was at 50 something percent the first year. And then we came real close last year. But I was totally fine last year. I mean this morning I woke up at 4:30, then at 7. And then I was just busy all morning just to keep myself busy.

But yes - no, you're trending in the right direction. But you never know which way you're going to go. And I didn't take it for granted. So, yes, it was a very emotional phone call when I received the news and humbling. Like I said, I just loved the playing the game of baseball and every minute of it, every inning of it.

And obviously now to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, it's pretty special. Very, very special. I'm overwhelmed by it right now.

Tom Haudricourt: That's understandable. If I can have a quick follow up question. What do you think's holding Jeff Bagwell back? You know he's not getting nearly close enough to 75% that his career would suggest he should be.

Craig Biggio: You know I don't know. I just - I think that there's so many - so many guys on the ballot. I think the writers really did a nice job. We got you know four guys in this year which frees up some space for next year. So hopefully you know he can start trending to go back in the right direction again. And Jeff Bagwell's a Hall of Fame player.

You know you think about it, offensively and defensively what he did. And he was a - he had 30/30 twice as a first baseman. And there's no first baseman in

the history of the game to every do it once. So he was a pretty special player. And hopefully, you know next year things will start trending back in the right direction.

Tom Haudricourt: Thank you very much.

Craig Biggio: Yes, sir.

Operator: The next question comes from the line of Tyler Kepner with the New York Times. Please proceed with your question.

Tyler Kepner: Thanks. Yes. Craig, congratulations. And you touched on it at the start there about the importance going in as an Astro. I just wanted to ask you to expand on that a little bit being that the franchise has been around for so long. What does that mean to be the first guy to represent that team in Cooperstown?

Craig Biggio: It means a lot to me. I mean you know you've got to think about it. We've had a lot of great players here. And you know as a younger player, Nolan - as a 22-year-old kid, Nolan Ryan was two lockers down from me. I had Buddy Bell two lockers down from me the other way. And Billy Doran and there was just so many great players that I had and that I was around.

And to be able to you know be the first guy, be one of their guys, it's really, really special. Like I said, a lot of this still is sinking in. And it seems very surreal. But to be able to finally get an Astro guy in there, I take a lot of pride in that. And I take a lot of pride in that for a lot of reasons. For just a lot of the players that have ever put an Astro uniform on.

And now to finally have a guy in there, it's pretty special.

Tyler Kepner: Thanks, Craig.

Operator: The next question comes from the line of Ronald Blum with the Associated Press. Please proceed with your question.

Ronald Blum: Hey, Craig. Congratulations.

Craig Biggio: Thank you, sir.

Ronald Blum: Wanted to ask what was it like for you hitting against Johnson, Pedro and Smoltz? You had a decent success against Pedro. None at all against Johnson and Smoltz somewhere in between.

Craig Biggio: I actually got a hit off of Randy in Spring Training once. But it didn't count. So. No I think I only faced Randy like 10 times or 11 times. But, you know Randy was teammate. And the thing about Randy that year that we traded for him in the 98 team which is probably the best team that I was ever a part. But we never had an opportunity to get to the World Series because we lost to San Diego in the playoffs and Kevin Brown.

But I mean, Randy was I mean a power pitcher and he pitched. And then - but facing John and Pedro, I mean you know John was a you know power pitcher with a dominant slider. And you know he's part of that Braves' staff that's - they were outstanding. And we had a lot of history together. And then Pedro, Pedro was the ultimate competitor and threw hard with a good breaking ball and didn't have a problem pitching inside either.

So I mean it was - we've had a lot of history together, a lot of stories together and a lot of respect for one another.

Ronald Blum: Thank you.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, as a reminder, if you would like to register for a question, that is the 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone. And our next question comes from the line Mel Antonen with Mid-Atlantic Sports Network. Please proceed with your question.

Mel Antonen: Hey, Craig. Congratulations. I wanted to ask you about your memories of the 3,000th hit. What do you remember leading up to that? Was it a relief once you got it? What's your lasting memory of that?

Craig Biggio: My memory of it was really I was trying to play the game. And I remember the hit had a - there was two outs and the hit was - we were going to score the run that tied the game. And there was two outs. And that's why the centerfielder had to go quite away to his right. And I tried to force him to throw me out which he did.

But then I was kind of very excited and happy. And then I was really more excited and happy that my teammates didn't have to talk about it anymore.

Mel Antonen: Thank you, Craig.

Craig Biggio: Yes, sir.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Steven Marcus with Newsday. Please proceed with your question.

Steven Marcus: Hey, Craig. How are you? Congratulations.

Craig Biggio: Thank you, sir.

Steven Marcus: Can you talk a little bit about growing up on Long Island and particularly playing high school baseball at Kings Park. It's very meaningful. I spoke to people in the community today. And they're all very excited for you and frankly for themselves to now be associated you know with the town that has produced only I think the second Hall of Famer, the other one being Carl Yastrzemski from Long Island.

Can you talk about that aspect of things?

Craig Biggio: Sure. You know my memories of growing up in Kings Park are nothing but fond and great memories. And the hardest thing about playing in Long Island is really just trying to get off the island. I played for the guy by the name of Marty Hasenfuss who had a baseball team with the (St. Germain's) is what it was.

And it was a summer team that was 16 and 18 year olds. And I started playing with him when I was 14. And Neal Heaton was on that team. And they had a couple of the pro guys that played for him. And you know growing up in Long Island, I delivered your newspaper by the way, Newsday. I had a newspaper route for many, many years.

It was my brother's and then my sister and then it went down to me. And so I delivered your newspaper quite a bit for many years. And - but my memories of growing up in Kings Park is - they're great memories. There's great coaches that I was around and part of and great friends. And I have nothing but really happy memories there.

And I'm really you know, it's - I'm happy for them to be able to - they can enjoy this with me.

Steven Marcus: One of the coaches that I spoke to, I think it was (John Rodcamp,) your high school coach.

Craig Biggio: Yes, sir.

Steven Marcus: He was talking about a situation when you were in your senior year and you were up for the Yastrzemski Award and it was the same night as your high school banquet. And he wanted to find out if he can get you to both. And the long story short was you were beaten out by another individual. And he was told it was the closest vote ever. So (John) said that you know you kind of had a history of close votes.

He thinks you lost that vote by about 2 as well.

Craig Biggio: Right.

Steven Marcus: But the other question is are you surprised that Long Island hasn't produced you know not more Hall of Famers but you know more major league baseball players than it has given the fact that it's a big population area?

Craig Biggio: Yes. You know I haven't really given much thought to think about it. Like I said, the hardest part is really the - it's trying to get off the island you know per say. And for me, I think playing for Marty opened up some eyes for me. And then I was able to go Seton Hall. And there's some awesome - there's awesome talent everywhere.

You can't hide anymore. Yes and I am a little bit surprised just because that the standing point is that it's got a large population base and there should be -

there's a lot of great athletes that are out there. And I'm not sure why. That's a good question.

Steven Marcus: Thank you very much.

Craig Biggio: Yes, sir.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line of Barry Bloom with MLB.com. Please proceed with your question.

Barry Bloom: Craig, congratulations.

Craig Biggio: Thank you, Barry.

Barry Bloom: Just wondering I mean you know your part of that two club Hall of Fame and scored those 3,000 hit guys who are in. How does it feel to join all those guys that have been in history great games and had to have 3,000 hits to go into the Hall of Fame?

Craig Biggio: Barry, you're really - I didn't really understand your question. It was kind of garbled a little bit coming through. Yes, I'm not really having a good question with you.

Barry Bloom: Okay. Let me try again.

Craig Biggio: You were saying 3,000 hit.

Barry Bloom: Right. You're - as a member of the two clubs now, the Hall of Fame and you know the 3,000 hit guys who are in the Hall of Fame. How does it feel to be among that group?

Craig Biggio: Oh, it's - I mean it's a huge - it's a great feeling. I mean and again, to be in the Hall of Fame and be one of the guys that has 3,000 hits, it's a hard thing to do and especially in the National League where I was a National League player. The only way to get 3,000 hits in the National League is that you've got to go out there and play every day.

And you know that's - that's why I think it's even a little bit harder because you've got to do the offense and defense side of things. So to be able to be a 3,000 hit guy that played in the National League and being in the Hall of Fame, I'm very - it's a pretty cool feeling.

Barry Bloom: That's great. Look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

Craig Biggio: Thank you, sir.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, as a reminder, if you would like to register for a question, that is the 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone. And our next question comes from the line of Bob Kuenster with Baseball Digest Magazine. Please proceed with your question.

Bob Kuenster: Congratulations, Craig.

Craig Biggio: Thank you.

Bob Kuenster: You were admired by many for the way you played the game with such intensity and drive. Was there any coach or player who guided your style of play?

Craig Biggio: You know, that's a good question. I mean Pete Rose played the game hard and played the game the right way. You know being an east coast guy, I didn't watch a lot of baseball. I really enjoyed playing it every day. And the way that I went about my business was I tried to go out there and play the game hard and play the game right every single day. I remember where I came from.

I remember how hard it was to get to the big leagues. And I try to go out there and play every game like it was going to be my last game. And I just wanted you know just keep grinding and work your way through it all the time and not forgetting where you came from.

Bob Kuenster: Okay. Thank you.

Operator: Our next question comes from the line Mike Vorkunov with NJ Advanced Media. Please proceed with your question.

Mike Vorkunov: Hello, Craig. Congratulations first of all.

Craig Biggio: Thank you.

Mike Yorkunov: I was wondering how did your time at Seton Hall influence you and get you to the point you are now? And obviously, how consequential was your decision to go to the school and focus primarily on baseball?

Craig Biggio: That's a great question. I mean it was - I was an 18 year old kid. And I could have won the 8th round with the Detroit Tigers and I declined and wanted to go to school. You know I was an 18 year old kid that thought I knew a lot. But I didn't know anything at all. And I went to Seton Hall and played for a guy named Mike Sheppard and Ed Blankmeyer.

And I tell you what, I went in as a kid and I came out as a man. And those guys, they taught me a lot. They - they're the reason why I was able to go high in the first round. And if I didn't do that, I wasn't mature enough coming out of a high school. I think if I would have signed out of high school, I wouldn't have lasted very long.

And I needed the college. I needed that time away from home a little bit. So I think they molded me and guided me into the person that - the player that I turned into and started me off.

Mike Vorkunov: Thanks, Craig.

Operator: We have a follow up question from the line of Ronald Blum with the Associated Press. Please proceed with your question.

Ronald Blum: Craig, you think this means more to you this year than if it happened last year or the year before? Does the waiting change the mindset? Or is it exactly the same?

Craig Biggio: Oh, it definitely wasn't the same. I was a nervous dog this morning. You know, I haven't been this anxious in a long time. And I think that again, it's a super special building. And to be invited in it at any time even though last year we were close, we were hoping that you know we got a couple more votes to get us over the top and which we did.

But you know going in if it would have been my first year or my second year or my third year, I'm very respectful. I'm just glad I'm able to be part of it and be part of such an amazing building.

Ronald Blum: How - do you think you feel differently this year than it would have been the first time, just more nervous even?

Craig Biggio: You know, I - it's an overwhelming and humbling experience. And I think that you know we were so close last year. You know maybe it does mean a little bit more this year. But it's such a - it's such a strong ballot that you don't - you didn't know which way it was going to trend.

Ronald Blum: Thank you.

Operator: We have a follow up question from the line of Steven Marcus from Newsday. Please proceed with your question.

Steven Marcus: Yes. Hey, Craig. One more thing. People obviously know that you also were a great high school football player and you know winning the Hansen Award out here. Did you give any significant thought to playing football? There's a story that Boston College coach thought that you might have been the next Doug Flute. I don't know if that was just a little recruiting tool.

But how seriously did you consider playing football in college?

Craig Biggio: I really did. I wanted to play football in college. I mean I - you know, baseball was really going to be the backup plan. I love football. Football was my number 1. And then the reality is it didn't happen. And I was fortunate to play baseball. And the right thing happened obviously. But I did. I loved it.

It was a - it took me a long time to get it out of my system that you weren't going to be doing this anymore. But again, you know I'm very fortune to be drafted by a great organization and be part of a lot of great times.

Steven Marcus: And one other thing, Craig. Could you talk a little bit about how you got your work - work ethic from your late dad?

Craig Biggio: You know, today's a tough day just from the standpoint that you know my mom and dad are - they've been gone for 10 years. And you know my dad was a - I had a guy one time tell me that he was the best catcher that he's ever seen to this date. Whether it was true or not, I never really saw my dad play. But for him to pass that compliment along you know was very, very nice.

But I mean he was a hardworking guy. He would - we would - he would throw me batting practice. And he'd try to hit me some ground balls. And he would tie me up to the backstop to stop lunging at the ball. And you know he worked hard and he was a good dad.

Steven Marcus: Thank you.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, as a reminder, if you would like to register a question, you may press the 1 followed by the 4 on your telephone. And the next question comes from the line of Murray Chass with MurrayChass.com. Please proceed with your question.

Murray Chass: Congratulations, Craig.

Craig Biggio: Thanks, sir.

Murray Chass: There are obviously some great players who have not done well in the Hall of Fame voting. And it's pretty obvious that they're linked to steroids as the reason. How do you feel about the situation where players are effected by that? And how do players generally feel about players who use steroids?

Craig Biggio: Well, I mean it's a - that's a kind of a loaded question there. You know we don't - I don't know. So I don't know the answer. The only answer that I know is that it didn't - it wasn't part of my life. That's all I can say. And you know other choices other players made, that was their choice. And that's - you know that's really all I have a comment on.

Murray Chass: Okay. Thank you.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen...

Brad Horn: As it appears there are no further questions, we're going to go ahead and excuse Craig so that he can get on a plane and head to New York for tomorrow's press conference.

Operator: Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude the call for today. We thank you for your participation and ask that you please disconnect your lines. Have a great day, everyone.

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