

A heartbreaking farewell to Dave Wills

By Sam Dolson

Opening Day 2023 arrived with a subdued mood in the Tampa Bay area. The sudden passing on March 5 of Rays radio broadcaster Dave Wills brought a jolt of sadness that will not dissipate for some time.

Wills had spoken to the the Roush-López Gulf Coast Chapter for its January meeting. He held court on all things Rays with his trademark booming voice and ever-present joy on full display.

Chapter member Steve Nadel had helped to arrange



Dave Wills and Andy Freed broadcast from Tampa on March 4.

the appearance through friend Mike Caragliano, a radio engineer and a colleague of Wills.

“Of all the announcers he has met, he said he found Dave Wills and Andy Freed to be the friendliest and easiest to

work with,” Nadel said.

That was evident from the start as Wills spoke via Zoom.

In describing the approach he and Freed brought to their jobs, it was clear why the duo had such a bond with listeners.

“One of the lines that (Andy) said a long time ago was, ‘We just try to be good company,’” Wills told our group. “The other thing we talk about: We might not lead the league in wins but we’re gonna lead the league in fun.

“I hope it plays out that way. I live in life’s candy store. I get paid to watch and talk about baseball.”

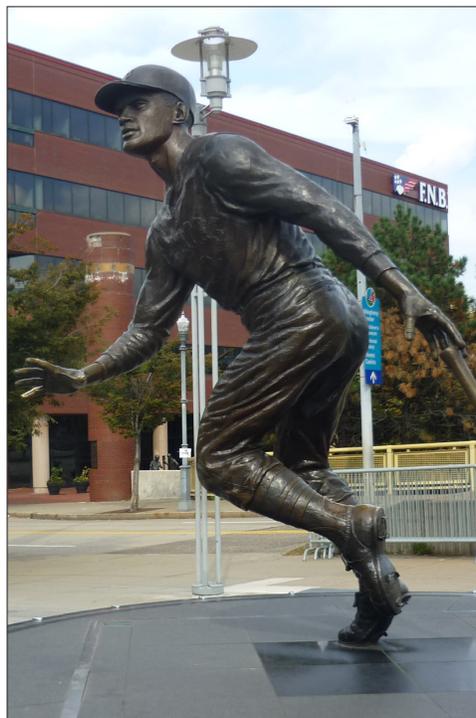
Wills’ perspective was as spot-on as his on-air analysis. Our group joins so many others in recognizing Dave Wills’ voice was silenced far too soon.

It’s time to retire No. 21 for Clemente

By Thomas Holmes

On September 15th, Major League baseball celebrated Roberto Clemente Day. Like Jackie Robinson Day, April 15th, players took to the field wearing Clemente’s number 21. This is an annual event that started in the 2020 season to focus on the emergence of Latin-born players in the 1960s. It is viewed as a continuation of Robinson’s efforts to integrate baseball.

Eight years after Robinson broke the color barrier, Clemente used the foundation of Robinson’s civil activism to improve the quality of life of players’ color. It was not easy for Clemente. Clemente endured the same segregation and Jim Crow laws that Robinson experienced. Segregation was a foreign concept to the Puerto Rico native where the society had been unified. During this time, baseball was moving in forward motion in social



Clemente statue at PNC Park in Pittsburgh

advancements; however, southern states legislature movements had stalled and were outdated. Efforts were made to soften Clemente’s Latin brand. Media referred

see **CLEMENTE**, next page

Opening Pitch

Today, the Roush-López Gulf Coast Chapter launches its monthly newsletter, *Gulf Coast Hardball*. I’m thrilled about our group taking these first steps in providing a new forum for our conversations.

To start, one goal and one theme. We hope to offer a way for any and all of our chapter members (and visitors) to research and write. Especially if it can move beyond the newsletter to platforms such as the SABR BioProject and the SABR Baseball Games Project. I’m also devoted to the idea of researching, publicizing and celebrating the game’s history in the Tampa Bay area. There’s so much here.

We’ll want our topics to be provocative. And fun. There’ll be differing opinions, and that’s a good thing.

Going forward, *Gulf Coast Hardball* will be ready for a read on the first day of each month. In that way, it’ll be a lead-off hitter for the Roush-López Chapter’s doings for the four-plus weeks that follow. Let’s get the rally started.

Sam Dolson

April meeting: Dan Schlossberg and Bill Mathews



Dan Schlossberg

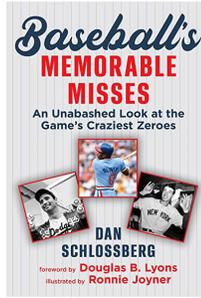


Bill Mathews

Author Dan Schlossberg and Eckerd College associate athletic director Bill Mathews will be the featured speakers for the Roush-López Gulf Coast Chapter's monthly gathering on Monday, April 3.

Schlossberg will discuss his newly released book, *Baseball's Memorable Misses*.

Mathews, who is the official scorer for Tampa Bay Rays games at Tropicana Field, will talk about his experiences handling the same duties in March at the World Baseball Classic in Miami.



Also Upcoming

CHAPTER MEETINGS FOR 2023: May 10, Jun 7, Jul 12, Aug 9, Sep 13, Oct 4, Nov 15, Dec. 13.

Apr 7 / Tampa Tarpons season opener, Steinbrenner Field / 6:30 p.m.

April 11 / Clearwater Threshers home opener, BayCare Ballpark / 6:30 p.m.

April 11 / Dunedin Blue Jays home opener, TD Ballpark / 6:30 p.m.

July 5-9 / 51st SABR convention in Chicago



Gulf Coast Hardball
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Celebrating our national game in the historic Tampa Bay area.

Roush-López Gulf Coast Chapter
Co-chairs:
Mark Drucker
Thomas Holmes
Newsletter editor:
Sam Dolson

This chapter is named for Edd Roush (HOF class of 1962), a longtime resident of Florida's west coast and the grandfather of founding member Susan Denlinger; and Al López (HOF class of 1977), the godfather of the game in Tampa and its surrounding areas. It was established in 2020.



Find us on the web at www.SABRroushlopez.com

Founded in 1971, the Society for American Baseball Research began in Cooperstown, N.Y., when L. Robert Davids met with 15 baseball researchers. Membership worldwide now exceeds 6,000.

CLEMENTE, from previous page

to him as Bob or Bobby instead of Roberto, which he detested. Clemente was born in Puerto Rico but made it his life's mission to represent all Latin nations and their people.

Clemente was an undeniable force with a bat and a glove. During his 18-year career with the Pirates, Clemente was a two-time World Series champion, 12-time Gold Glove Award winner in right field and 15-time All-Star. In addition, 1966 National League MVP, first Latin American player to reach the hallowed 3,000-hit mark which resulted in being first player from Latin America inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973. We celebrate him, today, for his off-field humanitarian contributions and his efforts to end segregation within baseball. Selfless to the end, Clemente died in a plane crash attempting to bring aid to earthquake victims in Nicaragua.

With all of Clemente's accomplishments on and off the field and now with an annual celebration of life, is it time to retire his number league-wide? These triumphs do mirror Robinson's achievements. Additionally, both have annual awards named after each other which are presented by MLB at the end of each season. The Jackie Robinson Award is given to the best rookie in each league. The Roberto Clemente Award is bestowed to a player who best represents the game of baseball through extraordinary character, community involvement, philanthropy, and positive contributions, both on and off the field. Both players had immense effects on civil and social movements

and hall-of-fame worthy careers. But what does Robinson have over Clemente? Why doesn't MLB retire number 21 league-wide, like they did to Robinson's 42? Clemente has two champions over Robinson's one. Robinson didn't reach 3,000 hits. The closest statistic for these Hall of Famers is the career batting average being off by four points, Robinson batted .313 and Clements had .317 average. Furthermore, Clemente had 99 more home runs. Another comparison is at the MLB Network. Content is produced in studios labeled Studio 42 and Studio 21.

Retiring of a number is a great honor. Retiring it league-wide involves a monumental impact on the game and society. There isn't a criterion for retiring a number. Each franchise commemorates players for various accomplishments. In fact, there are 189 players with retired numbers in the MLB. Granted, some numbers are retired more than once for different franchises (i.e., Greg Maddux with the Cubs and Braves). Compare the 189 retired numbers to the 263 players in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Fewer players have had a number retired than have been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

So, will fans see Clemente's 21 retired league-wide? Is the number 21 the new 42? Does it stop there? Many years ago, there was talk about retiring Babe Ruth's number 3 league wide. Ruth did challenge social norms of the time and posted monster numbers. Will there ever be an equal to Jack Roosevelt Robinson and his physical and mental capabilities?

PHOTO CREDITS
Cover: Dave Wills and Andy Freed, courtesy Alison Lighthall Miller; Roberto Clemente statue, public domain. **Page 2:** Dan Schlossberg, courtesy danschlossberg.net; Bill Mathews, courtesy Eckerd College; cover of *Baseball's Memorable Misses*, courtesy Sports Publishing; Edd Roush and Al López, public domain. **Page 3:** Buck O'Neil card, with permission from Graig Kreindler **Page 4:** Glove, ball and laptop, by Sam Dolson.

Trivia Quiz

At each monthly meeting of the Roush-López Gulf Coast Chapter, Steve Nadel works with SABR trivia guru Mike Caragliano to present a trivia quiz tailored to this group.

Steve reports that Mike is a multi-time trivia event winner at past SABR gatherings.

The nine questions that are included at each meeting break down into three primary categories: Tampa Bay Rays trivia, Hall

of Fame trivia and General Baseball trivia.

Typically, Steve presents the trivia questions at a point near the beginning of the proceedings. After talks and chapter business are conducted, the answers are revealed.

Presented here are five questions from the quiz that was given at the previous meeting.

Answers for these questions are on the following page.

• Question #1 – Rays Trivia

This World Series winning manager collected the first hit in Rays history?

• Question #4 – Rays Trivia

Name the Future Cy Young Award Winner who was the losing pitcher in Matt Garza 2010 no hitter?

• Question #7 – Rays Trivia

Who led the Rays in Homers in their 1998 inaugural season?

• Question #5 – Hall of Fame Trivia

Who is the first player in Baseball History to hit 5 home Runs in a Double Header?

• Question #9 – General Baseball Trivia

Who was the only player to win Batting Titles in 3 different decades?



IN THE CARDS

by Bobby Salerno

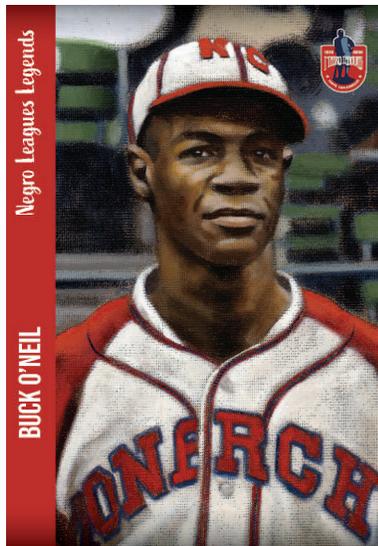
In each month's edition, a Roush/López Chapter member will spotlight a single or a pack or a set to celebrate collecting.

Leading off: the 2020 Negro League Legends set, commissioned by the Negro Leagues Museum Baseball Museum and featuring the artwork of Graig Kreindler.

WHILE always being a lifelong baseball fan since I was 8 years old, my knowledge about negroes in baseball was fairly limited back to the time of Jackie Robinson's breakthrough to the majors in 1947.

It wasn't until I viewed the fabulous HBO movie *Soul of the Game* (1996), which chronicled some of the plights of Negro Leagues players, that quenched my thirst all the more, and I've been a fan of Negro Leagues history ever since.

Card pictured from the set: No. 159, Buck O'Neil, who was born in the Florida Panhandle town of Carrabelle and raised in nearby Sarasota.



Name Search

A	C	N	A	S	P	A	H	N	P	N	C	E	T	T
E	L	E	D	A	T	E	C	R	E	K	A	E	P	S
N	C	O	N	I	L	O	F	T	O	N	A	F	T	I
G	M	B	U	N	T	C	S	M	O	R	G	A	N	T
S	A	N	T	O	T	R	O	U	T	N	N	L	E	B
D	A	Y	K	H	E	R	M	A	N	K	I	L	S	E
C	E	M	A	G	L	I	E	V	Y	P	E	E	U	N
A	C	D	R	C	M	U	N	G	O	E	W	N	Z	D
S	J	E	N	K	I	N	S	H	O	D	A	Z	U	E
H	E	R	T	N	Z	T	R	O	M	R	T	R	K	R
I	N	V	R	I	E	L	T	R	O	O	T	I	I	O
R	T	A	I	G	R	I	K	I	O	I	H	N	H	T
V	I	M	L	H	S	H	A	L	O	A	O	L	T	T
I	H	O	L	T	Z	M	A	N	N	A	M	I	A	O
N	T	U	O	N	O	R	T	K	I	N	E	R	H	V

The grid above, sent in by Mark Drucker, contains 28 baseball names. The challenge: Time yourself to see how long it takes to find them all.

Some names belong to Hall of Famers. Some are just famous names.

The list of names provided

as the full roster appears on the next page of this newsletter.

But there also is at least one bonus name in the grid. It belongs to a man who had a central role in a legendary World Series moment.

Perhaps there are others as well.

Local Player Spotlights

Historical research makes up a big part of the “R” in SABR for the Roush-López Gulf Coast Chapter, sure.

But we’ll also have our eyes on current games, specifically following the exploits of players with any connection to the

Tampa Bay area.

Watch this space each month for a glance at who is doing what at ballparks big and small. We’ll track All-Stars, journeymen, prospects and amateurs. MLB, MiLB, collegians and high schoolers.

If they come through Tampa, St. Pete or Clearwater, if they’re from Hillsborough County or Pinellas County, then they’re already authoring their own chapters in the story of hardball around these parts.



Pete Alonso 1B

Tampa Plant / 28 / drafted 2016 from UF
'22 NL RBI champ anchors Mets' lineup in cleanup spot



Bo Bichette SS

St. Petersburg Lakewood / 25 / drafted 2016 from HS
Defending AL hits leader locked in at SS for Blue Jays



Alex Faedo P

Tampa Alonzo / 27 / drafted 2017 from UF
After '22 MLB debut, righty starts '23 in Triple-A



Mychal Givens P

Tampa Plant / 32 / drafted 2009 from HS
Vet reliever begins on IL in second go-round with Orioles



Jimmy Herget P

Tampa Jefferson, USF / 29 / drafted 2015 from college
Should be in mix for saves after '22 emergence for Angels



Joey Krehbiel P

Seminole / 30 / drafted 2011 from HS
Righty reliever was optioned to Triple-A as camp closed



Shane McClanahan P

USF / 25 / drafted 2018 from college
'22 AL All-Star starter was WP for Rays on Opening Day



Lance McCullers P

Tampa Jesuit / 29 / drafted 2012 from HS
Said to be “pain-free” as he works back from muscle strain



Óscar Mercado OF

Tampa Gaither / 28 / drafted 2013 from HS
After departing Cleveland, Cards tenure begins in minors



Mat Nelson C

Clearwater Calv. Christian / 24 / drafted 2021 from FSU
Starts 2nd full pro season with High-A Dayton Dragons



Brett Phillips OF

Seminole / 28 / drafted 2012 from HS
Speedy defensive specialist got backup spot with Angels



Carson Ragsdale P

USF / 24 / drafted 2020 from college
Rostered with Single-A San Jose in Giants chain



Gabriel Rincones Jr. OF

Tampa Plant, SPC / 22 / drafted 2022 from FAU
Slugger starts 1st full pro season as a top Phillies prospect



Kyle Tucker OF

Tampa Plant / 26 / drafted 2015 from HS
WBC efforts only bolstered his status as an All-Star



Jake Woodford P

Tampa Plant / 26 / drafted 2015 from HS
Made the starting rotation after strong spring for Cards

Trivia Answers

1. Dave Martinez
4. Max Scherzer
5. Stan Musial
7. Fred McGriff
9. George Brett

Name Search List

Allen, Alou, Bender, Cash, Day, Herman, Holtzman, Irvin, Jenkins, Kaat, Kiner, Knight, Lofton, Maglie, Morgan, Mize, Mungo, Pedroia, Sain, Santo, Spahn, Speaker, Stanky, Suzuki, Thome, Trillo, Trout, Votto



Like to write (and love the game)?

With this newsletter, the Roush-López Gulf Coast Chapter hopes to promote the acts of researching and writing about the National Game. Contact the editor – chapter member Sam Dolson - with questions, suggestions and/or story ideas. Send an email to samdolson@yahoo.com.