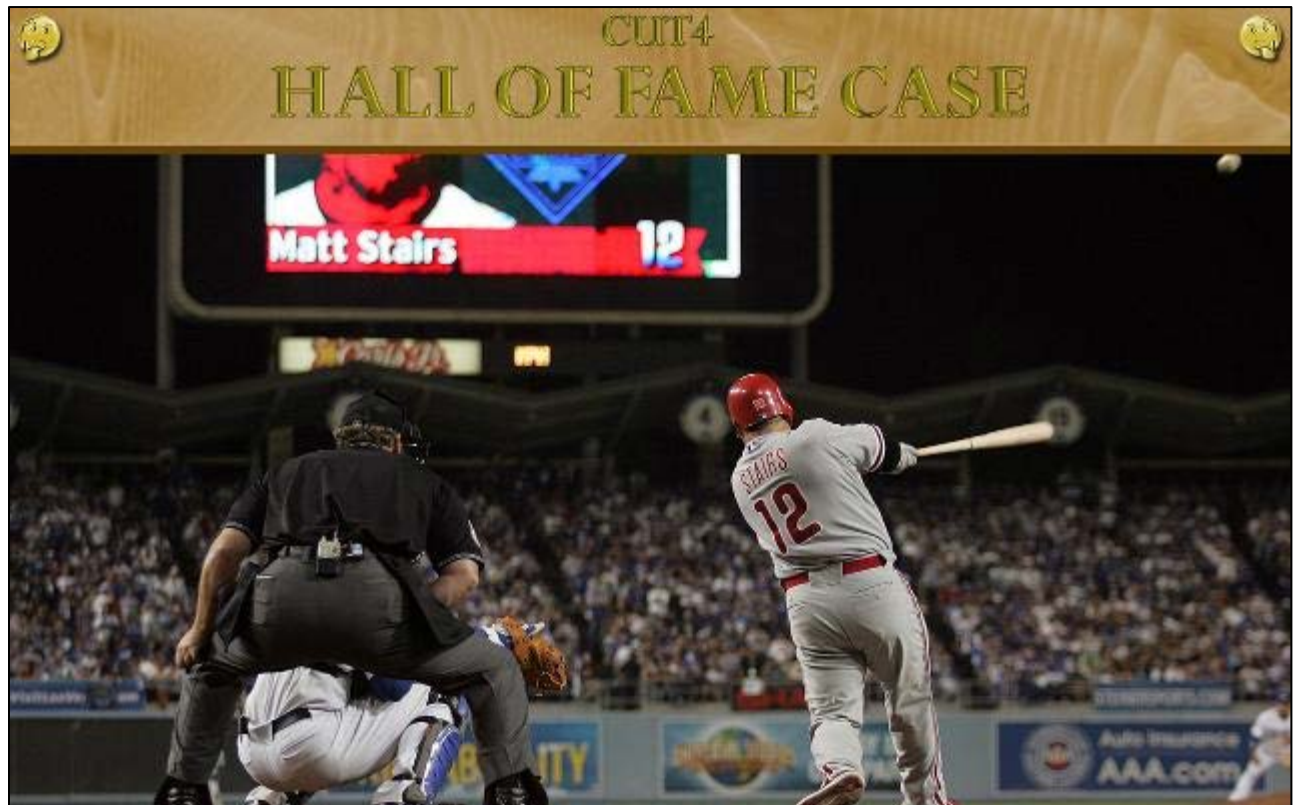


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The Hall of Fame Case: Matt Stairs



By Michael Clair

The likes of Jeff Bagwell and Tim Lincecum -- and even first-timers like Vladimir Guerrero or Pudge Rodriguez -- shouldn't have too much trouble racking up National Baseball Hall of Fame votes. But there are plenty of other players on the 2017 ballot who require a little more voter-cajoling. Players that may not have the on-field resume, but deserve an impassioned Hall of Fame case nonetheless. Players like ...

Matthew Wade Stairs. Dingers are, unequivocally, the best part of baseball. Therefore, shouldn't a man that is 10 percent Canadian hockey hair, 10 percent beef and 80 percent dingers be inducted into those hallowed halls?

Let's break down his case:

Dingers

Stairs is a home run personified. With the body and swing of a grizzled prospector, it took Stairs until he was 29 to get a real shot in the big leagues. All he did then was hit 27 home runs in just 410 plate appearances with Oakland in 1997. The next two seasons, he hit 26 and 38 long balls, respectively.

With that power -- and facial hair -- he could have been a decoy for Mark McGwire. The two could simply have hidden their uniform numbers from the opposition to really confuse the pitcher:



Even after becoming a part-time bat, he averaged 20 home runs per 162 games ... from the age of 33 to 43. He hit plenty of big home runs, too. Most notable was his pinch-hit home run in the 2008 postseason, which made him a Phillies hero, now and forever.

This aptitude at the plate earned him the nickname "The Professional Hitter." Not only did he earn one of the greatest nicknames that could possibly be bestowed upon a baseball player, he also went on to set the record for most career pinch-hit home runs, with 23.

He started as a 2B/3B

When you think of Stairs, you likely think of finely marbled beef molded into man. You do not think of a lithe middle infielder, hustling to make a backhand flip for the out. Yet that's where he started, playing mostly second and third until he made the full-time move to the outfield at the age of 24.

He even played 29 Minor League games at shortstop. Let me repeat: THIS MAN WAS A SHORTSTOP.



According to Victor Rojas, the voice of the Angels, Stairs was likely the starting shortstop for Team Canada in the 1988 Olympics. He also played for his country in the '88 Baseball World Cup, and was named the best shortstop of the tournament.

He's already in the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame

Hailing from New Brunswick, Stairs gained entry to the Canadian Hall in 2015, along with Corey Koskie, Carlos Delgado, Felipe Alou and sportswriter Bob Elliot. Do we really want the *Canadian Hall*, located only six hours away from Cooperstown, to lay sole claim to Stairs?



He played for more teams than anyone else in MLB history

While many people are impressed by players who stay with one team for their entire career, perhaps they only pull it off because *only* that team wants to employ them. Never thought of it that way, huh?

Counting the Expos and Nationals as separate teams, Matt Stairs played for 12 clubs -- almost half the league. If nearly every team wanted to hire Stairs, shouldn't every BBWAA writer want to elect him to the Hall, too?

Bald fingers

Male pattern baldness affects countless grown men, leading them to wear caps or buy wigs to cover their pates. But Stairs was unashamed. Shouldn't the follicly-impaired have someone to admire, too?



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