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COVERING THE BASES

Milwaukee Brewers Baseball Club
Alumni Newsletter

Simba Pride

Ted Simmons Catches On with the Hall of Fame

By Mario Ziino

Brewers Archive Photos and the National Baseball Hall of Fame

Though Ted Simmons will have to wait a bit longer, the door to Cooperstown will finally swing open for him on September 8, 2021.

Not only has he had to wait 32 years to earn admittance, but Simmons' big day was postponed a year ago due to the coronavirus pandemic and now delayed an additional seven weeks from the original July 25th date so as to accommodate a limited crowd. It's the right decision, since the original plan called for a virtual ceremony. It will now allow family and friends to be in attendance.

Nonetheless, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and the Modern Baseball Era Committee will make the wait worthwhile.

"There's never too long a time to wait if you finally make the leap," Simmons, 71, said.

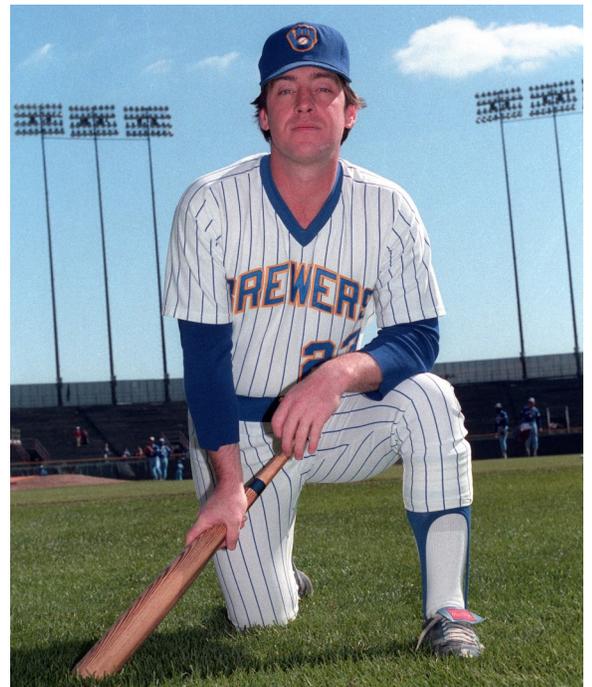
After missing the nomination in 2017 by a single vote, Simmons was named on 13 of 16 ballots in 2020. His skill set, knowledge and personal statistics over a 21-year playing career made him only the 19th catcher – the seventh this millennium – to be elected.

Also, voted in by the Veterans Committee will be the late players' union leader Marvin Miller, who will be honored posthumously at Cooperstown. They join the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) selections Derek Jeter and Larry Walker, along with Ford Frick Award winner Ken "Hawk" Harrelson and the BBWAA Career Excellence Award recipient the late Nick Cafardo.

In a joint ceremony, the Hall of Fame will recognize the 2021 class. This year's honorees include Ford Frick Award recipient Al Michaels and BBWAA Career Excellence Award winner Dick Kaegel. For the first time since 2013 and the eleventh time since the doors first opened in 1936, no players were voted in 2021.

As for Simmons' journey to Cooperstown, was stalled, perhaps, because he played in the same era of the great Cincinnati Reds' catcher Johnny Bench, who overshadowed many catchers who had legitimate credentials both at the plate and behind it.

"The one difficulty I had as a catcher, particularly in the National League, was the pretty profound standard set over there," recalled Simmons. "That standard was Bench, and in his prime years, he was the best catcher imaginable. He had the finest arm you could put on a catcher. He was big and strong. He could block the ball well. He could throw anybody out. When people watched Bench catch, everyone else seemed to be a step or two below that standard."



Ted Simmons ranks among baseball's all-time leading catchers

A switch-hitting catcher with the St. Louis Cardinals for 13 seasons – where he hit .300 or better seven times – Simmons was part of a seven-player trade to the Milwaukee Brewers at the 1980 Winter Meetings. It was perhaps the greatest trade in franchise history. The Cardinals dealt Simmons, along with closer Rollie Fingers and starting pitcher Pete Vuckovich to the Brewers for outfielder Sixto Lezcano, pitchers Dave LaPoint and Larry Sorensen, and outfield prospect David Green.

The following season, the Brewers earned their first postseason invitation. In 1982, they won the American League pennant and an only berth to a World Series, ironically losing to the Cardinals in seven games.

Fingers won the American League MVP and AL Cy Young awards in 1981, while Vuckovich won the AL Cy Young Award in 1982. Simmons, who played five seasons in Milwaukee and batted .262, including .308 in 1983, made the final two of his eight All-Star appearances in a Brewers uniform. He was the starting catcher in the 50th Midsummer Classic in which the American League won, snapping an 11-year losing streak.

Simmons is the seventh member of the 1982 Brewers' organization to earn election to the Hall of Fame, joining Rollie Fingers (1992), Don Sutton (1998), Robin Yount (1999), Bob Uecker (2003), Paul Molitor (2004) and Allan H. (Bud) Selig (2017).

"I was happy to come to Milwaukee," Simmons said. "It was a fantastic opportunity to play with the likes of Cecil Cooper, Robin Yount, Larry Hise, Paul Molitor, Gorman Thomas, and Ben Oglivie. There was some adjusting in the beginning, but to be part of that team was very exciting. The only goal I had at that point in my career was to win. I knew how good New York, Baltimore, and Boston were in the division, but I felt we could unseat that precedence."

After struggling in his first season, Simmons made the adjustments by 1982, enjoying the finest of his five seasons in the American League. He caught in 125 games and batted .269 – 53 points higher than the previous campaign – while adding 23 home runs and 97 RBI.

According to Simmons, who had never participated in the postseason before and after playing in Milwaukee, being part of the first championship was quite special. "That was my goal," Simmons shared. "I believed that that trade put Milwaukee in a positive position to contend and win the pennant."

In Milwaukee, Simmons was all about firsts. His first hit was a home run. He was the first Brewer switch-hitter to homer from each side of the plate in the same game. He was the first Brewer to hit a playoff homer and the first to homer in the World Series. Also, Simmons was behind the plate in all but three of the team's 147 postseason innings in 1981 and 1982.

"When I look back on my career, I assure you I first look to Milwaukee," he shared. "Nothing against St. Louis because I had a lot of good times and good years there, but to fulfill a dream of playing in a World Series with the players we had in Milwaukee was more than what I could ask. Just being part of the first championship team for a first-rate organization was memorable."

Simmons closed out his career as a part-time catcher with the Atlanta Braves. When he retired following the 1988 campaign, no catcher in baseball history had more hits, and only Hall of Famers Yogi Berra had more RBI, and Carlton Fisk had more total bases.

Since then, Iván Rodríguez overtook Simmons in the hits category. Nonetheless, he still ranks second among catchers with 2,472 hits and 1,389 RBI. He is fifth with 1,074 runs scored, seventh with 248 home runs, and eighth with a .285 batting average.

Simmons enjoyed his finest season in 1975 when he had a career-best .332 mark, finishing sixth in the National League MVP balloting. He reached 20 home runs six times, exceeded 90 RBI eight times, with a career-best of 108 in 1983.

"I looked in the mirror," Simmons once said. "I wanted to be a shortstop, but with this body, it was obvious I'd be a catcher."

After his playing days, Simmons served a number of organizations as a general manager, coach, scout, and adviser. Yet, despite his solid playing career, he received little support at the ballot box. That lack of votes eliminated him for future considerations.

Over the years, however, the analytic generation gained a deeper appreciation of his accomplishments, putting a greater emphasis on expanded statistics.

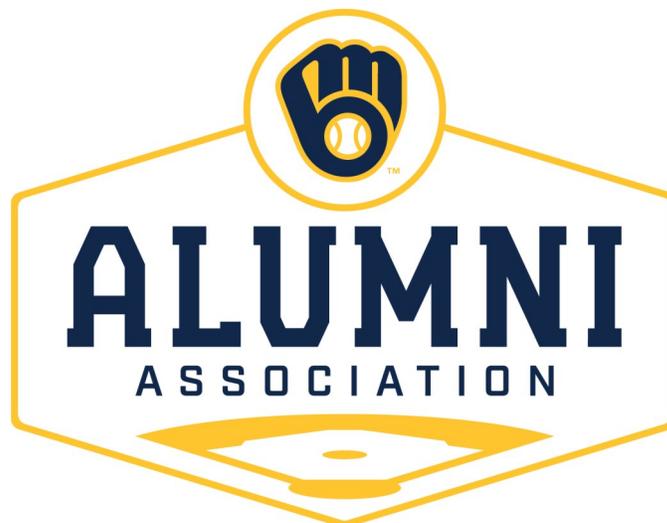
Simmons' 50.3-career WAR (Wins Above Replacement) made him one of nine catchers with 50 or more. That put him in the same category as Hall of Famers Johnny Bench, Gary Carter, Iván Rodríguez, Carlton Fisk, Gabby Hartnett, Yogi Berra, Mike Piazza, and Bill Dickey.

"If it weren't for the analytics people, my career as a potential Hall of Famer probably would have been shut down and forgotten a long time ago," Simmons said. "When they started talking about on-base percentage and WAR and how WAR was comprised, it became a real study, and then the real comparisons started to develop."

As much as being recognized by the Hall, what mattered most to Simmons was the respect of those who knew him best. Besides being called "Simba," for his long locks, the nickname also suggested he had the heart of a lion.

"I always thought the game through," he explained. "I studied. I watched. I understood what was about to happen. I would do things, and people would say to me, 'How did you know that was going to happen?' I studied the game long and hard and took the job seriously from a defensive perspective."

Mario Ziino is the Director of Sports Publications at Delzer Lithograph Co. He spent 25 years with the Milwaukee Brewers as the Director of Publications and Assistant Director of Public Relations.



Brewers All-Stars through the Years

Position Players

Pitchers

6 – Ryan Braun: '08, '09, '10, '11*, '12, '15
5 – Cecil Cooper: '79, '80, '82, '83, '85
Paul Molitor: '80*, '85, '88, '91, '92
4 – Don Money: *'74, '76, '77, '78
3 – Ben Oglivie: '80, '82, '83
Robin Yount: '80, '82, '83
Prince Fielder: '07, '09, '11
2 – Carlos Lee: '05, '06
Richie Sexson: '02, '03
Ted Simmons: '81, '83
Greg Vaughn: '93, '96
Corey Hart: '08^, '10
Carlos Gomez: '13, '14
Jonathan Lucroy: '14, '16
Christian Yelich: '18, '19
1 – Tommy Harper: '70
Ellie Rodriguez: '72*
Dave May: '73
Darrell Porter: '74*
Henry Aaron: '75
George Scott: '75
Larry Hise: '78
Gorman Thomas: '81
Jim Sundberg: '84
Dave Parker: '90*
Kevin Seitzer: '95
Jeff Cirillo: '97
Fernando Vina: '98
Jeromy Burnitz: '99
Dave Nilsson: '99
Jose Hernandez: '02
Geoff Jenkins: '03*^
J.J. Hardy: '07
Rickie Weeks: '11
Jean Segura: '13
Aramis Ramirez: '14
Jesús Aguilar: '18^
Lorenzo Cain: '18
Mike Moustakas: '19

6 – None
5 – None
4 – Ben Sheets: '01, '04, '07, '08
3 – Dan Plesac: '87, '88, '89
Josh Hader: '18, '19, '21
2 – Rollie Fingers: '81, '82
Francisco Rodriguez: '14, '15
Brandon Woodruff: '19, '21
1 – Marty Pattin: '71*
Jim Colborn: '73*
Bill Travers: '76*
Jim Slaton: '77*
Lary Sorensen: '78
Teddy Higuera: '86
Ricky Bones: *'94
Bob Wickman: '00
Dan Kolb: '04
Derrick Turnbow: '06
Chris Capuano: '06*
Francisco Cordero: '07
Trevor Hoffman: '09
Yovani Gallardo: '10*
Corey Knebel: '17*
Corbin Burnes: '21

* – *Did Not Play*

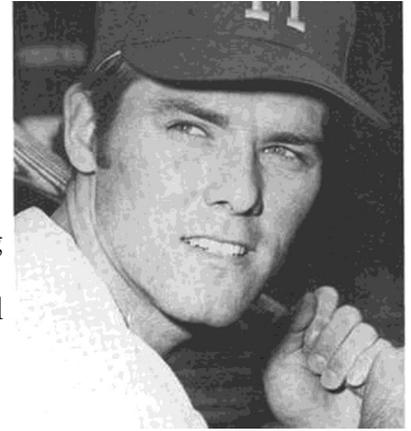
^ – *Final Vote!*

Bold Face – Starter

SOMETHING YOU MAY NOT KNOW

Ted Kubiak – SS (1970)

Better known for his defensive prowess over a 10-year career, Kubiak flexed his muscles one summer afternoon and set a Brewers single-game record that has remained on the books through the first 50 seasons. On July 18, 1970, the journeyman shortstop became the first player to drive in seven runs in a game in a 10-5 win over the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park. Kubiak collected four hits – missing a triple for the cycle. He singled home a run in the second inning and another in the fifth. He then had a run-scoring double in the eighth and closed out his day with a grand slam in the ninth inning. Over the years, several Brewers players have matched his seven-RBI day – the last being Christian Yelich in 2019 – but none have surpassed it.



TIME WAS...

July 12, 2001 – Twenty years ago, the Walk of Fame at Miller Park was dedicated prior to the Brewers – Twins game. The names of Henry Aaron, Rollie Fingers, Paul Molitor, and Robin Yount were the first inscribed on home plates shaped in granite encircling the ballpark plaza. In addition, the matted red brick home plates bear their uniform numbers and years of service with the franchise.



Willy Adames Packs a Punch at Short

By Mario Ziino
Photos by Scott Paulus and Kirsten Schmitt

There's electricity in the air at American Family Field.

Fans have felt it ever since Willy Adames landed with the Brewers following a trade with the Rays. Perhaps it reminds them of a time gone by when another high-energy player, Carlos Gómez, wore the uniform.

Call it a coincidence, but both come from Santiago, Dominican Republic, both played for the Rays, and yes, both wore No. 27.

"When I heard the news that Willy got traded to the Brewers, I got excited," said a smiling Gómez, who will be added to the Brewers Wall of Honor later this season. "I was happy for him. I told him that I left a lot of base hits in that jersey, so you better keep it."

Strange as it may be, their big league paths crossed in Tampa when the veteran Gómez was closing out his career and Adames was starting his. They became instant friends. But who would wear No. 27?

Not a problem. As a rookie, Adames didn't hesitate to show baseball etiquette by offering his uniform number to Gómez, who wore No. 27 most of his playing career, including in Milwaukee, where he enjoyed his finest seasons as a two-time All-Star.

Fast forward to 2021. Gómez has since retired, and Adames is an established player, now in his fourth season. And with Gómez's blessing, Adames opted to wear his friend's uniform number again. Except for this time as a sign of respect.

"I know (Gómez) means a lot for the fans in Milwaukee, for the organization," Adames told *MLB.com*. "I told him, 'You know, I'm going to use your number with a lot of pride. And I hope I can bring some great memories of what you did and when you were playing there.'"

It didn't take the 25-year-old long to live up to his promise.

Just six days after joining the team, Adames had a career-best four hits and a career-tying four RBI in a game as the Brewers completed a sweep of the Padres at home. He was a triple shy of hitting for the cycle, but he joined Robin Yount (1978 and 1982) and J.J. Hardy (2005) as the only shortstops in franchise history to register four hits and four RBI in a single game.

In his first six weeks with the Brewers, he hit .298 with eight home runs and 29 RBI in 42 games. The team went from two games under .500, four games out of first in the NL Central, to a season-best 18 games over .500, eight games ahead of the rest of the division.

That type of performance is why Brewers President of Baseball Operations David Stearns was keen on Adames.



Willy Adames became the third shortstop in franchise history to collect four hits and four RBI in a game.

“We had ongoing conversations with Tampa for a while,” Stearns said at the time of the trade that also included pitcher Trevor Richards, in exchange for pitchers Drew Rasmussen and J.P. Feyereisen. “He has proven to be one of the best defensive shortstops in baseball. He has performed on big stages. He was a key part of a team that won a pennant a year ago.

“We’re excited to add him to our infield mix.”

According to Stearns, the move was made purely to boost productivity. Together with Luis Urías, Kolten Wong, Travis Shaw, Daniel Robertson and Keston Hiura, he’s confident in the Brewers infield nucleus.

In addition, Adames made an immediate impact in the clubhouse.

“He’s been amazing,” another newcomer, Jackie Bradley Jr., told *MLB.com*. “He’s been here every single day, making sure everybody is elevated and keeping everybody in good spirits. He brings an awful lot of energy. The competitiveness he brings day in and day out is contagious.”

That fire and resolve make him special, on and off the field.

“I just think that’s my personality,” Adames said. “That’s who I am. I like to bring energy every day and to have fun. I like to enjoy the game. That’s what I bring to the clubhouse and I’m happy that I can do that.

“I like to be the first guy out of the dugout to greet my teammates after they get a home run or big hit. I just love this game. I enjoy every moment. Whenever you do something good on the field you have to celebrate. I’m just a happy kid.”

In 2012, the Tigers signed Adames as an international free agent at the tender age of 16. He spent two seasons in the Dominican Summer League before coming to the United States to test his skills at the Class -A level.

Midway through the 2014 campaign, Adames was traded to the Rays; and Drew Smyly; for David Price.

He spent the next three seasons climbing the Minor League ladder before making his Major League debut on May 22, 2018, against the Red Sox. Adames fanned three times in that game but managed to get his first hit off Chris Sale – a fourth-inning home run deep into the left-field bleachers.

He held his own that season, batting a solid .278 with ten homers and 34 RBI in 85 games. The following season, his average dipped to .254, but his homers doubled to 20, and he drove in 52 runs, playing in all, but ten games.

Unlike most hitters during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020, Adames did not struggle at the plate. His batting average was a respectable .259, and he managed to hit eight homers with 23 RBI in 54 games.

Since joining the Brewers, Adames has worked closely with hitting coaches Andy Haines and Jacob Cruz to perfect his swing for what awaits him in the National League.

“We’ve been working in the cages,” Adames said. “I now feel more confident at the plate. I try to be me. I try not to do too much and just be confident in myself. I feel pretty good, and I’m happy about that.”

Milwaukee fans have quickly embraced him as they did with Gómez, 11 years ago.

“This is a great fan base,” he shared. “I’m excited to be here and hopefully for a lot of years.”

No doubt, his mentor is keeping close tabs on his progress this summer.

“I know he’ll fit in with that team,” Gómez said. “That kid, for me, is like family. We’re always together in the Dominican. I’ll tell you, he comes to the ballpark positive and always smiling.”

Keeper Quotes

Pitching against the likes of Reggie Jackson, George Brett, and Eddie Murray...

“I tried not to let hitters look for certain pitches in a given situation. I’d keep them off stride. I wouldn’t let them sit on a pitch. The only way I knew how to do that was to mix up my repertoire and throw anything at any time. Everyone forgets that the hitters I faced were the best in the world. They were trying to get to me, to ruin my career, so I’d turn the table on them.” – **Pete Vuckovich (1981-86)**

Playing in the shadow of Johnny Bench...

“The one difficulty I had as a catcher, particularly in the National League, was the pretty profound standard set over there. That standard was (Johnny) Bench, and in his prime years, he was the best catcher imaginable. He had the finest arm you could put on a catcher. He was big and strong. He could block the ball well. He could throw anybody out. When people watched Bench catch, everyone else seemed to be a step or two below that standard. Well, I always hit the bat well, and people thought I was a better hitter. But based on his (Bench) standards, people couldn’t accept me, Manny Sanguillen or Gary Carter for a long time.” – **Ted Simmons (1981-85)**

Playing for Managers George Bamberger and Harvey Kuenn...

“Anything and everything I had in life back then I owed to them. George gave me my first real chance and put me in the lineup. Harvey understood how to best utilize me and let me play every day. George made us all believe that we could win, something this organization never had before him. Arch had been through everything imaginable as far as his playing career, and the problems with his leg and stomach disorder. We all respected them because they made us winners. I would run through a brick wall for them.”

– **Gorman Thomas (1973-76, 1978-83, 1986)**

Of all the big league stops, Milwaukee was his first and favorite...

“I had a great relationship with the fans. It really was special to have my own section and following out in the bleachers. Other places tried to duplicate ‘Vaughn Valley’ but it wasn’t the same like it was in Milwaukee. Not even close. As for my career, it was so important to me back when I was first came up to play alongside great veteran players. Robin (Yount) and Paulie (Molitor), Jimmy Gantner, and Willie Randolph all showed me so much about how to play the game the right way. I tried to do what they taught me.” – **Greg Vaughn (1989-96)**

A fan-favorite who enjoyed hitting at home...

“I don’t think I ever had a bad year in a Brewers uniform. Milwaukee was one place where I thought I made a difference, though the biggest difference was quite obvious: Miller Park. I knew we were going to play a game every night. No more rain delays like we had at County Stadium. When it was cold in April and September, it was miserable. But not at Miller Park. No matter where we played, though, there’s a lot of gratitude. I was fortunate that this game had been good to me. I was supported well but nowhere better than in Milwaukee.” – **Jeff Cirillo (1994-99, 2005-06)**



BREWERSTM

In Memoriam

Del Crandall (1972-76) – Manager – May 5, 2021 (91)

Mike Marshall (1969) – RHP – May 31, 2021 (78)



If you have ticket requests or any other alumni needs,
please call or email Lane Grindle at
(414) 544-7305 and/or lane.grindle@brewers.com