

# **RICHARD SULLIVAN**

**Nominated as: Player**

**Nominator: Brian Blevins**

**References: Tony Caruso & Howard Williams**

## **Nominee reviewed by Trustee: Carl Rakich (HoF 2016)**

**Trustee comment:** Richard Sullivan was nominated as a player, but from my discussions with his nominator and references and the written information received, he is much more than that. Throughout his baseball career he has been not only an outstanding pitcher, but an outstanding coach, manager and administrator as well. According to nominator Brian Blevins, Richard is truly a "student of the game" making him an even more valuable asset and a role model for his players and teammates to respect and emulate.

His references all agree that Richard is competitive, but always under control, and never aggressive or belligerent with opponents, umpires or fans. Brian says, "On the field Richard is as competitive as all fire, has the ability to shut any team down on the hill, and to hit bombs all over the yard, and does so on a regular basis to this day. But never, and I mean never, at the expense of embarrassing the opposition. Pure class!"

As a manager, Richard is a great leader. His knowledge of the game is extensive, including "what if" game situations, which includes mentally analyzing every scenario for each pitch or potential play. He's always one step ahead in planning strategy. He shows respect for all that surround him. He gets the most out of his team because of his consistent leadership. He positively encourages his players to help them bring out the most potential in their play and has never ever scolded or embarrassed anyone for any reason.

Reference Howard Williams says, "Sully's positivity and his ability to be 'The Rock' shines brighter off the field than it does on the field! He is without a doubt one of the strongest, most positive and well-rounded friends one could ever have. He has a way to put all of his strengths on display and has proven to be a leader, teammate and the best friend anyone could ever ask for."

According to reference Tony Caruso, Richard is an "exceptional organizer" including planning for league play each year and attendance at each RHWS. After the Roy Hobbs World Series is completed, Richard starts working on planning for the next year. He and the core players have round table meetings several times prior the next series to find ways to improve the team and filling in spots that need to be filled. He is also a strong leader and creative thinker in working out problems and solutions for the betterment of his local league and community.

For example, Tony said, "In 2005 our team was looking for another field to play on. Through negotiations, Richard secured Evans High School field. Evans High School is an inner-city field that was in poor condition and needed to be restored. An agreement was made to provide instructions to their struggling baseball team in exchange for the use of the field. With permission from the coach, Ray Bornacelli and the Orange County School Board and Orange County Commissioners, permission was granted to bring the field back into playing condition, which was a huge logistical challenge. Richard took it upon himself to have the field mowed, edged, seeded, new clay bought and installed on the infield and pitching clay for the mound completed. Once the field was in playing condition, he took up donations from players to purchase a full-size batting cage and get it installed. Once we started to play, the high school coach brought out his team and Richard and others started to give the students the fundamental skills and knowledge of the game. This was truly a gift to the kids and the school in giving back. Richard continues to pay it forward to this day."

To the best of my knowledge Richard meets all of the basic nominee requirements for consideration. He has been coming to the RHWS since 1999. He has been a member of at least three division winning teams at the RHWS and several league championship teams in both places he has lived and played.

Finally, I have received nothing negative regarding Richard Sullivan as a player, manager, organizer, teammate and team leader. I have pulled from the reference data corresponding to each of our three questions, including some specific examples to illustrate their claims.

## Achievements

From Nominator Brian Blevins:

- I have no idea if Richard has ever won an MVP award on a RH World Series team, because he would never tell me or anybody about that.
- His humility is the stuff of legend. I am positive he never named himself for one while he was managing the Orlando Blazers, although he certainly could have rationalized doing so.
- He is a widely respected Informational Technology specialist for the Fort Worth Public School district, and I'll bet accolades for his professional accomplishments are many.
- I know he was a mortal lock for Hall of Fame membership in the Central Florida orlandobaseball.com league before he moved to Texas, as I was the commissioner at the time. He was just shy of the minimum number of years needed to qualify there.
- I know he has been a member of at least three division winning squads at the RHWS, and several league championship teams in both places he has lived and played.

## Nominator comments

Nominator and references responded to questions. What follows are their responses to the questions or their letter of reference. (Some of this material has been edited for redundancy.)

**1. Please tell us how this individual and his character affect the game of baseball and his baseball colleagues on and off the field, and why. Use CONCRETE examples. \***

**BRIAN BLEVINS:** Sullivan is a unique individual in many ways. As it relates to baseball, he has a way of carrying himself on and around the field and the game that stands apart from his peers. He's not really the type of guy you bust chops with, not because he is threatening in any way, but because his carriage makes one perceive that he is above such earthly foolishness. He is as sincere as they come. When he says something, he means it. And, without ever saying so, the implication is that he expects the same from you. This makes him an excellent manager and an excellent coach. Richard is organized to a fault, always prepared, diligent and loyal to players who show him the same respect, and that is a long list, having watched him in action for the better part of thirty years. He knows the game of baseball, not in that generalized sense that people throw around too charitably. He knows it and he sees the totality of it, the intricacies and the nuances. For example, I've heard him on numerous occasions off handedly compliment a left fielder who backs up a play at third, when all the action was on the right side of the diamond. He loves to talk pitching and can predict with uncanny accuracy the intent and mindset of an opponent. In some cases, I always felt, before they thought of it.

**TONY CARUSO:** I have known Richard Sullivan since my very 1<sup>st</sup> trip to Roy Hobbs in 2001. We continue to be not only friends, but he is part of my family of friends.

Richard's contribution to the game is as follows, exceptional organizer in planning the attendance in the World series year after year, knowledge of the game, professionalism to each player, opposing team and total respect for the umpires. He has continually reached out to the players discussing the game of baseball and scenarios.

Returning to baseball after many years away from the game, I had recently had my Labrum repaired. Richard and I were playing catch before a game, and he noticed that my throws were moving a little more than normal. He mentioned to me that I should consider pitching. I told him my Dr. said not to pitch or do pull-ups. Richard said to throw within my capabilities and never try to overthrow. The following week he started to show me some mechanics and different ways to throw certain pitches. About 2 weeks later with his help he let me start a game. The results were OK and at that time he assured me that with time and work on mechanics, I would get better. That same fall we returned to the Roy Hobbs World Series, where I was placed in the starting pitching rotation. I will never forget starting the 1st game of the tournament. As it happened, I pitched a 1-hit shutout. During the game and after each inning he continued to give me the confidence to throw within my capabilities.

**2. What qualities and/or accomplishments make this individual special ... that they STAND APART from their peers and should be recognized through induction to the Roy Hobbs Baseball Hall of Fame? Use CONCRETE examples.**

**BLEVINS:** You simply will not find anyone who has a bad thing to say about the guy...nobody! He has been around the game of baseball all of his adult life. In any number of situations in any of his roles, whether as a player, coach, manager or administrator, he has been able to translate all of those dealings into positive ones. He has been coming to Roy Hobbs events since 1999, and I think the same could be said of his experiences there. He was the founder (and namer) of the Orlando Blazers. I almost cried when he announced he was moving up to the 53's, then the 60's with the Stoneage and the Wrinkles. As a player, the guy is a horse. He will take the ball whenever offered and give you all he has on the mound. His other distinction as a pitcher is this. In league play, tournaments, RH World Series, etc., imagine how many ground balls he has seen kicked and pop flies he has seen dropped. I have never seen him even express mild displeasure with such a turn of event, NEVER! He politely gets the ball back and goes and gets the next guy. It's remarkable, his self-control and mastery of perspective are the stuff of legend. Can he hit? I don't have access to the stats, but I would venture that he is close to a .500 hitter lifetime at Hobbs. And he is no Punch and Judy hitter either. He swings a heavy stick, with lots of extra-base hits. Honesty compels me to report he can't run a lick, so if he doubles, he doubles.

**CARUSO:** As a manager, Richard is a great leader. His knowledge of the game is extensive, including "what if" game situations, which includes mentally analyzing every scenario for each pitch or potential play. Richard shows respect for all that surround him. I cannot think of anytime that he has raised his voice or been disrespectful to any one on or off the field. He gets the most out of his team because of his consistent leadership. And, his compliments to both teammates and opposing teams is consistent and exceptional.

In 2007 our Orlando Blazers returned to the Roy Hobbs World Series with Richard as our manager. Our team has always been average but very scrappy. During the tournament we had some ups and downs. As our leader, Richard continued to focus on our play, making changes as needed. The goal was to win our division. As the week continued, with his strong leadership, we finally made it to the championship game for the first time after several years of trying with this group of guys. Our opponent was the Maine Indians, a great team with many tournament wins in their history. When the game started, our team came out with hit after hit and run after run. Richard taught us to never let up because a single play could change a game at any moment. We won the championship! I personally cannot thank Richard enough for his professionalism, leadership and team first mentality.

**3. From your list of character qualities and/or your line of reasoning in support of your candidate, if you could pick only 2, which would they be and why? These should be compelling and your stories should demonstrate how your candidate is EXCEPTIONAL.**

**BLEVINS:** This is a high-quality individual who loves baseball and who personifies the ideals of the Roy Hobbs Hall of Famers who came before him. He is fiercely loyal to the organization. And, he will condone no ill spoken about any and all things Roy Hobbs. He is a true ambassador for the sport and for the RHWS. I am confident in saying you simply will not come up with anyone, anywhere, in any context who will say a bad thing about the guy. He is old school, he loves his wife Cindy, his son Robert and whatever dog he has these days.

Second, his comportment on the field, in addition to his prodigious accomplishments as a player, coach and manager, stands alone. What we do at the plate, on the mound and in the field fades like the brilliant flash of a firecracker, gorgeous, exceptional, but gone in a puff of smoke. What lives on is the camaraderie, the esprit de corps, the memories forged in the dugout, before and after the competitions. The true mark and worth of a man in this context is the legacy he has left. Richard Sullivan has made a positive impression on thousands of ball players for many years.

Richard Sullivan is very aware of others. When my son was born many years ago, his baby shower gift was a top of the line, state of the industry batting helmet, junior sized. When Aaron did finally age into and ultimately out of its size, it was then and will forever be, "Mr. Richard's helmet." Again, who does that?

When I joined the Richard Sullivan-founded and managed Blazers in their infancy a couple of decades ago, I had another Richard Revelation. All ballplayers have gone through that slightly awkward assimilation stage as they join a new team, getting to know your new teammates, getting the lay of the land, fitting in. Part of the process for all of us was and is having your personal drink and snack at the ready as needed during games. Not on Richard Sullivan's teams. Every game was like a mini-buffet. Team sized Gatorade, water, cups, and snacks. Not just gum and some seeds, but cured meats from Pepperidge Farms, cheeses, crackers... And woe be to the player who didn't leave that dugout before cleaning up after themselves.

My last anecdote would be called more of a non-example. I have played with, against and for Richard in literally hundreds of games. Never have I seen or heard about him denigrating an opponent in any way, shape or form. Never. Not once. The Germans have an expression that beats what English has to offer in this regard. "Schadenfreude", the feeling of somehow bettering oneself in the eyes of others at the expense of someone else's misfortune. It's unfortunately a common characteristic of humanity, much less of ballplayers, even in jest. Richard is as competitive as all fire, has the ability to shut any team down on the hill, and to hit bombs all over the yard, and does so on a regular basis to this day. But never, and I mean never, at the expense of the opposition.

#### **CARUSO: Leadership and Character.**

Leadership – After the RHWS is completed, Richard starts working on planning for the next year. He and the core players have round table meetings several times prior the next series to find ways to improve the team and filling in spots that need to be filled. As a field manager, he positively encourages his players to help them bring out the most potential in their play and has never ever scolded or embarrassed anyone for any reason. I personally look up to Richard as a big brother and amazing honest and loyal person on and off the field. He has always strived to place a competitive team at the series and his attitude is win or lose, it is how we play the game that counts.

Character – I remember a game about 8 to 10 years ago, the opposing team's runner clearly missed 3<sup>rd</sup> base and scored a crucial run. Once the play was completed Richard called time out to have a meeting with the home plate umpire to discuss the play. I clearly remember the meeting, there was no raising of his voice just a quiet, respectful conversation. At that time the home plate umpire asked that the field umpire join the conversation and discuss the call. As the meeting was almost over, the home plate umpire corrected the call as he had a better view of 3<sup>rd</sup> base. There was no shouting or argument. I cannot tell you how proud we were of him for addressing the play in such a respectful manner.

#### **Comments from #2 Reference, Howard Williams**

I first met Richard Sullivan on the Baseball Field. We met as opponents and quickly developed a friendship that led to becoming Teammates. I've had the pleasure to call Sully a teammate for many years. He is a true competitor that always gives 100% of himself for the good of the "TEAM". However, this is not the attraction the Sully. Through the years we have become much closer, and I've been able to really come to know the man behind the bat and glove. The attraction to Sully has nothing to do with his ability to play the game of baseball...

Sully's positivity and his ability to be The Rock shines brighter off the field than it does on the field! He is without a doubt one of the strongest, positive and well-rounded friends one could ever have. He has a way to put all of his strengths on display and has proven to be a leader, teammate and the best friend anyone could ever ask for. Through the years, the pleasure would be anyone's who came in contact with Sully. The way he transforms his life habits over to the ball field go hand-in-hand.

Richard Sullivan is a fierce competitor, a strong teammate that always gives the best of himself for the better of the team and all of his teammates. Even when he is physically impaired and not at his best, he always shows up and gives it his all! There's nothing held back, and I can sincerely attest that his ability to play the game is secondary to his ability to be a true friend and support mechanism.