

PAUL WESTWOOD

Nominated as: Player

Nominator: SAM SIBETO, (HoF 2019)

References: Rob Fester (HoF 2018) & Jim Ahlborn (HoF 2017)

Nominee reviewed by Trustee: Lanny Ropke (HoF 2016)

Trustee comment: For more than 23 years I have been involved with forming and participating in two league's HOF committees. I (we) have researched more than 200 players over the years and after numerous interviews, inducted around 130.

The enthusiasm and excitement for this nominee, expressed verbally to me by phone, eclipses what is written in the nomination.

It is obvious he is an excellent player. You don't get into your college sports hall of fame or the National Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame without significant bonafides. Add to that the Pittsburgh teams' success over the years at the Roy Hobbs World Series – he is a significant contributor to 9 championships in 15 years. Interestingly, the Pittsburgh leadership keeps a scorebook but not for player statistics – just keep score – so statistics on Paul Westwood barely exist, limited to legendary home runs and come-from-behind victories. When opponents say, "Don't let Westwood beat you," it is a high compliment.

Nominator Sam Sibeto says Paul is the "best player to ever play for Pittsburgh," and that is saying a lot. The gentlemen I talked to echoed his sentiments.

Interestingly, for such a stellar player, he is very quiet and leads by example. Said Sibeto: "When best player is most likeable, it makes it easy to manage."

Outside the dugout, Paul, who is self-employed, is well-known for spending time making fields playable ... he volunteers time with Special Olympics, Little League, and takes his mom shopping, when he is not changing a diaper between innings – see the story below.

Said Sibeto, "He is a throwback. ... a player that everyone wants on their team."

In my book, that, too, is a high compliment.

Achievements:

- Pitt Hall of Fame (University of Pittsburgh)
- National Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame
- 9 AAAA championships in Open/35+ and Masters Divisions over an 15-year period.
- Pittsburgh's all-time leader in home runs and RBIs
- Called by teammates and opponents alike the best player on those Pittsburgh teams

Nominator comments / Sam Sibeto

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. *

Paul (Woody) Westwood has been the heart and soul of Pittsburgh from day one. He leads by example and is a man of few words. Bill Devine always calls him "John Wayne in cleats." I have never seen him make a mental error on the field. Our 1st-and-3rd play was to throw the ball to Woody at shortstop and he will take it from there. When the best player on the team is also the most likable it makes running the team easy. He never has had a cross word with his teammates. He just plays!

Off the field he is the guy draining puddles at 3pm so that you can play at 6pm. He is a throwback. A man's man and a player that everyone wants on their team. One game he gave up his first few innings in order to drive 20 miles to pick up a teammate with no other transportation.

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.

The best player to ever play for Pittsburgh period!! Batted 4th, played shortstop, all-time leader in home runs and RBI's. Hit one of the most memorable home runs in Roy Hobbs history Pittsburgh vs Texas in the mid 1990's on a Saturday night during a championship game at Hammond Stadium. Woody hit the game winning home run over the scoreboard, halfway up the light tower and into the cow pasture.

He is the guy your opponents say, "Don't let this guy beat you". That is the best compliment you can get. Everyone knows the accomplishments of Pittsburgh in the last 30 years as a team. Paul Westwood is our best player.

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.

Temperament and Composure – Woody plays the same way every game! He never panics or loses his cool. He is a throwback style of player. Hits a home run and runs around the bases with his head down and roots for the next man up to bat. Never a "look at me" kind of guy.

He is the teammate everyone looks to when the game is on the line. More often than not he delivers, but when he doesn't, he drops the bat, runs to his position and plays the game, that is true leadership.

Likability – Paul has the innate ability to be liked by all. He has always been the best player on his team. Woody is confident but not cocky. His demeanor is even-keel, and he's always been approachable and not aloof. He is universally liked and respected by our opponents everywhere we play. When we get to a tournament everyone always asks about Woody. You asked any opponent who is the best player on Pittsburgh, the answer would be Paul Westwood.

To demonstrate Paul's character as far as his fellow man, Paul volunteers yearly to help and support the Special Olympics.

His love and dedication to the game of baseball is shown by his time coaching Little League and passing along to the younger generation the skills, knowledge, respect, and appreciation of the game. I might add that this includes how to conduct one's self on and off the field. Not a bad quality to be teaching to young people.

Paul is self-employed and offers his services free of charge to needy senior citizens. Again, just another instance of the quality of the man.

Two examples of his giving volunteer spirit: one game he gave up his first few innings in order to drive 20 miles to pick up a teammate with no other transportation. And on more than one occasion than I can count he has left his job early to fix/clean up the baseball field to make it playable for that night's game.

Reference comments

Neither Rob Fester or Jim Ahlborn (both members of the Hall of Fame) submitted answers to the questionnaire, however sent in their thoughts:

ROB FESTER: Knowing Paul for so many years, I know his love for the game. But like the rest of us, our families come first. That brings me to a funny story that ties Paul, baseball, and his kids together. We were stuck one Sunday, with only 8 players. We tried everyone we knew. No luck.

Paul was not available that day because he was watching his children. We begged and pleaded, Paul finally said he would see what he could do. Paul arrives at the game but instead of his baseball bag he has two toddlers in tow, a diaper bag, a snack bag, all their toys and crafts to keep them occupied during the game. We all took turns

watching them throughout the game. At one point his son runs out from behind a tree toward the field buck naked yelling, "Daddy I'm done!!!" It was so funny it stopped play, and the game, as Paul had to leave his at bat to change Jacob's diaper.

Everyone who has played baseball in Pittsburgh knows and respects Paul Woodward, not just for his ability but also for his personality and character. He is a leader who sets the standard for conduct on and off the field. He is not only the best player but the hardest working and dedicated player who commands by example, and all the players fall into line with his lead. Many games would not have been played, or played on a terrible field if not for Paul arriving hours early to drag the field, fill holes, sweep puddles, line the field, apply Diamond Dry, and doing whatever it took to allow us to play that night.

One year we were playing the championship game and several players would not be available after the scheduled game. Wouldn't you know it poured with thunderstorms the night before. No way was the field going to be playable for several days, meaning, we would not have enough players to play later in the week. Meaning a forfeit of the championship game. I called Paul to see what we should do. He was way ahead of me, checking the field he told me to hold off canceling the game. Maybe two hours of work and five bags of Diamond Dry will save the day. He then took the day off and went to work on a very messy field. I show up 2 hours before the game to give a hand. There is Paul covered head to toe in mud, he has been working his tail off all alone. The field looks great. He says to me "I was wrong, it took a little longer and 15 bags of Diamond Dry." We played that night all thanks to Paul. That is just one of many ways he contributes to the league, team, and people in general. You rarely see this kind of selflessness from your star player.

JIM AHLBORN: Paul is a confident player whom you never want to let down. He would never disrespect any of us, he carries a stature that you just naturally respect. Best player I've ever had the fortune to play ball with. I've always said for years if Woody is at the game tonight, I know we're going to win. It plays out almost all the time. As I have been a player/coach in our Pittsburgh league for years, Woody's always been the first person to ask if I need help to work on the field, and I know he has my back as well as his teammates on and off the field.

Qualities I respect:

His mom is in her 90's and Paul is always there to help and make sure she's good to go... he takes her shopping and spends quality time with her. She'd be a great person to ask about his character...

He snow-plows in the winter and is always taking care of neighbors or people on his list and not concerned whatsoever about money...

Very good sense of humor. He's awesome in our after-game circle. He has a way of engaging us without trying. Just an all-around great person.