

RH HoF Reference Data for Ross Vukovich

Nominated as: Manager, Organizer

Vetter: Flip Harrison, HoF Trustee & HoF 2020, & Gerry Huppman, HoF Trustee & HoF 2016

Nominator: Scott Koenig

References: Dave Frak and Bill Devine, HoF 2013

Harrison/Huppman Notes:

After getting his written response this morning, I finally got to talk to Dave Frak this evening. Nice guy, he's known Ross Vukovich for 19 years and has played with him all along.

Besides telling me repeatedly that Ross works hard to create a "family environment" for all his players and their families, Dave emphasized the way Ross continuously assembles players to take the field each year. He impressed me with tales of how Ross would make sure his players were happy and wanted to come back and play year after year. Give the number of AAAA championship or runners-up teams he's managed or the number he's played in, it would certainly appear that he is adept at assembling quality players.

When Bill Devine spoke to Gerry, the first thing he told him was that he personally had not seen Ross in nearly 20 years. he also told Gerry that TG had personally asked him to be a reference for Ross. Well, you picked a good guy to be a reference despite not having seen him in a long time, Ross apparently made a lasting impression.

Bill talked about seeing Ross play as a 30 something middle infielder for the Akron A's in the mid 90's. He mentioned not liking him at the time but admired the way he played the game. He is aware of the number of championship's he's garnered as both a player and manager. He also pointed out how hard it is to assemble and keep guys that want to play for you, year after year.

From a personal viewpoint, having gotten into the Hall as an administrator first and player second, I can appreciate just how hard it is to keep a good team together. What Ross has accomplished over all these years is admirable, and in our opinion he checks all the boxes to qualify for inclusion in the Class of 2025.

Career and Achievements from nominator and references

Quick Facts

- **Born:** 1961
- **Hometown:** North Canton, Ohio
- **Roy Hobbs Experience:** 30+ years
- **Role:** Manager/Player
- **Teams:** Akron A's organization

The Builder of Champions

For over three decades, Ross Vukovich has been the architect of one of Roy Hobbs Baseball's most successful franchises. Known simply as "Vuk," he has created more than just winning teams—he's built a baseball family.

Championship Excellence

🏆 **21 League and Tournament Titles**

★ **6 Roy Hobbs World Series Championships**

Manager & Player

2011-Open AAAA champions

2013- Open AAAA runnerup

2014- Open AAAA Champions

2015- Open AAAA runnerup

2015- Open AAAA runnerup

2023- Veterans Div. AAA runnerup

2024- Veterans Div. AAA Champions

Player

1998- Open AAA Champions

2001- Open AAAA Champions

2004- Open AAAA champions

🏆 **Multiple championships across age divisions**

👊 **Elite teams in multiple age groups for 30+ years**

High School Standout to Hall of Famer

- **1979:** MVP and All-Stark County Team at North Canton Hoover High
- **College:** Two-time All-Conference at West Liberty College
- **1985:** Master of Science degree from University of Cincinnati
- **2004:** Inducted into Stark County Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame
- **2017:** Inducted into Greater Akron Baseball Hall of Fame

The A's Family Legacy

What sets Vuk apart is the culture he's created: - **"Once an Akron A, always an A"** - Creates a family atmosphere that keeps players returning year after year - Hosts annual Christmas parties for current and past players - Takes personal interest in every player's wellbeing on and off the field

Beyond Baseball

- **Youth Development:** Sons of former A's players now play for and run their own teams
- **Community Building:** A's games draw the most fans and families in NEORH
- **Leadership Development:** Former players model youth programs after A's principles
- **Canton Class A Revival:** Resurrected defunct league where Thurman Munson once played

Professional Achievements

- **1994:** Part of NABF National Championship team
- **1998:** Part of AABC National Title team
- **2014-Present:** Hitting coach for Croatian National Team

- **2014-Present:** Assistant coach at Jackson Township High School

The Vukovich Way

Dedication: - Plays through pain to support his team - Drives wounded but victorious after championships - Never stops recruiting talent to Roy Hobbs

Objectivity: - Approaches the game with honesty and humility - Acknowledges great plays by opponents - Masters the mental game with grace and sportsmanship

Building for the Future

Vuk doesn't just maintain success—he builds for tomorrow: - Develops younger Akron A's teams to keep tradition alive - Helps sustain local Roy Hobbs chapters - Mentors next generation of team managers - Created model for family-oriented baseball programs

Canton Class A Renaissance

Vuk's vision brought adult baseball back to Canton: - Resurrected league after years of dormancy - Now features 6 solid college-age teams - Plays at historic Thurman Munson Stadium - Provides summer home for college players

What Makes Vuk Exceptional

1. **Leadership of Men:** Holds teammates to higher standards
2. **Family First:** Opens home to all A's players past and present
3. **Never-Ending Energy:** Passion overflows to anyone who will listen
4. **Master Storyteller:** Captivates with baseball history and memories

The Vukovich Impact

"He has probably brought more men back to playing baseball through Roy Hobbs than anyone can count."
- Nomination testimony

Why Vuk Belongs in the Hall of Fame

- 30+ years of excellence in Roy Hobbs Baseball
- Created sustainable model for team success
- Brought adult baseball back to Canton
- Built lasting baseball family culture
- Mentored generations of players
- Embodiment of Roy Hobbs values

Ross Vukovich hasn't just won championships—he's built a legacy that will continue long after his playing days, making him an ideal candidate for the Roy Hobbs Baseball Hall of Fame.

Nominator Scott Koenig's Comments:

1. Please tell us how this individual and his character affect Roy Hobbs Baseball, the game of baseball and his baseball colleagues on and off the field, and why.

Ross, aka Vuk, bleeds baseball. I have known Vuk for over 30+ years, first as fierce competitor across the diamond, later a teammate, and now as a fellow board member for the Canton Class A and very dear friend.

His honesty, loyalty and integrity have never veered off course throughout his years in Roy Hobbs NEO and at the RH World Series in Florida. No matter what the circumstances and differences have arisen in the course of a ballgame, Vuk has always kept a level of respect for the game, his opponents, and umpires.

He has consistently put together elite teams with superior talent in NE Ohio for over 3 decades that have won championship after championship in multiple age groups in Ohio and Florida. He has also invested time in putting together younger Akron A's teams in Roy Hobbs as his teams age out and move up divisions in order to keep the A's tradition alive.

More importantly he does it to help the local RH chapter stay sustainable with opportunities for younger generations to play this great game into adulthood. Even now, sons of his teammates going back over 30 years are A's playing and running their own team. Vuk never stops recruiting.

He has probably brought more men back to playing baseball through Roy Hobbs than anyone can count. He is always turning over stones getting guys to come out of baseball retirement and rekindle that flame and passion we all had when we were younger.

His energy level is never ending for his love of the game, and his passion is overflowing to share it with anyone who will listen. He is a never-ending storyteller and can capture your attention for hours with recollections of games, teammates, and baseball history. A lifelong resident of Stark County Ohio, when it comes to baseball everyone knows Vuk and Vuk knows everyone.

2. What qualities and/or Roy Hobbs Baseball 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?

What makes Vuk stand apart from his peers, and what makes the A's a great organization, is the family atmosphere he created.

The A's family is the glue that holds it all together and keeps players coming back every spring above and beyond the winning. Once an Akron/Vukgripz A, always an A. Vuk takes a personal interest in all of his teammates and is someone the guys can come to for advice struggling while playing or outside of baseball as well.

He is a leader of men, and he expects his teammates to behave and act like men on and off the field in their personal lives. He holds his teammates to a higher standard which carries over on the field and why they win championships. He is fully invested in their families and wellbeing. Yearly trips to Fort Myers are not just for the guys, they are well planned family trips to make sure everyone has a great vacation in between ball games.

Locally in NEORH, A's games have the most fans and family filling the stands week after week to come watch their husbands, boyfriends, and fathers play more than any other team around. Post games turn into family picnics in the parking lots as wives' and girlfriend's bring food and snacks to help the guys replenish and relive highlights of the day's events.

This carries on into the off season as Ross and his angel of a wife, Judy, open their house every Christmas holiday for a reunion party of present and past players and their families. Thier house is

filled with kids, food and entertainment for a real joyous occasion. Even if you played just one year for the A's, Ross extends an invite.

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 in regard to Roy Hobbs Baseball. *

To demonstrate what a role Vuk's family-oriented team concept has become, some current and former players have gone on to model youth programs for their children and communities. Those players found that the building block of the A's was a family atmosphere.

Following the principals of how Vuk runs the A's, these new coaches are forming teams in rec and travel ball communities that are drawing attention of young parents and their sons to want to be a part of it all. They too have family involvement along with quality coaching of the fundamentals of baseball. They are continuing Vuk's legacy in ways he is not even aware of in NE Ohio.

One other story of his love for baseball is the resurgence of college age baseball due to his resurrecting a defunct program in his beloved Stark County called the Canton Class A League. Vuk cut his teeth transitioning from High School into adult baseball while in college during the summers in the original Class A.

Once a strong proud league with many former minor and major league players having come from it, ran its course and was defunct for several years. Vuk had a vision the bring back adult baseball to Canton again, and he helped form a committee of other baseball junkies to help him bring it to fruition. Now in its fourth year, and 6 solid teams made up of college aged players, the league is becoming a landing place for young men from local colleges home for the summer to stay sharp getting reps and ready for fall ball with their college teams. The center piece of the league is playing at Thurman Munson Stadium. Thurman was himself a Canton Class A player while in college at Kent State during the summers in the 60's. What a rich tradition Vuk has brought back to life!