

Names Sakes

By Bruce Shutan

Randy Johnson is still hurling fastballs and changeups for the Arizona Diamondbacks at the ripe old age of 44. Tom Glavine is not far behind in his celebrated return to the Atlanta Braves at age 42 as one of Major League Baseball's most celebrated southpaws, and 74-year-old legend Henry Louis "Hank" Aaron might be cheering him on in the stands.

What do these boys of summer have in common outside America's favorite pastime? Their names might be more common than meets the eye, and each of them has a decidedly un-famous counterpart who may (or may not) be known in the employee benefits and human resources field. In the case of Johnson, there are two such individuals, both of whom hail from Minnesota and enjoy wild rice.

Consider this unusual lineup card: Tom Glavin (sans the "e") plying his craft as Director of Risk Management and Employee Benefits for Gate Petroleum Co. in Jacksonville, Florida; Randy Johnson holding court as Vice President for Labor, Immigration, and Employee Benefits at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington; Randy Johnson toiling away as Founder of Harbor Solutions and Services in Chicago, Illinois, after 25 years in Motorola's HR department; Henry Jacob Aaron providing decades of provocative research and writings on health care and retirement policy as an economist and senior fellow with the Washington-based Brookings Institution's economic studies program.

So, what is it like for each of these ordinary gentlemen to share the name of a famous baseball star with another 161-game season under way? They are all serious professionals who have been forced to be good sports about having to endure repeated cases of mistaken identity.

Asking for Autographs

For a number of years, Aaron regularly received requests to make his autograph or sports memorabilia available for celebrity auctions and school events, as well as sign baseballs (in one face-to-face encounter, a gentleman actually said: "Sign it anyway. My kid won't know the difference").

With tongue planted firmly in cheek, he always sent the adults one of his books to be raffled off but, with the children who didn't know any better, he politely forwarded contact information for the former baseball great.

Aaron still has a letter from former Miss America and sportscaster Phyllis George inviting him to a celebrity golf tournament. "Unfortunately, I don't play golf but, if I did, I would have gone," he quips.

Now a consultant who works with employers to develop public policy initiatives that result in holistic living, Johnson remembers being in a hotel in Austin, Texas, when the Diamondbacks battled the Yankees in the 2001 World Series.

"I called the front desk from my room and said, 'This is Randy Johnson,' and there was silence on the other end of the line," he says. "Then he said, 'Is this the real Randy Johnson?' I said, 'My mother thinks I am.'"

When Hammerin' Hank signed a three-year contract for \$200,000 a year before baseball's big-money era, Aaron jokingly brought a copy of a newspaper article about the deal to the head of the Brookings Institution at that time and asked if he would match the offer. "He told me I should take it," he chuckles.

Depending on whom he encounters, Glavin will point out to people that the pitcher spells his name with an "e" at the end, but usually not until the end of the conversation. About 25% of people tell him, "Your name sounds so familiar." They've heard it, but are not really baseball fans. The other 75% know who Tom Glavine the pitcher is and, inevitably, a conversation will ensue for the next minute or so.

"Being a big baseball fan, at first it was pretty cool," Glavin says about the constant comparisons to Glavine. "Then, it became a pain or nuisance. Now, it's just part of life. Almost a day doesn't go by without some type of comment."

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