



New Cub Hairston completes family circle – all 5 big leaguers have played for Chicago teams

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Of course Scott Hairston's going to be thrilled logging outfield playing time for the Cubs.

Growing up in Naperville, the 32-year-old Hairston used to watch games from the Wrigley Field bleachers. He knows the area well and won't have the usual transition adjusting himself and family to a new city. He'll have people to hang with even after his immediate family has moved out to Arizona and the West Coast years ago.

"I have a cousin, my mom has a few cousins," Hairston said. "I have a lot of friends I went to high school with, who are still in the area. It's going to be a nice time to see some old friends and relatives. A lot of them are Cubs fans, so that's also good, too."

Hairston's father, Jerry Hairston, Sr., agrees that the homecoming should be a lot smoother than his own experience switching teams.

"I remember the first time I went from Chicago (White Sox) to Pittsburgh, I was devastated," he said. "When I moved in '77 to Pittsburgh, it was something that (had his head) spinning for two months, trying to do a job but (wondering) why the heck did I leave Chicago?"

"Scott has that knowledge on how to make that transition. His transition will be a whole lot more stable, with the confidence that will be shown by him."

Scott Hairston's projected smooth move to the Cubs still isn't any ordinary one. The nine-year major-league veteran isn't just any old kid coming home to Chicago. He has completed his distinguished family's baseball circle. A record-tying five Hairstons over three generations have played in the big leagues. Now the quintet, starting with his late grandfather Sam Hairston with the White Sox in 1951, all will have logged time with Chicago teams.

In what's likely a Cubs record, three Hairstons have donned the North Side blue pin-



Scott Hairston believes it's "cool" that all five major leaguers in his family over three generations will have played for Chicago teams. Photo credit Jill Hairston.

stripes. Uncle John Hairston was the Cubs' first African-American catcher, in 1969. Brother Jerry Hairston, Jr., now with the Dodgers, played as a utility man in Wrigley Field in 2005-06, after coming over from Baltimore with Mike Fontenot in the Sammy Sosa deal.

Meanwhile, Sam Hairston was the second player of color, after Minnie Minoso 2 1/2 months earlier, to perform for the Sox, and also served as the South Siders' first African-American catcher. Jerry Hairston, Sr., had two tenures with the Sox as a pinch hitter and spare outfielder in the 1970s and 1980s, sandwiched around that relatively brief detour to Pittsburgh.

All-Chicago Hairstons 'cool' for Scott

"That's really cool, especially being from the Chicago area," Scott Hairston said of his special family status. "Me and my brother got to play in the same city we grew up in. It's something special. It's something we'll really look back on and say, wow, that's a great feat to have.



Scott Hairston is overjoyed coming home to play for the Cubs. Photo credit [slgckgc](#).

"For all of us to say we played in the city of Chicago, there's a sense of pride in that. And I've always wanted to play for a Chicago team. Jerry did, too. And we achieved that. We can walk away when we're done playing and say we got to play in Chicago."

The Cubs have had plenty of brother and father-and-son acts – almost more of the latter.

Brothers Rick and Paul Reuschel teamed for the only all-brother shutout in big-league history in 1975 in Wrigley Field. First baseman Hal and catcher Danny Breeden briefly were teammates in 1971. Jim and Wayne Tyrone were another brother act in the 1970s, although the pair never were teammates. Hank Sauer, the "Mayor of Wrigley Field" as slugging left fielder and 1952 NL Most Valuable Player, had a brother named Ed Sauer who was even luckier – he played on the 1945 pennant winners compared to Hank's service on also-rans.

Father-and-son combos of Todd and Randy Hundley, Joe and Casey Coleman, Gary Sr. and Gary Jr. Matthews, Chris and Justin Speier, Marty and Matt Keough, and

Bobby and Mike Adams also are down in Cubs annals. But three family members over two generations is unprecedented.

“It lets me know we’ve done a pretty good job as far as our careers,” said Jerry Hairston, Sr., now a Sox spring-training instructor. “We’ve played long enough and people respect your ability. It’s a business and (Scott) going back to Chicago will be exciting. It’s a great sense of pride.”

The youngest of all the ballplaying Hairstons comes back familiar with the emotional territory of the fans.

“Scott knows the fan base,” said Jerry Hairston, Jr. “It’s really passionate.”

The Cubs briefly looked at Hairston at the start of the free-agent season. In the meantime, he also considered returning to the New York Mets, where he slugged a career-high 20 homers in 2012.

The Cubs’ interest heated up after New Year’s. Baseball brain trust Theo Epstein and Jed Hoyer, who had been Hairston’s general manager in San Diego in 2010, realized their projected right-field platoon was journeyman Nate Schierholtz and rookie Dave Sappelt. The outfield was weak in right-handed hitting after Alfonso Soriano. By the end of January, the parties had agreed upon a two-year deal.

“More and more as time went on, Chicago was looking as the best opportunity to me,” Hairston said. “I wanted to keep my options open. In my heart, Chicago was the right place.”

He knew the opportunity for playing time was ripe with the Cubs, lacking power after Soriano and Anthony Rizzo. Hairston had a chance to snare playing time in both right and center, the latter in a possible platoon with lefty-swinging David DeJesus. If Hairston could consistently produce against right-handers, he could carve out a regular’s job for himself.

Everyday outfielder’s job is goal

“I never consider myself a platoon player,” Hairston said. “Others have. I always felt like an everyday player. Given an opportunity, I can prove to people I can be. In the past, I feel I proved myself. But my opinion doesn’t matter.

“Last year I played in every single role – platooning, spot start, playing against lefties. The last few weeks in the season, I played every day. I just pride myself on being a guy the manager and the baseball club can rely on.”

Scott Hairston did not specific numbers to prove his point. That task was left to his loyal brother. Jerry Hairston, Jr., starting his 16th big-league season, said Scott had relatively even power numbers against both kinds of pitching.

“He hit 11 homers against lefties, and nine against righties, and a lot against right-handed relievers late in the game,” he said. “Look at Scott’s and Cody Ross’ numbers, they’re comparable. It’s terrible to get typecast (as a platoon player) that way.”

Scott Hairston hardly is the classic on-base-percentage maven craved by Epstein. He had just a .299 OBP in 2012, three points below his lifetime figure. But Hairston insists OBP is just one element of a hitter’s prowess.

“My goal is to get on base,” he said. “I’m a guy who can see a breaking ball throughout the at-bat. I’ve seen breaking balls on all counts. In a way, I have to be selective. I have to feel the situation out.

“You can talk in the off-season about my OBP. What they don’t talk about is the average of balls in play.

In the last few years, I’ve been one of those guys that have hit a lot of balls hard, but at people. At certain times, that doesn’t help your OBP. I don’t think a lot of that is talked about enough. The main thing is what a player brings to the table.

“There are guys who have high OBP, guys there are guys who have low. But what else do they bring to the table? I think a good balance (of OBP producers at the top of the lineup and RBI men in the middle) is key.”

He’s prepared for right field’s challenges

More commonly known as a left fielder, Hairston said he’s well-prepared to shift to right and center as a Cub. He played all three outfield positions for the Mets in 2012.

“I played a lot of right field for the first time in my career,” he said. “I played more innings in right than in center, which was very good for me. I have now equally have (service) spread out between left, right and center. I’m ready for whatever. It’s a good opportunity, and that’s why I chose to go to the Cubs.”

From both his visitor’s outfield experience and his days sitting in the bleachers, Hairston’s well aware Wrigley Field’s right field has the toughest late-afternoon sun of any big-league ballpark.

“I’ll ask some guys some questions,



Scott Hairston could garner a regular outfield job if he can hit right-handers consistently. Photo credit [Chrisjnelson](#).

how they approach the ball during day games,” he said. “I’m not too worried about that. It’s just one of the things, every park you go to on the road, you go to certain areas of the park where there are difficulties.”

In right, Hairston will have to worry about the whole range of elements that affect baseball at Wrigley Field as much as any ballpark in the majors.

“The biggest thing is to check the flags every inning – the wind can change in a matter of minutes,” Jerry Hairston, Jr. said. “It’s one of toughest outfields to play in the majors. Scott’s very aware of that.”

With his experience, awareness has to dovetail with physical ability that should be in its prime. Scott Hairston is at that good point where he knows himself as well as ever.

“I think right now I have a good understanding of what I can and cannot do,” he said. “Early in my career, I believe I was going out of my character, going out of my way to be somebody I wasn’t. Focus in on your strengths and understand your weaknesses.

“There are times you don’t feel as good or as confident as a hitter, but you can trick your mind so to speak and walk up there and act like you’re 9-for-your-last-12. It’s something that’s more mental than physical.”

No matter what the game situation, he has a permanent mindset he and four other Hairstons have a special place in Chicago baseball history.