



‘Wild Thing’ makes return as Pitch and Hit Banquet speaker

*By George Castle, CBM Historian
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Fans will get a chance to relive the “Wild Thing” late-inning histrionics on the “Boys of Zimmer” 1989 Cubs when Mitch Williams serves as guest speaker for the Pitch and Hit Club’s 68th annual banquet Sunday, Jan. 26, at the Carlisle, 435 E. Butterfield Road in Lombard, Ill.

Tickets and full tables are still available for the longest-running off-season baseball dinner in Chicago history. Individual tickets are \$75 for Pitch and Hit Club members, and \$100 for non-members.. A table of 10 is \$750. Tickets and tables can be ordered from Pitch and Hit Club Treasurer Bill Motluck at MotluckW@sbcglobal.net or 708/805-1928.

Doors open at 4:30 p.m. for cocktails. Dinner is scheduled for 6 p.m., with the awards ceremony starting at 6:30 p.m.

Emceeding the event is longtime Chicago broadcast personality Tom Shaer.

Now a baseball analyst for both the MLB Network and Fox Sports, Williams is marking the 25th anniversary of his memorable 36-save season for the Cubs’ National League East titlists. He cemented his nickname “Wild Thing” during the 1989 season, hard on the heels of a similar character in the baseball comedy *Major League* around the same time.

Described by teammate Mark Grace as pitching “with his hair on fire,” the colorful left-hander endured plenty of dramatics in the ninth inning after being traded from the Texas Rangers for Rafael Palmeiro and Jamie Moyer. Williams started out on Opening Day working out of a bases-loaded, no-out situation in the ninth against the Phillies and didn’t stop triggering heart palpitations all season.



Mitch Williams was a good talker as “Wild Thing” in relief, then as a baseball TV analyst and now as the Pitch and Hit Club Banquet’s guest speaker.

Williams went on to play for the 1993 NL champion Philadelphia Phillies. He served up the Toronto Blue Jays' Joe Carter's World Series-winning homer in Game 6 that season, but gained respect from fans by taking full responsibility for the pitch.



Sam Hairston (left as a White Sox in 1951) was the first of five family members to play for the Cubs or Sox. Son Jerry Hairston, Sr. (right as a Sox in 1973) will accept the President's Award in honor of the family's baseball achievements.

Earning the **President's Award** on behalf of his family will be former White Sox outfielder Jerry Hairston, Sr. He is a part of a family that produced a record-tying five major-league players over three generations. Family patriarch Sam Hairston was the first African-American player on the Sox in 1951. With Scott Hairston, Jerry Sr.'s younger son, playing on the Cubs in 2013, all five ballplaying Hairstons have performed either for the Cubs or Sox during their careers.

South suburban Lynwood native Curtis Granderson will be honored for his philanthropic work with the **Paul "Dizzy" Trout Ambassador Award**. Outfielder Granderson, who switched from the New York Yankees to the Mets in the off-season as a free agent, is one of the most active big leaguers for philanthropic work through his Grand-Kids foundation.

Fredi Gonzalez of the Atlanta Braves will be presented with the **Major League Manager of the Year Award**. Once again, the Braves, who are very rarely out of the contention, made the postseason.

Texas reliever Neal Cotts, a key bullpen member of the 2005 world champion Sox and also a former Cub, has earned the **Chicago-area Major League Player of the Year Award**.

Meanwhile, the Chicago Baseball Museum will present the **Jerome Holtzman Award** to the three producers of the superb, Emmy Award-quality Comcast SportsNet Chicago documentary "5 Outs," on the star-crossed 2003 Cubs. Sharing the award will be David Kaplan, Sarah Lauch and Ryan McGuffey.

Here is a list of other award winners:

Bo Jackson Courage Award: Steve Delabar, relief pitcher, Toronto Blue Jays.

Bill Gleason Sportswriter of the Year: Pat Disabato, *Daily Southtown-Star*.

Nick Kamzic Scout of the Year: Harvey Kuenn Jr., Milwaukee Brewers.

Mary Frances Veeck Woman of the Year: Kim DeJesus.

Charlie Hum Club Service Award: Tony D'Anza.

Amateur Coach of the Year: Brian Hurry, Mt Carmel High School.

Chicago Area Minor League Player of the Year: Dean Anna, New York Yankees.

Minor League Executive of the Year: Andy Viano, Schaumburg Boomers.

Len DiForte Amateur Service Award: Bill "Doc" Dwoinen.

Organization of the Year: Pat Salvi, owner Gary Railcats and Schaumburg Boomers.

Pitch& Hit Club Youth Courage Award: Danny Hyde, Niles Notre Dame High School.

Harry Caray Sportscaster of the Year: Todd Hollandsworth, Comcast SportsNet Chicago.