



Can't-miss listening is Pat Hughes' 'The Cubs Win the World Series!' CD

*By George Castle, CBM Historian
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What better way for Pat Hughes to honor his own achievement by reminding listeners on his new CD he's the first Cubs broadcaster to say the memorable words, "The Cubs win the World Series."

Hughes' broadcast on 670-The Score was the only Chicago version, radio or TV, of the hyper-historic early hours of Nov. 3, 2016 in Cleveland. Radio was still in the Marconi experimental stage in 1908, the last time the Cubs won the World Series. Baseball was not broadcast on radio until 1921. The five World Series the Cubs played in the radio era – 1929, 1932, 1935, 1938 and 1945 – would not have had classic announcers like Bob Elson claiming a Cubs victory.

Given the unbroken drumbeat of championship failure, there never has been a season tribute record or CD for Cubs radio calls. The "Great Moments in Cubs History" record was produced in the off-season of 1970-71 by Jack Brickhouse and sidekick Jack Rosenberg. But without a World Series title, the commemoration featured highlights of the near-miss 1969-70 seasons, tapped the WGN archives for older calls and backtracked to re-creations of plays as far back as the 1930s.

Did I miss it, or was there no commemorative CD with John Rooney, et. al. for the White Sox's 2005 World Series victory?

Meanwhile, a YouTube surfer can easily find audio from championship records of the 1957 Braves with Earl Gillespie and the 1959 Dodgers with Vin Scully. Such records were common in the mid-20th century among World Series winners.

Hughes has now broken the ice in Chicago in several important ways. Typically spending part of his off-seasons paying tribute to other all-time baseball announcers producing commemorative CDs, Hughes now can roundly take credit for his own talents. The



Pat Hughes was a one-man gang in producing and starring in "The Cubs Win the World Series!" CD.

best of the dulcet-toned, dry-witted Hughes is featured on “The Cubs Win the World Series!,” a collaborative production between the announcer and The Score. Just \$14.95 will land the listener what is the best of Hughes’ CDs at BaseballVoices.com or CBSChicago.com/Cubs CD.

Writing, narration help carry the show

As good as Hughes’ calls on “The Cubs Win the World Series!” are his writing and narration. These skills were his elbow grease. He does not consider himself a natural writer. “I struggled with the writing,” he admitted. But a man who is often understated personally does not give himself enough credit.

Painting a word picture of a Kris Bryant tape-measure homer or slick play at second by Javy Baez are the ingrained talents of Hughes, a finalist this fall along with Hawk Harrelson for the Ford Frick Award in baseball’s Hall of Fame’s broadcasters wing.

The narration features so many informative details. He reminds that a Jake Arrieta homer was measured at 440 feet. Or that some 15,000 Cubs fans, more than one-third of the gate, were in Progressive Field for Game 7. Or 20,000 Cubs rooters were in the house at Dodger Stadium for a late-August game.

“It was overwhelming how many followers attended Cubs road games,” he said in narration.

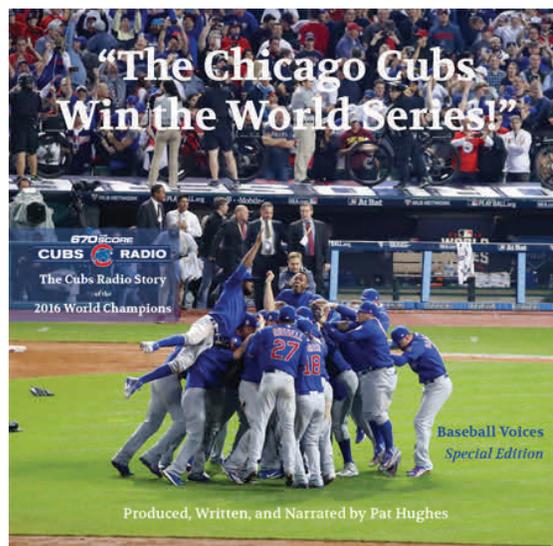
The amazing part of the Hughes collection of highlights is the author did not even hear his money line, “The Cubs win the World Series,” until he wearily drove home from Wrigley Field later in the morning of Nov. 3.

“I had no recollection of what I said,” Hughes said, a veteran of so much regular-season frustration and four dead-end playoff runs in his 21 seasons calling the Cubs on first WGN, then WBBM and finally The Score.

The actual World Series-clincher may not be his favorite call in the huge audio feast.

“Possibly it was the NLCS final out at Wrigley Field,” he said. “The double play. That was the major accomplishment, getting to the World Series.”

Hughes played out the scene on the highlight reel: “The Cubs are going to the World Series. The Cubs win the pennant. The National League Champion Chicago Cubs will play the Cleveland Indians in the World Series. The great fans at Wrigley Field are very respectful. They have not jumped onto the field.”



Few important 2016 moments are missed in “The Cubs win the World Series!”

HR call has a ‘cha-a-a-nce’ to be all-time classic

Throughout the CD, Hughes shows he has established a home-run call as distinctive as Brickhouse’s “Hey! Hey!,” Harry Caray’s “Holy Cow!” and Vince Lloyd’s “Holy Mackerel!” His “It’s gotta a cha-a-a-nce, GONE!” is creative enough in its simplicity. And stretching out “cha-a-a-nce” gives Hughes, well, a chance to backtrack if the ball does not make it over the wall.

“I’m just buying time, to make sure it’s going out,” he said. On the CD, he explained how he had to wait ‘til the last millisecond in calling Dexter Fowler’s leadoff homer in Game 7.

Even the greatest voices have gotten over-eager anticipating homers. Brickhouse once broke into “Hey! Hey!” on a Tommy Davis drive to left field in old Busch Stadium late in 1970. But he had to sheepishly apologize to the viewers when Lou Brock – always inspired against his old team – made a leaping catch at the wall.

Hughes doesn’t quite blow out his vocal chords as much as Brickhouse and Lloyd did in their primes. But he gets pretty guttural on walk-off homers and clutch hits that split the gaps or slice down the lines. He’ll also dig deep down on a “fabulous play” by Anthony Rizzo, now known for reaching far into the stands without losing his balance to snare foul popups.

Regular-season highlights are a cornucopia of aural delights before the main course of the postseason is served in “The Cubs Win the World Series!” Hughes kept his broadcast cool calling Arrieta’s second career no-hitter, in Cincinnati. That’s where he diverges from Brickhouse or Lloyd, who would have gone totally nuts.

Miguel Montero’s Game 1-deciding grand slam in the NLCS was rated by Hughes’ narration as drawing the loudest Wrigley Field crowd noise ever. I might dispute him, referring back to his own calls of Kerry Wood’s and Moises Alou’s homers in Game 7 of the 2003 NLCS.

The postseason journey is not just a cheerleading session. Hughes included Rajai Davis’ game-tying clout in Game 7 that threatened to make that contest dwarf Game 5 in the 1984 NLCS and Game 6 in the 2003 NLCS for sheer gut-busting disappointment.

“That ball...is...a...home run,” he announced, his voice sagging. In Scully style, letting the background noise tell the story, Hughes allowed the crowd noise and fireworks to take over for the next 15 seconds or so. You could tell Hughes was peeved. But it’s always on to the next play. Hughes and his booth mates would soon be rewarded after an opportune rain delay.



Pat Hughes’ home-run call can now rival those of Vince Lloyd (left) and Jack Brickhouse for distinctiveness.

If anything, Hughes wanted to give broadcast partner Ron Coomer, a native Chicagoan and childhood Cubs fan, a little more airplay on the CD. Third-wheel Mark Grote is heard briefly. My personal preference would have been for Hughes, adding humor, to have included Grote's riotous impersonation of Sweet Lou Piniella's halting verbal style. Hughes does get Wrigley Field organist Gary Pressy's tunes good exposure at the conclusion of segments.

Hughes a broadcast ironman

Even more credit is due to Hughes for his ironman talents. He calls play-by-play in eight of the nine innings, and all extra innings if necessary. He yields to Coomer for just the fifth, and is still on duty providing color. Back in the day, Hughes got one inning off per game. I'd find him in one of the upper booths in the Wrigley Field pressbox, mentally decompressing for the few minutes of down time. These were not the moments to chit-chat with Pat.

Hughes took no breaks once the Cubs dried off from their final champagne party. He emceed the Cubs victory rally in Grant Park. Then he quickly went to work on the CD, finishing by Nov. 20. He had to complete the licensing of the project through the always-bureaucratic Major League Baseball. CDs finally got into Hughes' hands Dec. 7.

When you order "The Cubs Win the World Series!," don't stop with one CD. Any Cubs fan will love his tributes to late partner Ron Santo and Caray, who worked home games only on TV one booth over in Wrigley Field in Hughes' first two seasons.

You must get the Santo tape simply for the byplay between the excitable Hall of Famer and the wry, sly and dry Hughes. My own personal favorite was one not included on the Santo tape. Announcers always need to be prepared to employ "B" material in the case of a blowout, as Hughes did one Saturday afternoon in Atlanta. He engaged Santo in a mental exercise on how many animals both could list with three-letter names. Don't know if Ronnie knew about the "gnu" Pat mentioned.

For fans of other announcers, other Hughes CDs recall former Sox and Cubs voice Milo Hamilton, Naperville native Harry Kalas, Bloomington native Denny Matthews, Jack Buck, Marty Brennaman, Bob Uecker, Mel Allen, Hughes' San Francisco childhood favorites Russ Hodges and Lon Simmons, Dave Niehaus, Bob Prince and Chuck Thompson.

No matter where Hughes goes or to whom he pays CD tribute in the future, he'll always have 2016 and this matter-of-fact statement from the highlights:

"The longest drought in the history of American sports is over."