



McGwire Loves Latest Challenge

by Brian Stull

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(Busch Stadium) As St. Louis Cardinals outfielder Stephen Piscotty hit a home run into Big Mac Land the other night, it was almost unavoidable to have one's attention shift to the San Diego Padres dugout and focus on the man responsible for the designation.

"It's funny, everybody asks me that," laughs Mark McGwire. "The Cardinals just put Big Mac Land up there, I was never approached saying hey, it's because you were here. I never got to play in this stadium, so obviously the old stadium—which I'm very fond of and now torn down, Big Mac Land was a little bit further and a little bit higher. I love this stadium, but never had a chance to play in it."

Now the bench coach with San Diego, it's been a long time since McGwire has picked up a bat and swung in earnest.

"I haven't swung in a while," he shared. "Once you get away from it so long and you don't do the stretching, it's not worth it."

The golf clubs have also been the bag for six years now too as McGwire prefers to spend time with his 6-year old triplet girls and two teenage sons. Eldest son Matthew is now 28 years old and works in computer advertising in California.

But his appreciation for the long ball has not waned and Giancarlo Stanton's recent display in the Home Run Derby was particularly impressive.

"He's legit," agreed McGwire. "There's only a few guys that are playing today that you can say are legitimate power hitters and he's one of them."

These days McGwire still provides a some instruction for the Padres hitters, but his focus is more on the whole game approach as the bench coach.

“You’ve got to look at both sides of the game,” pointed out McGwire. “I’ve been looking at one side of the game for over six years and now I get to look at the other side too. Just have all the numbers—who’s hot, who’s not, pitching changes, position player changes, just be on top of things. It’s all about baseball, it’s not just about hitting.”

“I’m learning—I have a lot to learn,” he continued. “I love it. I’m challenging myself—it’s something I’ve always loved to do is challenge myself in this game of baseball. It’s great. I don’t have to be in the cage, although I have my toes in there a little bit. But not so much, let our hitting coaches do the job. I just love the game of baseball and love what I’m doing.”

This is McGwire’s first season with San Diego after spending the last three seasons as the hitting coach with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Some were surprised to see him wind up with the Padres—especially as Arizona had managerial opening.

“I have no idea—I don’t know where people come up with that stuff,” said McGwire. “I was never approached by that. I just think people say that because Tony and I are so close.”

Would McGwire be ready to manage in the big leagues today?

“No, not even close,” he answered. “No, I’m not ready to do that. I’m not going to rule it out, but I’m enjoying what I’m doing. I like the position and the team I’m with right now in San Diego. I like what we’re doing here. A.J. Preller is only in his second year, he’s putting the people in the positions that he wants.”

McGwire is equally bullish on the San Diego manager.

“I love what Andy Green brings to the table,” he stated. “He reminds me so much of Tony—very high baseball IQ, a very smart person, a defensive-oriented guy. Not a lot of things get by him, always thinking about the game of baseball. So when I went to interview with Andy, it was almost like talking to a young Tony La Russa. Manager of the Year in the minor leagues with Arizona, great third base coach last year with Arizona—they were number one defensive team in the game last year because of him.”

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