

Wade Boggs
Hall of Fame Baseball Player

Wade Boggs' Major League Baseball career was a regimented, meticulous, disciplined journey, taken day-by-day across 18 years. As such, baseball's Hall of Fame voters apparently saw no reason to subject him to an equally long march toward immortality. They made Boggs only the 41st first-ballot honoree in Hall history when they resoundingly welcomed him in early 2005.

Only two previous Hall of Fame inductees received more votes from the Baseball Writers' Association of America than Boggs' 474. Nolan Ryan joined the enshrined of Cooperstown, N.Y., with 491 votes; George Brett collected 488.

After 11 seasons in Boston (1982-92), Boggs signed with the New York Yankees (1993-97) and, while wearing Yankee pinstripes, achieved the ultimate honor in professional baseball – the 1996 World Series title.

Befitting his epic career, Wade was blessed by the good fortune to complete his playing days in his hometown of Tampa, Fla. On August 7, 1999, amid the closing weeks of his final MLB season, he reached his 3,000th career hit with a dramatic, if not emotional, home run for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

Known as a base-hit machine, he accumulated more than 200 hits in seven consecutive seasons, and as a rookie in 1982 he batted an outstanding .349. This would turn out to be an “off” year, as in each of the next six seasons he would top a .350 average (except for 1984, when he “slumped” to .325). Three times in those six seasons he ended the year batting over .360.

In postseason play Boggs was equally effective. A key component of six playoff teams, Boggs twice savored the World Series experience, in 1986 and 1996. Individual honors included 12 consecutive All-Star appearances (1985-96); five batting titles (1983, 1985-88); and two Gold Gloves (1994-95). Boggs' Hall of Fame credentials were never in doubt, as he owned a batting average north of .300 during 15 seasons, and a .328 career batting average. His record of seven consecutive seasons of 200 or more hits has since been surpassed by Ichiro Suzuki, but the two remain as the only two baseball players to ever achieve the feat.

Boggs was further honored in 2003 when he was inducted into the Ted Williams Museum & Hitters Hall of Fame. This was especially rewarding for an individual who many viewed as a disciplined worker but not a natural superstar. Wade's approach to hitting was simply an extension of his methodical personality. Hard work, determination and grit kept him in the game years after many had given up on him and his abilities. His drive and motivation to succeed produced a lifetime in baseball.

“I never gave up,” Boggs said. “I knew what I believed and I just continued to play. I didn't listen to (critics). If that was the case, I would have gone home a long time ago.”

Determination, work ethic, love of the game, a burning passion, strict regimentation and adherence to superstitions are attributes Boggs wears like a badge. And his loyalty runs just as deep -- he returned home to Tampa every winter. There, Boggs and his wife, Debbie, head The Wade Boggs Foundation for Youth Athletics (a National Heritage Foundation). It provides hands-on fundraising to help children in the Tampa area acquire the equipment and facilities they need to promote growth and development through sports.

Boggs continues to reside in Tampa, where he was raised from elementary school, with his family, including two children, Meagann and Brett. Boggs' spare time is spent with his family, and in pursuit of the great outdoors, specifically hunting and fishing. In addition, he makes appearances on various ESPN outdoors programs, one of which included a safari to Africa.