

The Dream Deferred, but Not Denied: The Josh Hamilton Send off of The House that Ruth Built



Are you Josh-ing?

Appropriately enough, Josh Hamilton set a new home run derby record (28 in round 1) in *The House* known for glorious home runs from the immortals of the big fly. His is a story of triumph over tragedy, a dream finally realized, and making a mark on the biggest stage in the last throes of the dynastic setting of *The Bronx Zoo*.

Hamilton was a #1 overall pick with the Tampa Devil Rays back in the last millennium. He spent several seasons as an immature young man with a huge signing bonus, but lost as actual baseball player. He struggled with a heroin addiction; he sat out of baseball for 3 seasons (2003-2005), taking batting practice sometimes at the local coin-op cage. He was pulled out of the ball hopper of baseball talent – a rule 5 draft pick – eventually signed by the Reds big league club, traded for pitcher Edinson Volquez (an all-star himself), and finally, touched down in Texas in 2008.

All he's done since is hit.

He had a dream of hitting home runs in Yankee Stadium, long ago, before he *could imagine* being clean and sober. He brought along Clayvon Council, a 71-year old North Carolinian, his American Legion batting practice pitcher, to throw BP to this born-from-the-ashes baseball player. Council saw a perfect game in his only other Yankee Stadium visit – Don Larsen's – and now, he makes history with Hamilton. *Each coming full circle. The legacy of the house strong in their veins.*

Hamilton is legit for the AL RBI record – with 190 RBIs **not a complete absurdity** – while possibly chasing down this record set by Hack Wilson, who was taken off the scrap heap of talent John McGraw had piled up in New York in the 1920's. Yankee managerial legend Joe McCarthy put Wilson to great use in Chi-town, even though Hack was an alcoholic. (And died penniless, and was ignored for 3 days...)

Hamilton's doesn't have that story ahead. His acknowledgement of a problem and new fortitude enhances his natural ability. He comes at baseball with a new faith: no longer chasing a dream in a self-induced fog. He is truly living the glory of their times, as a boy of summer in the tradition of the hopeful image of baseball greatness in the backdrop of the stadium that launched under Ruthian success story.

Kudos to you, *Josh Hamilton*.