The Atlanta 400 Baseball Fan Club’s
55th Annual Eddie Glennon Gameboree

2020: A Season Like No Other

Honoring the Back-to-Back-to-Back
Division Champion Atlanta Braves

The First Ever Virtual Gameboree

Wednesday, January 20, 2021, 7:00 PM
“2020: A Season Like No Other”

The Lineup
Welcome – Howard Evans, President
Emcee – Wayne Coleman

Tribute to Bill Bartholomay and Phil Niekro
Gwen Hughes

Reflections On the 2020 Season Like No Other
Chip Caray and David O’Brien

Phil Niekro College Baseball Scholarships
Gordon State College – Head Baseball Coach Kent Rollins
University of West Georgia – Head Baseball Coach Jeff Smith

Awards
Atlanta Braves Player of the Year
Freddie Freeman

Atlanta Braves Pitcher of the Year
Max Fried

Atlanta Braves Rookie of the Year
Ian Anderson

Seventh Inning Stretch – Gwen Hughes

Luke Appling Nostalgia Awards
Gary Matthews 2020
Mark Wohlers 2021

Ivan Allen, Jr. “Mr. Baseball” Award
To Be Announced
“2020: A Season Like No Other”

By Wayne Coleman

It was certainly a season like no other, and this phrase was first suggested as the Gameboree theme as far back as last August’s 400 Fan Club board of directors meeting.

The 2020 baseball year began normally enough, players reporting to the Braves’ new Florida spring training complex in February and soon beginning daily games with other teams.

On March 12 baseball and the entire world changed dramatically. The bombshell news dropped during a Braves spring training game with the Detroit Tigers in Lakeland. Dave and Nancy Badertscher, Jean Berken, Sally Doster and other 400 Fan Club members were at the game and all were stunned at the public address announcement that Commissioner of Baseball Rob Manfred had ordered the shutdown of spring training at the conclusion of games already in progress.

Braves manager Brian Snitker said during the 400 Fan Club’s December 9 Zoom program that even though he’d had an inkling of the Commissioner’s announcement, as the team left the field in Lakeland that day he and the players and coaches were confused by what would happen next. Within days players headed home.

During that March 12 game numerous 400 Fan Club members were on I-75 South heading to the 400 Fan Club’s spring training weekend at CoolToday Park and looking forward to a private spring training complex tour scheduled for Saturday morning. Johnny Tallant and his crew and Carol Magill and Frank Morgan, all on I-75 South, turned their cars around. Club president Howard Evans was able to cancel his evening flight to Sarasota. The private tour never happened. Camp was closed. No more games.

Those of us who had been at spring training for a couple weeks had really enjoyed the games at new CoolToday Park. We had avoided the nightly news by spending our time away from the ballpark at restaurants, the beach and finding evening entertainment around Venice and North Port, so we were completely blindsided by the abrupt shutdown.

Bizarre happenings over the next few months bordered on fiction fueled by rumors and conjecture rather than solid fact.

• When could spring training resume?
• When could the season begin?
• Could we have a full 162-game season?
• Would the owners and Players Association be able to reach agreement on a reduced schedule and pro-rating of player salaries?
• Would teams play in their own ballparks? (Toronto eventually played home games in Buffalo.)
• Would fans be allowed in ballparks?

The owners and the Players Association eventually came to an agreement, and spring training resumed in early July but not at traditional spring training sites. The Braves held closed workout sessions and intrasquad games at Truist Park. Players, coaches and umpires were allowed to opt-out of the shortened season. Nick Markakis, first base coach Eric Young, Sr. and new acquisition Felix Hernandez, aka King Felix of perfect game fame, opted out, but weeks later after
Baseball invoked revolutionary rules changes, some just for the shortened 60-game 2020 season and some projected as permanent. Changes included:

- The designated hitter, a staple in the American League since 1973, became part of National League lineups for 2020.
- Teams were realigned into geographical divisions to play 40 games against teams in their division and 20 games against the other League’s corresponding geographical division.
- Pitchers were allowed to carry a wet rag in their back pockets for moisture rather than lick their fingers.
- Spitting on the field, something that generations of players had done since little league, was outlawed.
- Pitchers carried personal rosin bags to and from the mound every inning.
- Each extra inning began with a runner on second base, bringing big variations to managerial strategies in extra innings.
- Covid-19 fears caused numerous postponements, so for each team to play the full 60 games double headers became more frequent with both games reduced to seven innings.
- Relief pitchers were required to face at least three batters unless the inning ended earlier. (OMG … the death of the one-out lefty relief specialists?)
- Changes to roster limits allowed for more players on the active roster, and teams were allowed to carry three additional players on road trips as taxi squads.
- A Covid-19 category was added to the 10 and 45-day Injury Lists for players testing positive or exposed to Covid-19.

Fans experienced drastic personal changes. With Covid-19 precautions, live fans in ballparks were replaced by cutouts and piped-in sound. Braves television and radio announcers were forced to describe game action from distant monitors and television feeds as did writers who no longer traveled with the team.

The Braves team on the field experienced drastic changes, too. The team had begun the February version of spring training with the luxury of eight potential starters including Mike Soroka, Mike Foltynewicz, Max Fried, Sean Newcomb, Kyle Wright, Touki Toussaint and new signees Cole Hamels and Felix Hernandez. Six of the eight disappeared from the active roster before or soon into the limited season. Hernandez opted out of the season before spring training 2.0, and Hamels’ pre-season injury limited him to only one game. Soroka pitched only 13.2 innings before tearing his Achilles tendon. Newcomb, Foltynewicz and Toussaint were sent down after showing ineffectiveness. In early September Max Fried was on the 10 day injury list. This put an exclamation point to the season where manager Snitker and his coaches faced a never ending task of plugging and adjusting the rotation.

Max Fried stepped up to become the staff ace going 7-0.

Photo by The Athletic.
amazed his teammates and Braves fans by defeating the Yankees at Truist Park and then days later toppling the Red Sox at Fenway Park, an excellent way to begin a Major League career! Ian had a phenomenal WHIP (walks plus hits per inning pitched) of only 1.08 in his six starts. (Read more highlights for Max and Ian on their award pages in this program.)

The Braves’ 2020 offense was spectacular. When Brian Snitker moved Freddie Freeman to second in the order behind Ronald Acuna, Jr., followed by Marcel Ozuna and Travis d’Arnaud, opposing pitchers had to throw strikes and hope for the best. They couldn’t risk walks pitching around Braves hitters because the next Braves hitter was always another threat.

Freddie Freeman had gone from a severe case of Covid-19 before summer camp to a miraculous recovery at the start of camp. He finished the season with the National League MVP and the MLB Hank Aaron awards, won the league batting title with a .341 average and led the league in runs scored and doubles. Marcel Ozuna finished second in the batting race at .338 and led the league in home runs with 18 and RBI with 56. Catcher Travis d’Arnaud, signed in the winter as a free agent, truly stepped up to the plate after Brian moved him to the fourth spot hitting .321 for the season with power.

In 2020 the Braves ranked first in the league in hits, walks, doubles, on-base percentage, slugging percentage, on-base-plus-slugging, and total bases. They were second in runs, home runs and batting average, and their games were incredibly exciting to watch. On September 9 the Braves scored 29 runs in one game vs. the Marlins, the second highest number of runs in a Major League game since 1900.

We all know how this “season like no other” finished. The Braves went 35-25, won their third division title in a row by four games, and then swept the Wild Card Series 2-0 over the Cincinnati Reds and the Division Series 3-0 over the Marlins. With a patched up pitching rotation the Braves extended the National League Championship Series to a full seven games with the Dodgers. In Game 5 and short on starters, Brian Snitker created a relievers’ game by lining up six relievers to cover the nine innings. In losing the Game 7 finale by one run, 4-3, the Braves had come within one win of reaching the World Series… a season like no other!
People around the world will remember 2020 as the year that the Covid-19 pandemic turned life upside down. 400 Fan Club members will remember 2020 as the year we lost our two best supporters, Bill Bartholomay on March 25 and Phil Niekro on December 26.

Bill was a co-founder of the 400 Fan Club in March 1965, and Phil arrived in Atlanta in 1966, the team’s first season in Atlanta. Both were guests at the very first Gameboree in 1967. Bill attended many Gameborees over the next 50 years while Phil was a perennial attendee making 50 of 53 until last January.

**Bill Bartholomay 1928-2020**

Working with Atlanta area fans, Bill co-founded the 400 Fan Club in March 1965 and remained a lifetime friend of the Club.

Baseball was Bill’s lifelong passion. He attended his first game at age 4 with his parents and Chicago Cubs owner Phil Wrigley, a family friend. Bill and his partners purchased the Milwaukee Braves in 1962 and he was responsible along with Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr. for Major League Baseball relocating from Milwaukee to Atlanta in 1966.

Major League Baseball recognized Bill’s expertise in several areas. He chaired MLB’s Finance Committee and the Ownership Committee, served as a member of MLB’s Equal Opportunity Committee and MLB’s Executive Council, and served as a trustee of MLB’s Player’s Benefit Plan. He was also a Director or Trustee of many civic and business organizations and educational institutions throughout the country.

Atlanta fans and all of baseball are grateful for his lifelong contributions to the game. At the 1994 Gameboree Bill was named the fourth "Mr. Baseball" following Ivan Allen, Jr., Ted Turner and Bobby Cox. He was inducted into the Braves Hall of Fame in 2002.

Bill attended the 400 Fan Club’s big Saturday dinner celebration at the Boston Sheraton in 1997 when the Braves faced the Red Sox in interleague play. It marked the Braves first appearance in Boston since their relocation from Boston to Milwaukee following the 1952 season. The 400 Fan Club co-sponsored the dinner with the Boston Braves Historical Society with numerous Boston Braves players in attendance.

Bill attended many Gameborees including the 2003 banquet with Hank Aaron and President Jimmy Carter.
The 400 Fan Club honored Bill again at the 2015 Gameboree, the Club’s 50th anniversary celebration, by presenting him with a beautiful crystal etched baseball with a special plate at the award’s base. The plate read:

To Bill Bartholomay, With sincere gratitude for having the vision to bring Major League Baseball to Atlanta and launching the team’s official fan club, January 24, 2015

The Club further surprised him with the presentation of a $2,500 check to the Trey Duffy Foundation which Bill had founded in 2009. The program makes available four college scholarships of up to $10,000 each for Atlanta Braves employees and their families. The scholarship was established in memory of Bill’s grandson Raymond F. Duffy III, known as "Trey."

Bill was so taken with the evening’s honors, the Club’s donation to the Trey Duffy Foundation and his mentions in the souvenir Gameboree program that a few days later he requested a dozen copies of the program to share with family and grandkids. Bill was a true friend to the Club.

Phil Niekro 1939-2020

It’s not just fans or teammates or competitors saddened by the recent passing of Baseball Hall of Famer and legend Phil Niekro. It’s everyone. A true humanitarian, Phil raised countless millions for Atlanta area charities over the years.

Phil was a devoted friend of the 400 Fan Club, even mentioning the Club in his Hall of Fame Induction speech. From our first Gameboree in 1967, Phil was ever present and allowed the Club to present awards in his name. He and Nancy were big boosters of the Club, and Club member volunteers actively supported Phil and his charities.

The Braves commissioned a monument for Phil that was placed and dedicated outside Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium in 1986. However, there was no plaque on the statue because Phil was still playing. A plaque would have to wait until his retirement from the game. The 400 Fan Club got permission from the Braves to design and fund a plaque for Phil’s statue. The Club created numbered prints of Phil’s statue with the plaque’s words below, individually signed by Phil and the artist.
Phil signed 1,000 prints. By investing revenue from print sales in excess of the cast bronze plaque cost, the Club created the Phil Niekro Scholarship Fund. Combined with the Gameboree’s annual silent auction proceeds, Phil Niekro Scholarships were then funded by a separate scholarship account rather than from the 400 Fan Club’s operating account.

At his plaque unveiling ceremony, Phil said that when walking by his statue he would hear kids ask their dads, “Who’s that?” and dads would reply, “I don’t know.” Phil said, “I felt like the unknown ballplayer!”

His ever present sense of humor also helped endear him to everyone who knew him. These memories of Phil from his teammates, competitors and fans express how much people loved and were influenced by Phil.

**Brian Jordan:** RIP Phil Niekro. To a great man both on and off the field. You were a great example for what athletes should aspire to be. Phil had a huge heart to bring joy to others. He cared so much for kids and had a fantastic foundation. Continue to bring the joy in heaven my friend.

**Dale Murphy:** Nancy and I are deeply saddened by the news today of the passing of Phil Niekro. Knucksie was one of a kind. Friend, teammate, father and husband. Our hearts go out to Nancy Niekro, the kids and grandkids. So thankful for our memories and time together. We’ll miss you, Knucksie.

**Freddie Freeman:** Ugh heartbroken! An amazing pitcher but an even better man! Thank you Phil for all the laughs and wonderful memories over the years!
Johnny Tallant (400 Fan Club Presidential Advisory Council): Phil Niekro was always very nice to me and my family at numerous Gameboree events, often taking pictures with my grandsons. He also visited my basement for our Hot Stove meeting in early 2000 and spent a couple of hours signing stuff and telling stories. His best was about the events leading up to winning his 300th game and going back and forth to see his father who was very ill. In attendance at this event was two local pastors, and after Phil left they both commented about our silence while he was speaking. They said they never got that when they were preaching.

Judy Messer (400 Fan Club Presidential Advisory Council): I remember attending a late season game at Municipal Stadium, Cleveland in 1986. As usual the Indians were having a bad season, and Phil was playing for the Tribe that year. The Tribe was losing and suddenly out of nowhere Phil came running out of the dugout and stole second base. He literally slid into second, picked up the base and took it off the field. No one knew what to do. They all just stood there and watched as he walked off the field. I later asked him about that. He was shocked that I was there that night and just laughed about it. He said it was the only time he had ever stolen a base.

Mary Lou Brooks (400 Fan Club Director): I had the good fortune to talk to Phil for just a few minutes at his golf tournament in October and whether he saw my name tag or knew who I was – probably the former – but he called me by name and did not give the appearance that he was reading my 400 Club name tag. We chatted for just a few minutes as he had others waiting to talk to him. But he always made you feel like you were the most important person he was talking to at that time and was in no hurry to move along. I’ll treasure those few minutes forever.

Jon Van Wieren: Pete, Skip and Ernie are waiting for Phil with a brew and some stories to make them all laugh.

The Oak Ridge Boys: So a few years ago at the end of a show in Georgia Phil comes up to the front of the stage to shake our hands. Realizing it was Phil we yell to the crowd HEY YALL STOP PHIL NIEKRO IS IN THE HOUSE … they all turned and applauded Ole Knucksie.

Art Shamsky: I battled Phil Niekro & his knuckleball a lot. Fans always ask me how do you hit it? 3 things. Move up in the plate a little towards the pitcher, choke up on the bat & try to hit the ball right up the middle. Sometimes it worked & sometimes I just scratched my head.

Doug Glanville: I will always remember the fun I had with him at the Baseball Hall of Fame game years ago. And yes, I had the honor of facing him – pop out to 2nd.

Marvin Freeman: Knucksie was truly a giving individual off and on the field.

Jayson Stark: Phil Niekro didn’t just throw the knuckleball. He was the brand name for the knuckleball – “Knucksie.”

Johnny Bench: Phil Niekro has joined the Heavenly Halos team. I talked to Phil and Nancy a few days ago and he was prepared. I remember Sparky saying we had a chance to trade for Knucksie and (he asked) what I thought. I said you better trade for his catcher too! Great human being.

Fergie Jenkins: Very sad to hear of the passing of fellow Hall of Famer Phil Niekro. I will remember him fondly as a happy-go-lucky joker with a great knuckle ball.

Dave Winfield: He was kind, a gentleman, family man, master of his trade and teammate.
David O’Brien: Phil Niekro. Hall of Fame pitcher, Braves icon, and one of the nicest men I’ve known.

(Excerpt from David O’Brien’s article on Phil’s legacy): Niekro wanted people to feel good when they were around him. He was always upbeat. It was his thing.

Bruce Benedict: I was talking to Dale (Murphy) a couple days ago. We both said almost at the same time it was really an honor to be a part of Niekro’s career that way. It was such a privilege. Even to the last speaking engagement we did together, Phil would stand up there, and given his generosity and the type of person he was, he would say, ‘I am not in the Hall of Fame without him,’ and point to me. What does that mean to your heart and your spirit as a friend and a teammate? It meant the world to me.

Ken Singleton: Sorry to hear of the passing of Hall Of Fame knuckleball pitcher Phil Niekro. Nobody threw the knuckleball better than Niekro who rode it to 318 wins. Knucksie was a class act as well.

Eddie Cook (400 Fan Club Director): Phil Niekro is my favorite baseball player of all time. He was also the best friend the 400 Fan Club has ever had. I was blessed to be in his presence many times. Phil was always generous with his time, personable, and engaging. I saw him pitch for the Atlanta Braves in person, and I saw him manage the Colorado Silver Bullets in person. The crowning moment, though, was on Hall of Fame weekend in 1997 when he emerged from a car in front of the museum on the night before he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. He looked up right at me and smiled as he heard me excitedly say, “Knucksie”.

Gwinnett Stripers: We are saddened to hear of Braves legend Phil Niekro’s passing. A key figure in Gwinnett baseball, Phil lent his name to Niekro’s at Coolray Field, threw out memorable first pitches, & took part in the Stripers unveil. Knucksie was a big presence in our team’s history & community.

Bob Uecker: “He told me that he was ready. I talked to him for about 15 minutes. He was strong enough that I understood everything that he was saying. He wanted to say goodbye to me. “He called me The Chaser and I called him The Thrower. That was our nickname for each other. He told me, ‘Chaser, I’m getting tired, and I think I’m going to go to sleep for a while.’ ”

(The compiler of this tribute is wiping away tears as he types.)

Rest in peace, Bill and Phil. You will live in our hearts and memories forever.
Who Was Eddie Glennon, and Why Is Our Annual Winter Gala Named the Eddie Glennon Gameboree?

Eddie Glennon, born in 1901 and a native of Philadelphia, PA, began his baseball career as a bat boy for Hall of Fame manager Connie Mack, who led the Philadelphia Athletics for over 50 years and was instrumental in forming the American League.

Glennon had a way with fans, and fans flocked to Rickwood Field in Birmingham, AL from the time he took over as the Barons general manager in 1946 until he left following the 1961 season. An innovator, Glennon made the game more fan-friendly and targeted previously untargeted sectors of fans. He created the Barons Bees, a club that allowed honor students to get in free while he also worked diligently to get more female fans to attend Barons games.

The fans responded to Glennon’s innovations by showing up like they never had before. After drawing fewer than 100,000 fans in six of the previous seven seasons before Glennon, Rickwood Field never drew fewer than 110,000 in any of Glennon's 16 seasons at the helm.

After 15 years in Birmingham where he was twice named Minor League Executive of the Year, Glennon went to Denver to head the Milwaukee Braves Triple-A farm club. After two years he joined the Atlanta Crackers as General Manager.

The 400 Fan Club formed in 1965, the result of a meeting of eight Atlanta businessmen and two representatives from the Braves, Chairman of the Board Bill Bartholomay and Crackers GM Eddie Glennon. The late Joe Gerson, the 400 Club's first president, said that Glennon was a “400 Club visionary” and helped nurture the Club to success in its early years.

In 1966 Glennon joined the Atlanta Braves as Area Sales Manager and continued his volunteer work with the 400 Fan Club. The Club held its first annual winter banquet on February 5, 1967, and Eddie helped promote the banquet by coining the word Gameboree (pronounced Game with a long “a”), a play on the words game and jamboree.

Following his death in September 1968 at age 67, the 400 Fan Club honored Eddie’s memory in perpetuity by naming the annual event the Eddie Glennon Gameboree.

Have even more fun and excitement with Braves Baseball in 2021

The Atlanta 400 Baseball Fan Club is a non-profit organization of baseball fans dedicated to supporting the game of baseball at all levels. As a member you can receive our bi-monthly newsletter, join our Major League trip to Denver on Labor Day weekend, participate in road trips to Braves Minor League games, enjoy our entertaining and complimentary baseball Zoom meetings from your home, and more. When public health issues allow, we will resume monthly pre-game socials at the ballpark and many other themed events.

Annual membership is only $30, and you may add additional family members in the same household for only $15 each.

Membership Bonus for 2021: New and renewing members will receive a valuable surprise item to be announced at tonight’s Gameboree!

Join securely online at www.ATL400.org
24 hour recorded Hotline 770-416-4539
It’s never certain. Is a young player all that he’s cracked up to be? Will he meet the expectations? Can he block out the chatter? Will he live up to the hype? Can he be what the organization wants him to be? Needs him to be? Can he be the future of the franchise?

In 2007, that’s what was running through the collective minds of the Atlanta Braves when they drafted a kid from Orange County California in the second round. Could he be all that? Yes, he could. Freddie Freeman became the future of the organization.

Freddie worked through the minor leagues quickly, making his major league debut on September 1, 2010. Part of a talented group of young stars, Freddie wasn’t the flashiest. He kept his head down and he worked hard. Harder than anyone else. He listened to the veteran players. He watched. He learned. He grew. He expected a lot from himself. He smiled a lot. He hugged even more.

Eleven years later, he’s the sole player remaining from his draft class. The face of the franchise. Four All-Star selections, two Silver Sluggers, one Gold Glove, National League Hank Aaron Award winner and in 2020, the National League MVP.

Coming off of elbow surgery at the end of the 2019 season, Freddie entered Spring Training firing on all cylinders. Then, the world stopped. When it started again, Freddie was down but not out. Rejoining the team after recovering from COVID, he started back slowly, hitting just .200 in his first 15 games. Then Freddie got his groove on and there was no stopping him. From August 9th forward, his batting average skyrocketed to .384.

The season stats tell the story. Freddie played in 58 of the 60 games played this season. He led the Majors with 51 runs scored and ranked second in the NL in batting average (.341), on-base percentage (.462), slugging percentage (.640), OPS (1.102) and wRC+ (187). His fielding percentage was near perfect (.998).

Freddie Freeman received 28 of the 30 first-place votes cast by select members of the Baseball Writers’ Association of America. The truest of team players, he credited those batting around him for helping him garner baseball’s highest individual honor.

Freddie Freeman has long been considered one of baseball’s most underrated players. Perhaps by the casual fan, perhaps by some parts of the media, but not by those who play the game. Admired by his teammates and peers for his work ethic, tenacity and selflessness, Freddie is just getting started. Bring on 2021!
Max Dorian Fried was born on January 18, 1994 in Santa Monica CA. He played for Harvard-Westlake High School in North Hollywood CA. Even back then the Scouting Reports noted that his great fastball-curve combination can be devastating for batters to deal with. He was drafted by the San Diego Padres in the 1st round (7th) of the 2012 MLB June Amateur Draft. The 6’4” 190 pound Southpaw was acquired by the Atlanta Braves as part of a trade that sent LF Justin Upton and RHP Aaron Northcraft to the Padres.

A major component to the Braves’ success this season was Fried’s growth into a legitimate ace and one of the best arms in baseball. With the season-ending injury to Mike Soroka and other starting rotation issues, Fried’s production may have been the most important factor of all. He pitched like the ace the Braves needed and was in Cy Young contention until a minor injury in early September knocked him out of the race.

Fried was consistently reliable going 7-0. In 12 of his 15 total starts between the regular and postseason, he completed at least five innings of work while allowing two runs or less. Beyond being reliable, Fried simply was one of the best pitchers in baseball this season. His performances ranged from highly effective to dominant in an overwhelming majority of his appearances. Among pitchers who completed 50 or more innings in 2020, Fried (2.25 ERA/3.10 FIP (Fielding Independent Pitching)/ 4.05 xFIP) finished eighth in ERA and tied for second in wins. Furthermore, among pitchers who pitched 50 or more innings and started 10 or more games, Fried was one of only two pitchers (the other was Julio Urias) who did not suffer a loss during the regular season. He was also named to the 2020 All-MLB First Team.

Atlanta won each of Fried’s first eight starts this season before losing September 5 to Washington. He was the only pitcher in the majors to make at least eight starts and have his team win each of them. Fried’s run of team wins was the longest to open a season for a Braves starter since Atlanta won all 12 of Kris Medlen’s starts in 2012 and was tied for the fifth-longest such streak since the team moved to Atlanta in 1966.

Fried did not allow a home run in any of his first 10 starts of the season, and his 26 wins over the past two seasons are most in the majors by a lefthander.

On November 3, Fried was recognized by Rawlings as the NL’s top defensive pitcher for 2020 after posting a .941 fielding percentage (one error in 17 total chances) and recording an MLB-high four pickoffs. In earning his first MLB award of any kind, Fried became just the fourth Atlanta Braves pitcher to win a Gold Glove, joining Hall of Famer Phil Niekro (five times, 1978-80, 1982-83), Hall of Famer Greg Maddux (10 times, 1993-2002), and Mike Hampton (2003).

Thanks to Fried’s consistency and effectiveness, the Braves now have the confidence that they can matchup against any other team’s starters during a series. If Fried can maintain his strengths from the past two years and continue his ability to produce weaker contact like he did in 2020, he could once again emerge as a true Cy Young candidate in 2021 and beyond.
Who had a rookie season like none other? Ian Anderson who helped rescue a starting rotation decimated by injuries. His debut on August 26 against the Yankees provided a glimmer of hope and by the end of the season he was a solid choice for the Braves Rookie of the Year.

Ian was born on May 2, 1998 in upstate New York (Rexford) just 68 miles East of Cooperstown. He attended Shenendahowa High School with his twin brother, Ben, who hopes to debut with the Texas Rangers in 2021. Ian was a star in the Babe Ruth League World Series in 2013 and an outstanding pitcher for his high school in Clifton Park, NY. He helped lead that team to the 2016 New York Large School State Championship in his senior year. In 2015 he played for the United States Baseball Team that won the World Cup. Not surprisingly, Ian was the third pick in the first round of the 2016 draft by the Atlanta Braves.

Ian advanced through the Braves minor league system and in 2019 went 7-5 with a 2.68 ERA for the Mississippi Braves. He started 21 games striking out 147 batters in 111 innings. He was called up to Gwinnett on August 5 making his debut with the Stripers the following day. He was selected to play in the 2019 MLB Futures game in Cleveland where he pitched a scoreless, hitless inning for the NL team.

Ian is a 6’3” right hander with a mid-90s fast ball, a fine curveball and a super changeup that eats up major league hitters. His debut with the Braves on August 26th against the Yankees was a thing of beauty. He bested Gerrit Cole going 6 innings and giving up only one hit in a 5-1 Braves win. He followed this performance with five more starts and ended the regular season with a 3-2 record and 1.95 ERA.

This set the stage for a brilliant post-season when he started 4 games going 2-0 with a 0.96 ERA. Ian dominated the Cincinnati Reds in his first post-season start on October 1 by allowing only 2 hits in six innings, striking out 9 batters as the Braves swept the series. He was just as impressive six days later in his second post-season appearance when he pitched 5 2/3 innings and giving up only 3 hits in a victory over the Miami Marlins. His post-season ERA stands at 0.96.

Ian is a lock for the 2021 starting rotation and has high hopes for another Division Title and post-season success.
Mark Wohlers was selected in the 8th Round of the 1988 amateur draft by the Atlanta Braves. During his 12-year Major League career as a reliever with Atlanta (1991-99), Cincinnati (2000-01), the New York Yankees (2001), and Cleveland (2002), Mark compiled a record of 39-29 with a 3.97 ERA and 119 saves, while striking out 557 batters in 553.1 innings.

Mark made his Major League debut with the Braves on August 17, 1991, at the age of 21. A few weeks later he combined with Kent Mercker and Alejandro Peña on a no-hitter against the Padres. After working several seasons as a 100-mph setup man, Mark earned the role of Braves closer in 1995. He caught fire, converting 21 saves in a row and finished the season with a total of 25.

With the Braves set to finally bring the World Championship to Atlanta in 1995, Mark was called on in the ninth inning of Game 6 to save Tom Glavine’s epic one-hitter against Cleveland. When his final pitch landed in the glove of Marquis Grissom securing the Braves 1-0 victory and the Series, Mark had established himself as one of baseball’s top closers.

Mark continued to dominate in 1996, throwing a career-high 77 regular season innings with a 3.03 ERA, 100 strikeouts, 39 saves, and a trip to the All-Star Game. The Braves went on to face the Yankees in the 1996 World Series. In Game 4 Mark yielded a three-run, game-tying home run to Jim Leyritz in the eighth, shifting the momentum of the Series and ending the Braves quest for a second consecutive Championship.

In 1997 Mark pitched 71 innings and recorded 33 saves, but his walk rate climbed. Over the remainder of his career he dealt with control issues, personal problems, and two Tommy John surgeries while playing for Cleveland. Mark left baseball before the start of the 2004 season.

In an interview with Carroll Rogers Walton for the AJC in 2020, Mark was quoted as saying, “Not a lot of people have gone through what I went through and come back. To have the inner strength to do that was something I was extremely proud of. Even going and pitching for the Yankees after the history I’d had with them was pretty special.”

Mark and his wife, Kimberly, live in the Atlanta area with their children. They have a successful residential real estate business called Major League Homes at Keller Williams Realty.
Last January Gary attended the Cubs Convention in Chicago and was unable to accept his award in person. Gary joins us tonight!

Gary Matthews, the Sarge, was selected in the first round of the June 1968 draft by the Giants. He hit .281 during his 16-season Major League career with San Francisco (1972–76), Atlanta (1977–80), Philadelphia (1981–83), the Chicago Cubs (1984–87) and Seattle (1987). He appeared in 2,033 games banging out 2,011 hits, 234 homers and 978 RBI while scoring 1,083 runs.

Matthews, nicknamed the Sarge, was National League Rookie of the Year in 1973 after hitting .300 with 12 homers and 58 RBI for the Giants. He had his best overall season with the Braves in 1979, going to the All-Star Game during a season in which he batted .304 with 27 homers and 90 RBI.

He saw postseason action with the Phillies in 1981 and 1983. He homered 7 times in 19 playoff games and was voted the MVP of the 1983 NLCS after leading the Phillies past Los Angeles into the World Series. In the 5-game series, he went 6-for-14 with three homers and eight RBIs. He was also a key contributor to the Cubs' NL Eastern Division title in 1984, batting .291 with 101 runs scored.

After retiring as a player following the 1987 season, Matthews worked in broadcasting before joining the Cubs' organization in 1995 as minor league hitting coordinator. In 1998 he become Toronto's hitting coach for two years, and then joined their broadcast team for two seasons. Matthews returned to the field in 2002 as Milwaukee's hitting coach and served as a coach for the Cubs in 2003–06.

Following the 2006 season, Matthews served as a color analyst for the Philadelphia Phillies from 2007 to 2013. During his first year in Philadelphia’s booth, Matthews provided analysis for the entire game alongside the legendary broadcaster Harry Kalas.

His son, Gary Matthews Jr., played 12 seasons in the Major Leagues. The Sarge still lives in the Atlanta area and is active in charity golf tournaments and baseball alumni events.
Atlanta 400 Baseball Fan Club Phil Niekro Scholarships

Each year the Atlanta 400 Baseball Fan Club presents the Phil Niekro Scholarship Awards to Georgia Colleges and Universities with baseball programs. The scholarships are funded through the proceeds from the Silent Auction and other fundraising efforts of the 400 Fan Club. The scholarships are presented in memory of Michael Marcey, a past president of the 400 Fan Club, who passed away in August 2003. Michael worked tirelessly to generate funding for these scholarships. Thank you to Scholarship Chair Linda Lovejoy for researching the college and university baseball programs considered for these awards.

Gordon State College

Gordon State College is a public college in Barnesville, Georgia. A member of the University System of Georgia, Gordon State offers classes at three physical campuses and online. In 2006 the school was designated a four-year state college and now offers ten bachelor’s degree programs. Their athletic teams compete in Region XVII of the Georgia College Athletic Association and the National Junior College Athletic Association.

Head Baseball Coach Kent Rollins is a Gwinnett native who played baseball and football at South Gwinnett and Brookwood. He attended Auburn University, Middle Georgia State College under Paul Knight, and Georgia Southern University in 2015-2016. He was a 48th round draft pick by San Diego Padres in 2011.

Kent was assistant coach at Georgia College. He served as assistant coach and recruiting coordinator at Murray State University in Kentucky for the last two seasons.

University of West Georgia

The University of West Georgia is a public university in Carrollton, Georgia. The university offers a satellite campus in Newnan, select classes at its Douglasville Center, and off-campus Museum Studies classes at the Atlanta History Center in Atlanta.

The UWG baseball team joins the University of Alabama Huntsville and Valdosta State as the only ranked teams in the Gulf South Conference in the 2021 CBN Preseason rankings.

Jeff Smith became Head Baseball Coach prior to the 2020 season replacing retiring coach Skip Fite. From 1996 – 1999 he was head coach at Tennessee Wesleyan University in Athens, TN, and head coach at Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin between 1999 and 2005 with a record of 225-123.

Prior to joining the UWG staff as a pitching coach, Jeff had an overall record of 294 – 190 as a head coach. At UWG he took over a pitching staff with a 9.59 ERA and by 2015 they had an ERA of 3.10. In 2016 and 2017 the team had players drafted by the Cardinals and the Angels.
Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr. recognized early on that major league sports would help the rest of the world see Atlanta as a major league city. Mayor Allen gathered a group of business professionals in early 1963 to discuss the possibilities of constructing a stadium to lure a major league team. He led a group to the 1963 All-Star Game in Cleveland to let baseball know that Atlanta was deserving of — and preparing for — Major League Baseball.

Mayor Allen and his group believed so strongly that a franchise was in the offing that ground was broken for the $18 million stadium in April 1964, six months before the National League approved the Braves’ move to Atlanta.

At the 1990 Gameboree, the 400 Fan Club honored Mayor Allen for his “Special Service to the Braves, Atlanta, and the Southeast.” Mayor Allen, out of the country at the time, received his award in a special pre-game ceremony in April.

In 1992, the 400 Fan Club renamed Mayor Allen’s “Special Service” award and established the “Ivan Allen, Jr. Mr. Baseball Award” presented annually to the “Person who has contributed significantly to the promotion of baseball in the Atlanta area.”

This year’s “Mr. Baseball” will be revealed at the conclusion of tonight’s Gameboree.