

Ex-big leaguer Hall to lead new Chiefs

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Joe Hall sat Wednesday afternoon in the stands behind home plate at Brooks Stadium in Paducah, looking out at the grass infield, imagining local diamond stars of yesterday grooming the next generation.

"I still envision that day, and it would be great to see, when you can look out on this field and see a Phil Roof, a Gene Roof, a Terry Shumpert, a Steve Finley, myself out here giving lessons," Hall said, naming a few of Paducah's homegrown sons who played Major League Baseball.

"I think we'd have it all covered. We're not able to do that, but all of the guys, I'm sure I speak for all of them, wish they could give back more to the community."



Joe Hall, 49, a Paducah native and former Major League Baseball player, was announced Wednesday as the manager for the new Paducah Chiefs. The team will begin Ohio Valley League play in June at Brooks Stadium. Hall graduated from St. Mary High School and played at Southern Illinois. He spent three seasons in the majors, with the Chicago White Sox and Detroit Tigers.

Photo: Joshua Roberts for The Paducah Sun

If that on-field scenario, or something like it, ever comes to pass, it's Hall who's likely to be the bridge between past and present.

The 49-year-old native, who spent part of three seasons in the majors with the Chicago White Sox and Detroit Tigers, was announced Wednesday as the manager of the new Paducah Chiefs, a team of college-level players set to begin Ohio Valley League play in June.

The team is named after Paducah's minor league franchise that disbanded in 1955.

Hall, who now lives in Toledo, Ohio, and operates the Next Level Baseball training facility, said the biggest selling point for him managing the Chiefs was being able to come home and give back to his community. His mother, Dorothy Hall, is a city resident.

"I can't really say if this same thing would have happened if it was Bowling Green or Hopkinsville," he said. "I know how baseball rich this area is."

Hall graduated in 1985 from St. Mary High School and played at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. The St. Louis Cardinals, his favorite team growing up, drafted him as a catcher. He was a utility player when he made it to the show in the 1994, 1995 and 1997 seasons.

After continuing his career in the minors, independent leagues and in Taiwan, Mexico and China, Hall retired as a player in 2000. He turned to coaching, and earned a World Series ring in 2005 as a hitting instructor for the White Sox.

Doc Hideg, a Brooks Stadium Commission member, has known Hall since he was a teen. He said Hall was the best candidate for the new Chiefs, and the reasons are many.

"I knew he was very qualified, and if we got him, I knew it would be a big plus for not only us, but for the young men he'll be working with on the baseball field," Hideg said Wednesday, not far from the field named after him.

"Joe, he'll do his job, he'll do it well, and he'll do it right. That's the only way he knows."

The Chiefs will play a 40-game schedule, with half that slate at home at Brooks. The roster is being finalized, though the team has secured contracts with the majority of the 24 players allowed.

On Monday night, the McCracken County Fiscal Court unanimously approved a \$10,000 allocation to the Chiefs, buy-in money for the team in the OVL.

"Play ball," Judge-Executive Bob Leeper said to Brooks Stadium Commission representatives in the audience.

"It's a great feeling to know that after 60 years, what this stadium was built for will be used for that - the Paducah Chiefs," Hideg said Wednesday. "It will be a first-class program with first-class people."

The Chiefs used Wednesday to announce another coaching addition, also a familiar face. Gabriel Shaw, 27, will work as the team's pitching coach.

Shaw graduated in 2007 from St. Mary and pitched at the University of Louisville. A closer, he played independent ball for four years with the Southern Illinois Miners and the River City Rascals in Missouri. He works as regional sales manager for Credit Bureau Systems in Paducah.

"I'm getting anxious," Shaw said of his first real venture into coaching. "I've been a year out from playing, so I'm really getting back into baseball."

Hall, who won't begin working with his players until the season gets closer, said fans can expect a fundamentally sound, aggressive team on the field.

He said he's a players-first coach, and explained his managerial philosophy as patient, tutorial, and centered on helping players improve through opportunity and repetition.

"Development, that's the No. 1 word," Hall said.

"You're probably going to hear me say that a lot during the season, and that's what it's got to be about: developing and teaching and getting players better. If you can do enough of that, the game stuff comes easy. The winning comes from that."