



BIG PLAYS

by BERRY
CRAIG

by **BIG LEAGUERS**

A RUNDOWN OF THE SOME OF THE PROS WHO STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE AT DOC HIDEG FIELD INSIDE BROOKS STADIUM

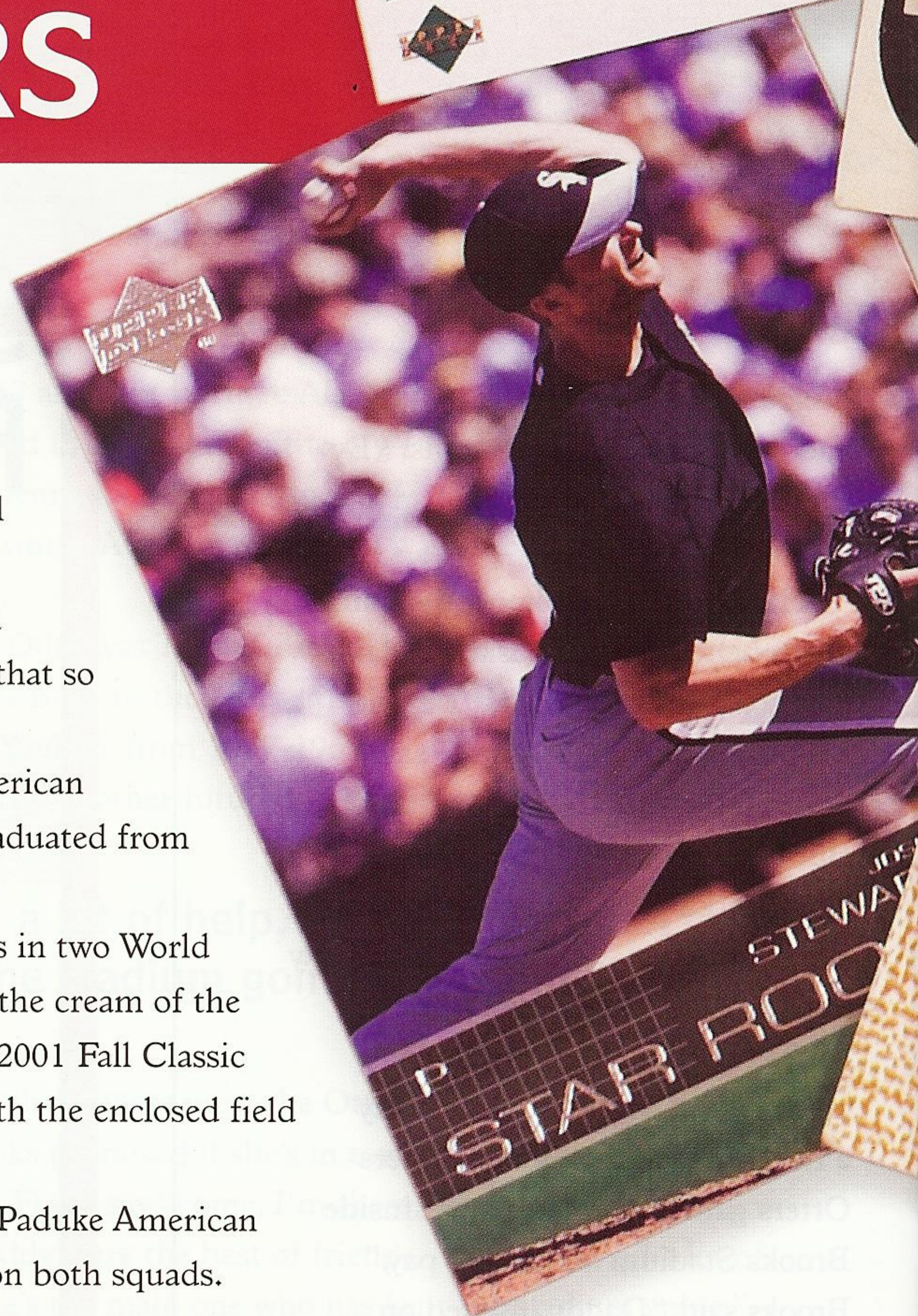
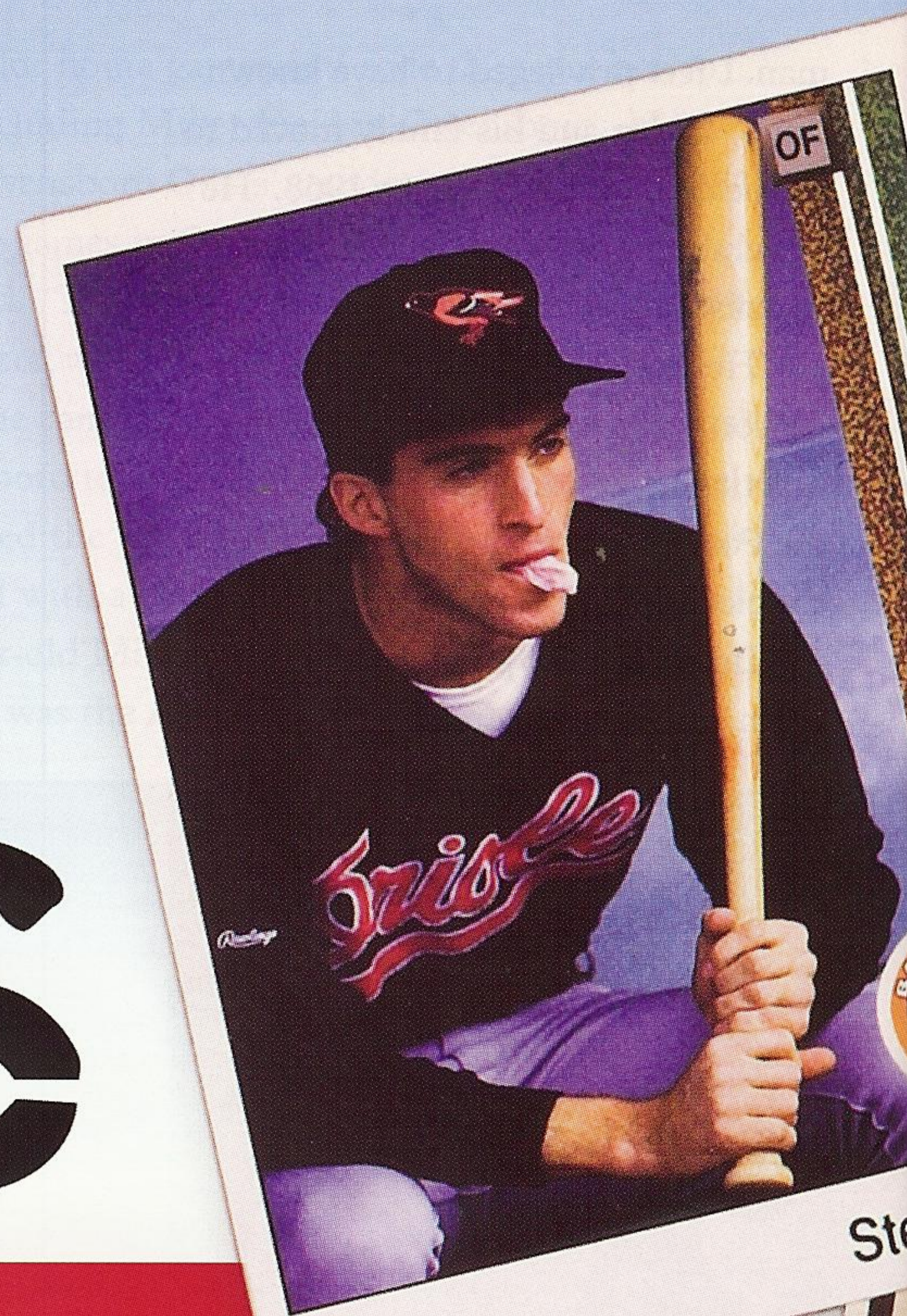
PHIL ROOF GREW UP WATCHING the Paducah Chiefs play baseball at Brooks Stadium.

"I never dreamed of getting there myself," he said. "But I did. It was a beautiful ballpark then, and it's a beautiful ballpark now. I am glad to see that so many kids are still enjoying Brooks Stadium like I did."

Roof, who is from the St. John Community, played high school and American Legion ball at the historic stadium. He is one of several local stars who graduated from the city diamond to the major leagues.

They include Paducahans Steve Finley and Terry Shumpert. Finley was in two World Series and has a championship ring from one. "[Brooks Stadium] . . . was the cream of the crop," said Finley, who played outfield for the Arizona Diamondbacks, the 2001 Fall Classic champs. "There was nothing like it in the region. It was a real stadium with the enclosed field and the [concrete] wall surrounding the stadium."

Brooks Stadium is home to Paducah Tilghman High School and Chief Paduke American Legion Post 31 teams. Finley and Shumpert, an infielder, were standouts on both squads.



The Sporting News
ROOKIE STARS OF 1959

EDDIE HAAS
BRAVES
OUTFIELD

TWINS

PHIL ROOF
Catcher

FLEER

Gene Roof
OUTFIELD

HAWK TAYLOR
CATCHER
ANGELS

TERRY SHUMPERT
APPLETON


Fair LAIR.

“The other high school fields were out in the open, usually surrounded by a chain link fence,” added Finley, an ‘83 Tilghman grad. “It was a beautiful stadium and it was great to be able to play there. We were always really proud that it was our home playing field.”

Between 1989 and 2007, Finley played for the Baltimore Orioles, Houston Astros, San Diego Padres, the Diamondbacks, Los Angeles Dodgers, Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, San Francisco Giants and Colorado Rockies. He was with the Padres when they won the 1998 National League pennant but lost the World Series.

Shumpert, an infielder, graduated from Tilghman in the class after Finley’s.

He recalled the solid fence around Brooks Stadium, too. “That green wall made us all feel like major leaguers,” Shumpert said.



“There was nothing like it in the region. It was a real stadium with the enclosed field and the [concrete] wall surrounding the stadium.” —STEVE FINLEY

From 1990 to 2003, he played for the Kansas City Royals, Boston Red Sox, Chicago Cubs, Padres, Rockies and Tampa Bay Devil Rays. He is a player development coordinator with the Giants.

Shumpert added, “We felt blessed to play at Brooks Stadium. I would certainly give all the credit to ‘Doc’ [Hideg] for that. It had to be a lot of work.”

Hideg, a city chiropractor and Finley and Shumpert’s American Legion coach, helped lead the drive to preserve and restore Brooks Stadium. The playing surface is “Doc Hideg Field.”

Shumpert said the well-manicured grass and dirt infield “helped cut down on errors. It was certainly the best field I ever played on at Tilghman and in American Legion ball.”

Roof, a big league catcher, coach and minor league manager, also put on spikes for the Post 31 team, but in the pre-Hideg era. “I have a lot of good memories of Brooks Stadium,” said Roof, a graduate of old St. John High School. “I hit home runs and doubles and triples there. I really admire ‘Doc’ Hideg and the other people for keeping it in good shape.”

Roof played in the National and American Leagues from 1961 to 1977. He caught for the Milwaukee Braves, California Angels, Cleveland Indians, Kansas City and Oakland Athletics, Milwaukee Brewers, Minnesota Twins, Chicago White Sox and Toronto Blue Jays. He was a bullpen coach for the Padres and the Seattle Mariners and managed the Twins’ Rochester, N.Y., AAA minor league team for many years. He is still in the Twins organization.

Hideg, who coached the Paducah American Legion team for 23 years, cited a number of other major leaguers who played at Brooks Stadium at one time or another. Besides Finley and Shumpert, three more were on his American Legion

teams - Gene Roof, Phil's brother; Joe Hall and Josh Stewart. Gene Roof graduated from St. Mary High School and played outfield for the St. Louis Cardinals and Montreal Expos in 1981-1983. He was a coach for the Detroit Tigers under manager Sparky Anderson and is a minor league instructor for the Tigers, Hideg said.

The Roof brothers' cousin, Eddie Haas, also made the major leagues after his Brooks Stadium days. Haas, another St. John High alumni, roamed the outfield for the Cubs and Milwaukee Braves in 1957, 1958 and 1960 (an ankle injury sidelined him for the '59 season and shortened his big league playing career.) Haas stayed with the Braves organization after the team moved to Atlanta. He coached and managed in the Braves' farm system and for the big league team. He was the Braves' skipper in 1985. Afterwards, he was a scout for the Expos and Boston Red Sox.

Also an outfielder but a St. Mary graduate, Hall played for the White Sox and Detroit Tigers in 1994-1997. Stewart, a Livingston Central High School alumnus, was a Chicago White Sox pitcher in 2003-2004.

According to Hideg and other sources, at least four other future major leaguers took the field at Brooks Stadium: Bob Buhl, pitcher, Milwaukee Braves, Cubs and Philadelphia Phillies; Gene Green, catcher, outfielder and first baseman, Cardinals, Orioles, Washington Senators, Indians and Cincinnati Reds; Tony Kubek, shortstop, New York Yankees; and Marty Kutyna, pitcher, Kansas City Athletics, and Senators. ©