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'He makes me proud to be a cardinal': Dolan remembers Hall of Famer Stan 'The Man' Musial

Brian Roewe | Jan. 22, 2013 NCR Today

New York Archbishop Cardinal Timothy Dolan has often spoke of his desire as a child to become a cardinal. It wasn?t confessions he dreamed of hearing, though, but the roar of the crowd and the crack of the bat.

As a kid growing up in St. Louis, he wanted to play baseball for the St. Louis Cardinals. And like many of his generation, his dreams were fueled by the exceptional play of outfielder Stan ?The Man? Musial, who died Saturday evening surrounded by family at his home in a St. Louis suburb.

Reporting for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Tim Townsend has pieces of a homily Dolan delivered Sunday [1] at St. Patrick?s Cathedral in New York, as the cardinal remembered the Cardinal:

> ?He was not only a great athlete, but he took his Catholic faith very seriously. And in fact tried his best to go to Mass and Holy Communion every day.
>
> In fact, the story I love to tell about him: One time I was saying Mass, substituting at his parish church, and he was there. Afterward he said, ?C'mon let's go out for breakfast.? And I can tell you when it was, it was 12 years ago because he was 80 years old then, and he was 92 when he died yesterday.
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> And I remember going out with him and we started talking about baseball. And I said, 'Stan if you were playing today, what do you think you'd bat?' Remember his lifetime batting average was .331.
>
> And he said, 'Ahh. If I were playing today with everything ? with a juiced up ball and bat and AstroTurf, I might hit .275.'
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> And I said, 'Stan, I think you're selling yourself short ? .275?'
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> And he shrugged and said, ?Well, I'm 80.?

But Musial's impressive stats extended far beyond the playing field, known as much for his decency as his home runs. In 3,026 games, Musial was never ejected once. He befriended black players when baseball struggled toward racial integration ? fellow Hall of Famer Willie Mays described Musial to reporters Saturday night as "a true gentleman who understood the race thing and did all he could," adding "I never heard anybody say a bad word about him, ever."

Around St. Louis, he was known for his friendliness, never turning away a fan and often pulling out his harmonica to play "Happy Birthday to You" or "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." In February 2011, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor for a civilian, for his contributions to society.

Dolan, who will preside as one of the bishops at Musial?s funeral Saturday, also used his blog early Tuesday to revisit a post [2] he had written last year about his favorite Cardinal. Responding to a review of a biography of

the baseball player, which called it boring because of the lack of scandal and controversy in The Man?s life, the cardinal wrote:

> "Alleluia! A great man! A superb athlete! Married seven decades to his beloved Lil; proud father; committed Catholic (he readily admits one of the highpoints of his life was getting to know his fellow Pole, Blessed John Paul II); never missed Sunday Mass; no steroids or drugs; no brawls, enemies, or DUI. Just a gentleman, day-in-day-out reliable, never complaining or demanding; no controversy or foul language.
>
> And one of the best baseball players ever, an inspiration to generations, whose very name stands for integrity, professionalism, loyalty, and championship. If that?s 'boring,' bottle it and sell it.
>
> We need more Stan Musials. He makes me proud to be a 'cardinal.'"

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Links:
[1] http://www.stltoday.com/lifestyles/faith-and-values/a-cardinal-salutes-another-one-of-his-baseball-heroes-from/article_0eeb7045-12b2-5247-8c55-7037765915bc.html
[2] http://blog.archny.org/index.php/an-inspiration-to-generations/] http://blog.archny.org/index.php/an-inspiration-to-generations