

SCOUTING GIANT DOUG GASSAWAY DIES AT 82

April 03, 2017 By Tracy Ringolsby

It was in the spring of 1998 and the Rangers had a handful of scouts in New England, taking a look at high school pitchers Jeff Juden and Scott Burrell. On the third day of the scouting expedition, then-Rangers scouting director Sandy Johnson had some advice for a newly hired area scout.

"You don't have to introduce Doug (Gassaway) to the other scouts," Johnson said. "They know him. That's why they aren't talking to him."

Point made.

Gassaway, who died during the weekend at the age of 82, was an old-school scout. He was a loner. He was always looking for that undiscovered future big league player. And he wasn't about to share what he knew.

If he let you into his world, you found out he was a gracious, caring man. But if you were his competition on the scouting trail, there was no fiercer competitor.

The results speak for his abilities. In more than 40 years of amateur scouting, he was the key man in signing more than 100 big league players, ranging from first-rounders including John Russell and Brian Bohanon to the undrafted such as Jeff Stone, Chris Jones, Don Carman and Greg Jelks. He signed lefthander Jim Morris, the 34-year-old teacher who pitched in the big leagues for the Rays in 1999 and 2000, and inspired the movie "The Rookie."

What kind of respect did he have in his native Texas? His name was on a parking place at Disch-Falk Field at the University of Texas, right next to the spot where former Longhorns coach Cliff Gustafson parked.

Oh, and he pushed the Rangers to sign Ivan Rodriguez, among this year's inductees into the Hall of Fame, who Gassaway spotted as a 15-year-old during a Puerto Rican workout for outfielder Melvin Nieves.

"I think we had 11 or 13 guys at the tryout camp," said Johnson, the scouting

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TOP 10 PROSPECTS

#	Player	Pos	Team
1	Yoan Moncada	2B	White Sox
2	Vladimir Guerrero Jr.	3B	Blue Jays
3	Gleyber Torres	SS	Yankees

director in Texas when Gassaway worked for the Rangers. Johnson was in the dugout talking to Nieves, and “all of a sudden, big old Gasser is sprinting in from center field, and he's screaming, 'That little SOB just threw 93 miles an hour to second base.' Why he was out there clocking catchers throwing to second base nobody knows, but that was Gas.

"Then we threw him and hit him and worked him out. There were four other catchers there who signed for big money, but Gasser loved Pudge. When he turned 16 we signed him."

That was Gassaway, always looking for that other guy, such as lefthander Chuck McElroy, an eighth-round pick out of Lincoln High in Port Arthur, Texas. Not many scouts had seen McElroy in high school, but Gassaway did.

McElroy, however, got the attention of others scouts during the state championship at the Astrodome. Seeing other scouts waiting outside the locker room to do background work on McElroy, Gassaway, with the Phillies at the time, went in a back door, invited McElroy to go fishing and escorted him out through the center field gate. The Phillies selected McElroy in the eighth round in that 1986 draft.

That was Gassaway.

He had a brief playing career, appearing in only 27 games spread over three seasons in the low minor leagues.

He, however, distinguished himself in a scouting career that began with the Giants in 1973 and ended with the Mets in 2011. In between he worked with the Phillies (1975-86), Rangers (1987-92), Cubs (1993-95), Rays (1998-2000) and Diamondbacks (2001-04) He took delight in signing the undrafted players who made it to the big leagues such as Stone, who he worked out in a plowed Missouri farm field.

"He loved getting the first-rounders but he prided himself on finding those guys others didn't know about," Johnson said. "He wasn't a pack guy."

No, Gassaway was the guy who would be down the left field line or right field line, standing by himself, not wanting to be distracted. And when he was behind home plate he was in the last row of the scouts' section.

"Son," he told a young writer, "never sit in front of the other scouts."

Why, he was asked.

≡ x

See, Gassaway said. They are taking their eyes off the field. You can't know what's going on if you aren't watching what's on the field. You aren't signing anybody sitting behind you."

And one thing Gassaway knew what to do was sign players—big league players.

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3	Oregon State	56-6
4	TCU	50-18
5	Louisville	53-12
6	Florida State	46-23
7	Cal State Fullerton	39-24
8	Long Beach State	42-20

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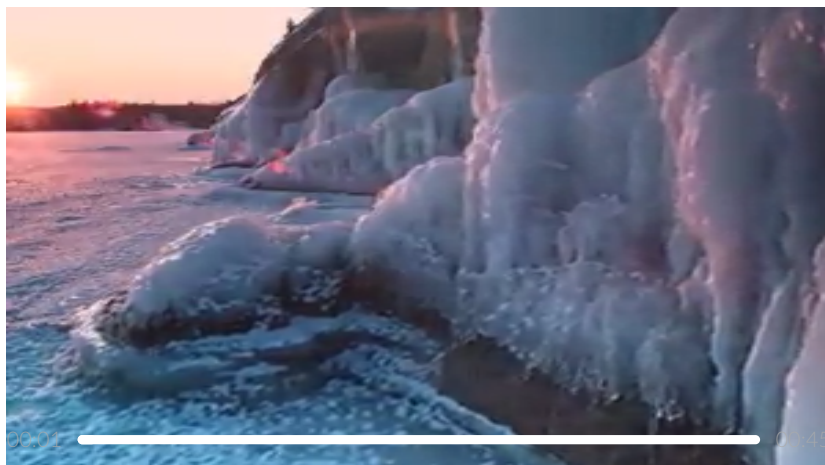
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Bill • 8 months ago

He'll be missed by many. He gave many of us an opportunity to work in the game and taught by what he knew best and that was finding ball players! Gracious indeed and fierce competitor indeed, he'd give you the shirt of his back if you knew him! RIP Doug!!

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#	Player	Pos	Team
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2	Daniel Flores	C	Red Sox
3	Ronny Mauricio	SS	Mets
4	Everson Pereira	OF	Yankees
5	George Valera	OF	Indians
6	Julio Rodriguez	OF	Mariners
7	Danny Diaz	SS	Red Sox
8	Carlos Rodriguez	OF	Brewers
9	Kristian Robinson	OF	Diamondbacks
10	Raimfer Salinas	OF	

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