



## Gary Nolan Class of 2011

Gary Nolan was born on May 27, 1948 in Herlong, California, and came to Oroville at the age of four. He attended Bird Street and Central schools before moving on to Oroville High School (OHS) where he graduated in 1966. While at OHS, he played one year of JV baseball and then led the varsity team to three straight league championships. He earned all-league honors in each of his three varsity seasons and was the team captain and most valuable player in each of those seasons. During the summer, Gary played American Legion baseball and worked at the Butte County Public Works Department. On the weekends, he worked at a local gas station.

On June 26, 1966, the Cincinnati Reds of the National League (NL) made Gary their number one draft choice, taking him as the thirteenth overall pick in that draft. He reported to the Red's on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and was assigned to their Sioux Falls minor league team, where he remained for less than a full year, before being called up to the majors in 1967. On April 15, 1967, he made his big league pitching debut at the age of 19. In July 2009, David Schoenfield of ESPN wrote, "Gary Nolan was one of the greatest teenage pitching sensations in major league history!"

Gary finished his rookie season winning 14 games, losing 8 and logging 206 strikeouts. A rookie highlight was striking out 15 San Francisco Giants in seven innings with four of those by future Hall of Famer Willie Mays. He finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the rookie of the year balloting, losing to future National Baseball Hall of Famer Tom Seaver. Gary's earned run average (ERA) was 2.58 -- better than Seaver's 2.76.

Nolan's major league career spanned ten seasons with his final game being played as a Los Angeles Angel on September 18, 1977. His overall win loss record for his career was 110-70, with an ERA of 3.08, and 1,039 strike outs. In six of the ten years he spent with the Reds, he won twelve or more games, his best record coming in 1970, when he won 18 and lost 7, which was the 5<sup>th</sup> best record in the NL. His best ERA came in 1972 when it was 1.99.

He pitched in the World Series as a 22 year old in 1970, and then again in 1972, 1975, and 1976. He was 2-2 overall in World Series play. In 1972, he led the NL in winning percentage with a 15-5 record but missed playing in the All-Star game with neck and shoulder problems. He then missed virtually all of the next two seasons due to injuries, but returned to post back-to-back 15-9 seasons in 1975 and 1976. The Reds swept the Yankees in the 1976 Series with Gary winning the final game.

Gary was on the Cy Young Award ballot in 1970, 1972 and 1975. He won the Hutch Award given annually to the player who best exemplifies the fighting spirit of former major league pitcher and manager, Fred Hutchinson. He had a career .990 fielding average, tying for the best in major league history among pitchers. An outstanding baseball career was cut short by injuries.

Following his retirement, Gary worked as a Las Vegas casino VIP host for twenty-six years before returning to Oroville in 2004. In 1999, he was honored by the City of Oroville when all the ball fields on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Pomona were entitled, The Gary Nolan Sports Complex. The honor was for his many achievements and contributions to the community and as a positive role model.

Gary was inducted into the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame in 1983, the Northern California Sports Association Hall of Fame in 1998, and this past April was inducted into the LaSalle Club Hall of Fame in Sacramento.

OUHSD Hall of Fame coach Ken Arnold, a former teacher of Gary's at OHS, wrote in his recommendation letter: Abraham Lincoln once said, "A good rule to judge the character of a man is how he treats people who can't do anything for him." Ken went on to say, "Gary is a man of character. He is also a generous man who supports the American Legion, Special Needs for Kids, Veteran organizations, and his local community. Even at a young age, I remember Gary as a gentleman who was polite, respectful, and honest."