

# Curtain Calls & Cleats

## *Former LSU All-American Aaron Hill's Two Cycles Run Him into Cooperstown*

July 11, 2012 by Jeff LeJeune

Collecting four hits in a Major League baseball game is difficult enough. Having the fortune to have those hits meet the different base totals—single, double, triple and home run—in one game is especially rare. It has happened only 294 times in MLB history, roughly equivalent to the number of no-hitters thrown (274). It is so rare and difficult that no player in history has ever hit for the cycle in an MLB All-Star or postseason game.

This is why former LSU Tiger shortstop Aaron Hill's accomplishing it twice in two weeks is such a feat.

Hill hit for the cycle Friday night in the Diamondbacks' 9-3 win over the Brewers, 11 days after he did it to highlight a 7-1 Arizona victory over the Mariners. According to STATS LLC, it marked the first time a player had hit for the cycle twice in the same year since Babe Herman in 1931. The only other two times it had happened were before 1900.

It was an extra special night for Hill. His double in the first off of Milwaukee starter Randy Wolf was his 1,000th career hit.

The cycles are not just random successes for the 30-year-old second baseman. He entered Friday's game having hit .371 over his last 30 games, and his 4-for-5 night at the plate only adds to that.

"He just has really been swinging at good pitches, and when they elevate them, he's on them," Arizona manager Kirk Gibson said. "You can see on the off-speed pitches that are up, he hammers them. Those are nice pitches to hit."

While Hill needed a home run in the seventh against the Mariners, he stepped to the plate in the sixth against the Brewers needing and getting a triple off of Livan Hernandez. He slid head-first into third, well ahead of the relay throw from the outfield.

He admitted after the Mariners game that he'd never tried to hit a home run before, and that although he knew what he needed to get the cycle, he was just trying to treat the at-bat like any other. He reiterated those points after his second cycle.

"You can't think about it," Hill said. "If you think about doing anything at the plate, you're digging yourself into a hole. I said that last time. You look for a ball up and hope things work out."

Friday's cycle was the fourth of Hill's life. He had one in high school and another at LSU on April 5, 2003 against South Carolina.

Hill is considered one of the best in LSU history, finishing his career in 2003 as an All-American and SEC Player of the Year in leading the Tigers to the College World Series.

Hill chose LSU over the Anaheim Angels, who drafted the young shortstop out of California in the seventh round of the June 2000 draft. He turned down the offer, however, opting to go to a school with, [as he termed it](#), an "academic and athletic reputation, and for the experience of a lifetime."

Such humility was evident in his playing days at LSU and has carried over into his career in the majors.

"It's great," Hill said, obviously trying to deflect the attention of his second cycle. "It was obviously great to get the win. It wouldn't have been as enjoyable if we came away with the loss."

"You go through ups and downs throughout the whole year. You walk out of the clubhouse and you never know if you're going to be 0-4 or 4-4."

Hill said taking the curtain call in response to the crowd's vivacious approval was an honor.

"It's a pretty special thing," he said. "Obviously, the fans are here for us and they've been here for us all year. It's nice when they recognize something and the least you can do is show them how much we appreciate them."

Cooperstown has even made an overture. They want a little something from Hill as well.

"It's kind of cool, we got a call from Cooperstown today, they wanted the cleats sent right away so, I wasn't going to say no to that. Now I don't have any cleats to wear for the game tonight."

Such a sense of humor and humility may be made easier by the fact that, despite being near the top of most offensive categories for National League second baseman, he did not make the NL All-Star team for the July 10 game in Kansas City. The one chance he does have now, though, is the All-Star Game Final Vote sponsored by Firestone, a feature now in its 11th year that allows the fans to vote one final player onto the team in each league. Hill is one of five names on the list in the NL.

But he'll have to beat out Atlanta's Michael Borne, last year's World Series hero David Freese, this year's rookie phenom Bryce Harper, and retiring future Hall of Famer Chipper Jones. Whether he makes the team or not, it is clear that Hill will handle it with class.

He'll handle it as smoothly as he's handling NL pitching this year.

"I saw this guy in Toronto, and he's really good," Brewers manager Ron Roenicke said of Hill, who was traded from the Blue Jays to the Arizona in Aug. 2011. "I was surprised when, in his last year in Toronto, he had a down year. I was surprised because when I saw him, he could really hit. He never missed a fastball. He's really quick inside. And now he's also staying back well enough where he's also hitting offspeed pitches. But it doesn't surprise me—this is a really good hitter."

The most cycles hit by a single player in Major League baseball is three, accomplished by three players. What some fans may not know is that Hill was only a double shy of hitting for the cycle a week before the Seattle game, which would have put him in truly select company.

"It's been pretty crazy these last couple of weeks. I obviously can't describe it, you know, how or why it happened. But if it wants to happen again, I'll be more than happy to welcome it."

The only trade-off might be another lost pair of cleats.