



SF Giants Press Clips

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Giants' Steven Duggar claiming center stage with his glove

John Shea

The catch probability was 31 percent, but David Peralta of the Diamondbacks thought it was closer to 0 percent.

Peralta hit a ball to the gap in right-center and cruised all the way to third base, thinking he had a stand-up triple. Apparently, he was familiar enough with the Giants' center fielders in recent years that he couldn't imagine the ball being caught.

David Peralta, meet Steven Duggar.

Duggar is trying to figure out life as a big-league hitter, which will take time. Learning pitchers and ballparks is a process, as is improving an on-base percentage and strikeout rate, which he needs to do.

But as far as his defense? Six words:

Sit back and enjoy the show.

Duggar caught Peralta's deep drive and is fast becoming a nightly highlight reel, showing range and glove work that Giants fans haven't seen from a center fielder since backup outfielder Gregor Blanco was in his prime. Or on an everyday basis since ... Gold Glover Darren Lewis in 1994?

"He plays incredibly hard. It's fun to watch him," said reliever Ray Black, who broke into the majors the same day (July 8) as Duggar after playing with him for parts of three minor-league

seasons. "It gives you extra confidence as a pitcher knowing he's behind you."

On Saturday in Arizona, Duggar ranged well into right-center for Peralta's ball, made a snow-cone catch and tumbled onto the warning track. According to Statcast, which uses cameras and radar to record every defender's movement to every ball, Duggar sprinted 112 feet at a well-above-average speed of 30.3 feet per second.

Although the catch probability was listed at 31 percent, it was far more difficult, considering Duggar had to avoid a collision at the last moment with right fielder Andrew McCutchen. Peralta didn't believe it was a catch and wasn't budging off third until a scoreboard replay showed the ball in Duggar's glove.

A play like that will take a few seconds, but Duggar has spent his baseball life trying to make those few seconds game-changing. It's not just showing up and shagging. It's hours and days and months preparing for the moment.

"There's a lot of pre-pitch setup and variables," Duggar said. "Once the ball's in the air, you kind of let your athletic ability take over and just try to flag it down."

What are the variables?

Duggar listed three: Knowing the pitcher. Knowing the hitter. And knowing the location of the pitch, which a center fielder can anticipate from how a catcher positions his mitt.

Duggar also studies heat maps, which show where a batter tends to hit the ball the most often, including on particular pitches. He said he considers the wind, the backdrop (a night sky in San Francisco is a far cry from the roof in Arizona), the height of the ball and how it would leave the bat from a left-handed hitter as opposed to a righty.

"It just depends," Duggar said. "If a guy's got two strikes and is swinging a little late, we'll shade oppo. If he's getting good swings, I might take a step or two back. It depends on how the at-bat's going, how he's swinging it. If our guy's got his stuff, I'll probably play straight up. A lot of different factors go into it. You feel it out."

Duggar anticipates but doesn't lean.

"If I get caught leaning one way," he said, "I'm not going to get the best jump to come in and get that ball if a guy duck-hooks it and hits a flare."

In games against the Astros on Monday and Tuesday, Duggar was involved in two memorable plays on balls hit to the gap. He robbed Jake Marisnick of extra bases in the opener, seemingly outrunning the high drive destined for Triples Alley. The next day, Duggar dived for Tyler White's sinking liner and missed it.

Duggar could have taken the conservative route, held back and cut off the ball but was confident enough to think he could have caught it. White got a triple but didn't score. His eighth-inning homer off Black helped Houston complete a two-game sweep.

"We talked about that dive in the bullpen," Black said. "Personally, I'd rather have an outfielder play hard and go for that ball in that situation than lay back and maybe cut the ball off and keep him to a double."

Duggar said on certain balls that are hit far enough from him, such as the one in Arizona, he intentionally will take his eye off the ball.

"Sometimes you put your head down and take a couple of hard steps and then pick the ball back up," Duggar said. "It can hang up there. You kind of have an idea when the ball is in midflight whether you're gaining ground on it."

Duggar went hitless in the series — he popped up Tuesday immediately after Alen Hanson's leadoff triple in the seventh — and his average fell from .270 to .247. His OBP is .303, and he has struck out 28 times in 81 at-bats.

It's a small sample size, but the Giants see plenty of positive signs for Duggar to remain the everyday center fielder.

"He's finding his way. Overall, he's played well," manager Bruce Bochy said. "You see the ground he's covering out there. Defensively, he's been great. He's holding his own with the bat. He's gotten some big hits. He's got discipline at the plate. That's why he's out there. He's doing a pretty good job overall."

MLB.com

Remembering Bonds' 5 biggest Giants homers

Chris Haft

SAN FRANCISCO -- Some were awe-inspiring. Many were historic. None, it seemed, were boring.

That defines Barry Bonds' catalog of home runs during his 22-year career. He hit a Major League-record 762 of them, including 586 for the Giants from 1993-2007.

On Saturday, the Giants will salute Bonds by retiring his jersey No. 25 in ceremonies preceding their game against the Pirates, with whom he spent his first seven big league seasons. He didn't become truly synonymous with the long ball, however, until he migrated to San Francisco as a free agent.

So here's a collection of five home runs that ranked among the biggest he hit with the Giants.

Anybody could pick five different homers and compile a list that's just as definitive. That would be legitimate, since Bonds hit so many to choose from.

Here are our five:

Home at last

April 12, 1993

It's safe to say that this ranked among the most meaningful home openers in Giants history.

Nearly sold during the offseason to a group that would have moved the franchise to St. Petersburg, the Giants were in the hands of the Peter Magowan-led ownership group that knew it had to find an alternative to Candlestick Park. But on this sunny afternoon, everybody was happy just to have the Giants still around. The paid attendance, a regular-season record 56,689, conveyed this joy.

It was a blessed day for the Giants and their fans. Tony Bennett delivered a stirring rendition of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." Bonds added an encore in his first home at-bat as a Giant, launching a second-inning homer off Florida's Chris Hammond. This would be no ordinary trip around the bases. As Bonds rounded first, he high-fived his father, Bobby, the team's hitting and first-base coach.

Having grown up in nearby San Carlos, Calif., Bonds was truly home.

Dancing for the Dodgers

Sept. 17, 1997

For the second-place Giants, this was the first of two critical encounters with the archrival Dodgers, who led them by two games in the National League West standings.

Having endured sub-.500 seasons in five of the previous six seasons, the Giants were sick of losing. So were their fans, including 56,625 who paid their way into Candlestick to see a thriller.

Bonds immediately established the Giants' presence, belting a two-run, first-inning homer off Chan Ho Park. The pro-Giants crowd didn't cheer. It exploded, bellowing at full volume. Displaying showmanship that must have irked the Dodgers, Bonds spun in a mini-pirouette shortly after leaving the batter's box. The Giants hung on to win, 2-1, setting up Brian Johnson's game-winning homer the next day for San Francisco in a 6-5, 12-inning triumph. That lifted the Giants into a tie atop the NL West standings with the Dodgers; San Francisco proceeded to capture the division title.

No. 500

April 17, 2001

It wasn't just that Bonds joined a select group of sluggers with this milestone. It also won a game against the Dodgers, and it was a homer that was properly celebrated by the Giants' greatest legends.

The Giants trailed, 2-1, when Rich Aurilia tripled to lead off San Francisco's eighth. Issue an intentional walk? No. The Dodgers elected to pitch to Bonds, who made that decision all wet when he drove Terry Adams' 2-0 delivery into McCovey Cove. That made him the 17th big leaguer to reach the 500-homer mark. The game was stopped as Bonds embraced family members and posed for pictures with Willie Mays and Willie McCovey, longtime members in good standing of the "500" club.

Fall Classic clout

Oct. 20, 2002

If Bonds had a shortcoming in his game, it was his postseason performance. Through three NL Championship Series with Pittsburgh and two NL Division Series with San Francisco, he owned a puny .196 (19-for-97) batting average with one home run.

That changed dramatically in 2002.

Bonds hit three homers in the NLDS against the Braves, including one in the Game 5 clincher. He added six RBIs in the five-game NLCS against St. Louis.

Then he peaked. Bonds belted four home runs vs. the Angels in the seven-game World Series, including a Game 2 wallop at Angel Stadium that amazed all who witnessed it. Bonds smacked it in the ninth inning off closer Troy Percival as television cameras caught Halos star Tim Salmon saying, "That's the farthest ball I've ever seen hit."

This was the pre-Statcast™ era, so it had to be generally agreed that Bonds' homer traveled an estimated 485 feet.

Passing Hank

Aug. 7, 2007

Linked by various reports to baseball's performance-enhancing-drug saga, Bonds was widely regarded as a polarizing figure. Nevertheless, the Giants consistently played to sellout crowds on the road and, of course, at home as Bonds chased Hank Aaron's standard of 755 homers.

The record breaker was like most of Bonds' homers. Estimated at 435 feet, it was a sure thing from the time it left the bat. Bonds clobbered a 3-2 delivery from Washington's Mike Bacsik over AT&T Park's right-center-field barrier. Bonds was greeted at home plate by his son, Nikolai, then engulfed by Giants teammates and coaches before family members joined him on the field.

Interestingly, Bacsik's father, also named Mike, faced Aaron and held him to a flyout on Aug. 23, 1976, as a member of the Texas Rangers.

The Giants showed a brief but gracious video message from Aaron, who congratulated Bonds on breaking the record he held for 33 years and expressed the hope that "the achievement of

this record will inspire others to chase their own dreams."

MLB.com

Bonds reinvigorated Magowan's early Giants

Chris Haft

SAN FRANCISCO -- Saturday's festivities at AT&T Park commemorating the retirement of Barry Bonds' No. 25 prove the adage that timing really is everything. Peter Magowan likely would agree.

Magowan led a group of Bay Area-based investors who scrounged up \$100 million in November 1992 to buy the Giants and prevent them from moving to the Tampa Bay region.

Once the euphoria ebbed, Magowan and his partners had to face harsh reality: They were saddled with a team that, on paper, really didn't look like a good investment. The 1992 Giants finished 72-90, 26 games behind the National League West-winning Braves in fifth place.

Magowan recently recalled asking himself, "What had we bought? How can we improve this team?"

Simple: Acquire the game's best player. That happened to be Bonds, the free-agent left fielder who won three of the previous four National League Most Valuable Player Awards while playing for the Pirates.

The Yankees and Braves were considered the favorites to sign Bonds, but Magowan and his group reached into their pockets again and came up with \$43.75 million to be paid over six years, making Bonds baseball's highest-paid player. Bonds helped transform the Giants into perennial contenders, and his ability to lift the franchise's profile stimulated the public's approval in a 1996 vote to build what is now known as AT&T Park, following four failed ballpark ballot measures.

Magowan, who ceded his control as the Giants' managing general partner at the end of the 2008 season, will be one of the proudest attendees at the ceremony when No. 25 officially enters posterity. Magowan wholeheartedly endorsed the concept of Bonds' jersey being put away forever, along with those of five San Francisco-era Hall of Famers who also will be present Saturday: Willie Mays, Willie McCovey, Juan Marichal, Gaylord Perry and Orlando Cepeda.

"He's the best player I ever saw, short of Mays," said Magowan, 76, of Bonds.

NBC Sports Bay Area

Down on the Farm: Joey Bart goes deep, Giants prospect Rincones wins All-Star Game MVP Dalton Johnson

The Joey Bart Show continues, with each episode more exciting than the last.

For his fantastic July, the Giants' top prospect was named Northwest League Player of the Month on Monday. One day later, he was just showing off.

Bart started behind the dish and batted third Tuesday night in the Northwest League-Pioneer League All-Star Game. In his first at-bat, Bart showed off his power stroke that has caught everyone's attention.

After fouling off three pitches, Bart dug out a 2-2 offering and hammered a three-run blast just to the right of dead-center field. The knock gave the Northwest League a 3-0 lead in the top of the first inning.

That was just the beginning of a big game for Bart. His next at-bat, Bart just missed going yard for the second time on the night. Bart hit a rocket of a line drive off the top of the right field wall, resulting in a single.

On the day, Bart went 2-for-3 with the home run and single, three RBI and one run scored.

Bart dominated his first month in the minors to earn top honors with a .333 batting average, 1.126 OPS and nine home runs. Somehow, he's been even hotter to start August. In his first four games this month, Bart is batting .412 with two doubles and two triples. If you include the All-Star Game, he is 9-for-20 this month.

While Bart had yet another big night at the plate, it was actually his Salem-Keizer teammate who stole the show for the Northwest League in a 13-10 loss to the Pioneer League.

Diego Rincones, batting fifth and playing left field, won Northwest League MVP. The 19-year-old went 4-for-5 with two doubles and two runs scored. He also nailed a runner out at the plate with Bart making the tag.

"I felt really good having [Bart] there behind the plate and just wanted to make a really good throw," Rincones said to MiLB.com. "I feel really happy about [the MVP award] because I can play here. I felt really good about the game and was trying to do 100 percent."

Rincones is batting .357 with four home runs, 10 doubles and an .876 OPS this season for the Volcanoes.

NBC Sports Bay Area

Krukow calls Bochy taking Bumgarner out after 100 pitches 'insulting'

Dalton Johnson

The Giants were swept by the Astros in a two-game homestand on Monday and Tuesday. Do not blame their starting pitchers.

Derek Rodriguez and Madison Bumgarner combined to throw 14 scoreless innings against the defending champions. Both pitchers received no-decisions. Both games ended with a Giants loss.

"He's probably second-guessing himself, but we don't know," Mike Krukow said Wednesday on KNBR about Bochy's decisions to take Rodriguez and Bumgarner out after seven innings.

In Monday's loss, Rodriguez came out after 94 pitches in seven innings while Bumgarner totaled 100 pitches when his day came to an end after seven scoreless as well. Pitch counts are nothing new at this point. And it's safe to say Krukow is no fan of them.

"I believe that the pitch count has changed the game in some negative ways and it really bothers me, especially when you see guys that are built for innings," Krukow said.

After Alen Hanson tripled to lead off the bottom of the seventh inning Tuesday, Bochy used Hunter Pence as a pinch-hitter two batters later for Bumgarner. That decision didn't pan out as Pence went down swinging and Hanson was stranded at third base with McCutchen striking out as well.

"I mean, it's insulting to think you're gonna take a guy like Bumgarner out of the game after 100 pitches," Krukow continued.

Krukow tossed 41 complete games in 355 career starts. So far, Bumgarner, considered a workhorse on the mound by many, only has 15 complete games in 243 games started. To Krukow, a part of the game is being taken away from starting pitchers because of pitch counts.

"Those last outs, to get the 27th out and stand on the infield with your teammates as they're shaking your hand, that's the best feeling that a starting pitcher can ever have," Krukow said.