



**Above:** Dave Van Horne - Montreal Expos play by play announcer and current broadcaster for Miami Marlins (2000 picture taken at Olympic Stadium Montreal)

Van Horne is the 2011 recipient of the Ford C. Frick Award from the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

**Left:** 3 Baseball Hall of Famers: (left to right) #8 Gary Carter, #30 Tim Lincecum, and #10 Andre Dawson are the only 3 Expos elected to Baseball's Hall of Fame.

# SUMMER MEMORIES: Rusty, Dave & Duke and Me!

By Jonathan Vickers

On March 29th of this year, a part of my childhood died as "Le Grand Orange" Rusty Staub passed away in West Palm Beach Florida at the age of 73. If you're a baseball fan, and especially a Montreal Expo's fan, you will know who this special baseball icon was.

In 1969, I was just 5 years old in Montreal and the city was about to fall in love with a team that hadn't seen professional baseball since the Montreal Royals left in 1960. The Expos that year needed an identity as they were on their way in their inaugural season to lose 110 games (52-110) but there was one player the city fell in love with - Rusty Staub. The Houston Astros traded Rusty to the Montreal Expos before the start of their inaugural season in 1969 and after some initial controversy with the deal and the commissioner involved the deal went through and Montreal had its first superstar player.

He wore #10 for the Expos and embraced coming to the city and tried even learning French though ("Rusty") at first, he did commercials and got involved with charities and sports dinners until his time with

Expos ended in 1972. He probably was the most iconic athlete in the city next to the now late 'Jean Beliveau' of the Montreal Canadiens of his time.

Rusty came back to the city in a trade in 1979 from the Detroit Tigers and was trying to help the Expos in their first ever post season run that fell short. The night he made his return in a plate appearance pinch hitting his reception was thunderous at Olympic Stadium in Montreal, as over 58,000 fans cheered on and on for over 5 minutes. It was an emotional home coming. He wore # 6 as Andre Dawson now wore # 10. He never forgot Montreal and visited many times after his career. Still today there are some adults that have bank accounts with The Bank of Montreal as the Expos had a marketing tool in 1969 and early 70's as "The Little Expos Club" and Rusty was the spokesperson.

I write this as I reflect upon how my summers growing up in Montreal and then in Alexandria, Ontario truly revolved around the Montreal Expos. How I loved baseball and the nuances and slowness of the game back then. Listening to the games

on CFCF Radio 600 (then later on CJAD 800) in Montreal with Dave Van Horne and Duke Snider. ("Dave & Duke") were probably the second-best baseball broadcasting tandem in the business. (Vin Scully of The Los Angeles Dodgers was the best). How I loved listening as a kid, at night around 10 or 11pm, when the Expos were on a west coast road trip to Los Angeles and the initial introduction every time by Dave Van Horne, "Thanks Duke, and hi again everybody, glad to have you aboard for tonight's game!", or when an Expo's player hit a home run it was "UP, UP AND AWAY, A HOME RUN FOR.... (Gary Carter, Andre Dawson, Larry Walker, Tim Wallach, etc.), it was always goose bumping moments for me.

Summer days or nights listening to the Expos were a big part of my summer memories, as listening to the radio you had to use your imagination and listen to the description of the game. When the game was on TV on CBC, (imagine in the 1970's and 1980's there were only 2 Canadian sports broadcasting stations, CTV or CBC, the Blue Jays were on CTV) Dave and Duke would move over to broadcast on TV, it was great to listen and watch.



Duke Snider (left) and Dave Van Horne (Right) circa 1980's broadcasting CBC Sports Expos Baseball



Rust Staub #10 "Le Grande Orange" circa 1969 Expos photo

Dave and Duke were special, and in the mornings before the games, Duke Snider had a 10-minute radio show on CJAD 800 and had a following of over 100,000 listeners in Montreal, which at the time was incredible, if you think about it in today's radio terms. Duke broadcasted from 1972-1986 for the Expos and passed away in 2011. Dave Van Horne started with the Expos in 1969 and in 2000, as the Expos had not secured an English radio or television contract, Van Horne broadcasted the season over the Internet. With the Expos broadcast situation still unsettled for the 2001 season, Van Horne left at the end of the 2000 season to broadcast for the Florida Marlins. Coincidentally enough, Van Horne broadcast the last Expos home game in Montreal from the Marlins' broadcast booth on September 29, 2004, a 9-1 win for Florida. After the game was over, Van Horne joined the Expos television crew for a special post-game show.

Dave's most prominent baseball call for the Expos was his: "El Presidente, El Perfecto!", made when Montreal Expos pitcher Dennis Martínez completed his perfect game against the Los Angeles Dodgers on July 28, 1991.

It is especially irritating to me that Dave got to broadcast for the Florida Marlins the 2003 World Series win for them (he really should have done one for the Expos). I truly miss listening to him and miss Duke too, as they were a big part of my childhood and teenage years.

In 1992, I was 27 years old. I followed the Expos on a Baseball trip that took me to Wrigley Field in Chicago. I saw the Cubs and Expos in a night game, then also enjoyed a Hall of Fame Cubs day and sang along with legendary broadcaster 'Harry Caray' during the 7th inning stretch. I moved on to Boston and saw the Red Sox and Yankees at Fenway Park in Boston and then caught up with the Expos in Pittsburg. I saw 4 games at the old

Three Rivers Stadium. 10 Games in 11 days, a true baseball summer dream for me.

Many great players passed through Montreal during the Expos years: Pedro Martinez, Ronell White, Cliff Floyd, Chris Spier, Steve Rogers, Tony Perez, Moises Alou, Tim Raines, Warren Cromartie, Vladimir Guerrero, Pete Rose, Larry Parrish, Bill Stoneman, Charlie Lea, Dennis Martinez, Bill Lee, Andrés Galarraga, and my favourite player # 29 Tim Wallach, plus many more I could mention.

Great managers like Felipe Alou, Buck Rodgers, Dick Williams, Gene Mauch and a great owner in Charles Bronfman.

The Expos gave us some great summers back in the late 70's and early 80's and the apex came in 1981 when the team made the post-season in a strike filled season by the Major league players. The Expos faced the Phillies in the National League Division Series and won and the series 3-2 and moved on to play the Los Angeles Dodgers for Championship series. On October 19, 1981: Blue Monday as referred eternally by Expos fans, in the decisive Game 5 of their only National League Championship Series, the Expos were defeated at home, 2-1, by the Los Angeles Dodgers won a home run by Dodger Rick Monday off Steve Rogers of the Expos and the franchise never truly recovered from this.

Management decided in the mid 1980's to trade Gary Carter (even more popular to some Expo fans than Rusty Staub) and the team started to decline. In 1989 the Expos made a big trade for a pitcher by the name of Mark Langston but had a late August and September collapse again sealed the teams fate and the owner Charles Bronfman decided to sell the team. What followed was a true demise of the franchise under Claude Brochu and an ownership group that refused to invest in the team and many great players left in 1994 when the Expos had the best record in baseball at 74-40 on August 12, 1994 when a baseball

strike ruined the season. The team never recovered and in 2000, a new owner Jeff Loria took control in an ultimate move with Major League baseball, to move and relocate the team. For the next 4 years it was "will they or won't they stay" and in 2003 the Expos made one last run for glory under GM Omar Minya, who somehow with no payroll on August 29, the team was tied with four other clubs for the National League Wild Card spot. However, when MLB's rosters expanded on September 1, Commissioner Bud Selig announced that the Expos would not be recalling any additional players from the minor leagues: the other owners had decided against spending a few extra thousand dollars, a small fraction of the team's \$35 million payroll, to bolster the team and the team faded badly and finished 18 games out of first and 8 back of a wild card spot and the dye was cast for the final season in 2004. I remember listening to a game on radio in Montreal and over 40,000 attended in late August for that playoff run but again it was hopeless.

In 2004 the Expos finished a sad final season on Sept 29th with a 67-95 record with a number of games being played in Puerto Rico as home games (21), truly embarrassing for a proud franchise of 36 years.

Today, I don't follow baseball as much, I did try to follow the Blue Jays in their amazing run 2015 & 2016 and it rekindled summer memories of baseball but alas, it doesn't replace my beloved Expos.

I miss you Rusty, Dave and Duke, "I was happy to have you aboard in my childhood."

Thanks. LH

