

POSITIONS OF POWER

Sportsnet's baseball panel discuss the greatest Jays to ever play the game *By Dan Zaiontz*

It was arguably one of the biggest trades in the history of the franchise. Former Blue Jays General Manager Pat Gillick acquired promising second baseman Roberto Alomar along with Joe Carter in exchange for Tony Fernandez and Fred McGriff from the San Diego Padres in December of 1990. Few Jays fans could have predicted that Gillick had just nabbed a pair of players who would be integral in the franchise's upcoming back-to-back World Series championships in '92 and '93.

In retrospect, Gillick's eye for talent and penchant for making gutsy trades were the qualities that would eventually establish him as, perhaps, the best GM in the franchise's 32-year history. A minority of Jays supporters would disagree with Gillick being labelled the club's all-time best executive. However, there is plenty of room for discussion when it comes to talking the all-time Jays by position.

Sportsnet's baseball experts, Jamie Campbell, Sam Cosentino and Scott Carson took time out of a busy early season schedule to chime in with their selections for the all-time Blue Jays players by position. From scrappers to All-Stars, deciding who would make the list wasn't easy. Featuring a plethora of familiar faces, former aces and pleaded cases, Sportsnet's Positions of Power will make Jays fans nostalgic for sunny afternoons at Exhibition Stadium and powder blue uniforms, before they were considered 'retro'.

► **All-Time Toronto Blue Jays by Position**

Catcher:

Jamie Campbell selects: Ernie Whitt – His twelve years as a Blue Jay may not have been storied but there is no doubt that Whitt played with some good teams, and could always be counted on for 15 home runs. His shared platoon role with Buck Martinez meant he was never given his full due by fans but he will always be known as one of the early leaders on the young Jays clubs of the mid-eighties.

Sam Cosentino selects: Ernie Whitt – Whitt's patented left-handed swing often saw him finish on one knee. That swing was evident in a September 14, 1987 game when he swatted three of the Jays' Major League record 10 home runs against Baltimore. With his ability to call a game and handle pitchers, he was largely responsible for the success of Jays hurlers Jim Clancy, Luis Leal, Roy-Lee Jackson, Jimmy Key and Dave Stieb to name a few.

Sportsnet's Baseball Panel



Jamie Campbell

Play-by-play voice of the Jays on Rogers Sportsnet.

Career highlight: Catching David Ortiz' home run at the 2004 All-Star Game.



Sam Cosentino

Jays on Rogers Sportsnet in-game reporter and baseball analyst.

Career highlight: Calling the last out in the final Montreal Expos home game at Olympic Stadium.



Scott Carson

Jays on Rogers Sportsnet statistician, Sportsnet.ca baseball columnist and original member of Jays on Sportsnet staff.

Career highlight: Sitting in the broadcast booth at Skydome as Carlos Delgado became the first Blue Jay to hit four home runs in a game, September 25, 2003 against the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.



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Scott Carson selects: Pat Borders – While he has cemented his place in Jays lore by earning the '92 World Series MVP, he was vastly under-rated behind the plate in his time. A baseball lifer, Borders played the game till the age of 43, never re-capturing the success he achieved with the Blue Jays. Borders hit .450 in the '92 World Series against Atlanta and had a career .321 playoff batting average as a Jay.

Sportsnet names Ernie Whitt the Jays all-time catcher.

First base:

Jamie Campbell selects: Carlos Delgado – The big first baseman displayed the kind of pop you

would expect from a power position. Not bad for a converted catcher! Delgado never played in a playoff game for Toronto but not for lack of effort. He hit 40-plus home runs three times as a Jay, driving in 100 runs or more six times.

Sam Cosentino selects: Carlos Delgado – Delgado is the Jays all-time leader in home runs (336), RBI (1058), runs (889), BB (827), doubles (343), and is second all-time in games played as a Blue Jay (1423). On September 23rd, 2003, Delgado became the first and only Jay to hit four home runs in a game against Tampa Bay. Not only was he a great ambassador for the team, but for the city of Toronto.



Ernie Whitt

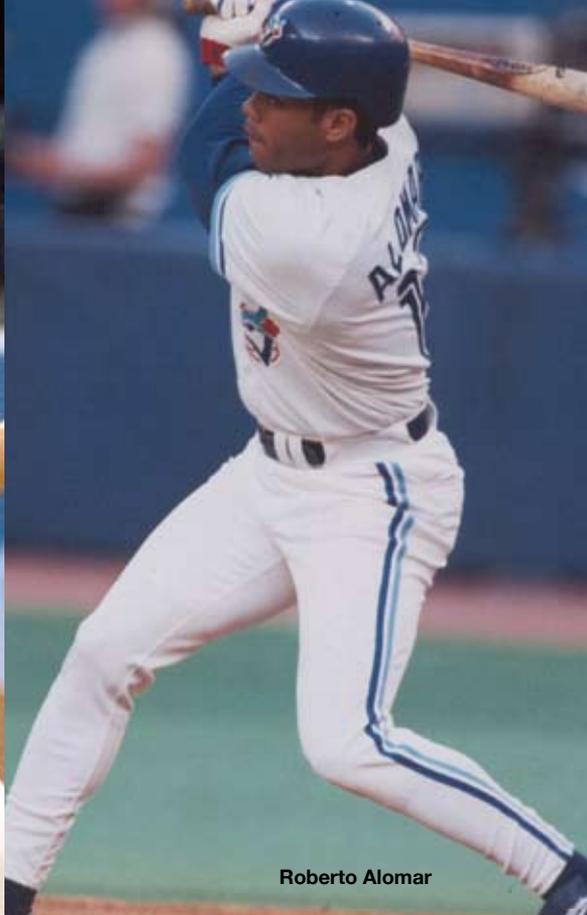


Carlos Delgado

Photos: Sportsnet



Kelly Gruber



Roberto Alomar



Tony Fernandez

Scott Carson selects: Carlos Delgado – The greatest homegrown slugger in franchise history was also responsible for one of the best individual offensive seasons in team history. In 2000, Delgado smacked 196 hits, 41 of those for home runs while driving in 137 runs. The man with the widest of smiles hit .344 that year and finished fourth in AL MVP voting, losing to Jason Giambi, then of the Oakland Athletics.

Sportsnet names Carlos Delgado the Jays all-time first baseman.

Second base:

Jamie Campbell selects: Roberto Alomar – The debate over who would be named the Jays all-time second baseman was short and sweet. Robbie Alomar could change the course of a game with his bat or his glove. He earned four Gold Gloves with the Jays and of course, was an integral member of WAMCO (White, Alomar, Molitor, Carter and Olerud) a lineup that struck fear in the hearts of AL pitchers in '93.

Sam Cosentino selects: Roberto Alomar – Alomar will go down in Jays history as the best second baseman the club has ever known. In fact, many will argue his place amongst the top-five second baseman of all-time. Although just five of his 18+ seasons in the big leagues were spent with Toronto, Alomar made the best of his stint. Robbie is quite possibly the greatest athlete to ever don a Blue Jays jersey.

Scott Carson selects: Roberto Alomar – Roberto Alomar's tenure in Toronto was brief but magical. He will be remembered for hitting, arguably the second biggest home run in team history versus hall-of-fame reliever Dennis Eckersley in the '92 ALCS in Oakland. Alomar may very well make

it to Cooperstown one day and here's hoping he's wearing a Blue Jays cap when he does.

Sportsnet names Roberto Alomar the Jays all-time second baseman.

Shortstop:

Jamie Campbell selects: Tony Fernandez – Another easy choice at a position that has had incredible turnover. Fernandez led a young group of Blue Jays to their first ever division title in '85. His wavering batting stance and diminutive stature accounted for his lack of pop but regardless, Tony could hit, producing five seasons with at least 160 hits as a Blue Jay.

Sam Cosentino selects: Tony Fernandez – Fernandez was the first notable product produced by the Blue Jays' pioneer efforts into the Dominican Republic. He makes this list for the simple fact that he's the franchise's all-time leader in games played (1450). Fernandez was a slick-fielding, switch-hitting machine, whose range and side-arm throws from short always looked routine, but were anything but. He won four straight Gold Glove awards from '85-'89, and is also on the Blue Jays' Level of Excellence.

Scott Carson selects: Tony Fernandez – Fernandez has collected the most hits in franchise history but more importantly, he is a great man. As a shortstop, he could exhilarate crowds with acrobatic plays and a clutch bat. A fitness fiend, Fernandez was an athlete's athlete and indirectly helped the Jays reach the '92 World Series as part of the trade package that brought in Roberto Alomar and Joe Carter.

Sportsnet names Tony Fernandez the Jays all-time shortstop.

Third base:

Jamie Campbell selects: Kelly Gruber – Rance Mulliniks will kill me, but Gruber's bat was the deciding factor. He was the first Jay to hit for the cycle and earned a Gold Glove in 1990 for his play at the hot corner. Gruber was a steal by Pat Gillick in the Rule 5 draft and he made the most of his renaissance with the Jays, earning a World Series ring in '92.

Sam Cosentino selects: Rance Mulliniks/Garth Iorg – These two are like rum and coke, you can't have one without the other. The right-handed hitting Iorg started against lefties and was one of the best charging the slow roller or bunt down the third base line. Mulliniks was also adept at playing third and got the bulk of the at-bats in the platoon situation because he hit left-handed. Both made it tough for opposing managers to match-up at the end of games.

Scott Carson selects: Kelly Gruber – Gruber was a great all-round athlete who could have been even better. His career was cut short because of a bone spur on his spinal cord but in his eight seasons with the Blue Jays, he left his mark. He was the only Jays third baseman ever to be in contention for AL MVP voting but makes this list for the legacy he left at third, a legacy yet to be matched by any other Toronto third baseman.

Sportsnet names Kelly Gruber the Jays all-time third baseman.



Lloyd Moseby



George Bell



Jesse Barfield



Devon White

Left field:

Jamie Campbell selects: George Bell – When George Bell won the AL MVP playing left field for the Jays in '87, his place in team history was solidified (he's the only Jay to have ever won the award). His 47 home runs that season stand the test of time and remain the most home runs a Jay has hit in a season.

Sam Cosentino selects: George Bell – For most of his career as a Blue Jay, George Bell was misunderstood. Just about every teammate he played with enjoyed his candidness in the clubhouse and passion on the field. Bell's walk-off homer against Chicago ended an era at the 'Ex'. He also ushered in the new era, homering in the first game ever played at Skydome.

Scott Carson selects: George Bell – Bell was not just another professional athlete in the city of Toronto in the 80's, he was *the* professional athlete in Toronto when Wendell Clark was hitting the links in the off-season. Bell's '87 AL MVP shocked baseball as it was presumed that Alan Trammell of the Detroit Tigers was a lock for the award. In Toronto, however, Jays fans knew that their outspoken All-Star was the real winner.

Sportsnet names George Bell the Jays all-time left fielder.

Centre field:

Jamie Campbell selects: Vernon Wells – While he has lacked consistency with the bat, Vernon has demonstrated that he is capable of being the superstar that the franchise is paying him to be. Three Gold Gloves into a nine-year career, expect big things from Vernon in the future, as the Jays make a push for the post-season.

Sam Cosentino selects: Lloyd Moseby – With the nickname 'Shaker', how could you leave this guy off the list of all-time Jays? Teamed with George Bell and Jesse Barfield, Moseby was part of one of the best outfield trios in the game during the mid-eighties. With his great speed and ability to read the ball off the bat, Moseby never had less than a .980 fielding percentage in his 10 years with the club.

Scott Carson selects: Devon White – Gold Glove defence, golden legs on the base paths – these were Devon White's signature qualities in his time with the Toronto Blue Jays. In the third game of the '92 World Series, White made a spectacular catch in centre field off

a David Justice fly ball. The Jays nearly converted his relay into what would have been only the second triple play in Fall Classic history, but were denied by an umpire's missed call.

Sportsnet names a platoon of Wells, Moseby and White to the Jays all-time centre field position.

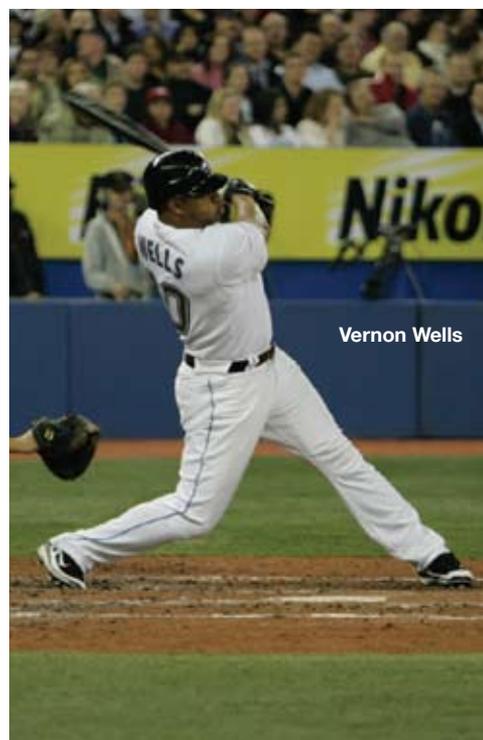
Right field:

Jamie Campbell selects: Jesse Barfield – As the AL home run leader in '86 and possessing the best arm in team history, Jesse Barfield along with Bell and Moseby was a staple in the Jays outfield in the mid-eighties. Barfield's outfield assist numbers were among the best in the American League in '86. That year, his offence earned him a spot on the AL All-Star team, while his defence earned him a Gold Glove award.

Sam Cosentino selects: Joe Carter – The single most replayed moment in Jays history will always be Carter's Game 6 walk-off home run to clinch the '93 Fall Classic. The best part of the legacy is former Jays broadcaster Tom Cheek's call of the game winner, where he coined the phrase, "touch 'em all Joe, you'll never hit a bigger home run in your life." A two-time World Series champion with Toronto, Carter was a five-time all-star in seven seasons with the Jays.

Scott Carson selects: Jesse Barfield – He was the first Jay to hit 40 dingers in a season, leading the league in the process. Barfield's fearlessness at the plate told you all you needed to know about him. Despite amassing over 140 strikeouts, in four of his nine seasons as a Jay, he still produced five 20-home run campaigns while with Toronto.

Sportsnet names Jesse Barfield the Jays all-time right fielder.



Vernon Wells



Joe Carter

Designated hitter:

Jamie Campbell selects: Dave Winfield/Paul Molitor – It was their ability to hit in the clutch that made these men ideal designated hitters in their time with Toronto. Molitor hit .500 in the '93 World Series taking home the MVP honours, while Winfield smacked the game winning double in the 11th inning of Game 6 in the '92 Fall Classic to clinch the victory for the Jays.

Sam Cosentino selects: Paul Molitor – A HOF'er in every sense of the word, free agency finally got the best of 'Moli' when, after 15 seasons in Milwaukee, he signed a three-year deal with Toronto in '93. It turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to Molitor's career. That post-season, the sweet swinging DH hit .447 with 2 HR and 8 RBI.

Scott Carson selects: Paul Molitor – Paul could beat you in so many different ways. His patience at the plate was matched only by his impeccable timing. Sometimes it seemed as if he knew what pitch was headed his way. Molitor (.332) finished second in the '93 race for the AL batting title sandwiched between teammates John Olerud (.363) and Roberto Alomar (.326).

Sportsnet names Paul Molitor the Jays all-time DH.

Starting pitcher:

Jamie Campbell selects: Dave Stieb – Roy Halladay is about two years away from claiming this position but until then Stieb is the tops. He holds several key franchise pitching marks – he's the career leader in wins, shutouts, strikeouts and games started. Stieb was a cog in the rotation as the young Blue Jays won their first ever division title in '85.

Sam Cosentino selects: Dave Stieb – Dave Stieb was converted from his original position as an outfielder at Southern Illinois University to a pitcher in the Blue Jays minor league system. On September 2, 1990, he threw the first and only no-hitter in franchise history, keeping the Cleveland Indians at bay in a 3-0 win. His Frisbee-like slider has often been imitated but

never duplicated. Accompanied by a low 90's fastball and a willingness to pitch inside, Stieb was one of the most feared hurlers of the 80's.

Scott Carson selects: Dave Stieb – It's hard to believe but at one point in the mid-eighties, Stieb was awarded one of the biggest contracts in baseball history by the Blue Jays (a whopping one million dollars US per season over five years) – and deservedly so. Stieb is second only to the legendary Jack Morris for wins in the eighties.

Sportsnet names Dave Stieb the Jays all-time starting pitcher.

Middle reliever:

Jamie Campbell selects: Paul Quantrill – You can't ignore Paul Quantrill, nor a line that says: "Many qualify, but I'll go with the rubber-armed Canadian." Quantrill never saw any post-season action with Toronto but his relief efforts spoke to his consistency. An All-Star appearance in 2001 was made extra special in that the Jays were performing miserably on the field – except for their Canuck in the bullpen.

Sam Cosentino selects: Duane Ward – One of the game's best set-up men when it wasn't all that sexy to be one. He intimidated hitters with his mound presence and mid 90's heater. At a time when Tom Henke was so dominant, Blue Jays clubs of the mid 80's were blessed with having two closers. That would prove to be evident when Henke was not re-signed in '93 and Ward took over the closer's role, saving 45 games.

Scott Carson selects: Paul Quantrill – No Canadian-born player/pitcher appeared in more games with the Jays than Quantrill. The London, Ontario native wasn't flashy but got the job done in 400-plus innings of relief for the Jays. A converted starter, Paul consistently kept batters thinking, which was all you could ask from your middle reliever.

Sportsnet names Paul Quantrill the Jays all-time middle reliever.

Closer:

Jamie Campbell selects: Tom Henke – With almost twice the saves of any other Jay, and a 2.48 ERA in the closer's role for Toronto, Henke truly was 'The Terminator'. His large-rimmed glasses made him stand out on the mound, and being 6'5 certainly helped. Henke was particularly dominant in the '92 post-season where he gave up just one earned run in seven innings of work.

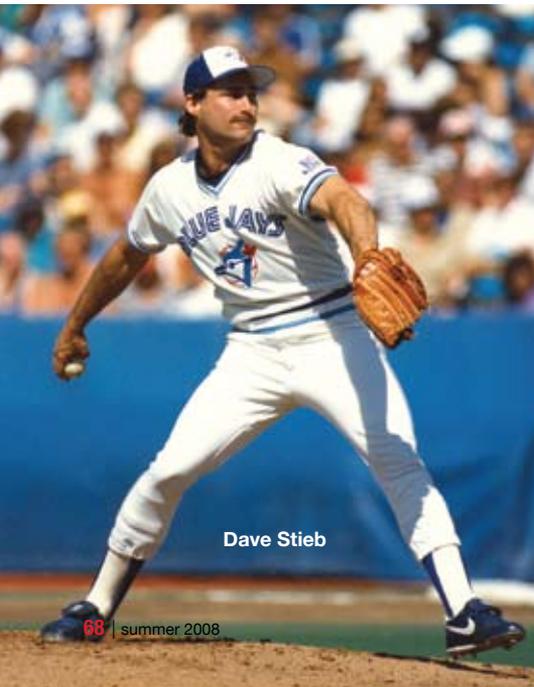
Sam Cosentino selects: Tom Henke – Henke is the second-most tenured Blue Jays pitcher, having appeared in 446 games. His 217 saves is tops in Blue Jays history and other-worldly 3.9 K/BB (strikeout to walk ratio) and 1.02 WHIP (walks and hits per inning pitched) are amongst the best in team history.

Scott Carson selects: Tom Henke – It's appropriate that Tom Henke caps off this list, because when he entered a game from the bullpen, the opposition knew it was over. Henke earned at least 30 saves, four times in his eight seasons with the Jays, while his 34 saves in '87 led the American League. In an era when the Jays were fielding competitive, playoff-bound teams every year, Henke was charged with holding and protecting the lead when the game was on the line.

Sportsnet names Tom Henke the Jays all-time closer.



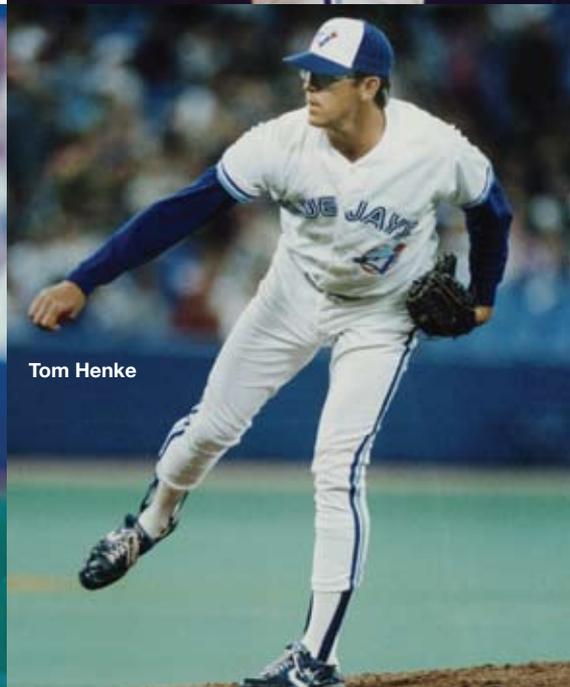
Paul Molitor



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