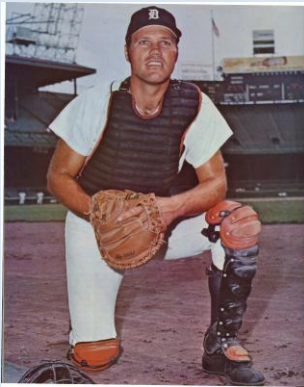




Providing the services of Dynamic Athletes & Celebrities to meet your business & promotional needs

Bill Freehan



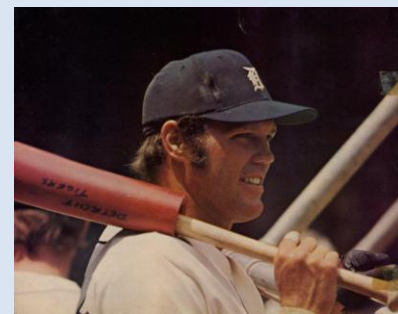
When hometown boy Bill Freehan was signed by the Tigers in 1961 for one hundred thousand dollars, more than a few eyebrows were raised. By the late '50s, baseball people had become disenchanted with the entire "Bonus Baby" system, most of these players had been flops (the draft replaced that system in 1965). Bill and the Tigers were on the spot; as most baseball fans know, the gamble worked, for Bill Freehan is one of the great post-War catchers.

Between '63 and '75 he was the Tigers regular backstop, and one of the best in the game, garnering five Gold Gloves. When he hung up the ill-nicknamed "tools of ignorance" in '76, Freehan stood at the top of the charts for catchers with an

unbelievable .993 fielding average. Of course, he was recognized during his career as one of the best, making the All Star team 11 times including every year from 1964-73, and again in '75. Although his average went as high as .300 in 1964, he was a career .262 hitter, but he had good power, hitting 200 homers.

In the Tigers' peak year of that period, 1968, when they won the World Series, the year Denny McLain was 31-6 and Mickey Lolich 17-9, Bill and teammate Norm Cash tied for fifth in the AL with 25 homers apiece. The two of them, along with Willie Horton (36), Jim Northrup (21) Dick McAuliffe (16) and swift center fielder Mickey Stanley (11) gave A.L. hurlers fits. The Motown bunch led the AL with 185 dingers and 671 runs, while the pitching staff, which also included Earl Wilson, Joe Sparma and Pat Dobson, led the league in fewest runs allowed, 492. On top of that, they paced the junior circuit with a mere 105 E's and a collective .983 fielding average. They ran away and hid with the pennant, racking up a 103-59 mark, 12 games ahead of the Birds from Baltimore. To top it off, in a rematch against the St. Louis Cardinals (the two clubs went head-to-head 34 years earlier, in the 1934 Series), the Tigers won four games to three, with Freehan catching every game. That was the peak of an excellent career.

As well as his behind-the-plate wizardry and his respectability as a power hitter, Bill was indeed a field general, like Fisk and Boone who followed in his footsteps, studying enemy batters, knowing his pitchers, who in addition to the '68 staff, included Jim Bunning, Hank Aguirre, Joe Niekro, and Don Mossi. Towards the end of his fine career, the man who caught the last 30-game winner, helped pace the Tigers to a division title in 1972. He retired holding Major League records in putouts, total chances and highest fielding percentage for a catcher.



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