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★ A SPECIAL FOUR-PAGE WRAPAROUND SECTION ★

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### 2001 HALL OF FAME

# Puckett closes the book



Bill Mazerowski, a defensive whiz for the Pittsburgh Pirates, was voted in by the Veterans' Committee, while Dave Winfield and Kirby Puckett were first-ballot inductees.

### Twins great wraps up day of laughter, tears

By Jim Seaman  
Star Tribune Staff Writer

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — Kirby Puckett connected with baseball's sweet spot on Sunday.

In a pristine valley filled with sun-baked Twins fans, Puckett batted cleanup at the 2001 Hall of Fame induction ceremony, taking the podium after Dave Winfield, Bill Mazerowski and the son of late Negro League pitcher Hilton Smith.

He left a crowd of 23,000, including 12 busloads from Minnesota and Wisconsin, with one more scrappy-quality memory.

"I never felt sorry for my-

self," Puckett said. "I've said it before and I'll say it again: It might be cloudy in my right eye, but the sun is shining very brightly in my left eye."

"And just think how the sun has shined, right up to the doors of this great Hall, the shrine for the greatest game in the world and the greatest players in the world."

Later, after his nine-minute speech, Puckett said: "I thought I was eloquent. It was just like being in the batter's box. Get in there and be ready to swing."

On a scorching afternoon outside of Cooperstown, the inductees' speeches resembled themselves.

Puckett was short and

powerful. St. Paul native Dave Winfield was long and complicated. And former Pittsburgh Pirates second baseman Bill Mazerowski was defensive. (Hilton Smith was represented by his son, Mickey.)

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— Puckett, Winfield remember their early days.

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## Still a fan favorite

On a sunny, 88-degree day in Cooperstown, N.Y., Kirby Puckett stepped up and delivered again. The last of four speakers, Puckett made a short but eloquent induction address to the 23,000 on hand, many of them his adoring fans.



Shirley Fisher of Richfield, left, and Barb Rasmussen of Brooklyn Park were among a large Twins contingent.



His Hall of Fame plaque said it. His fans said it. Kirby Puckett brought joy to the game of baseball for all 12 of his years as a major league outfielder with the Twins.



Above: Puckett gave special thanks to his wife, Tonya, and their children, Kirby Jr. and Catherine. To Tonya, he said: "Thanks for baby-sitting me for 16 years."

Left: Charles Lamb of Rochester, Minn., relaxed in the warm sun before Sunday's festivities. Puckett said he was "blessed to play the greatest game for the greatest fans in the world."