

Election to Baseball's Hall of Fame

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Chapter 5

Since *Chapter 5* talks about current and future Hall of Famers, it seems appropriate to talk about how a player gets elected to Baseball's Hall of Fame.

The Baseball's Hall of Fame

Two Methods of Election to Baseball's Hall of Fame:

Election to the *Hall of Fame* is possible through one of two paths. The Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA) considers only those players who have played at least 10 major league seasons and have been retired at least five seasons. The *Veterans Committee* considers only those players whose careers concluded no later than 21 years ago, along with managers, umpires, and executives.

The rules for election of candidates differ between the BBWAA and the Veterans Committee. In this book we will only detail the rules for election by the BBWAA. If interested, the rules used by the Veterans Committee can be found at the website www.baseballhalloffame.org.

Election to the Baseball Hall of Fame by Baseball Writers

Electors:

Only active and honorary member of the BBWAA who have been active baseball writers for at least 10 years are eligible to vote.

Method of Election:

(A) A screening committee of six members from the BBWAA prepares a ballot listing in alphabetical order those eligible players (played at least 10 years in the majors and retired for at least five years) who (1) received a vote on a minimum of 5% of the ballots cast in the preceding election or (2) are eligible for the first time and are nominated by any two of the six members of the screening committee.

(B) Electors may vote for as few as zero and as many as 10 of the eligible candidates. Write-ins are not permitted.

(C) Any candidate receiving votes on 75% of the ballots cast shall be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Hall of Fame Trivia

- The top 10 vote getters by percentage to the Hall of fame were:

Tom Seaver	98.80%
Nolan Ryan	98.80%
Cal Ripken	98.50%
Ty Cobb	98.20%
George Brett	98.20%
Hank Aaron	97.80%
Tony Gwynn	97.60%
Mike Schmidt	96.50%
Johnny Bench	96.40%
Steve Carlton	95.80%

- The bottom 10 vote getters by percentage to the Hall of fame were:

Fergie Jenkins	75.40%
Ralph Kiner	75.40%
Al Simmons	75.40%
Willie Keeler	75.50%
Early Wynn	76.00%

Cy Young	76.10%
Ryne Sandberg	76.20%
Catfish Hunter	76.30%
Jim Rice	76.40%
Lefty Grove	76.40%

- The five charter inductees into the Hall of Fame were Babe Ruth (95.10% of the votes), Christy Mathewson (90.70% of the vote), Honus Wagner (95.10% of the vote), Ty Cobb (98.20% of the vote), and Walter Johnson (83.60% of the vote). The first vote was on February 3, 1936. Ty Cobb had the highest number of votes. He received 222 votes out of 226 ballots cast. Ty Cobb is third to Tom Seaver and Nolan Ryan in percentage of votes. Babe Ruth received 215 votes out of 226 ballots cast.
- The only brothers in the Hall of Fame are Paul and Lloyd Waner.
- The 10 year requirement was waived for Addie Joss, who was one game short when stricken by tubercular meningitis just as he was to pitch the first game in 1911. Joss dies a week later at the age of 31. Roberto Clemente was another exception. He died three months after retiring from baseball in 1972. He was inducted into the hall in 1973. I ask the following question: Should Thurmon Munson, the Yankee captain, who died tragically while flying his own plane, be considered on this basis for the Hall of Fame?
- Hall of Famers Wade Boggs and Tony Gwynn reached their 3000th hit on consecutive days in 1999.
- After 12 years with the Philadelphia Phillies, Hall of Famer Richie Ashburn joined the expansion New York Mets in 1962. Ashburn was a centerfielder with very little power. Ashburn ended his career with a total of 29 home runs among his 2574 hits. Before joining the Mets, Ashburn had a total of 22 career home runs, seven of which were of the inside-the-park variety. In 1962, with the Polo Grounds as his home park, he would hit his career high of seven home runs in his last season. The Polo Grounds had odd dimensions. Down the right field line was 258 feet; down the left field line was 280 feet. Straight away centerfield was 475 feet. In his career of 29 home runs, there were two games in which he hit two home runs. Both of these games were at the Polo Grounds. Fortunately, this power surge in his last year enabled Ashburn to avoid the dubious record of having the fewest home runs for any player with at least 2500 hits. That honor

belongs to Rabbit Maranville who had 28 home runs among his 2605 hits from 1912 to 1935. It should be mentioned that Maranville was only 5-5 and weighed 155. He is also in the Hall of Fame.

- Each summer, two Major League teams play an exhibition game at Cooperstown's Doubleday Field on the day of the Hall of Fame inductions. The first game was played on June 12, 1939. For that first game, each team sent two players to participate. Honus Wagner and Eddie Collins chose up sides. Babe Ruth even played in the game and fouled out in his only at-bat.
- Two players in the Hall of Fame have the same retired number for the same team. Bill Dickey and Yogi Berra both wore the number eight.
- The first Little League player to be inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame was Jim "Catfish" Hunter in 1987.

As of February 2008, the controversy of whether a player who used steroids during his career should be disqualified for the Hall of Fame is being discussed by former major leaguers, sports reporters, radio sports talk hosts, and most importantly by the fans. With the evidence implicating Barry Bonds and the recent admission of Alex Rodriguez that he used steroids during the years 2001 thru 2003, it is possible that two of the greatest offensive players in the history of baseball will be excluded from the Hall of Fame.

Two great players excluded from the Hall of Fame were Joe Jackson and Pete Rose. They both were excluded for gambling on baseball.

It is time for you as a fan to give your opinion on whether steroid use should exclude players as gambling did in the past.

Quotations from Presidents

Abraham Lincoln actually enjoyed playing an earlier form of baseball, close to the game of rounders. In 1860, as a presidential candidate, he was featured in a cartoon, along with other

presidential candidates, wearing a baseball uniform holding a baseball and bat saying, "I am glad to hear of their coming, but they will have to wait a few minutes till I get my turn at bat."

Theodore Roosevelt

"I like to see Quentin (Roosevelt) practicing baseball. It gives me hope that one of my boys will not take after his father in this respect, and will prove able to play the national game."

Franklin Roosevelt

"I honestly feel that it would be best for the country to keep baseball going."

Harry Truman

"May the sun never set on American baseball."

John F. Kennedy

"A couple of years ago, they told me I was too young to be President and you (Stan Musial) were too old to be playing baseball. But we fooled them." – (1962 All-Star game)

Lyndon Johnson

"We cheer for the Senators, we pray for the Senators, and we hope that the Supreme Court does not declare that unconstitutional."

Richard Nixon

"I never leave a game before the last pitch, because in baseball, as in life and especially politics, you never know what will happen."

Gerald Ford

"I had a life-long ambition to be a professional baseball player, but nobody would sign me."

Ronald Reagan

"(baseball is) our national pastime, that is if you discount political campaigning."

George HW. Bush

"Once, after an especially strong day at bat in a game at Raleigh, North Carolina, I was 3 for 5 with a double and triple, and a scout approached me as I left the field. That was the first and last nibble I ever got from the pros."

Bill Clinton

"I think just about everybody ought to get a second chance and I'd like to see it worked out, because he (Pete Rose) brought a lot of joy to the game, and he gave a lot of joy to people, and he's paid a price - God knows, he's paid a price."

George W. Bush

"Baseball isn't just the stats. As much as anything else, baseball is the style of Willie Mays, or the determination of Henry Aaron, or the endurance of a Mickey Mantle, the discipline of Carl Yastrzemski, the drive of Eddie Mathews, the reliability of a Al Kaline or a Joe Morgan, the grace of a Joe DiMaggio, the kindness of a Harmon Killebrew, and the class of Stan Musial, the courage of a Jackie Robinson, or the heroism of Lou Gehrig. My hope for the game is that these qualities will never be lost."

Quotations from Baseball People

Albert Spalding, remarking on the influence of the game of baseball during the Civil War, said, "Modern baseball had been born in the brain of an American soldier. It received its baptism in the bloody days of our Nation's direst danger. It had its early evolution when soldiers, North and South, were striving to forget their foes by cultivating, through this grand game, fraternal friendship with comrades in arms."

Ty Cobb said, "Babe Ruth gave me more trouble than any other left-handed pitcher."

Pete Rose said about Mike Schmidt, "Just to have his body, I'd trade mine and my wife's and throw in some cash."

Dale Berra referring to his father Yogi said, "Our similarities are different."

Mickey Mantle said, "A team is where a boy can prove courage on his own. A gang is where a coward goes to hide."

Bill Veeck said, "The most beautiful thing in the world is a ballpark filled with people."

Bill Veeck said, "Baseball is almost the only orderly thing in a very unordered world. If you get three strikes, even the best lawyer in the world can't get you off."

Jackie Robinson said, "I'm not concerned with your liking or disliking me. All I ask is you respect me as a human being."

Josh Gibson, a catcher who was considered one of the greatest players in the Negro Leagues said, referring to one of his teammates, "Cool Papa Bell was so fast he could get out of bed, turn out the lights across the room, and be back in bed under the covers before the lights went out."

As a sidenote, it has been alleged that in a game played at Yankee Stadium, Josh Gibson actually hit a home run that traveled out of Yankee Stadium. If true, he would have been the only man to achieve this feat in the history of baseball.

Roy Campanella said, "You gotta be a man to play baseball, but you gotta have a lot of little boy in you, too."

Whitey Ford said, "The way to make coaches think you're in shape in the spring is to get a tan."

Pete Rose said, "Playing baseball for a living is like having a license to steal."

The next section is dedicated to quotations either said by or attributed to **Yogi Berra**. Yogi Berra played for the New York Yankees from 1947 to 1963. He was the catcher for 10 World Series championships and 14 American League pennants. Arguably, Yogi could be called the winningst player in the history of sports. Yogi, whose real name is Lawrence Peter Berra, got his nickname as a teenager. The story is Yogi and a friend saw a travelogue on India. In that travelogue, Yogi's friend said he resembled a "yogi". The nickname stuck with him the rest of his life.

Some of Yogi's batting accomplishments included winning the Most Valuable Player award three times (1951, 1954, and 1955) and leading the Yankees in RBIs for seven straight years (1949-1955).

Today, Yogi is considered a folk-hero and is known more in that capacity than as a great ballplayer.

Quotations from Yogi Berra (Yogisms)

"All pitchers are liars or crybabies."

"I usually take a two-hour nap from 1 to 4."

"It was hard to have conversation with anyone, there were so many people talking".

When asked about his cap size, Yogi said, "I don't know I'm not in shape yet."

"Baseball is ninety percent mental. The other half is physical."

"He hits from both sides of the plate. He's amphibious."

"How can you hit and think at the same time?"

"I always thought that record would stand until it was broken."

"I can see how he (Sandy Koufax) won twenty-five games. What I don't understand is how he lost five."

"I don't know (if they were men or women fans running naked across the field). They had bags over their heads."

"If people don't want to come out to the ballpark, how are you going to stop them?"

"I'm a lucky guy and I'm happy to be with the Yankees. And I want to thank everyone for making this night necessary."

"I never blame myself when I'm not hitting. I just blame the bat and if it keeps up, I change bats. After all, if I know it isn't my fault that I'm not hitting, how can I get mad at myself?"

"I never said most of the things I said."

"It ain't the heat, it's the humility."

"It gets late early out there."

"I think Little League is wonderful. It keeps the kids out of the house."

"It's like deja vu all over again."

"I wish everybody had the drive he (Joe DiMaggio) had. He never did anything wrong on the field. I'd never seen him dive for a ball, everything was a chest-high catch, and he never walked off the field."

"Little League baseball is a very good thing because it keeps the parents off the streets."

"So I'm ugly. I never saw anyone hit with his face."

"Take it with a grin of salt."

"The game's isn't over until it's over."

"The towels were so thick there I could hardly close my suitcase."

"You can observe a lot just by watching."

"You should always go to other people's funerals, otherwise, they won't come to yours."

"You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going because you might not get there."

"We made too many wrong mistakes."

"When you come to a fork in the road, take it."

Funny Quotations

Branch Rickey, the GM of the Pirates, in negotiating his contract with Ralph Kiner, said, "We finished last with you. We can finish last without you." Ralph Kiner, after hearing the pronouncement of Branch Rickey, said, "I just signed the contract." *Boy, are times different in today's negotiations.*

Baltimore Orioles' manager **Earl Weaver** said, "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts."

Bill Veeck, former owner, said, "It isn't the high price of stars that's so expensive, it's the high price of mediocrity."

Red Sox owner **Harry Frazee**, after trading Babe Ruth said, "I believe the sale of Babe Ruth will ultimately strengthen the team".

Hitting instructor **Charlie Lau** said, "There are two ways to catch a knuckleball. Unfortunately, neither of them works."

Pete Rose said, "I am no different from anybody else with two legs, two arms and 4200 hits."

Former pitcher **Gaylord Perry** said, "I retired to go to work. How many people can say that?"

Broadcaster **Joe Garagiola** said, "One thing you learn as a Cub fan; when you buy your ticket, you can bank on seeing the bottom of the ninth inning."

Former player **Andy Van Slyke** said, "They told me they wanted me to play third base like Brooks. I did. I played it like Mel Brooks." The Brooks referred to in this quote is the great defensive third baseman Brooks Robinson."

Pitcher **Al Downing**, who served up Hank Aaron's 715th home run said, "I never say 'seven-fifteen' anymore. Now I say 'quarter after seven.'"

Mickey McDermott was a pitcher whose career spanned the years 1948 to 1961. He spent most of his career with the Boston Red Sox. His life-time record was 69 wins and 69 losses with an ERA of 3.91. On his wife winning 6,000,000 dollars in the Arizona lottery, McDermott said, “I feel like I just struck out Joe DiMaggio with the bases loaded and two outs in the ninth inning.”

Sandlot Stats

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