



Hall of Fame vote disappointing, but ex-Sox made strong showing

*By David J. Fletcher, CBM President
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SAN DIEGO — I could tell by the dour facial expression of Jane Forbes Clark, before announcing the Golden Era Ballot at the dais in the Grand Hall of the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel, that this vote was going to be another shutout, just as veteran MLB.com columnist Barry Bloom had predicted.

Dick Allen, the leading former White Sox candidate, and Tony Oliva were the top vote-getters, each coming in just one vote shy with 11. Ex-Sox Jim Kaat also was close with 10 votes, Maury Wills nine and Minnie Minoso eight. All others, including former Sox Billy Pierce and Ken Boyer, got three or fewer votes.

As with the annual BBWAA vote, successful candidates must receive at least 75 percent of the vote from the 16-member Golden Era Committee.

Having enjoyed a large six-member class this past July, with three 2014 Hall of Famers voted in via the Expansion Era Committee, the coming year's induction class size is left only with the results of the upcoming January BBWAA vote.

After the vote, several members of the committee — Cubs Hall of Famer Fergie Jenkins, fellow enshrinees Jim Bunning and Pat Gillick, statistician Steve Hirdt and veteran writers Tracy Ringolsby and Dick Kaegel — fielded questions about the process. Detroit Tigers president Dave Dombrowski, already in town for the winter meetings, filled in for ill panel member Bob Watson.

The Denver-based Ringolsby also was a member of the 11-man BBWAA Historical Overview Committee that selected the ballot out of roughly 200 candidates. He said the process worked by maintaining the high standards of the Hall.



Golden Era voter Tracy Ringolsby, nicknamed "The Cowboy," of MLB.com.

"The results today are a reminder that election to the Hall of Fame is incredibly difficult and the highest honor an individual can receive in baseball," said Clark.

Several of the committee members were disappointed that Allen had not gotten in after not even appearing on the 2011 Golden Era Ballot that led to the selection of Ron Santo.

Jenkins terms Allen's showing 'outstanding'

Jenkins, Allen's 1963 Arkansas Traveler's teammate, was disappointed by the results. "His first time on the ballot — getting 11 votes — that is outstanding," he said of Allen. "He needs to do some more public appearances before the next (2017) vote."

Gillick said Allen had a large groundswell of support. "It was his numbers," he said. "Look at this guy. He was a power hitter. He was a guy that got on base. He stole bases. He had to make position changes (because of injuries) ... a lot of good qualities... Everyone talked about Dick being a real good teammate." [Watch Hall of Fame baseball executive Pat Gillick explain how Dick Allen missed by just one vote.](#)

Gillick rebutted the widely reported viewpoint expressed by Bill James' near-condemnation about Allen "did more to keep his teams from winning than anyone else who ever played major league baseball."

In the audience waiting for the announcement was Dick Allen's son Richard Allen, Jr., who traveled from Williamsport, Pa. to support his father. "It's a disappointment, but I am proud my Dad got 11 votes," Allen said.

Before the vote, I just had a 20-minute conversation with the senior Allen, who was waiting at his winter residence in Tampa for the announcement. He was upbeat and forgiving of all the past slights in his life. He has been very touched with people remembering his career and all that he had to endure.

As a strong practicing Christian, Allen said, "It is in God's hands. I did all I could on the field."

Allen knew he had a late surge of support over the nation with great stories written in the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *ESPN The Magazine* and others.

As William C. Rhoden, who saw Allen play in Chicago in his 1972 AL MVP year, wrote in the *New York Times*, "The Dick Allen story has never been solely about statistics, but



Richard Allen, Jr. (left) represented his father, and was re-united with voter Roland Hemond, who acquired Dick Allen for the Sox in late 1971.

about perception and forgiveness...” While Allen fell one vote short, the perception about him has changed, and the large number of stories that appeared lately provided some better understanding of his complex behavior in the context of the times.

Minoso’s vote support lessens

For Minnie Minoso the vote totals were even more disappointing, as he only got eight votes this time compared to nine in 2011.

The Saturday night before the vote, I met with several members of the Golden Era committee at the bar of Donovan’s, a San Diego Restaurant in the Gas Lamp district, where the committee had a private dinner afterwards.

Committee members said they had been bombarded with mail pitches by the various candidates. Don Sutton said, “The Tony Oliva book I got cost \$15 to ship to me!”

Several told me and Chicago media veteran John Reyes they were really confused about Minoso’s date of birth. That was a big issue for the committee because if Minoso had been born in Nov. 1922 (as widely reported), that would have made him a 28-year-old rookie when he started with the White Sox in 1951.

Such a late start due to the just-lifted major-league color line would have earned Minoso more merit from the committee. They asked me as a Chicago baseball historian what was the correct date. I replied that Minoso’s wife Sharon insists that he was born in Nov. 1925, which would have made him a 25- year-old rookie in 1951.

In rebuttal to discrepancy regarding Minoso’s actual age when he broke in, I provided some last- minute support for his candidacy: “Your committee must take into account that Minoso blazed the trail with pride and dignity for Latin players, much like Jackie Robinson did for African-Americans not long before him — a distinction that is Minoso's and his alone — and any reasonable doubt about his Hall of Fame credentials should be erased once and for all.”



Hall of Famer Don Sutton (left), also on the Golden Era panel, joins Roland Hemond at Donovan’s Restaurant on 12/6/14.

Here’s to hoping that University of Illinois Professor Adrian Burgos finally writes the definitive biography of Minoso that outlines the social impact he made being the pioneering Latin player who broke the color line in Chicago and was an inspiration for Latin players who came after him.

In contrast to Mino, Allen was a pioneer in a different fashion. He was on the vanguard of the second-generation of integration in baseball, including the 1963 Triple-A stint as the first African-American pro player in the racial battleground of Little Rock. This was followed by six polarizing years in Philadelphia as that city's first black superstar, while marching to his own non-conformist drummer.

Pierce remains underrated

For Pierce, his low showing should not be disappointing because this was the first time the ol' lefty has appeared on a Hall of Fame ballot since 1974. The CBM has a lot more work to do to promote Pierce's candidacy the next go-around in 2017. I know he was happy to just to be on the ballot.

But before 2017, the CBM will need to make the case for the historically-overlooked Pierce as the most outstanding American League pitcher in the 1950s. Pierce was the AL's best pitcher in the 1950s according to WAR (43.7) while running second in both ERA+ (128) and wins (155). While Pierce's 211-169 career record is not awe-inspiring, he pitched brilliantly in big games, winning Game 1 and saving Game 3 of the 1962 Dodgers-Giants NL pennant playoff. Pierce then won Game 6 of the 1962 World Series against the Yankees.

For Ken Boyer, deceased for three decades, getting three or fewer votes probably means his future candidacy is likely diminished. If he had only hit in late 1967 when the Sox acquired him for the pennant push and had helped carry the team into the World Series, things may have been different.

Finally, Kaat will hang around the Golden Era ballot for a long time, just like he did in his 24 year-MLB career. Hopefully, he will get that bump to get him over the top.

Let's just hope the four living ex-Sox players are around in 2017 with at least one getting in to enjoy enshrinement.