

Ageless Minoso Merits Holtzman Award

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By Paul Ladewski

Minnie Minoso had many a productive season in his 17 years as a major league player, but in many respects, his most momentous one came three decades after his final game.

In recognition of his contributions to the local baseball community, the Chicago Baseball Museum selected the former White Sox star as the recipient of the Jerome Holtzman Award this year.

The honor comes 60 years after Minoso became the first Chicago player to break the color line in the major leagues.

“I am very humble to receive this great honor,” Minoso said. “I want to thank the Chicago Baseball Museum for all the support that it has given me this year.

“Baseball has been my life. I want to give to baseball and to my country for all that they have done for me. I will always have a smile on my face. I will not change, I promise you.”

Named in honor of the late Chicago and Hall of Fame sportswriter, the award is presented annually to the person who has made the most significant contribution to the promotion of local baseball and the preservation of its history and tradition.

“There were several qualified candidates, but no one did more than Minnie Minoso to promote baseball locally,” said Dr. David Fletcher, Chicago Baseball Museum founder and president. “His great passion for the game remained the same. He was as active and visible as ever.”

In April, Minoso threw the first ceremonial pitch in the home opener at U.S. Cellular Field. On May 1, the anniversary of his White Sox debut, he was honored in a pre-game ceremony.

“When Minnie homered in his first game with the White Sox on May 1, 1951, it wasn't just a personal triumph for a great baseball player,” White Sox board chairman Jerry Reinsdorf said at the time. “It was a blow that helped change baseball and change the Chicago White Sox organization forever.”

Earlier this month, Minoso made his strongest bid yet for Hall of Fame induction. While he fell three votes short of election, the close call heightened awareness for his many achievements on and off the field in the last eight decades.

All the while, the 86-year-old remained active as a good-will ambassador in the White Sox organization.

The award will be presented on Sunday, Jan. 29, at the Pitch & Hit Club of Chicago awards banquet. That weekend Minoso is scheduled to participate in a charity function in Florida, but he hopes to return in time for the event.

“That pretty much says it all for Minnie Minoso and what he means to the baseball community,” Dr. Fletcher said.