

**Alomar, Blyleven get Hall votes here,
but McGwire will have to wait for now**

By Paul Ladewski

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Three years ago, in the midst of the steroids controversy, I inadvertently touched off a nation-wide controversy when I submitted a blank ballot in the Hall of Fame election. In retrospect, under the same circumstances, I would do it over again.

If nothing else, my hard-line stance provoked much debate about how the steroids era should be handled among Baseball Writers Association of America members. After much deliberation, I decided that the best way to handle the situation was to ignore any power hitter or pitcher who spent the brunt of his career in the 1993-2005 period, the height of the steroids era as far I could determine.

With that in mind, I voted for Roberto Alomar but not Mark McGwire in the current election. In my opinion, Alomar is the best second baseman of the post-expansion era. I also supported Bert Blyleven, a dominant pitcher in the pre-steroids era whose achievements would be even more impressive if not for the mostly ordinary support around him.

If McGwire can convince me that his 583 career home runs were not the result of steroids at least in part, then he has my vote in any future election. He has been mum on the subject since his retirement, but now that he has returned to baseball as a St. Louis Cardinals coach, perhaps he will address the subject in the months ahead.

As for the local candidates, I gave serious consideration to Andre Dawson, Fred McGriff and Lee Smith, who certainly deserved as much. Their career statistics are such that a case can be made for all of them.

At the same time, because I believe the Hall of Fame is reserved for the best of the best, my standards are higher than most. In my estimation, where Dawson and Smith fall short mostly is the postseason, the time for true greats to distinguish themselves.

McGriff was even more productive in the playoffs and World Series, but his body of work fails to meet the standard, it says here. And like Dawson and Smith, his career lacked a defining moment that set him apart from the rest.

Dawson, McGriff and Smith are in my Hall of Very Good, but they fall a bit short of a higher place.

END