



Hall of Fame Veterans Committee: lots of votes, only one player inductee in past 10 years

*By Dr. David Fletcher, CBM President
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This year's Golden Era Hall of Fame vote is that panel's second meeting to consider candidates whose main contribution to baseball came between 1947 and 1972 – popularized as the Golden Era of baseball.

All candidates receiving at least 12 of 16 votes (75 percent) will gain election into the Hall of Fame for a July 26, 2015 ceremonial induction.

No living player has been selected by the Veteran's Committee, which looks at Hall of Fame caliber players overlooked and no longer eligible via the Baseball Writers America Association (BBWAA) vote, since Bill Mazeroski was selected in 2001.



Dr. David Fletcher

The Hall of Fame's Board of Directors reformed the system radically with new rules enacted in August 2001. Formerly, 15 members of the Veterans Committee were appointed to limited terms. The new Veterans Committee would comprise all living members of the Hall and recipients of the Spink and Frick awards to writers and broadcasters. In particular the new members were 61 living Hall of Famers, 13 living recipients of the J. G. Taylor Spink Award, another 13 living recipients of the Ford C. Frick Award and three members of the previous committee with terms that had not yet expired.

In 2003, Ron Santo received only 46 out of 85 votes and fell far from the 75 percent required to get elected. (Minnie Minoso only received 16 votes and Dick Allen 13 votes.)

In 2005, after Santo and Gil Hodges got 52 out 83 votes and needed 60 to get in, the sentiment was beginning to become apparent that no additional members of the Hall of Fame would be selected by the Veterans Committee.

In the past, the committee had elected Sox players Ed Walsh (1946) Ray Schalk (1955), Red Faber (1964), Al Lopez (1977), Hoyt Wilhelm (1985), Bill Veeck (1991) and Nellie Fox (1997). For Fox, a fan-based campaign "The Nellie Fox Society" helped the venerable Sox second baseman to get elected by the Veteran's Committee in 1997.

The Cubs also had several players elected by the Veterans Committee: Johnny Evers/Joe Tinker/Frank Chance in 1946; Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown in 1949, Kiki Cuyler in 1968 and Hack Wilson in 1979.

After the second Veterans Committee shutout in 2005, it is becoming clear that no former player bypassed by the baseball writers would ever get in again with the current Veterans Committee structure.

Mike Downey of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote in 2005: "And once again these gentlemen made it crystal clear they like their society being extremely exclusive. They act as aristocratically as a board from a private school or a homeowners association in the Hampdens... if the vote were left strictly to former players, they might not let another soul in."

In 2007 and 2008, the Veteran's Committee failed to elect one former player to the Hall of Fame.

In July 2010, after the Veteran's Committee had failed to elect any former player in nearly a decade, Cooperstown's Board of Directors realized they had to do something to elect overlooked players, managers, executives, and umpires into the Hall of Fame. The board came up with "the Eras Committees" to consider candidates from three different timeframes: The Expansion Era (1973 and forward), the Pre-Integration Era (baseball's origins through 1946) and the Golden Era (1947-1972).

BBWAA's Historical Overview Committee, which consists of 10 different members, crafts each year's Eras Committee ballot. Retired *Chicago Tribune* baseball writer Dave Van Dyck sits on the committee. He told this writer in May 2013 how seriously his fellow BBWAA members take their responsibility to select overlooked deserving candidates to be named to the Veteran's Committee ballot.

The Historical Overview Committee meets early in the year to craft the ballot for the coming year. Soon, this committee will be picking the 10-person ballot for the Pre-Integration Era that will be announced after the 2015 World Series and will be voted on in Dec. 2015 at the Winter Meetings in Nashville. The Chicago Baseball Museum will be lobbying to get former Cubs President William Louis Veeck, Sr. -- the unsung hero of Major League Baseball for helping expose the Black Sox scandal -- on the 2015 Pre-Integration ballot.

Lobbying for Santo, Minnie in 2011

In 2011, the CBM worked vigorously behind-the-scenes to promote the candidacies of Santo and Minoza. Our lobbying efforts—akin to a political campaign—helped get Santo in Dec. 2011, but we fell short with Minoza by three votes, who deserves to finally get the nod this year.

It was exciting the night before the historic vote in Dec. 2011 to elect Santo to the Hall of Fame to get a call from his broadcaster partner Pat Hughes asking me: "Is Ronnie



Bill Mazerowski was the last living inductee chosen by a Veterans Committee-type panel, back in 2001.

going to get in?” as Pat knew that the CBM was vigorously lobbying on behalf of both Santo and Mino. I told Pat: “Ronnie is going to get in. He is a lock. We are certain of 14 votes and he only needed 12.”

Pat knew first-hand the pain of his former broadcast partner whose hopes for the Hall of Fame had been dashed by prior incarnations of the Veterans Committee. Santo had died from complications related to bladder cancer in Dec. 2010 and would not live to see that he finally get elected to the Hall of Fame.

We hope in 2014, that the CBM is able to assist in getting at least one or two more Chicago baseball players elected to the Hall of Fame. We will be in San Diego covering this historical election and hoping to persuade a few members of the Golden Era electorate to vote Chicago when they cast their ballots.

In the CBM’s Jerome Holtzman Collection we have Holtzman’s 2003 Veteran’s Committee Ballot and the supporting material he received to cast a vote. As a member of the writer’s wing of the Hall of Fame — via being awarded the 1991 J. G. Taylor Spink Award by the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) — he voted in 2003, 2005, and 2007 when the committee failed to elect a single member. In future stories, I will reveal how Holtzman voted in 2003.

In the weeks before the Dec. 7th vote, the CBM will feature stories on the four Chicago candidates for the Golden Era Ballot .



Ron Santo was chosen posthumously in 2011 after his inability to gain induction deeply affected the Cubs great the previous eight years.