



HOF Voters Say No to Steroids Era

*By Paul Ladewski, Executive Director
Posted on Wednesday, July 9th*

Barry Bonds and ex-Cub Sammy Sosa totaled 1,371 home runs, 3,663 RBI and eight Most Valuable Player Awards in their careers, but apparently, it will take more than overwhelming statistics to be afforded baseball's greatest individual honor in the future.

That was the stern message sent by the Baseball Writers' Association of America on Wednesday, when the Baseball Hall of Fame announced that the group had not elected any of the 37 candidates for induction this year. The outcome marked the eighth time that the field had been shut out since the Hall of Fame opened 74 years ago.

As the leaders of the first tidal wave of Steroids Era candidates, Bonds and Sosa fell far short of the required 75 percent approval rate in their first bids for election. Bonds received 206 of the 569 votes (36.2 percent), while Sosa was named on 71 ballots (12.5 percent). Despite their repeated denials, they are among the many stars who have strongly linked to performance-enhancers in their years of domination.



Sammy Sosa faces an uphill battle in his bid for Hall of Fame induction.

Craig Biggio (68.2 percent) and Mike Piazza (57.8) gained the most support among those on the ballot for the first time. Among pitchers, former Cy Young Award-winners Curt Schilling (38.8) and Roger Clemens (37.6) received the most votes but not nearly enough for election.

Commissioner Bud Selig supported the BBWAA voters and their consensus interpretation of the words “integrity, sportsmanship” and “character,” which are part of the Hall of Fame criteria.

“This is not to be voted to make sure that somebody gets in every year,” Selig said at the team owners' meetings in Paradise Valley, Ariz. “It's to be voted on to make sure that they're deserving. I respect the writers as well as the Hall itself. This idea that this some-

how diminishes the Hall of baseball is just ridiculous in my opinion.”

The road to Cooperstown, N.Y., appears to be a long one for Mark McGuire and one-time Cub Rafael Palmeiro as well. McGwire saw his support decrease from 19.5 to 16.9 percent, while Palmeiro had a similar drop from 12.6 to 8.8 percent.

“The standards for earning election to the Hall of Fame have been very high ever since the rules were created in 1936,” said Jeff Idelson, Hall of Fame president. “We realize the challenges voters are faced with in this era. The Hall of Fame has always entrusted the exclusive voting privilege to the Baseball Writers’ Association of America.



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McGriff made his fourth try. Candidates remain eligible for a maximum of 15 years provided that they receive at least 5 percent of the vote each year.

Former Cubs pitcher Gregg Maddux and White Sox first baseman Frank Thomas head the candidates whose names will appear on the ballot for the first time next year. The list also includes second baseman Jeff Kent and pitchers Tom Glavine and Mike Mussina.

We remain pleased with their role in evaluating candidates based on the criteria we provide.”

At 52.2 percent, ex-White Sox Tim Raines was the only local candidate to be selected on more than half the ballots. He also was the only one to receive more votes than last year, when his name was checked on 48.7 percent of the ballots.

Former Cubs Lee Smith (50.6 to 47.8 percent) and Fred McGriff (23.9 to 20.7) experienced drop-offs from a year ago.

Raines was on the ballot for the sixth time. Smith appeared for the 11th time, while