

Baseball tidbits newsletter – interesting and random stuff, fodder for bar bets.

1.30.2022

Good morning baseball fans,

In case I lose internet, shipping this a day early as the nor'easter snows and blows here in Maine.

Grudging tip of the cap to David Ortiz. Hated him as a Yankee killer and that he got a pass on PEDs, but impossible to minimize his strong career numbers.

Last newsletter (for now) highlighting HOF debate with commentary pro and con the accused PED users. Jayson Stark, Joe Posnanski and former Commissioner Fay Vincent weigh in. Also some thoughts on what kind of Hall of Fame do you want? (elite of the elite? Only the cleanest sportsmen? More inclusion or more exclusive?)

And finally, a piece on Joan Joyce, the amazing fast pitch softball pitcher.

Enjoy.

YOUR TRIVIA CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK—NAME THE CAREER HR LEADER BY LETTER OF HIS LAST NAME

Great quiz from Joe Posnanski's blog. Answers at the bottom of the newsletter. How many can you guess?

MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

Hank Aaron hit 30 or more HRs 15 times.

Eddie Murray played 2413 games at 1B, more games at 1B than anyone else. Would have been more if there was no DH.

Three relief pitchers have won MVP—Dennis Eckersley 1992 A's, Willie Hernandez 1984 Tigers, Rollie Fingers 1981 Brewers.

Bobby Shantz 1952 A's, Jackie Jensen 1958 Red Sox, Dick Groat 1960 Pirates, Jeff Burroughs 1974 Rangers, Willie McGee 1985 Cards and Kevin Mitchell 1989 Giants were all league MVPs.

Jake Peavy - he was 92-68 with a 119 ERA+, two ERA titles and a Cy Young with the Padres. He also led the league in strikeouts twice.

First black manager in the AL was Frank Robinson, Cleveland Indians 1975. Did you remember that Robinson was also the first black manager in the NL when he took over the Giants in 1971?

Honus Wagner was the oldest player ever to hit an inside the park HR. he did it at the age of 42.

Baseball songs—a subscriber offered this after last week's Paradise by the Dashboard Lights highlight:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvNQWQSwmow>

You could probably win a bet asking the only three pitchers in AL/NL history with multiple seasons of 50 or more saves--Eric Gagné, Mariano Rivera and Jim Johnson (twice each).

Kenny Lofton one of only nine players with 600 career steals and 600 extra-base hits; he's the only one not in the Hall of Fame.

Two things that surprised me this week--Carlos Delgado hit 473 career HRs, Moises Alou had 332 HRs.

From the late 1940s until 2000 Eddie Feigner was a famous fast pitch hurler who played exhibitions. Feigner toured as the King and His Court. On February 18, 1967, Feigner appeared in a celebrity charity softball game against many [Major League Baseball](#) players. In the game Feigner struck out [Willie Mays](#), [Willie McCovey](#), [Brooks Robinson](#), [Roberto Clemente](#), [Maury Wills](#), and [Harmon Killebrew](#) all in a row. "The King and His Court" was a four-man team: pitcher, catcher, first baseman, and shortstop. The King and His Court touring team played over ten thousand softball games in a hundred countries from the late 1940s to the beginning of the 21st century and achieved widespread fame similar to that of the [Harlem Globetrotters](#). Feigner's meticulous records claim 9,743 victories, 141,517 strikeouts, 930 no-hitters and 238 perfect games.

The Boston Globe speculated this week whether Jon Lester was worthy of HOF consideration. Food for thought:

Jon Lester

200 wins-117 losses

WAR 44.2

2740 innings pitched

3.66 ERA

2488 K/892 BB

1.278 WHIP

post season 9-7, 2.51 ERA including 4-1 World Series

Andy Pettitte

256 wins-153 losses

WAR 60.2

3316 innings pitched

3.85 ERA

2448 K/1031 BB

1.351 WHIP

post season 19-11, 3.81 ERA, 5-4 World Series

note career K's--both had exactly the same number of career strikeouts.

LITTLE KNOW RULES FROM BLEACHER REPORT VIA A SUBSCRIBER

Rule 2.00: "...An INFIELD FLY is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive nor an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, when first and second, or first, second and third bases are occupied, before two are out."

Infield fly rule cannot be called on a bunt.

Rule 6.08c: "...If a play follows the (catcher's) interference, the manager of the offense may advise the plate umpire that he elects to decline the interference penalty and accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play..."

Catcher's interference is a somewhat rare occurrence, but it does happen from time to time. It is called when a batter makes contact with a catcher's glove on the swing, and as a result is rewarded first base. Should the batter manage to get enough bat on the ball that he makes solid contact and gets a hit on the play, however, the manager can opt to take the result of the play as opposed to the interference penalty of first base.

Rule 7.05b: "Each runner including the batter-runner may, without liability to be put out, advance three bases if a fielder deliberately touches a fair ball with his cap, mask or any part or any part of his uniform detached from its proper place on his person."

It's commonplace for little kids playing a neighborhood game of baseball to throw their gloves at the ball to try to stop it or catch the ball in their hat for one reason or another. In the MLB, however, taking off any piece of your uniform and touching the ball with it is an immediate three-base penalty.

HALL OF FAME NOTES

Interesting bits lifted from an avalanche of articles

A-Rod 34% and Manny Ramirez 29% show the guys who failed tests are way behind the guys who did not--Bonds 66% and Clemens 65%.

Curt Schilling (58.6%) — He lost 53 votes, which can't be too unexpected since he basically asked people to not vote for him. He might be the only guy in baseball history to talk himself out of the Hall of Fame.

Only Ortiz, Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle, and Reggie Jackson hit 500 home runs and played on three Series winners.

What is the lowest vote percentage a player has had before eventually being elected to the Hall of Fame? Courtesy STATS Perform. We just have to divide it into different categories because the voting rules have changed a lot.

BEFORE MODERN VOTING RULES: Lou Boudreau got 1 percent of the vote in the 1956 election (before the 5 percent rule) — and still eventually was elected by the writers! It took him until his 12th time on the ballot. But still. What the heck went on in 1956 anyway?

SINCE MODERN VOTING RULES: Annual voting kicked in (finally) in 1966. Bob Lemon got 7.0 percent that year, then gradually kept inching forward until he was elected in 1976. So he's the "modern" record holder. But wait ... I have one more category!

AFTER THE 1985 SECOND-CHANCE ELECTION: In 1985, the Hall handed out a mulligan to a bunch of candidates who had failed to hit 5 percent in earlier elections. So we're going to leave out that whole group, which was kicked off the ballot and then restored.

After that period, the record-holder is ... Larry Walker, who got 10.2 percent in 2014, *in his fourth year on the ballot*, but then rocketed into the Hall in his 10th year. File that away, because guess what Scott Rolen's vote percentage was in his first year? Yep. That would be 10.2 percent!

David Ortiz just the fourth first-ballot Hall of Fame hitter to play most of his career with the Red Sox. You've heard of the others: Ted Williams, Carl Yastrzemski and Wade Boggs.

Ortiz's 77.9 percent of the overall vote — the highest first-ballot total ever for a player who has dealt with any form of PED whispers, proven or unproven. (The old record, incidentally, was 76.0 percent, by Pudge Rodriguez, in 2017, when he was voted in by just four votes.)

Over the last 5 years (out of 10) of eligibility Bonds and Clemens needed to add about 100 votes. They each gained 11 votes in years 6-10.

The drop in support for Omar Vizquel and Kurt Schilling was the biggest drop ever. See what happens when you are accused of abusing a bat boy or saying sports writers (voters) should be lynched?

Scott Rolen's increase from 53% to 63% was the biggest leap in this year's election. So Rolen crossed that 60-percent threshold in his fifth year on the ballot. And in the history of the modern voting system, no player has ever done that and not gotten elected. Edgar Martinez didn't poke his head above that 60-percent line until his ninth year on the ballot. And Larry Walker was still at 34.1 percent after eight years, then catapulted to 54.6 percent in Year 9 and then 76.6 percent in his 10th and final year.

A-Rod? Six-hundred-and-ninety-six homers. Was suspended for a year. Maybe the greatest talent to ever play the game. Sued baseball. Won three MVPs and multiple Gold Gloves and had a 40-40 season and led the league in runs scored five times. Broke the bank (twice) and was almost universally despised. Higher WAR than Mickey Mantle, Frank Robinson and Cal Ripken. I have yet to meet a Yankees fan who holds him in anything but disdain even though he won two MVP awards and was a superhero in their last World Series run.

Mark Teixeira

Until the retirement of Dave Kingman in 1986, every single player with 400 home runs was either in the Hall of Fame or, in the case of Willie Stargell, soon would be. That list included 18 players — yes, at the end of the 1986 season, there were only 18 players in baseball history who had hit 400 home runs.

Reggie Jackson, with his 563 homers, retired the next year: Hall of Fame. Darrell Evans and Mike Schmidt — both 400-homer guys — retired two years after that: Schmidt went in and Evans did not. Then came Dave Winfield (Hall), Andrew Dawson (Hall) and Eddie Murray (Hall).

So at the end of the last century, there were 24 players with 400 home runs, and 22 of them either were or would be elected to the Hall of Fame.

Well, since 2000, twenty-nine more players have ended their careers with 400-plus home runs (it will be 30 if Albert Pujols does retire).

And of those 29, only NINE are likely to end up in the Hall of Fame. Eight are in the Hall, and David Ortiz will probably be elected this year.

That's kind of crazy, right? The point is that in another time, a career like Mark Teixeira's would absolutely have been considered for the Hall of Fame. Not only did he hit 400 homers, he was a Gold Glove first baseman, he led the league in homers and RBIs one season, and he was just a consistent force for a lot of years. One of his top comps is Gil Hodges, who was just elected to the Hall.

But this is a different time, and I suspect Mark Teixeira won't get five votes on this year's ballot.

Billy Wagner

Round and round and round we go on this reliever thing. Can you really vote a pitcher with 903 innings pitched into the Hall of Fame? Can you really make the argument that he was a more impactful and better pitcher than Tim Lincecum or Jake Peavy on this year's ballot, not to even mention names like Andy Pettitte and Mark Buehrle?

I think the Hall of Fame without Barry Bonds is confusing enough.

The Hall of Fame without Barry Bonds but with Jeff Kent, for me, would be like break-the-Matrix level bad.

Tim Lincecum

It's just four seasons, but from 2008 to 2011, Tim Lincecum was about as much fun as a pitcher can be. The composite is 62-36, 2.81 ERA, 977 strikeouts in 881 innings, two Cy Youngs and a

143 OPS+. one of only two pitchers in MLB history to win multiple World Series Championships, win multiple Cy Youngs, throw multiple no-hitters and be elected to multiple All-Star Games. The other is Hall of Famer Sandy Koufax.”

Multiple Cy Young winners who also had multiple no-hitters, we’re down to five pitchers.

1. Randy Johnson
2. Sandy Koufax
3. Tim Lincecum
4. Max Scherzer
5. Justin Verlander

JAYSON STARK REMARKS

I woke up Wednesday morning, the day after [Hall of Fame election day](#), with a voice in my brain asking the same questions over and over:

In 50 or 150 or 750 years, will people be walking through the plaque gallery in Cooperstown, trying to explain to their kids why the Hall of Fame doesn’t have a plaque for:

- The man who hit more home runs than any player in history (Barry Bonds)?
- The man who got more hits than any player in history (Pete Rose)?
- The pitcher who won more Cy Young Awards than anyone else in history (Roger Clemens)?
- The only man ever to hit 60-plus homers *three* times (Sammy Sosa)?

I could go on with this list, but you get my drift. Now that Bonds, Clemens and Sosa have finished their 10-year spin cycle on the writers’ ballot, those of us who vote no longer have a say in their future place in the Hall of Fame. And unless Rose somehow has his lifetime ban lifted, we can at least claim we never had any say in his Hall of Fame fate.

But no matter what happens, I don’t think we should ever stop thinking about the most pivotal question of all:

What kind of Hall of Fame do we want to have?

Should it be a Hall of Fame that just honors the greatest players of all time, no matter how much controversy mucks up their life story? Or do we want a Hall of Purity that erects barricades for every player whose world is shrouded by any sort of dark clouds?

What kind of Hall of Fame do we want to have?

Just remember that if that answer is going to be “a Hall of Purity,” then don’t we have to start throwing people out? Every baseball scuffer, bat corker, sign stealer and every other form of rapsallion? That seems kind of impractical!

So maybe somebody really will decide someday that we need a Hall just based on historic achievements. Think how easy that would make it for those committees. So who knows? Bonds and Clemens might get 100 percent in one of *those* elections!

DH RULE EXTENDED THESE HALL OF FAME CAREERS

Jan. 11, 1973, was a momentous day in baseball history. It was on that date that the American League voted to formally adopt the [DH rule](#) (Rule 5.11) for a three-year trial period. on April 6, 1973, Major League Baseball history changed forever when the Yankees' Ron Blomberg stepped to the plate against Red Sox right-hander Luis Tiant at Fenway Park. In this landmark moment, Blomberg became the first official DH in MLB history, with Boston hosting New York in the first game of the season.

Besides Ortiz, these Hall of Famers saw plenty of DH duty

Paul Molitor DH in 976 of his 1,143 games from 1991-98.

Frank Thomas is one of three Hall of Famers, along with Edgar Martinez and Harold Baines, who played more than half of his games at DH.

Jim Thome played through 2021 (hit over 600 HRs). From 2005 on he had just 8 defensive appearances.

Eddie Murray began his career as Orioles DH (behind Lee May at 1B). Appearing as a DH in 371 of his 428 games from 1994-97, Murray became the third player in history to record both 3,000 hits and 500 home runs, joining Willie Mays and Hank Aaron.

Edgar Martinez is the poster child for the DH position; the award for the league's top designated hitter has been named after him since 2004, and he played 68.3% of his career games as a DH, the highest among Hall of Famers until Ortiz.

Dave Winfield remained a regular outfielder through age 39, he was able to hang around for another four seasons thanks to the DH spot. Those years allowed the 12-time All-Star to pad his

resume, as he finished fifth in the AL MVP race and won the only World Series title of his career with the Blue Jays in 1992. Winfield then joined the Twins and reached the 3,000-hit plateau the next season.

Harold Baines made just five appearances as a designated hitter over his first seven seasons, but he ended up playing 58.1% of his career games as a DH, second to only Martinez among Hall of Famers. Baines racked up 1,789 of his 2,866 career hits, 244 of his 384 homers and 1,039 of his 1,628 RBIs from 1987-2001, a stretch in which he made only 81 appearances on defense.

JAYSON STARK ON STARTING PITCHERS AND HOF

Is it possible we won't elect another starting pitcher to the Hall of Fame before 2025 — at the earliest? Oh, it's not just possible. After this election, it's almost a guarantee. Why don't we comb through the rubble that remains after this go-round of voting:

- Clemens and Schilling — gone after 10 years on the ballot.
- Tim Hudson (3.0 percent) — missed the 5-percent cutoff in Year 2 and won't make it to a third year on the ballot.
- Tim Lincecum and Jake Peavy — two former Cy Young Award winners who debuted on this ballot and received just 2.3 percent and 0.0 percent of the vote, respectively, so they're both one and done.

Which means, incredibly, that the only starting pitchers on this entire ballot who lived to see another election are Mark Buehrle, who barely cleared the 5-percent bar (5.8 percent) and Andy Pettitte, whose vote total dropped by 3 percentage points (to 10.7 percent), making him the biggest decliner not named Schilling or Vizquel.

So what does a Hall of Fame starting pitcher look like these days? Not like any of those guys, apparently.

If it weren't for their off-field actions, Clemens and Schilling would have roared into the Hall years ago. Instead, they'll now rank 1-2 all-time in most Wins Above Replacement among retired post-1900 starting pitchers with no plaques in Cooperstown. They're also by far the two greatest starters ever to fall off the ballot in the same year without getting elected.

So because they missed, it means the writers haven't elected a starter since Mussina and Roy Halladay in 2019. And more ominously, it's hard to envision any future starter making it until at least 2025, when CC Sabathia arrives on the ballot. Check out the future first-ballot classes and see if you disagree.

2023: John Lackey, Jered Weaver

2024: Bartolo Colon, James Shields

2025: CC Sabathia, Félix Hernández

2026: Cole Hamels*, Rick Porcello

*(*if Hamels doesn't pitch in 2022)*

Even CC isn't a first-ballot cinch. And Bartolo, Félix and Hamels feel like they're headed for the Not Quite a Hall of Famer Club. So let me ask one more time: What does a Hall of Fame starting pitcher look like in this day and age?

Think about this: From 2014 to 2019, we had an amazing six-year stretch in which the writers elected seven starters: Mussina, Halladay, Randy Johnson, Pedro Martínez, John Smoltz, Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine. Will we see a run of Hall of Fame starters like that ever again?

Just consider the modern state of starting pitching. Justin Verlander, Max Scherzer and Clayton Kershaw are "in" right now. Zack Greinke and even Adam Wainwright? Not out of the question. But now think about everyone else and how little, in comparison to past eras, is even asked of starting pitchers these days. Get the picture?

So how long will it take to elect the next seven Hall of Fame starters? I'll set the over/under at 10 years — and I think I might take the "over."

THESE HALL OF FAMERS PLAYED....WHERE?

Catcher: Craig Biggio

428 games (1988-91, 2007)

Biggio, one of three second basemen in the 3,000-hit club, came up as a catcher.

Biggio was a catcher when he made his MLB debut for Houston in 1988, and he even won a Silver Slugger at catcher in '89 and was an All-Star at catcher in '91.

Honorable mention: Jimmie Foxx (109 games)

First base: Mike Schmidt

157 games (1973, 1984-88)

Honorable mention: Mike Piazza (70 games), Larry Walker (81 games), Wade Boggs (67 games), Willie Mays (83 games), Ralph Kiner (58 games).

Second base: Tim Lincecum

53 games (1980-84)

Rock was a rock in left field for his 23-year Major League career. That's where the longtime Expos star amassed the bulk of his 2,605 hits and 808 stolen bases. But when Montreal was ready to call up a 20-year-old Raines in 1980, they first used him as a second baseman, which is where he'd been playing at Triple-A.

Honorable mention: Honus Wagner (58 games)

Third base: Jim Thome

492 games (1991-96)

The first version of Thome you think of is the imposing, lefty-slugging first baseman Thome, who averaged 41 home runs a season for Cleveland and Philadelphia from 1997-2004. Then there's the resurgent, late-career DH Thome, who had a 40-homer season and two 30-homer seasons for the White Sox. But before all that, there was the young third baseman Thome.

Thome played third base from the time he debuted for Cleveland as a 21-year-old in 1991 up through his big breakout seasons in 1995, when the club went to the World Series, and '96, when he slugged 38 home runs and won the Silver Slugger Award at the hot corner. But when Cleveland traded for Matt Williams that offseason, Thome crossed the infield to the other corner, and he never played third base again, even after Williams left the next year. Still, 93 of Thome's 612 home runs came as a third baseman.

Honorable mention: Ernie Banks (69 games), Mel Ott (256 games)

Shortstop: Paul Molitor

57 games (1978-80, 1982)

Molitor's defining position is "hitter." He knocked his way into the top 10 all-time with 3,319 career hits, with runs at a lot of positions, mainly third base, DH and second base. But shortstop? Hold on -- the Brewers had Robin Yount, and the Hall of Fame shortstop was Molitor's teammate for his entire tenure in Milwaukee. Here's what happened.

At the start of the 1978 season, an unhappy Yount was thinking about leaving baseball altogether (rumor had it he was going to try his hand at pro golf). In Yount's absence, the Brewers called up their 21-year-old first-round Draft pick Molitor straight from Class A and stuck him at shortstop on Opening Day. That's where Molitor played his first month and a half in the big leagues, until Yount decided to come back in May.

Honorable mention: Pie Traynor (50 games), Nap Lajoie (74 games)

Left field: Yogi Berra

149 games (1947, 1956-57, 1960-62)

Yogi is one of the most iconic players in the history of the game, period, and how could you think of him as anything but a catcher? Well, somewhere in the middle of the three MVP trophies and 10 World Series rings with the Yankees are a couple hundred games in the outfield -- a few at the beginning of his career, and more toward the end.

In 1947 and '48, a young Berra was getting his first real Major League action, and he played wherever the Yankees needed him. That wasn't always at catcher. Berra even played a little outfield during his first World Series in '47. Then came his Hall of Fame run behind the plate, which encompassed all three of his MVP Awards and the Yankees' historic World Series five-peat from 1949-53. Later on, in his 30s, Berra returned to the outfield, and by the 1960s he was manning left field at Yankee Stadium as often as he was catching. During Berra's last two World Series as a Yankees regular, 1960 and '61, he was mainly an outfielder. In fact, he watched Bill Mazeroski's legendary World Series-clinching homer sail over his head as a left fielder to end the 1960 Fall Classic.

Honorable mention: Chipper Jones (356 games), Tony Gwynn (51 games), Robin Yount (69 games), Eddie Mathews (52 games), Jackie Robinson (150 games), Carlton Fisk (41 games)

Center field: Babe Ruth

74 games (1918-21, 1923-24)

Ruth's first foray into center field came while he was still with the Red Sox and testing out his position-player abilities for the first time in 1918 -- a successful experiment, as Ruth homered in his first four career games playing center. But he also got a run as a center fielder in his early years in New York. Playing center field in pinstripes, Ruth put up, well, Ruthian numbers. In his 61 games as Yankees center fielder, Ruth hit .384/.509/.787 with 23 home runs and a 1.296 OPS. Sadly, though, we never got to see Ruth in center field during a World Series game.

Honorable mention: Roberto Clemente (63 games)

Right field: Johnny Bench

55 games (1970-73, 1975, 1977-78)

Bench defined the catcher position. The Big Red Machine's anchor was a 14-time All-Star, 10-time Gold Glover, two-time MVP and two-time World Series champion in Cincinnati. He's maybe the greatest catcher of all time. He also played more outfield than you might remember.

Bench manned both corners on occasion throughout the 1970s, playing the outfield at least once in eight different seasons that decade, and more than 10 times in five of those seasons. He finished his career with 111 total games as an outfielder, appearing 55 times each in left field and right field, and even twice in center. Of course, once it came time for the postseason, Bench was always behind the plate -- all 45 of his playoff games were at catcher.

Honorable mention: Gary Carter (132 games)

Starting pitcher: Goose Gossage

37 starts (1972-74, 1976)

One of the pioneers of the closer role, Gossage notched 310 saves in his career, most for the Yankees and Padres. But early in his career, the White Sox tried to make him a starter -- right after he was named the Sporting News' Fireman of the Year in 1975, no less.

After leading the Major Leagues in saves with 26, posting a 1.84 ERA and finishing sixth in AL Cy Young voting in '75, Gossage went 9-17 with a 3.94 ERA as a starter in '76. That offseason, the White Sox traded him to the Pirates for Richie Zisk. Gossage went back to the bullpen, saved 26 games with a 1.62 ERA in '77, signed with the Yankees in November and went on to his Hall of Fame career as a closer. He never started another game.

Honorable mention: Rollie Fingers (37 starts), Mariano Rivera (10 starts)

Relief pitcher: Pedro Martinez

67 relief appearances (1992-94, 1999)

Do you remember Pedro's days as a rookie reliever for the Dodgers? It's true, they happened. Not only was Pedro's MLB debut in September 1990 in relief, he pitched his first full season in LA as a setup man. Martinez was a good one, too, pitching 65 games and finishing with a 2.61 ERA and 119 strikeouts in 107 innings.

Honorable mention: John Smoltz (242 relief appearances), Roy Halladay (26 relief appearances), Sandy Koufax (83 relief appearances)

8 HALL OF FAMERS YOU MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN WERE TRADED

(addition to last week's item--Trevor Hoffman, Jeff Bagwell, John Smoltz, Ryne Sandberg, Nolan Ryan, Nellie Fox, Pee Wee Reese, Christy Mathewson) a subscriber sent a note--

Another player that should be included was Lou Brock who joined the Cubs in 1961 (11AB) and was traded to St. Louis for pitcher Ernie Broglio on June 15, 1964, after a couple of unremarkable years in Chicago. One of the worst trades in MLB history.

Do you think David Ortiz used PEDs?

I don't ask that question for any other reason except this: If you asked me that question about just about any player from the last 30-plus years, I'd have to shrug and say I don't know. I'm not a mind-reader. I can't look into somebody's soul. I don't know. There are some players who seem more likely, and some players who seem less likely. There are some players who have a reputation as probable users and some who have reputations as probably clean. But we don't know any of it for sure.

And yet, I often see a certainty around the steroid question that troubles me. There are people who will not vote for Ortiz because they think he used PEDs. There are other people who will vote for Ortiz because they think he did not use — they don't trust the leaked test — but if there were clear evidence that he used, they would not vote for him. There are still other people who think Ortiz probably used PEDs, but they can't be sure and it's that gray area that will allow them to vote for him.

And there are others who, frankly, don't care because they think pretty much all the great players used.

Why vote for Guerrero and not Abreu?

Guerrero won an MVP award and finished Top 5 three other times. Abreu never finished Top 13 in the voting. he didn't get to 3,000 hits or a 300 homer-300 stolen base double or a .300/.400/.500 split.

Vlad Guerrero: .318/.379/.553, 2,590 hits, 477 doubles, 449 homers, 181 stolen bases, 1,328 runs, 1,496 RBIs, 59.5/54.5 WAR.

Abreu: .291/.395/.475, 2,470 hits, 574 doubles, 288 homers, 400 stolen bases, 1,453 runs, 1,363 RBIs, 60.2/59.8 WAR.

Guerrero hit a lot more homers and, as such, for a lot more power.

But Abreu walked almost exactly twice as often as Vladdy and, as such, has a significantly higher on-base percentage. Abreu was also a much better base runner, stealing more than twice as many bases while being caught about the same number of times. That's why his Baseball-Reference and FanGraphs WARs are higher.

Pettitte vs. Buehrle comparisons.

Here's Baseball-Reference WAR:

Andy Pettitte, 60.7 WAR.

Mark Buehrle: 60.0 WAR.

Looking pretty identical there, right? Two lefties, more or less contemporaries, almost exactly the same number of innings, almost the exact same ERA, the absolutely exact 117 ERA+, Buehrle with a perfect game and a no-no, Pettitte with some postseason heroics, Pettitte with more wins because he played on better teams, Buehrle with a lower WHIP.

Looking pretty identical, yep. So much so that in a couple of Hall of Fame essays I wrote, I simply grouped them as one entry.

Only, now, here's FanGraphs WAR:

Andy Pettitte, 68.2 WAR

Mark Buehrle, 52.3 WAR

Not looking so identical anymore, is it?

What the heck is even happening here? Well, FanGraphs looks only at those three pitcher outcomes — strikeouts, walks and homers. Pettitte struck out a lot more hitters and gave up many fewer homers. And so even though Buehrle walked fewer batters, Pettitte's FIP (Fielding Independent Pitching ERA) is 3.74, while Buehrle's is 4.11. Huge difference. FanGraphs WAR doesn't have them close at all.

It just goes to show you that so much of how we judge players comes down to what we choose to measure. Pettitte and Buehrle were, at a surface level, similar pitchers — lefties, low-round draft picks, fastball-sinker types, 200-game winners — but they were actually very, very different pitchers. You would not have confused one for the other.

Carl Crawford was a dazzling player who led the league in triples and stolen bases four times each.

Prince Fielder. It's easy to forget — because of how his career ended — that Prince Fielder was one heck of a hitter in Milwaukee. He hit .282/.390/.540 with 230 home runs in six full seasons, a 143 OPS+, he finished Top 5 in the MVP balloting three times. He was such a massive slugger. One more wonderful baseball thing: Cecil and Prince Fielder make up the only father-and-son duo to each hit 50 home runs in a season. Cecil hit 51 in 1990, his first year back from Japan. And Prince hit 50 in 2007.

In 2000, Todd Helton hit .372/.463/.698 with 59 doubles, 42 homers, 147 RBIs, and 138 runs. That's a Ted Williams season. That's a Stan Musial season. That's even a Babe Ruth season. It is, numerically, one of the greatest offensive seasons in baseball history — that's 192 runs created.

The only other players who have had 192 runs created in a single season:

Babe Ruth (1920, 1921, 1923, 1924, 1927)

Barry Bonds (2001, 2002, 2004)

Lou Gehrig (1927, 1930)

Jimmie Foxx (1932)

Rogers Hornsby (1922)

Mark McGwire (1998)

Stan Musial (1948)

Sammy Sosa (2001)

That's it. Mantle never did it. Mays never did it. Aaron never did it. Cobb never did it. And, for our purposes here, Larry Walker never did it either. But Todd Helton did.

And do you know where Helton finished in the MVP balloting that year? Fifth. Yeah, fifth. His OPS was 140 points higher than Jeff Kent's. His on-base percentage was 23 points higher than Barry Bonds'. His slugging percentage was 74 points higher than Mike Piazza's. His WAR was 2.6 wins higher than Jim Edmonds'. But all four of those guys finished ahead of him in the MVP balloting anyway. his .316/.414/.539 split is obviously Hall of Fame-caliber in every way.

Ryan Howard. He got a late start — he didn't play his first full season in the big leagues until he was 26 — he really made up for lost time by winning an MVP and averaging 49 home runs in his first four full seasons.

As for his place in baseball lore, well, I think a lot about Boog Powell — he wasn't quite a Hall of Famer, but he remains a Baltimore icon, which, in some ways, is just as good. Everybody loves Boog.

So it will be for Ryan Howard, sort of the modern-day Boog. He will always be a Philadelphia superhero.

UPCOMING HALL OF FAME BALLOTS

2023 Carlos Beltran (Jeff Kent final year)

2024 Adrián Beltré, Joe Mauer, Chase Utley (Gary Sheffield final year)

2025 Ichiro Suzuki, CC Sabathia (Billy Wagner final year)

2026 Ryan Braun (Manny Ramirez final year)

2027 Buster Posey, Jon Lester (Andruw Jones, Scott Rolen final year)

- We don't know when Justin Verlander, Zack Greinke, Clayton Kershaw and Albert Pujols will retire

BEST PLAYERS NOT IN THE HALL OF FAME—A PRETTY STRONG LINEUP

Mlb.com. Great debate topic over beers with your buds.

C: Bill Freehan

Honorable mentions: Munson, Tenace, Jorge Posada (Joe Mauer not yet eligible)

1B: Rafael Palmeiro

Honorable mentions: McGwire, Fred McGriff, Todd Helton, Gil Hodges (Albert Pujols not yet eligible)

2B: Lou Whitaker

Honorable mentions: Jeff Kent, Bobby Grich (Chase Utley not yet eligible)

3B: Dick Allen

Honorable mentions: Scott Rolen, Graig Nettles, Ken Boyer, Sal Bando (Adrián Beltré not yet eligible)

SS: Alex Rodriguez

Honorable mentions: Bill Dahlen, Omar Vizquel, Jimmy Rollins, Nomar Garciaparra, Miguel Tejada, Jim Fregosi

LF: Barry Bonds

Honorable mention: Pete Rose, Manny Ramirez

CF: Kenny Lofton

Honorable mentions: Andruw Jones, Jim Edmonds, Dale Murphy, Jim Wynn (Carlos Beltrán not yet eligible)

RF: Shoeless Joe Jackson

Honorable mentions: Sammy Sosa, Dwight Evans, Reggie Smith, Gary Sheffield, Dave Parker, Bobby Abreu (Ichiro Suzuki not yet eligible)

DH: Hal McRae

Honorable mention: Don Baylor

Starting RHP: Roger Clemens

Honorable mention: Curt Schilling, Tim Lincecum, Luis Tiant, Dave Stieb, Kevin Brown, David Cone, Orel Hershiser, Roy Oswalt, Eddie Cicotte

Starting LHP: Johan Santana

Honorable mention: Andy Pettitte, Mark Buehrle, Ron Guidry, Tommy John, Mickey Lolich, Jimmy Key (CC Sabathia not yet eligible)

Relief RHP: Dan Quisenberry

Honorable mention: Joe Nathan, Jonathan Papelbon, Keith Foulke, Tom Gordon, Tom Henke, Firpo Marberry, Troy Percival, Kent Tekulve, John Wetteland (Francisco Rodríguez and Huston Street not yet eligible)

Relief LHP: Billy Wagner

Honorable mention: John Franco, Sparky Lyle, Tug McGraw, Randy Myers

THE 7 HALL OF FAMERS ELECTED IN THEIR FINAL YEAR ON THE BALLOT.

From mlb.com

Some Hall of Fame candidates are no-doubt picks, cruising into Cooperstown [on the first ballot](#). Other cases aren't so simple, requiring years of debate, hand-wringing, and consternation, as supporters try to change minds, and doubters dig in their heels. Sometimes progress is incremental, and sometimes it comes all at once.

A select group of candidates go all the way down to the wire before finally getting the call from the Baseball Writers' Association of America in their final year of eligibility -- as Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Curt Schilling and Sammy Sosa [hope to do on Tuesday](#). In fact, just the seven listed below have been elected in their "last chance," while five others [fell just short](#).

Note: Under BBWAA rules, players first appear on the ballot five seasons after their last in the Major Leagues. They used to be granted 15 years of eligibility once on the ballot, but the limit was reduced to 10 years prior to the 2015 election.

Larry Walker, 2020

Final-year vote total: 76.6 percent

Over 17 Major League seasons, including 10 with the Rockies, Walker hit .313/.400/.565 (141 OPS+) with 383 homers and 230 steals. He also won seven Gold Glove Awards and collected 154 outfield assists. However, for his first eight years on the ballot, Walker looked like a long shot to make the Hall of Fame, as voters seemingly penalized him for playing nearly a third of his career games at hitter-friendly Coors Field.

Walker earned 20.3 percent of the vote in his first year on the ballot in 2011, and he fell to 10.2 percent in '14. As recently as 2018, Walker was still at just 34.1 percent.

But Walker made up significant ground in his last two years of eligibility, as more voters began to recognize his all-around excellence. After jumping to 54.6 percent in 2019, Walker received enough votes to earn his place in Cooperstown in '20, becoming the second Canadian-born player to make the Hall.

Edgar Martinez, 2019

Final-year vote total: 85.4 percent

It was not an easy climb for Martinez, who garnered just 36.2 percent of the BBWAA vote when he debuted on the ballot in 2010 and actually saw that total plummet to as low as 25.2 percent in '14. The longtime Mariners great didn't cross the 50-percent threshold until his eighth year, making it all the more remarkable that he breezed in with plenty of room to spare in his final opportunity.

The biggest challenge for Martinez was the idea that a player who took more than 70 percent of his plate appearances as a designated hitter could not be worthy of a spot in the Hall. But voters warmed to the idea over time, as they embraced advanced metrics and Martinez's sheer brilliance at the plate -- with a push from the Mariners and others who took up the cause.

"All these years I've had the mentality that it's something I didn't have any control over," Martinez said of the voting results. "I kind of just hoped that things will change over time, and over time it did change. Some of the sabermetrics really helped."

Tim Lincecum, 2017

Final-year vote total: 86.0 percent

Bert Blyleven was probably the first player to ride a wave of sabermetric support to his Hall of Fame election in 2011 (his 14th and penultimate year on the ballot), but Lincecum elicited the most passionate groundswell.

The former Expos star garnered less than one-quarter of the BBWAA vote when he debuted in 2008, and didn't cross 50 percent until his sixth year of eligibility. But a grassroots online

campaign began convincing voters to look beyond Raines' lack of traditional Hall standards like 3,000 hits or a .300 average. Raines' on-base ability, stolen bases and underrated power swayed voters to boost him by 31 percentage points over his final two years on the ballot.

Jim Rice, 2009

Final-year vote total: 76.4 percent

Rice's three-year peak with the Red Sox from 1977-79, when he led the American League in total bases three straight times, slugged .596 with 124 homers and captured the '78 AL MVP Award, was undeniably spectacular. But modern voting standards -- particularly after some of the video-game numbers posted by hitters during baseball's "Steroid Era" -- made Rice a divisive candidate.

Rice saw 21 other players gain election through the BBWAA during his 15-year wait, but the tide began turning in 2006 when he crossed the 60-percent threshold for the first time. The Red Sox legend missed election by just 16 votes in his penultimate year, setting up a final-year push that helped him clear the barrier by seven votes in 2009.

Ralph Kiner, 1975

Final-year vote total: 75.4 percent

The Hall's voting rules stipulate that a player must have logged at least 10 Major League seasons to earn consideration, and a back injury forced Kiner to retire after exactly that many campaigns at just 32 years old in 1955. Kiner packed a lot into those 10 years, claiming seven straight NL homer crowns beginning his rookie year and pacing all of baseball in a record six consecutive seasons from 1947-52. He also became the first NL player to record multiple 50-homer seasons.

Kiner became arguably even more famous as a Mets broadcaster, but the brevity of his playing career made him a particularly tough case for the BBWAA. The slugger earned just three votes when he debuted on the ballot in 1960, and had to wait even longer than the usual candidate because the BBWAA did not vote on an annual basis in the early part of that decade. Kiner was elected by the smallest possible margin -- one vote -- in his final year of consideration, making him the ultimate comeback story in the annals of BBWAA voting. Per the Hall, only three other players (Wee Willie Keeler, Al Simmons and Ferguson Jenkins) have gained election by a single vote since the BBWAA elected its first class in 1936.

Joe Medwick, 1968

Final-year vote total: 84.8 percent

An ignition key for the Cardinals' famous "Gashouse Gang" teams of the 1930s, Medwick gained fame for both his colorful personality and his superb hitting talent. He remains the most recent NL player to win the Triple Crown, doing so in 1937, while also holding the league's single-

season record for doubles with 64 the year prior. But Medwick had a rocky relationship with the press, which may have been a chief contributor to the wait he equated to a "20-year slump." He finally cleared the threshold by 27 votes in 1968.

Red Ruffing, 1967

Final-year vote total: 86.9 percent (runoff election)

Ruffing was a big contributor to six different World Series championship clubs in the Bronx, but his .548 win percentage and 3.80 ERA weren't the usual dominant metrics of a slam-dunk Hall of Fame pitcher. The right-hander was a bridesmaid a handful of times in BBWAA elections and placed second to shortstop Luke Appling in a runoff in 1964. Like Medwick, Ruffing was hurt somewhat by the BBWAA's inconsistent voting periods of the early 1960s, but he finally prevailed in another runoff in '67, edging out Medwick by 5.9 percent to get his long-awaited ticket to Cooperstown.

57 PLAYERS MADE THE HALL OF FAME ON FIRST BALLOT

David Ortiz 2022

Derek Jeter 2020

Mariano Rivera 2019

Roy Halladay 2019

Chipper Jones 2018

Jim Thome 2018

Ivan Rodriguez 2017

Ken Griffey Jr. 2016

Randy Johnson 2015

Pedro Martinez 2015

John Smoltz 2015

Greg Maddux 2014

Tom Glavine 2014

Frank Thomas 2014

Rickey Henderson 2009

Tony Gwynn 2007

Cal Ripken Jr. 2007

Wade Boggs 2005

Dennis Eckersley 2004

Paul Molitor 2004

Eddie Murray 2003

Ozzie Smith 2002

Kirby Puckett 2001

Dave Winfield 2001

George Brett 1999

Nolan Ryan 1999

Robin Yount 1999

Mike Schmidt 1995

Steve Carlton 1994

Reggie Jackson 1993

Tom Seaver 1992

Rod Carew 1991

Jim Palmer 1990

Joe Morgan 1990

Johnny Bench 1989

Carl Yastrzemski 1989

Willie Stargell 1988

Willie McCovey 1986

Lou Brock 1985

Brooks Robinson 1983

Hank Aaron 1982

Frank Robinson 1982

Bob Gibson 1981

Al Kaline 1980

Willie Mays 1979

Ernie Banks 1977

Mickey Mantle 1974

Warren Spahn 1973

Sandy Koufax 1972

Stan Musial 1969

Ted Williams 1966

Bob Feller 1962

Jackie Robinson 1962

Ty Cobb 1936

Walter Johnson 1936

Christy Mathewson 1936

Babe Ruth 1936

Honus Wagner 1936

Not a lot of controversy that those guys got in on the first try. But I do find it Amazing these ten guys did not get elected first ballot eligible:

Grover Cleveland Alexander 373 wins

Yogi Berra 3 x MVP, 10 x World Series champ

Eddie Collins 3315 hits

Joe DiMaggio 3x MVP, 2 batting titles, 56 game hitting streak

Whitey Ford 10 World Series wins

Jimmie Foxx 3x MVP, 2 batting titles, triple crown

Lefty Grove 300 wins

Tris Speaker 3514 hits

Cy Young 511 wins

ONE AND DONE

Since 1979, in one form or another, the 5% rule has applied for potential Cooperstown inductees: if you get at least 5% of the Baseball Writers Association of America's votes, you stay on the ballot for another year; if you fall short of that mark, you fall off future ballots. (The number of votes needed for election to the Hall of Fame is 75%.)

Plenty of stars have dropped off the ballot after only a year. In 2022, that list included sluggers like Mark Teixeira, Ryan Howard, Justin Morneau and Prince Fielder.

Some one-and-dones have been more surprising than others. Here are six of the best hitters who missed the 5% cutoff in their first year of eligibility -- despite comparing favorably to other Hall of Famers -- and never got a second shot at election.

Jim Edmonds, CF, 1993-2010

Career stats: .284/.376/.527, 1,949 H, 393 HR, 1,199 RBIs, 1,251 R, 60.4 WAR (Baseball Reference)

Hall of Fame voting: 2.5% of ballots in 2016

Edmonds made four All-Star teams, won eight Gold Glove Awards (including six straight) and one Silver Slugger Award and placed in the MVP voting six times. At his peak, a five-season stretch from 2000-04 bookended by top-five MVP finishes, Edmonds averaged more than six WAR per year and helped the Cardinals to four playoff appearances.

Compares favorably to: Jim Rice. Edmonds has a higher career WAR than many Hall of Fame outfielders, with Rice a more recently elected example from the BBWAA ballot. Edmonds played fewer career games than Rice, but his 60.3 WAR is well more than Rice's 47.7. Rice's best season, his MVP year in 1978, slightly edges Edmonds' best in 2004 (7.6 WAR to 7.2), but Edmonds' peak five years (32.1 WAR) beat Rice's best five (30.5). Edmonds also had more career home runs and an OPS almost 50 points higher than Rice.

Carlos Delgado, 1B, 1993-2009

Stats: .280/.383/.546, 2,038 H, 473 HR, 1,512 RBIs, 1,241 R, 44.4 WAR

HOF voting: 3.8% in 2015

Delgado was one of the best players in Blue Jays history, mashing nearly 500 homers and driving in more than 1,500 runs. Delgado won three Silver Slugger Awards and placed in the MVP voting seven times, including four top-10 finishes and a runner-up in 2003. His best season came in 2000, when he hit .344/.470/.664 with 41 home runs, 137 RBIs and an American League-best 57 doubles.

Compares favorably to: Gil Hodges. Delgado has the WAR edge over Hodges, who just got in via the Golden Days Era Committee (44.4 to 43.9), and significantly better offensive numbers. They

played close to the same number of games, but Delgado outhomered Hodges 473 to 370, including three 40-homer seasons to Hodges' two and 11 30-homer seasons to Hodges' six, and collected 1,512 RBIs to Hodges' 1,274, with nine 100-RBI seasons to Hodges' seven. Delgado was better in batting average, on-base percentage and slugging, posting a .929 career OPS to Hodges' .846 and a 138 [OPS+](#) that was well better than Hodges' 120.

Kenny Lofton, CF, 1991-2007

Stats: .299/.372/.423, 2,428 H, 130 HR, 781 RBIs, 1,528 R, 622 SB, 68.4 WAR

HOF voting: 3.2% in 2013

Lofton has a real Hall of Fame case, but he might have been hurt by being a contact hitter and speedster in a power-hitting age. His 622 stolen bases rank 15th all-time, and he led the AL in steals five straight seasons from 1992-96 while leading the Majors three of those years. Lofton made six straight All-Star teams from '94-99 and placed in the MVP voting four times, finishing as high as fourth. He was an excellent defender, winning four straight Gold Glove Awards in center field from 1993-96. Lofton's 68.4 career WAR ranks ninth all-time among center fielders. He's one of only nine players with 600 career steals and 600 extra-base hits; he's the only one not in the Hall of Fame.

Compares favorably to: Lou Brock. Lofton produced much more value over his career than his fellow speedy outfielder -- Lofton's 68.4 WAR dwarfs Brock's 45.3. Lofton's best season (7.6 WAR in 1993) is nearly two wins better than Brock's (5.8 in '64 and '68), and his peak run was better as well (33 WAR in his best five seasons compared to Brock's 25).

Al Oliver, OF/1B, 1968-85

Stats: .303/.344/.451, 2,743 H, 219 HR, 1,326 RBIs, 1,189 R, 43.6 WAR

HOF voting: 4.3% in 1991

Oliver's consistent hitting over 18 Major League seasons gave him some career totals that are nothing to sneeze at. Oliver maintained better than a .300 lifetime batting average even while amassing nearly 10,000 plate appearances. Only 31 players in modern AL/NL history have retired as a .300 hitter over as many plate appearances as Oliver (9,778); nearly all are in the Hall of Fame. But Oliver's 2,743 hits still weren't enough for him to generate the 5% of votes necessary to stay on the Hall of Fame ballot past his first year.

Compares favorably to: Bill Mazeroski. A fellow Pirate and Oliver's teammate for several seasons, Mazeroski played Gold Glove defense at second base and hit the legendary walk-off home run in Game 7 of the 1960 World Series, but Oliver's career numbers might be better thanks to his hitting. Oliver has the edge in some key advanced stats (43.6 WAR to 36.4, 5.2 to 4.9 in their best individual season) and counting stats (.303 batting average to .260, 2,743 hits to 2,016, 219 homers to 138).

Red Sox legend Ortiz may become a Hall of Fame DH, but he also may be one of the last

By Matt Bonesteel

The Washington Post

On Tuesday, David Ortiz will either be elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility or come very close: As of Monday, he was listed on 84.2% of the ballots that were publicly known, above the 75% needed for induction. If and when Ortiz gets in, he would join a small group of inductees who spent a good chunk of their careers as a designated hitter, among them Paul Molitor, Frank Thomas, Harold Baines and Edgar Martinez.

He also might be one of the last designated hitters enshrined in Cooperstown, at least for the foreseeable future, and not because of any backlash toward players who only hit and don't play the field (that debate seemingly was settled with the induction of Baines and Martinez in 2019, and with Ortiz's strong candidacy). Instead, it's because of the evolution of the position, with teams often not settling on one DH and instead spreading that job out to multiple players. This trend might only intensify if MLB adopts the universal designated hitter in the next collective bargaining agreement, as many expect.

Ortiz played 2,028 of his 2,408 career games at DH, the most games at the position all-time and nearly 400 more than the second-place Baines. The players below Big Papi on the list either already have been inducted into the Hall of Fame or don't have much of a case. Don Baylor won the 1979 AL MVP while playing 65 games as a DH and eventually played 1,287 games at the position (sixth all-time). His Hall of Fame candidacy petered out in the 1990s. Hal McRae, third in games played at DH behind Ortiz and Baines, was one of the first designated hitters to receive acclaim. He finished fourth in the AL MVP voting in 1976, a season in which he played 117 games at DH, and fourth again in 1982, when he played 158 games at DH. He never received serious Hall of Fame consideration. Chili Davis, Travis Hafner and Billy Butler, Nos. 8-10 on the career DH games-played list, aren't Cooperstown material. Martinez, Thomas and Molitor, Nos. 4, 5 and 7, are already in.

Victor Martinez had a nice career, 44% of which was at DH. He even finished second in the 2014 AL MVP voting for the Detroit Tigers while mainly playing the position. He's not getting to Cooperstown. Also unlikely is Nelson Cruz, who has received MVP votes as a DH over the latter portion of his career but seems like a Hall of Fame long shot (and has played more games as an outfielder, anyway). Albert Pujols almost certainly will be a Hall of Famer, but he played only 19.3% of his games at DH.

Only Shohei Ohtani, who is mainly a DH when he isn't pitching, would seem to have a chance if he keeps up his miraculous ways, and that probably won't be for many years. But he's a special case, obviously.

The designated hitter's imperial era, in other words, would seem to be over, at least in terms of Hall of Fame candidates. And moving forward, teams seem more inclined to shuffle numerous players into the DH role. In 2021, only two players – Ohtani and J.D. Martinez – had more than 600 plate appearances as a DH. In 2016, Ortiz's final season, that number was seven (and Carlos Beltrán was close to making it eight that year with 593 plate appearances).

"I think if you can have a David Ortiz, every team in baseball will take a guy like that, right?" Atlanta Braves General Manager Alex Anthopoulos said in November. "And if not, then people like to move guys in and out and so on, so it all depends. I think just like anything else, I think it all depends on the player."

Said Oakland Athletics GM David Forst: "My first thought if the NL has the DH is, thank God our pitchers don't ever have to hit again. I mean, there's a lot of ways to fill that spot. You're seeing fewer and fewer teams have a dedicated designated hitter. A lot of teams are valuing the versatility on their roster."

Ortiz may have broken the mold for designating-hitting Hall of Famers. He's 17th all-time in career home runs (541), 12th in doubles (632) and eighth in extra-base hits. In postseason play alone, he hit .289 with a .404 on-base percentage and .543 slugging percentage, with 22 doubles, two triples, 17 homers, 61 RBI and 51 runs. Sure, he barely played in the field, but there are plenty of Hall of Famers who have gotten in almost solely for their plate prowess and not because they were at all good in the field. And yes, Ortiz's name was on a list of players who tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs in a 2003 survey of MLB players that was supposed to remain confidential (the New York Times revealed its existence in 2009). But he never tested positive after that, and Commissioner Rob Manfred has said there are "legitimate scientific questions about whether or not those were truly positives" with regard to the 2003 list.

Ortiz is probably headed for Cooperstown, and there might not be another comparable designated hitter for many, many years.

DUMP THE CHARACTER STANDARD FOR BASEBALL'S HALL OF FAME

BARRY BONDS AND ROGER CLEMENS AREN'T SAINTS, BUT OTHER INDUCTEES WEREN'T EITHER DURING THEIR CAREERS

By Fay Vincent in WSJ

Major League Baseball is untidy these days. The players union and the owners are in a labor imbroglio, with the owners having “locked out” the players, which imperils the scheduled opening of the season in April.

Meanwhile, the National Baseball Hall of Fame announced the election of Boston Red Sox slugger David Ortiz, but Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens failed to get the requisite 75% of the votes by the Baseball Writers’ Association of America in the final year of their 10-year election eligibility.

I suspect those two steroid-tarnished stars will be elected later on by the Eras Committee process, which sportscaster Bob Costas termed the “court of appeal” after it elected several old-time stars whom voters had failed to elect, including Buck O’Neil, Jim Kaat, Gil Hodges, Tony Oliva and Minnie Miñoso, along with Bud Fowler, widely considered the first black professional baseball player.

Doling out honors is never easy. For the Hall of Fame, the problem originates with its terms for election, which instruct voters to consider “integrity, sportsmanship [and] character” in addition to on-field performance. In the case of Messrs. Bonds and Clemens, their records have been damaged by allegations that they used performance-enhancing drugs before testing began in Major League Baseball in 2009. Mr. Ortiz never failed a test once the league began testing. The writers seem to have punished Messrs. Bonds and Clemens for steroid use, though neither tested positive or has admitted he used performance-enhancers, and both survived legal challenges.

The Hall of Fame is in a difficult spot because players have been elected despite suspicions of steroid use. Also, the character clause notwithstanding, Cap Anson remains in the Hall of Fame and he played a large role in the racial segregation of professional baseball.

The two-stage election process using special committees permits the hall to elect admired old-timers. But for every Buck O’Neil, the widely beloved Negro League alumnus, there are several examples of good but not luminous players elected because they had a strong advocate on a veterans committee.

The Hall of Fame must acknowledge the differences between steroid use and gambling. The growth of sports betting is a threat to the integrity of all sports. Gambling almost destroyed baseball in 1919, and it remains to be seen how professional sports can protect themselves from corruption. How, for example, can Major League Baseball keep players from telling their relatives when and when not to bet?

The use of steroids without a valid prescription is illegal under federal law, but betting on sports isn’t. Players run criminal risks with steroids, while only league rules bar betting on baseball. After the Dowd report proved that Pete Rose bet on professional baseball games, then-Commissioner Bart Giamatti and I, his deputy, entered into an agreement with Mr. Rose

banning him from baseball and making him ineligible for Hall of Fame induction. Meanwhile, players who may have violated federal law are still eligible.

More recently, baseball's refusal to discipline the Houston Astros players who participated in the corrupt hijacking of the 2017 World Series further muddled the consequences of cheating.

To redeem and clarify its election process, the Hall of Fame should revise the election rules to eliminate the hopelessly vague character standard. In addition, the Eras Committee should be dropped to reinforce the writers' voting decisions.

The Hall of Fame's job is to look backward and honor past performance. Major League Baseball tries to protect the future of the sport by defending its integrity. By trying to inject nobility into its election standards, the Hall of Fame aimed to maintain the old-fashioned view that honors should accrue to the honorable. Messrs. Bonds and Clemens may not have been saints, but they were great players. Pretending anything else matters is hypocrisy.

Mr. Vincent was commissioner of baseball, 1989-92.

WRAPPING THIS WEEK'S HOF DISCUSSION WITH A COLUMN FROM JOE POSNANSKI

Got a text from a friend of mine Tuesday night, shortly after the announcement that David Ortiz was elected to the Hall of Fame while Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Curt Schilling, Sammy Sosa, and all the rest were not.

"I don't pretend to know the specifics of Bonds, Clemens and PEDs as well as the voters," he wrote. "But to me, it feels like this whole process has lost the plot. Why does the Hall of Fame exist at all? In my opinion not to reward or punish players but to celebrate the game, give fans an amazing day out and maybe put the men who played it best in some context. Are we so incapable of that?"

My first reaction was an immediate, "Yes, of course we are incapable of that." I mean, THAT has been made clear on an annual basis for a long time now. We have been in an endless loop for 10, 15, 20 years now — the same shallow arguments being lobbed back and forth over walls, those arguments rarely having much or anything to do with baseball or fun or celebration.

But as the night went on, something about my friend's message hit me anew.

There is something about the Baseball Hall of Fame that baseball fans take immense pride in ... and that is that we CARE about it in a way that's just different from other sports and other Halls of Fame. We love that the Baseball Hall of Fame matters so much more to us baseball fans than the Pro Football Hall of Fame matters to football fans or the Basketball Hall of Fame matters to basketball fans or the Hockey Hall of Fame matters to hockey fans. Those fans care, certainly, but it's on a whole different level, in a whole other dimension.

This has long been a point of pride, I think. The Baseball Hall of Fame is the best Hall of Fame! The Baseball Hall of Fame is the off-the-field jewel of the sport. Away from the field, the NFL has the impossibly popular draft, and the NBA has the lottery and slam-dunk contest, and hockey has the Winter Classic and the best trophy in sports. Baseball has the Hall of Fame.

And I always thought that was a good thing for baseball.

But, you know what? Now I'm not so sure.

"Why does the Hall of Fame exist at all?" my friend asked. Indeed — why?

Is it so that on a cold winter day in January, there can be a television show where people sit around a table and argue about just how bad it was for players to use steroids?

Panelist 1: "These players disgraced the game!"

Panelist 2: "Disgrace is not even a strong enough word! They tarnished the game!"

Panelist 1: "That means the same thing. You just used a thesaurus."

Panelist 2: "Did not. Oh, by the way they also besmirched, blackened, debased, defamed ..."

Panelist 3: "Well, I think they dishonored the game."

Panelists 1 and 2: "Boo!"

It is incredible, every year, re-litigating the 1990s, what other sport does that? What other sport — what other form of entertainment — keeps going back every year to a contentious time a quarter-century earlier and keeps harping about it?

So is that the reason the Hall of Fame exists? Is it to scapegoat a handful of amazing but not-overly likable players so that we can just blame them for an era when nobody cared about steroids?

Is it to annually remind kids who grew up in the 1990s and early 2000s that their era was terrible and their memories tainted?

Is it to drain as much joy as possible out of the experience? After all, it isn't just PEDs. The Hall of Fame process can put a raincloud over even the sunniest day. Remember when Ken Griffey Jr. was elected? What could be more wonderful than Junior getting elected to the Hall of Fame?

And what did we talk about that day?

How he didn't go in unanimously.

What is fun about any of this? Baseball already struggles mightily with fun. I'm not as big a fan of Tony Romo the announcer as many others are, but what I can say without hesitation is that the guy is having a blast in the booth, he's gushing about the players, he's predicting what's coming, he's getting giddier with every play.

And in baseball? You know this: So many (not all but so many) baseball broadcasts and baseball stories are grumpy, frumpy, filled with spoken and unspoken complaints about all the strikeouts, and how starters can't go nine innings (or even seven), and the crawling pace and the diabolical shifts and, well, you know the lyrics to the song.

It isn't that those themes are wrong — they are not wrong, lots of people feel them — it's more that they're ever-present. They're not a side conversation, they are the main conversation.

And it's the same with the Baseball Hall of Fame, only more so. Two things come to mind. One, I keep thinking about the feeling I had last month when Buck O'Neil, Minnie Miñoso, Jim Kaat, Gil Hodges and Tony Oliva were elected to the Hall of Fame (also the great 19th century player Bud Fowler, though he's another conversation). Of course, I was overjoyed. Of course, it was also bittersweet because Buck and Minnie in particular are not here to enjoy it and also help us enjoy it.

But more than anything, my feeling was: “See? Is that so hard?” We had a great day, a wonderful day, and at what cost? The Hall of Fame was not in any way, shape or form LESSENERD with the addition of all these men who had spent many, many decades in Hall of Fame purgatory as people picked at every scab of their careers. Did Tony Oliva have enough hits? Did Gil Hodges hit enough home runs? Was Buck O’Neil’s life in baseball vivid enough? Was Minnie Miñoso a — well, I never really understood what held voters back on Minnie Miñoso. I guess they questioned his greatness as a player and his importance as a pioneer. It was, in so many ways, the biggest oversight in recent Hall of Fame history.

And look at me there — bringing more grousing into even that happy moment.

Point is, once they all went into the Hall, it was like: “Seriously, this is awesome! This should have happened 20 years ago! It felt so right and so easy and so fun. It was an unchained celebration of baseball and the people who played it. Baseball seems to have so few of those days.

And here’s another word that comes to mind: It was GENEROUS. So much about the Hall of Fame feels ungenerous, as if it’s more important who is kept out than who is invited in. Yes, you want it to be exclusive, you want it to be filled with the greatest players, but why can’t it be more big-hearted?

That leads into my second thought which is — what would happen if all these players we KNOW were transcendent just got elected? What if they inducted Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens and Alex Rodriguez and, on a different frequency, Pete Rose and Joe Jackson and Curt Schilling? What would happen?

Sure, there might be some awkwardness on induction day, and there would be some people who would turn away, and some who would hold their noses and some who would threaten to never visit Cooperstown again, and even some, I’m sure, who would say that they were giving up their baseball fanhood.

And then what? Would the Hall of Fame stop mattering? Of course not. Would baseball itself stop mattering? Of course not. Would the baseball discussions about future Hall of Fame candidates like Todd Helton and Scott Rolen and Gary Sheffield and Jeff Kent and, later, Carlos

Beltran and Adrian Beltré and the rest be any less passionate? Of course not. Would Cooperstown itself be any less wonderful a place to visit? Of course not.

All that would happen is that there would be a few more plaques in the Hall of Fame featuring a few more flawed men who played baseball impossibly and gloriously well. Bill James decided on Tuesday to wade into the conversation when he tweeted this:

Bill James—If you can't appreciate Roger Clemens or Barry Bonds, man, you just don't like baseball.

You can imagine some of the comments to that — I'm sure Bill made more blocks that day than the Chiefs' offensive line did on Sunday — but you know what else I see? I see 2,124 likes. So many people just want to enjoy baseball, to love it, to talk about what it was like to watch Barry Bonds at the plate when he was so locked in that there was simply no way to throw a pitch by him, to watch Roger Clemens when his face was red and his eyes bulged and he didn't throw a baseball so much as he blowtorched a baseball.

It's a game, a fun game, the best game in my book, and yes, we want fair play, and yes, cheaters should be punished, and yes, rule-breakers should pay the consequences and all of that.

But that's not where the heart of the game is. That's not why we invest ourselves in it. That's not why we care about a brick building in a small snow-covered town in the middle of nowhere. The Baseball Hall of Fame voting should not be an annual conference on morality and sportsmanship. It should be about doubles and homers and sliders that catch the corner and diving plays and scoops out of the dirt and rising fastballs and that moment when the runner rounds second and decides to go for the triple.

I so wish that we were capable of that.

MEET THE WOMAN WHO STRUCK OUT HANK AARON

I was never gonna let anybody beat me at anything. I was so competitive. When I was facing Ted Williams, I was facing Ted Williams. Yeah he probably should've hit me, but he didn't."

To say that Joan Joyce was the greatest softball player ever and a conqueror of MLB legends is probably an understatement.

She was also one of the best golfers -- competing on the LPGA tour for 19 years. She had a career low score of 66, [drove it 30 yards longer than most of her opponents](#) and holds the Guinness record for fewest putts in a PGA or LPGA round with a minuscule 17.

She's in the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, named to the Women's Basketball Association All-America team four times and Amateur Athletic Union All-America team three. She played for the USA Women's National team in 1964-65 and holds the record for the most points in an AAU tournament game with 67.

She was a player-coach and all-east regional player in the United States Volleyball Association. She took her team to four National Tournament appearances.

She was hired to be a professional bowler, she was a [runner-up in ABC's Superstars](#) tennis competition, she has more than 900 wins as a coach at FAU. She's a living, breathing tall tale of the sports world.

"There will always be great female players in a particular sport -- but there will never be another Joan Joyce," Tony Renzoni, author of "Connecticut Softball Legend Joan Joyce" said.

But playing softball was where she really made her mark.

She joined the professional, Connecticut-based Raybestos Brakettes team at the age of 13. She traveled the country, compiling a ridiculous 753-42 record and .09 ERA over 20 seasons. Her famed [slingshot windup](#) helped her throw 150 no-hitters and 50 perfect games. She routinely led the league with a .400-plus average and once pitched [45 consecutive scoreless innings](#) in a 24-hour span during a national tournament.

She threw faster than an Amtrak train.

"Well, they didn't have radar guns back then," Joyce laughed during an interview with MLB.com.

She went on to explain that she was involved in a study at USC where a graduate student took a bunch of pitchers from the Pacific Coast League and attempted to measure their speeds using various throwing techniques and stop watches.

"I didn't know anything that happened, I never read her dissertation," Joyce said. "And then when I was playing out on the pro tour for golf with a friend of mine, Carla Glasgow, someone asked me how fast I threw. And I said, I don't know. Carla looked at me and she said, 'Did you not read the USC thesis? In that thesis she said that you threw the equivalent of 119 mph.'"

That's a fastball in the mid-70s from 40 feet away, and it's probably why some of the best hitters in baseball history could barely manage to make contact against her. Here are a few of those stories.

Joan vs. Hank

"Yeah, I pitched against Hank Aaron," Joyce said. "We did that up in Hartford at an exhibition. Actually I wasn't even gonna pitch in the game ... and then the people who were running the exhibition came over and asked if I could pitch the last inning and then they would put Hank Aaron up to bat."

This was in 1978, Aaron was 44, two years removed from playing in the Majors, while Joyce was 38. Even still, it was billed like a [heavyweight title fight](#).

"So I went out and warmed up, came in for the last inning, he came up to bat and I struck him out," Joyce said.

"She was something else," Aaron [said at the time](#). "That softball comes at you and rises up around your head by the time you swing at it."

Joan vs. Yaz

Another Hall of Famer, Carl Yastrzemski, was scared to face Joyce's dreaded rise-ball in the '70s.

"He was supposed to hit against me," Joyce said. "At the [ABC] Superstars. Yeah, they called and asked him to hit against me. He told them no."

Joyce lived in Florida at that point and Yaz, because Joan's life couldn't get any more mythical, was actually her neighbor. The two became friends and were out golfing one day when the story of why he didn't want to come came up.

"So we started to play golf together and he found out I pitched and he said, 'Oh, I know you,' Joyce recalls. "'They wanted me to come hit against you and I wouldn't. I told them I wouldn't go get struck out by a girl.'"

Joan vs. Ted

This was Joyce's most legendary matchup. She faced Ted Williams a few times in her hometown of Waterbury, Conn., as part of a fundraiser for The Jimmy Fund. One of the most famous matchups was in 1966.

When they squared off in August of that year, the event was highly anticipated. A crowd of 17,000 overflowed the tiny Minor League Municipal Stadium to watch baseball's greatest hitter face off against softball's greatest pitcher.

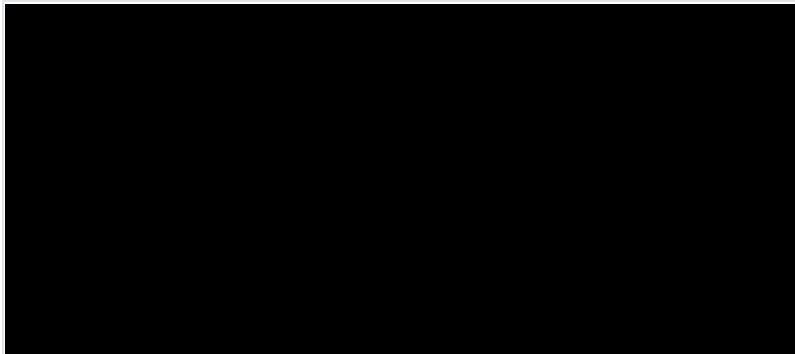
So, what was Joyce's approach?

"I said, Ted Williams is not gonna get a pitch where his eyes are," Joyce recalls. "This guy's got the best eyes in baseball. He reads the letters on a baseball. I got a softball that's twice as big as a baseball. He could probably read everything on the softball -- I'm not throwing it up by his eyes."

Joyce went mostly with her drop-ball. If she left it up, she left it way up, where he could only foul it back. She mostly used drop-balls and curves, eliciting zero contact from the Red Sox superstar.

"After about 10 minutes, he threw the bat down on the ground and said, 'I can't hit this.'

Williams, who famously said Joyce was the [greatest pitcher he'd ever faced](#), asked his opponent how she was able to throw a ball that moves so much. Joyce showed him with a softball and Williams said, "Girls shouldn't know that."



Joan Joyce: the best Ted Williams ever faced

Fifty years ago, two competitors squared off: a 20-year-old regarded as softball's best pitcher versus baseball'...

Joyce responded, "This girl does know that."

Turns out, facing MLB's most legendary batter ended up not being that hard after all. It was, as she said years later, just about the easiest thing she's ever done.

ALL TIME HOME RUN LEADERS BY LETTER

A: Henry Aaron, 755

OK, sure, that's easy. But who is No. 2 on the list?

That's actually not that hard either — it's Dick Allen with 351. After that you have a couple more 300-homer hitters: Joe Adcock and Moises Alou.

B: Barry Bonds, 762

Again, this one's pretty easy and the No. 2 is easy too because for years and years this trivia question answer was Ernie Banks (512). Adrian Beltré (477) didn't quite get to 500.

C: Miguel Cabrera, 502

Until fairly recently, the answer here was Jose Canseco — who decided to weigh in on the Hall of Fame voting in his own inimitable and e

I think “again MLB screws it up again” would be an outstanding title for a poem, even if MLB didn't really have anything to do with anything here. But, as always goes with Canseco, there probably is some weird germ of a point somewhere in there.

D: Carlos Delgado, 473

Too often forgotten, Delgado was an absolute force. Look at these two splits:

Player A: .287/.397/.571, 148 OPS+

Player B: .290/.386/.570, 148 OPS+

Player A is Delgado over a 10-season span, 1997-2006.

Player B is David Ortiz in Boston.

Delgado wasn't as good for as long as Ortiz, but at their best they were essentially the same kind of hitter.

Adam Dunn, incidentally, is second on the D list with 462.

E. Edwin Encarnacion, 424

Encarnacion went into the 2020 COVID season tied with Darrell Evans for the most home runs hit by an E. He whacked 10 homers in 44 games, and now he should have the spot for a good long time; there are no promising E's on the horizon.

F. Jimmie Foxx, 534

Ol' Double X has had this spot for 90-plus years, and unless we get some sort of massive name change like Albert Fujols or Aaron Fudge, it's going to be his letter pretty much Forever.

G. Ken Griffey Jr., 630, or Josh Gibson (???)

G has actually been a pretty good power-hitting letter — not just Griffey, Gibson, Gehrig, Guerrero, Giambi, Gonzalez and Galarraga, but in total 59 different Gs have hit more than 100 big league home runs, including both Griffey's.

H: Ryan Howard, 382; Frank Howard, 382

This is definitely my favorite letter. It thrills me that two gigantic men named Howard, playing in different times and different places, climbed and climbed and, in the end, met at the top of Mount H.

With just a few more homers, this spot could have belonged to Gil Hodges (370), Todd Helton (369) or Torii Hunter (353). But I think the baseball gods wanted two Howards.

I: Raul Ibañez, 305

Hey, hey, it's my friend Raul! He passed Pete Incaviglia (205) back in 2009 and never looked back. Of course, we should pause here to wonder just how many home runs Monte Irvin would have hit in MLB had he been given the chance.

J: Reggie Jackson, 563

This is one of those letters that just feels right — it SHOULD be Reggie Jackson. If someone asked you, “Who do you think has the most home runs for players whose last name begins with J,” virtually everyone would guess, “Reggie Jackson.” That's no offense to Chipper Jones or Andruw Jones, but it has to be Reggie.

K: Harmon Killebrew, 573

Poor Jeff Kent. He did hit the most home runs for any second baseman ever, which is something that his Hall of Fame advocates will talk about repeatedly. But among players whose name begin with K, he's FIFTH, which is a bit of a letdown, no?

1. Harmon Killebrew, 573
2. Dave Kingman, 442
3. Paul Konerko, 439
4. Al Kaline, 399
5. Jeff Kent, 377

He is ahead of Hall of Famers Ralph Kiner and Chuck Klein, so there's that.

L: Carlos Lee, 358

Just ahead of Derrek Lee at 331.

Evan Longoria (317) has a good chance of overtaking the Lees in the next couple of years.

M: Willie Mays, 660

Is this the most star-studded letter? It could be: Mays, McGwire, Mantle, McCovey, Mathews, Murray, McGriff, Musial, Murphy. Not to mention Maris.

N: Graig Nettles, 390

Trivia question: How many N hitters are in the Baseball Hall of Fame?

Answer: Zero. There have been a surprisingly small number of great every-day players whose name starts with N. Nettles, I would think, is probably the closest.

There are three N Pitchers in the Hall — Hal Newhouser, Kid Nichols and Phil Niekro.

O: David Ortiz, 541

Here's Papi, who moved past Mel Ott (511) in his final big-league season.

O seems more a letter for pure line-drive hitters than big sluggers — Tony Oliva, Al Oliver, John Olerud. etc.

P: Albert Pujols, 679

For a short while, the top player on the P list was Boog Powell with 339 home runs — less than half of where Pujols ended up. Boog is now sixth on the list behind Pujols, Palmeiro, Piazza, Perez and Parker.

Q: Carlos Quentin, 154

No other Q has hit even 100 home runs.

No. 2 on the list, believe it or not, is Mark Quinn, who is best known for going on a long, long, long no-walk streak — so long that when he finally did draw a walk, they set off some fireworks at Kauffman Stadium. No. 3 is another Royal — Jamie Quirk.

R: Babe Ruth, 714

Here's how out of it Mike is after signing several bajillion books; I was saying to him, "You know, there's a certain justice that not only did Alex Rodriguez fall short of the home run record that basically everyone predicted for him, but he's not even the leading Letter R home run hitter."

And Mike looked at me blankly and said: "Who is?"

Send help.

S: Sammy Sosa, 609

Mike Schmidt is second with 548.

T: Jim Thome, 612

It's funny, when I was thinking "Which player with T hit the most home runs?" Jim Thome was somehow the furthest name from my mind. What's funnier is that Mickey Tettleton was the name that just kept popping in. I would tell my brain, "Stop that, it's not Mickey Tettleton, give me another T name, any other T name."

And my brain would go: "How about Mickey Tettleton?"

Tettleton is 12th on the list with 245 homers, in case you were wondering.

U: Justin Upton, 324

No, it's not Chase Utley — though he is second on the list with 259, a bit ahead of Dan Uggla at 235.

V: Greg Vaughn, 355

This is the year that Joey Votto (331) takes the V title, and what a glorious day that will be. I'm going to keep an eye on it and try to go to that historic game. Maybe I'll get Mike to come too (I would ask him now but, no kidding, he's fading hard).

W: Ted Williams, 521

Winfields and Walkers and Wynns and numerous other Williamses such as Billy and Bernie and Matt have come along, but nobody's taking W away from the Splendid Splinter.

X: Nobody

There has never been an MLB players whose last name started with X. There have been a few first-name guys such as Xavier Nady and Xander Boegarts, and there have been guys called the X Factor (David Eckstein) and Double X (Jimmie Foxx) but no true Xs in MLB.

There was a player from Cuba in the Negro Leagues, however — Leovigildo Xiqués — who played for a time with the Indianapolis Clowns. If he hit an MLB home run, however, it has not yet been uncovered.

Y: Carl Yastrzemski, 452

Another first-guess choice — think Y players and you think Yaz. He has never really been challenged — Rudy York is second on the list with 277.

Z: Ryan Zimmerman, 284

For a while, the answer to the Z trivia question was Gus Zernial. Then Todd Zeile moved by. Now it's Zimmerman, and it's probably his for a long time, though Mike Zunino, by hitting 33 home runs last year, announced his presence. Zunino has 141 home runs, but he's just 31. That's the thing about baseball, though. You just never know.