

What to do with Baseball's Hall of Fame?

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

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Everyone, if you have not learned by now, especially being a fan of Cleveland sports, has an opinion.

There's numerous, and quite humorous, cliches that are associated with that phrase, none of which I will repeat for the sake of me not looking tacky and cheesy, but proceed through this article with many of them in mind.

I don't claim to be much of a historian of the game of baseball. I love the Cleveland Indians, I love the sport of baseball. I'm also a few months away from my 24th birthday. Until the early 2000's hit, I really did not even follow the game that much. Of course that had to do with age, but when it came to fandom, the Indians might have been third or even fourth in terms of interest.

First was football, college football, even basketball. I look back now and wonder why I ever liked the NBA as much as I did. Today I look at and just do not understand how that sport can have any sort of intrigue to it. You have six to eight teams that are acquiring all the good players and the league is embracing this idea. Let's put all the superstars on six squads, that's a fantastic idea!

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And as much as I love college football, with the ultimate display of passion within college sports being the ultimate factor to making any collegiate game of athletics entertaining and fun to watch, it does not come without its warts. The landscape is ever changing with teams that switch conferences every other year and the run to create the first big super-conference at the forefront of every commissioner's agenda.

The NFL, as much as I get into the competitiveness of fantasy football, with me having something to root for on a weekly basis, the game, while I largely enjoy it, has become a shell of itself. With the emphasis on safety at the forefront of Roger Goodell's platform, it has very much diluted a game that was highly entertaining.

Is this all in an effort for me to make a claim that baseball is the best? The king of all sports, the one that I would rather watch over any of them.

While that is true in my eyes, it certainly cannot be argued that because of those issues with other sports, that baseball is indeed a perfect child. In fact, it is why we are here, where we are right now with the sport and their Hall of Fame debacle. For a decade, probably more, but at least for the era that it largely impacted, performance enhancers ran rampant over this sport. In a way, it crippled it because while it was fun while it lasted, it has resulted in clouds of suspicion, unrest, and an inability to trust anyone or anything.

It is why the Hall of Fame has decided that this year, they're not going to let anyone into a place that is supposed to showcase the best of the best the game has to offer. It is why that perhaps the game's most feared hitter is not allowed to be enshrined into Cooperstown. It is why one of the most remarkable pitching careers will not be honored among some of the other ones that were similar, if not inferior to it.

I'm not here to say that Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens should be in the [Hall of Fame](#) . But what is a Hall of Fame if it doesn't remember some feats of greatness? What is a Hall of Fame if it doesn't recognize some of the more remarkable achievements in the history of professional baseball? What is a Hall of Fame if it does not stand to let in people that showed they had ability that helped them lay claim as one of the game's best in their time period?

Remember how I said everyone has an opinion?

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Everyone has an opinion as to everything. And this whole baseball Hall of Fame thing boils down to just that, everyone has an opinion.

And in this case, 569 baseball writers have an opinion. Ultimately, it is their opinion that matters the most in this issue, which is a problem in itself, but for better or worse, it is their opinion that we must rely on to make sure what is right is done. However, who are we to decide what is right? It is again, our opinion. Whether you think Barry Bonds should be let in because he was the greatest hitter of our era, regardless of the steroid speculation or you think not because all accused or alleged users should be not allowed is your opinion.

Whether you think we should just enshrine everyone that deserves it based off numbers, regardless of speculation, or enshrine no one that is speculated, is your opinion. I can tell you that if we are taking the later route, we may go a good decade and a half without letting anyone in, because in our era of baseball right now, in my era, the one that we've grown up with, lived with, watched for the past two decades. That era is going to forever be filled with speculation. No one is safe, not a single one. Not the man who finger wagged congress, not the one who beat congress, not the one who spawned a book I remember reading back in High School that single-handedly cracked open this entire mess of lies, drug use, and shame to the sport.

I love watching this game. In it's form today, it is pure, it is fun, it is everything that you want in what entertainment should be. Real people, playing a fun game, a game kids enjoy, doing it because they are good at it and because we, as fans, need entertained and need something to root for. It is a magical sport that brings us together for the common purpose. Regardless of if you think Chris Antonetti should be fired or not, we are here for the common purpose that we want the Cleveland Indians to win the World Series. Our opinions, set us apart, yet our reasoning for our opinions unite us.

What the baseball writers are now doing with this Hall of Fame thing, is simply adding an element of unrest. Did this sport betray us? For years everyone let it happen. From the players to the managers, to the media, to everyone involved. Yeah, the sport collectively let the steroid era happen. We bought into it because we were none-the-wiser. We simply thought there was an evolution, that players were simply getting better, records were simply getting broken because the sport has reached a modern age. How were we to know that people were cheating other than to learn from the people who reported it or didn't report it? Calvin Johnson just broke the NFL's single season receiving yards record, while Adrian Peterson came up nine yards short of the rushing record. Are we ready to suspect them of something unfair?

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If anything, Peterson's miraculous rebound from surgery to repair a torn ACL should give you a little more pause than Sammy Sosa hitting 60-plus home runs in a season. It would for me. We know as much as the media tells us. Baseball players will do as much as their sport lets them.

What we enjoyed so much years ago has now come back to betray us, as a process to initiate players of greatness, into a place that celebrates that greatness, has now broken down. I never understood why it would take someone like Jim Rice so many attempts to get into the Hall of Fame in the first place, but now, there's a new element. There's an element of speculation. Speculation as to who was clean, who wasn't, and who is worthy?

Craig Biggio is a fun case, and is someone that you would have never thought would be closer to getting into the Hall of Fame than the likes of Bonds, Sosa, McGwire, and Clemens. Not in a million years. Biggio is a guy who notched 3,000 hits, played the game the right way, was great for a period of time, good for an even longer period of time. Some would say he played that long to attain those numbers that would get him in, some say that the fact he did that and accomplished everything should make him a Hall of Famer. One day he will likely get in, but not on the first ballot, not this year.

That should be the arguments that we are having, not where we are with the steroid era. Not with the speculation era.

Again, the Hall of Fame voting process has its flaws. If Jim Rice isn't a Hall of Fame caliber player for 13 years, what makes him one in the 14th year? He hasn't added on to his numbers, he is not in a sport like Football that if you do not get in on a certain year, it is more because of the people that are getting in ahead of you than your individual case. If Jim Rice can't get into the Hall of Fame, he can't get into the Hall of Fame because a good majority of people do not think he should get into it.

To this day, I will not understand the logic in that process, but to me, that process is at least accepting of the really good players. The all-time greats. The ones that deserve it. It opens up the discussion for the ones that are not, and have a case. It makes discussions about someone we love in Omar Vizquel interesting. I think Omar Vizquel should be in. He was one of the best defensive players to every play the sport of baseball, the best of his generation and era, a top three shortstop of all time. And he has some offensive numbers to at least help his case.

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But he likely suffers the same fate as a Craig Biggio, someone who did a whole lot to prove his case, but may get toyed with for several years as writers slowly get on board to get him to that important number of 75.



Jordan Bastian [asked the question earlier this week on his Indians blog](#) . Does Kenny Lofton have a case? Forever, people will show numbers and say that certain people should not be in, and yet argue that because those similar numbered people shouldn't be in, Kenny shouldn't. Others will show numbers of other players and say that Kenny wasn't as good as them. And some will inevitable show numbers of current guys, or even just Kenny himself and say, yes, this man is someone who needs to be recognized.

And Bastian himself makes a compelling case that Lofton needs at least consideration, at least a look at the numbers. Unfortunately there were not enough writers that felt he deserved even a look and for that, in the future, Lofton will not be a part of the official ballot. Because he didn't garner five percent of the 569 people that submitted a ballot, he won't be on the ballot again.

A lot of Indians fans will probably sit around, having witnessed most of, if not all of Lofton's career and say he should be in, or at least considered. I think he should be considered, but again that is my opinion. Not enough people shared that opinion. Perhaps everyone shared the opinion that he had a case, but ultimately didn't deserve a vote, hence why only 18 people voted for him. Was he a casualty of the speculation era? Left off numerous ballots that were filled with 10 people that thought the lot of Sosa, McGwire, Schilling, Bonds, Clemens, etc. should all be in?

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If so, he will not be the only casualty of the speculation era. Because if this continues, we will all lose. This era, the era that we all remembered, for better or worse, will be forgotten. Baseball can deny it happened, but it did, because we remember it. There may not be anyone left that remembers Babe Ruth, but we remember him because baseball let us remember him.

We may not like the speculation or the steroid era, but we have to remember it because it happened and it changed the game. It impacted the game, it was a part of the game. Those numbers happened, even if they were tainted. If we do not let baseball remember them, they will have been successful in their denial. Baseball will escape with their lie.

Am I saying we let the speculative players in? Maybe I am. Maybe I think, as much as I don't like him, the fact that he probably cheated, and some of his phony records, Barry Bonds should be in the Hall of Fame. Why not? Why not make an example of him? Why not let him in with his career. You can put it on his plaque, he broke the single-season home run record, do it. And right under it, you can put that he was at the epicenter of baseball's darkest day.

Because both things need to be remembered. Give the devil his due, but in turn, why not due in the devil as well?

While I don't mean to turn this into an article in which the ultimate point is to let Barry Bonds into the Hall of Fame, it helps me prove the point of this long-winded, and often side-tracked narrative that I've produced. Largely there is no Cleveland Indians point to what I'm saying. Sure I talked about Kenny and Omar. If I was voting, when the time comes in the next, five to possibly seven years (five from when he retires), I would vote for Jim Thome. I'd vote for Omar, I'd consider Kenny. But I'm an Indians fan, born and bred. Someone that was born a Yankees fan might say the same for Bernie Williams (also missed the 5% cut off to remain on future ballots).

My overall point? Not of Bonds or Lofton, or Omar or of relation to any Indians?

I guess it simply boils down to feeling cheated. Feeling that we witnessed an era of baseball and are now being told to forget what we saw. For being led to believe that some magical things

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were happening when baseball was being revitalized in the so called "steroid era" of the game as it is now called. And now being told by the same people that told us magic was happening, that it was all something we should forget about.

I don't want to forget about it and I really do not like someone who told me what happened, to tell me to forget what I just saw.

So maybe the baseball writers need to look into the mirror. Maybe they need to hold themselves accountable for having played part in the era they want us to forget about. At least the ones who are voting in that manner, or I guess not voting at all in protest. Maybe we should just forget about the Hall of Fame all together. If it takes 15 years for someone to get in, has players that most feel don't deserve it, and is also a place that some believe shouldn't be for the "very good" but just the "very best" then, maybe we don't need it.

Let's just forget about it all. Let's not have the debates about Craig Biggio, Jack Morris or Bert Blyleven. Let's not worry about having to endure the speculation era. Let's just stop this mess right now. I'd rather do that then be told to forget what happen and let the sport erase a significant era of their history for the people who have yet to be born to never know the truth about.

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Nino, willing to remove the "I Hate Nick Swisher" line from his Facebook profile is also on [The Tribe Daily](#), his own Indians blog. As long as JoAnna Garcia-Swisher's "Better With You" gets another shot on television.

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