

Dear BBWAA Hall of Fame Voter:

Over the years, I have been approached by many Hall of Fame members telling me we needed to do something to speak out about the possibility of steroid users entering the Hall of Fame. This issue has been bubbling below the surface for quite a while.

I hope you don't mind if I bring to your attention what I'm hearing.

Please keep in mind I don't speak for every single member of the Hall of Fame. I don't know how everyone feels, but I do know how many of the Hall of Famers feel.

I, along with other Hall of Fame Baseball players, have the deepest respect for you and all the writers who vote to decide who enters Baseball's most hallowed shrine, the National Baseball Hall of Fame. For some 80 years, the men and women of the BBWAA have cast ballots that have made the Hall into the wonderful place it is.

I think the Hall of Fame is special. There is a sanctity to being elected to the Hall. It is revered. It is the hardest Hall of Fame to enter, of any sport in America.

But times change, and a day we all knew was coming has now arrived. Players who played during the steroid era have become eligible for entry into the Hall of Fame.

The more we Hall of Famers talk about this – and we talk about it a lot – we realize we can no longer sit silent. Many of us have come to think that silence will be considered complicity. Or that fans might think we are ok if the standards of election to the Hall of Fame are relaxed, at least relaxed enough for steroid users to enter and become members of the most sacred place in Baseball. We don't want fans ever to think that.

We hope the day never comes when known steroid users are voted into the Hall of Fame. They cheated. Steroid users don't belong here.

Players who failed drug tests, admitted using steroids, or were identified as users in Major League Baseball's investigation into steroid abuse, known as the Mitchell Report, should not get in. Those are the three criteria that many of the players and I think are right.

Now, I recognize there are players identified as users on the Mitchell Report who deny they were users. That's why this is a tricky issue. Not everything is black and white – there are shades of gray here. It's why your job as a voter is and has always been a difficult and important job. I have faith in your judgment and know that ultimately, this is your call.

But it still occurs to me that anyone who took body-altering chemicals in a deliberate effort to cheat the game we love, not to mention they cheated current and former players, and fans too, doesn't belong in the Hall of Fame. By cheating, they put up huge numbers, and they made great players who didn't cheat look smaller by comparison, taking away from their achievements and consideration for the Hall of Fame. That's not right.

And that's why I, and other Hall of Famers, feel so strongly about this.

It's gotten to the point where Hall of Famers are saying that if steroid users get in, they'll no longer come to Cooperstown for Induction Ceremonies or other events. Some feel they can't share a stage with players who did steroids. The cheating that tainted an era now risks tainting the Hall of Fame too.

The Hall of Fame means too much to us to ever see that happen. If steroid users get in, it will divide and diminish the Hall, something we couldn't bear.

Section 5 of the Rules for Election states, "Voting shall be based upon the player's record, playing ability, integrity, sportsmanship, character, and contributions to the team(s) on which the player played."

I care about how good a player was or what kind of numbers he put up; but if a player did steroids, his integrity is suspect; he lacks sportsmanship; his character is flawed; and, whatever contribution he made to his team is now dwarfed by his selfishness.

Steroid use put Baseball through a tainted era where records were shattered. "It was a steroidal farce," wrote Michael Powell in the *New York Times*. It is no accident that those records held up for decades until the steroid era began, and they haven't been broken since the steroid era ended. Sadly, steroids worked.

Dan Naulty was a journeyman pitcher in the late 1990s who admitted he took steroids, noting that his fastball went from 87 to 96. He told *Sports Illustrated's* Tom Verducci in 2012, "I was a full-blown cheater, and I knew it. You didn't need a written rule. I was violating clear principles that were laid down within the rules. I understood I was violating implicit principles."

The Hall of Fame has always had its share of colorful characters, some of whom broke or bent society's rules in their era. By today's standards, some might not have gotten in. Times change and society improves. What once was accepted no longer is.

But steroid users don't belong here. What they did shouldn't be accepted. Times shouldn't change for the worse.

Steroid users knew they were taking a drug that physically improved how they played. Taking steroids is a decision. It's the deliberate act of using chemistry to change how hard you hit and throw by changing what your body is made of.

I and other Hall of Famers played hard all our lives to achieve what we did. I love this game and am proud of it. I hope the Hall of Fame's standards won't be lowered with the passage of time.

For over eighty years, the Hall of Fame has been a place to look up to, where the hallowed halls honor those who played the game hard and right. I hope it will always remain that way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Morgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

Joe Morgan
Hall of Fame Class of 1990
Vice Chairman

P.S. Families come to Cooperstown because they know it's special. To parents, it's a place they can take their kids for an uplifting, feel-good visit. It's a place where kids can see what true greatness is all about. It's a place where youngsters can dream that one day they too might get in. This place is special. I hope it stays that way.