

Sports desk Zeroes vote for All Star Heroes

Battalion writers bicker their way through choosing the 2001 MLB All Star Teams

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The Battalion

Baseball experts around the nation are deciding on their choices for next month's All Star Game. While hardly experts, *The Battalion* sports desk has also selected who they think should be playing in the midsummer classic and have made their cases as logically as possible.

National League:

First base: Todd Helton, Colorado (.343 average, 24 home runs, 79 RBI). His statistics for this season dominate all other NL first basemen. This is a no-brainer.

Protest vote: Ryan "Beertruck" Klesko, San Diego (.295, 15 HR, 58 RBI). His single-handed thrashing of the Astros made him deserving of the vote.

But who does not thrash the Astros pitching staff?

Second base: Craig Biggio, Houston (.307, 9 HR, 31 RBI). He is having another quality season after coming back from a devastating knee injury.

Shortstop: Rich Aurilia, San Francisco (.354, 11 HR, 25 RBI). He does not have the flashy glove of Rey Ordonez of the Mets, but his batting average is a little better. Nearly 200 points better.

Third base: Chipper Jones, Atlanta (.292, 18 HR, 48 RBI). Simply the best third baseman in baseball. And he wears those sexy knee-high socks.

Protest vote: Phil Nevin, San Diego (.330, 17 HR, 52 RBI). He may not have Chipper's name-recognition or good looks, but his stats speak for themselves.

Catcher: Charles Johnson, Florida (.284, 12 HR, 41 RBI). Even though Mike Piazza will be the voter's choice, we hate him. Therefore, our selection goes to Johnson, who is a better defensive catcher and actually has comparable offensive numbers this season.

Outfield: Barry Bonds, San Francisco (.320, 36 HR, 64 RBI), Luis Gonzalez, Arizona (.356, 28 HR, 62 RBI) and Larry Walker, Colorado (.346, 21 HR, 67 RBI).

Bonds and Gonzalez are both givens, considering their home run totals. Larry Walker is simply electrifying.

Protest votes: Moises Alou (.348, 11 HR, 44 RBI) and Lance Berkman (.333, 16 HR, 53 RBI), Houston. Alou is a great player who never gets any credit, and Berkman may look like a pizza delivery man but is becoming an offensive force.

Designated hitter: Sammy Sosa, Chicago (.303, 21 HR, 64 RBI). If you have to ask why, you do not watch baseball.

Pitcher: Curt Schilling, Arizona (11-2, 2.76 Earned Run Average). It is tough to choose anyone over Randy Johnson, but this is one guy that is deserving of the honor. It was even tougher not to listen to the Jose Lima voting block, but we persevered.

American League:

First base: Jason Giambi, Oakland (.342, 17 HR, 54 RBI). He is just good. If he is on the cover of *Triple Play* 2001, he must be All-Star material. Oh, he was the 2000 AL Most Valuable Player too?

Second base: Bret Boone, Seattle (.326, 16 HR, 70 RBI). He is having a career year, and is one of the big reasons for Seattle's great start.

Protest vote: Roberto Alomar, Cleveland (.337, 6 HR, 42 RBI). He is the spitting image of a hall-of-famer. Literally.

Shortstop: Alex Rodriguez, Texas (.327, 20 HR, 80 RBI). Next.

Third base: Cal Ripken Jr., Baltimore (.210, 4 HR, 25 RBI). Yes, it is a sympathy vote. So what? Yes, the editor threatened to fire the other writers if they voted for someone else. So what?

Protest vote: Troy Glaus, Anaheim (.265, 18 HR, 46 RBI). Yes, I saved my job by voting for Ripken, but Glaus is the better player. Catcher: Ivan Rodriguez, Texas (.286, 13 HR, 33 RBI). Jorge Posada of the Yankees has similar offensive numbers, but his defense pales to the skills of "Pudge." Besides, we hate the Yankees.

Designated hitter: Edgar Martinez, Seattle (.315, 10 HR, 53 RBI). He is the best designated hitter of all time. Besides, he does not own a glove anymore.

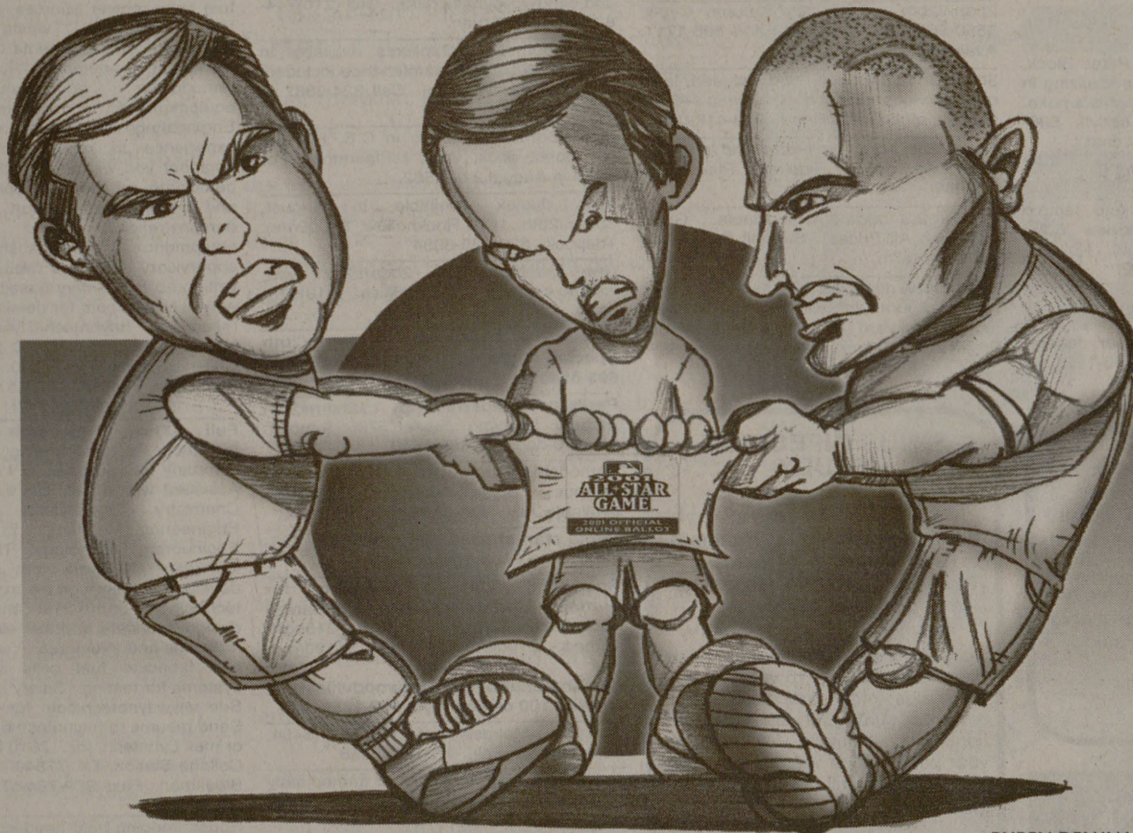
Outfielders: Manny Ramirez, Boston (.357, 21 HR, 66 RBI), Juan Gonzalez, Cleveland (.343, 16 HR, 57 RBI) and Ichiro Suzuki, Seattle (.351, 3 HR, 23 stolen bases). How can anyone argue with the statistics of these players?

Well, someone can.

Protest vote: Raul Mondesi, Toronto (.295, 12 HR, 39 RBI). He is a great player and he suffers through playing in Canada. This should count for something.

Pitcher: Pedro Martinez, Boston (7-2, 2.01 ERA). Someone in the hallway was muttering about Seattle's Aaron Sele. We ignored him.

After much arguing, debate and threats of termination, these are the teams *The Battalion* sports desk has chosen. The annoyed and embittered can still vote at any ballpark or online at MLB.com.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Cal Ripken to retire at the completion of the season

Baltimore's 40-year-old third baseman played in 2,632 consecutive games, wants to spend more time with family

BALTIMORE (AP) — Iron Man Cal Ripken Jr. will retire at the end of this season to spend more time with his family and teach youngsters how to play the game that has been "my whole life."

"The last couple of years I've been noticing that I miss being away from home," the Baltimore Orioles' third baseman said Tuesday at a news conference at Camden Yards. "I miss my kids' activities and it seems like the passion — I was getting into other things."

Injuries were not a factor, said Ripken, who has been plagued by back problems in recent seasons.

"I'm as healthy now as at any time," he said. "It feels good to come to a decision not forced but really from your feelings."

The 40-year-old Ripken, a two-time Most Valuable Player, said it was the start of another phase in his career.

"I don't see this as an ending so much. I'm not stopping something. I'm just moving on," he said.

"The reality is that players can't play forever," he said.

Ripken holds the major league record for consecutive games, playing in 2,632 from May 30, 1982 to Sept. 20, 1998, when he voluntarily ended the streak. At the time, Ripken said he chose

to sit down because he feared his Iron Man run was a distraction to the Orioles.

His passion for the team he grew up rooting for, and the one his father once managed and coached, also played a role in Ripken's decision to retire after his 21st season, all with Baltimore. "The Orioles have been my whole life," he said.

He was reduced to a part-time role this year because of the team's transition toward youth. Ripken, an 18-time All Star whose 345 home runs as a shortstop are a major league record, has

"I accomplished what my skill set and my determination and my ability allowed me to do."



RIPKEN

been a part-time player this year. He is hitting .210 with four homers and 25 runs batted in.

"I tried to love every minute I was on the field," Ripken said. "I accomplished what my skill set and my determination and my ability allowed me to do."

Ripken broke Lou Gehrig's seemingly un-

breakable record of 2,130 consecutive games on Sept. 6, 1995. In the days leading to that day, he was honored in baseball cities throughout the country. When he broke the record, the celebration became a national event.

Ripken spoke this spring about his disdain for a possible farewell tour, but that now appears inevitable.

He is defined by his consecutive games streak, but Ripken is also one of seven players in major league history with 3,000 hits (3,107) and 400 home runs (421).

Ripken's final chance to play at home will be Sept. 23 against the New York Yankees. The Orioles finish the season Sept. 30 at Yankee Stadium.

He said he did not realize until Tuesday that his final major league game would be in the stadium where Gehrig played.

"Yankee history is very rich," he said.

By 9 a.m., 75 people were in line at Camden Yards hoping to buy tickets for Ripken's final home game. At 9:30 a.m., an announcement over the public address system alerted those in line that tickets for the final two games at Camden Yards were completely sold out. Only standing room tickets remained.

Fans, meanwhile, expressed gratitude for Ripken's longevity.

"I guess it was not unexpected," said Bob Hahn of Westminster. "What he did for baseball is truly amazing."

Hahn, stopped on the street in Annapolis, where he works, said he was not saddened by the news.

"This is one of those things in life. Life goes on," Hahn said.

Ripken was American League Rookie of the Year in 1982 and was selected league MVP in 1983 and 1991. He won a World Series championship with the Orioles in 1983.

In 1990, Ripken set a record for shortstops with a .996 fielding percentage, making just three errors in 161 games. He moved to third base in 1997.

In 1999, Ripken and Ernie Banks of the Chicago Cubs were selected as the shortstops for baseball's "All-Century" team.

Ripken, who regularly signs autographs before games at home and on the road, has often spoken about his love for fans of the game.

They love him back. Despite his poor batting average and part-time status, Ripken leads all AL third basemen in voting for the All-Star game.

He said he would be honored to play in another All-Star game.

"It would be very special to say goodbye that way," he said.

Sports in Brief

Montreal Canadiens sold to an American

The sale of the Montreal Canadiens to a Colorado businessman was unanimously approved Tuesday by the NHL's Board of Governors, with the condition that the team not be moved.

George Gillett Jr., bought an 80 percent controlling interest in the Canadiens and 100 percent of the Molson Centre for \$178.3 million. Canadian beer maker Molson retains a 20 percent interest in the Canadiens.

A Wisconsin native who does not speak French, Gillett has said repeatedly that he has no plans to shift the franchise elsewhere. Gillett, 62, is a former minority owner of the Miami Dolphins and the Harlem Globetrotters. He failed in a bid last year to purchase another NHL team, the Colorado Avalanche.

Gillett struck the deal in late January, but it was not until Tuesday's 30-0 vote that the sale became official.

"It was a six-month process and we move on," said Canadiens president Pierre Boivin. "There's nothing like closure in any transaction. It takes away any uncertainty or any doubt that may have remained."

Said NHL commissioner Gary Bettman: "It was a complicated transaction, but we worked our way through it and everyone is comfortable. Sometimes these transactions take awhile." The Canadiens failed to make the playoffs for the third straight year, the first time that has happened since 1920-22.

Boivin said last year's player budget of \$36 million to \$37 million will remain about the same for next season.

Goosen recovers, wins U.S. Open playoff

For Retief Goosen, the tortuous ordeal lasted just one day.

When given a chance to atone for one of golf's most embarrassing moments, the soft-spoken South African made sure he would not have to go through life as the guy who missed a 2-foot putt to win the U.S. Open.

No, he will be remembered as a U.S. Open champion.

"I felt like I needed to win this because of what happened," Goosen said Monday, savoring a 2-stroke victory over Mark Brooks in the first Open playoff since 1994. "When the putt went in, it was great relief. In a way, I was a little bit shocked that I won it."

That's understandable, considering what Goosen went through Sunday evening. Just 12 feet from his first major victory and given two putts to make it happen, he needed three.

Suddenly, a golfer who was barely known on this side of the Atlantic at the beginning of the tournament was linked with Jan Van de Velde, Scott Hoch, Ed Sneed and Doug Sanders — all the victims of unspeakable collapses that let major victories slip away.

The others also had a chance to make amends, only to stumble under the weight of bitter disappointment. Goosen was different, responding with rock-solid play in the 18-hole playoff to beat 40-year-old Texan Mark Brooks, the 1998 champion.

With the trophy in his hand, the new champion could even poke fun as his misfortune.

"(Sunday) was quite funny, actually," Goosen said. "I sort of laughed to myself when I missed that short putt to win, like I couldn't believe what just happened."

A day later, Goosen walked to the final hole with a 3-stroke

lead over Brooks, having erased all memories of the Sunday debacle. He even pulled out that dreaded putter while still 100 feet off the green, taking a conservative approach.

"I knew this time I had it in the bag," Goosen said.

He could afford a 3-putt from 25 feet to clinch a belated victory, but needed only two, rolling the second try into the middle of the cup from 6 feet for bogey and an even-par round of 70.

Sampras, Hingis top seeds at Wimbledon

Pete Sampras will open his bid for an eighth Wimbledon title Monday against Francisco Clavet, a Spanish clay-court player ranked 53rd.

The 29-year-old American has won four straight Wimbledon titles and was last beaten on the grass at the All England Club in the 1996 quarterfinals by eventual winner Richard Krajicek.

In the draw Tuesday, No. 2 Andre Agassi of the United States was paired against Peter Wessels of the Netherlands in the opening round. Wessels defeated top-seeded Marat Safin last week in the Queen's Club tournament, the traditional grass-court warm-up for Wimbledon.

In the women's draw, top-seeded Martina Hingis will open against Virginia Ruano Pascual, a Spaniard ranked 84th. Second-seeded and defending Wimbledon champion Venus Williams of the United States will open against Shinobu Asagoe of Japan.

Fellow American Jennifer Capriati, seeded fourth and halfway to a Grand Slam sweep after winning the Australian Open and French Open, begins against Maria Alejandra Ventosa, a Venezuelan ranked No. 110.