

Gwynn, Ripken: Hall of Fame shoo-ins

One of game's great hitters nearly picked NBA

By **BERNIE WILSON**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN DIEGO

One day in June 1981, Tony Gwynn was drafted by the San Diego Padres in the morning and the San Diego Clippers in the afternoon.

Which sport should the kid with the afro pick? The NBA, where he figured he could make it for maybe a year? Or baseball, which he also played at San Diego State?

Eight NL batting titles, 3,141 hits and a gaudy .338 lifetime average later, Gwynn awaits the ultimate affirmation of that long-ago choice. On Tuesday, he's expected to be voted into the Hall of Fame after appearing on the ballot for the first time.

"I wasn't a real home run hitter, a big RBI guy," Gwynn, San Diego State's baseball coach, said at the cozy ballpark that bears his name. "My forte was putting the bat on the ball."

"To get into the Hall of Fame for me would just mean validation that I could be that kind of player and be very good at it and be rewarded for being that type of player."



The San Diego Padres' Tony Gwynn earned eight National League batting titles during his career.

"Since I've retired, I think the game has put even more emphasis on being able to hit the ball out of the park, and that's a great thing to be able to do. But I think there's still a place in the game for that guy who can create stuff, who can put the bat on the ball, who can get on base, hit, steal a base, score a run."

That was Gwynn, playing among big boppers in an era tarnished by steroids.

The only doubts about Gwynn

are why he stayed with the Padres his entire 20-season career, through many more bad seasons than good.

He could have made more money elsewhere but was comfortable in San Diego, where the spotlight isn't as intense as in New York or Los Angeles.

A 15-time All-Star, Gwynn made a career out of wearing out the gaps with singles and doubles.

With his sweet left-handed swing, Gwynn loved to hit the ball the opposite way, between third base and shortstop. Because baseball scorekeepers designate third base as 5 and shortstop as 6, Gwynn called it the "5.5 hole."

He made a serious run at hitting .400 in 1994, topping out at .394 before the players went on strike Aug. 12.

Gwynn's favorite hit didn't count in his official totals.

In Game 1 of the 1998 World Series, Gwynn turned on a pitch by lefty David Wells, driving it off the facade of Yankee Stadium's upper deck for a home run.

The Padres were swept in that Series and haven't been back since. Gwynn also played in the 1984 World Series, which San Diego lost to Detroit.

By **DAVID GINSBURG**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BALTIMORE

Cal Ripken is a virtual lock to gain first-ballot entry into the Hall of Fame when the results are announced Tuesday.

The real question is: Is the feeling unanimous? No player has received 100 percent of the vote. But no one has had a career quite like that of Cal Ripken, either.

"He's got a shot," Hall of Famer Brooks Robinson said. "It's a long shot, but it's going to be interesting."

Ripken put up plenty of dazzling numbers during his sensational 21-year career, all with the Baltimore Orioles. He played in 2,632 consecutive games, tallied 3,184 hits, hit 431 home runs, won two MVP awards and appeared in 19 All-Star games.

Now, five years after his retirement, he has a chance to accumulate yet another eye-opening number for his Hall of Fame plaque: 100, as in the percentage of votes received for entry into baseball's shrine. Since the Baseball Writers'



The Baltimore Orioles' Cal Ripken played in 2,632 consecutive games, a major-league record.

Association of America began voting for Hall of Fame entrants by ushering in the inaugural class of Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Walter Johnson, Christy Mathewson and Honus Wagner in 1936, no player has received 100 percent of the vote.

Each year, more than 500 eligible BBWAA members receive a ballot filled with about two dozen possibilities. Only a few players actually receive votes. "History tells us that he's not

going to be unanimous because nobody's ever unanimous. Until somebody is, my gut feeling is it won't happen that way," said Peter Schmuck, a baseball writer for The (Baltimore) Sun and a former BBWAA chapter president.

It's hard to imagine a candidate more worthy than Ripken, a player who respected and honored the game.

The son of a lifelong baseball man, Ripken never asked or wanted a day off. He was a 6-foot-4 power-hitting shortstop, one who redefined a position manned previously by diminutive slap-hitters.

Some say Ripken saved baseball in September 1995, with his impromptu feel-good lap around Camden Yards after he broke Lou Gehrig's record of playing in 2,130 consecutive games.

Ripken's march to 2,131 that season displayed what was right about a game that had been staggered a year earlier by a bitter labor dispute that forced cancellation of the World Series.

"I know the criteria to be a Hall of Famer," Robinson said, "and Cal is every one of those things."

New legislative session means another look at deer-pen issue

Well, it is January 2007, the new calendar notes, and I now can tell you a few things about the deer situation.

More specifically, here's the way things look at the moment for deer-pen hunting as the Indiana General Assembly prepares to lay its erudite lawmaking skills on us.

I probably should tell you the legislature will convene Monday; the House of Representatives at 1 p.m., and the Senate at 1:30 p.m.

It might also be a good idea to point out that our lawmaking body is estimated by a conservationist to be composed of a hefty five politicians who know the differences between a wood duck and a woodchuck. A smattering know the difference, and some of the legislators who know not



'Bayou' Bill Scifres
OUTDOORS

sometimes listen to their wisdom. But generally, they are pretty much fogged on the issues involved in wildlife management.

Likewise, some of those charged with wildlife management jobs are fogged on that, too. It seems, to conservationists, that legislators hailing from the boonies know more about management of natural resources than do their city brethren.

To their credit, most of the wildlife managers have a pretty good handle on how deer-pen hunting should be handled. But too much water has crossed the dam — oops, I mean greenbacks have changed hands, a matter of record — for that to matter.

Like it or not, neither the Republicans nor the Democrats can be blamed for our foibles. And I suppose, if an independent may some day be elected governor, the situation will survive.

Elect a governor, and he immediately starts giving political cronies state jobs. It is a way of life in our state. And in this case, resources often suffer. State government is our largest employer, it is said.

Oh, yes, deer-pen hunting. I was going to spill the beans on

deer-pen hunting. Well, my crystal ball for the issue is somewhat fogged at this reading. But it now appears the legislature will vault back into the picture sort of off-again, on-again.

What is being somewhat proposed by some stalwarts at the Department of Natural Resources is a bill that would include some of the ancient and forgotten verbiage from last year's unsuccessful legislation.

That bill, championed by Rep. John Ulmer, one of those in-the-know legislators, suggested that we should give game-farm operators seven years to recoup possible losses and go back to some legitimate business.

Currently, the Department of Natural Resources is rather locked into a plan that would

give deer-pen operators 12 years to get out of the deer-pen business. Of course, some other features of that old legislation may be considered, too.

The way I see it, we would all be better off (especially the resources) if the legislators would step back and tell the Department of Natural Resources and its satellite, the Division of Fish and Wildlife, to forget politics and do its job, firing those who can't comply.

"Oh, you'll never get the legislature to give in on passing the buck on management of wildlife to those who are trained resource managers," you might say.

Well, we didn't think the lawmakers would give up setting hunting seasons or establishing price schedules for hunting/fish-

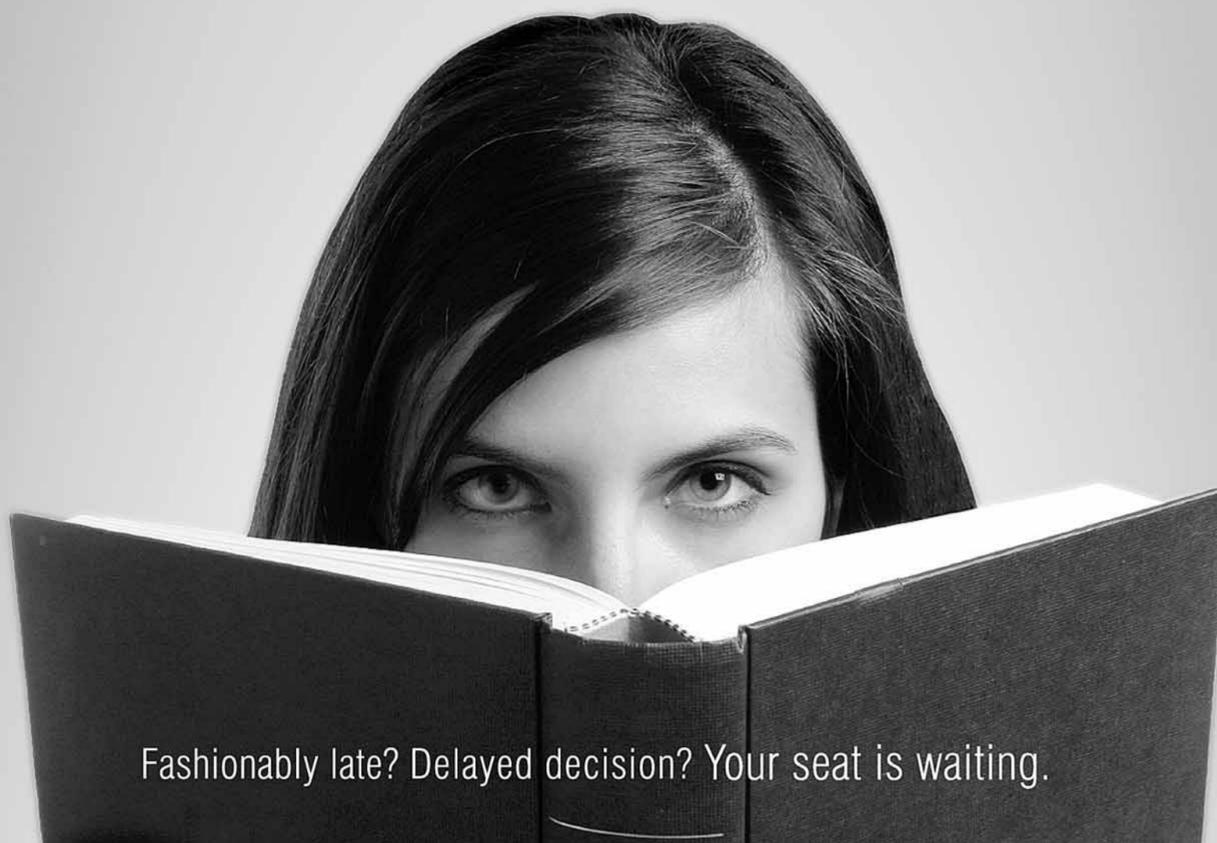
ing license prices, either. They did both for many years. But they did. They gave both up.

Right to hunt

You also probably will see the so-called "right-to-hunt" bill back in the general assembly this year with those who hunt, fish and pursue wild game squarely behind the author, the aforementioned Ulmer. It passed two years ago, but it is required to pass again after an election.

It gives those who hunt, fish and pursue wild critters the right to do so.

"Bayou" Bill Scifres' outdoors column appears Saturdays in the Daily Journal. Comments can be sent to P.O. Box 699, Franklin, IN 46131.



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