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Holdovers McGwire, Rice, Gossage again on Hall ballot

Associated Press

NEW YORK -- Tim Raines and David Justice head 11 first-time candidates on the baseball writers' 2008 Hall of Fame ballot, joining Mark McGwire, Rich Gossage, Jim Rice and 11 other holdovers.

McGwire, his candidacy hurt by suspicions of steroids use, was selected on just 23.5 percent of ballots when he was eligible for the first time in 2007.

When Cal Ripken Jr. and Tony Gwynn were elected in January, Gossage fell 21 votes shy of the necessary 75 percent and Rice was 63 votes short.

Rice is on the ballot for the 14th time and Gossage for the ninth. Players can be on the Baseball Writers' Association of America ballot for up to 15 years.

Gossage's percentage increased from 64.6 in 2006 to 71.2 in 2007, while Rice's declined from 64.6 to 63.5. The highest percentage for a player who wasn't elected in a later year was 63.4 by Gil Hodges in 1983, his final time on the ballot.

Raines was a seven-time All-Star who played 23 seasons and batted .294 with 2,605 hits and 808 steals, fifth on the career list. He was the 1986 NL batting champion.

Justice was the 1990 NL Rookie of the Year and a three-time All-Star. He had a .279 average, 305 homers and 1,017 RBIs in 14 seasons.

Brady Anderson, Rod Beck, Shawon Dunston, Chuck Finley, Travis Fryman, Chuck Knoblauch, Robb Nen, Jose Rijo and Todd Stottlemire also are first-time candidates. The five-year waiting rule was waived for Beck, who died June 23.

Other holdovers (with their 2007 vote percentages) include Andre Dawson (56.7), Bert Blyleven (47.7), Lee Smith (39.8), Jack Morris (37.1), Tommy John (22.9), Dave Concepcion (13.6), Alan Trammell (13.4), Dave Parker (11.4), Don Mattingly (9.9), Dale Murphy (9.2) and Harold Baines (5.3).

Rijo retired after the 1995 season and appeared on the 2001 Hall ballot, when he received one vote. He then returned to the major leagues and pitched for Cincinnati in 2001 and 2002, making him eligible to go back on the ballot.

Reporters who have been in the BBWAA for 10 or more consecutive years are eligible to vote, and the totals will be announced Jan. 8. Rickey Henderson tops the players who will be eligible for the first time on the 2009 ballot. Results of balloting for managers, umpires and executives by the newly reconstituted Veterans Committee will be announced Dec. 3 at the winter meetings.