

The Greatest Hall Of Fame

Becoming Enshrined in New Jerusalem

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I have a question for you: What do the cities of Charlotte, NC; Canton, OH; Springfield, MA; Eveleth, MN; and Cooperstown, NY; have in common? Canton and Cooperstown probably gave it away: They are the host cities of the five major American professional sports halls of fame. Charlotte, NC has NASCAR; Canton, OH has professional football; Springfield, MA has professional basketball; Eveleth, MN (the one you probably did not know of all of them) has the National Hockey League's Hall of Fame; and Cooperstown, NY has the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame.

All the major sports leagues and associations have a museum complex where they showcase the growth of their sports and the greatest players, coaches, executives, and teams in their histories. It is the goal of every kid who aspires to play in the Majors to one day be inducted into his sport's Hall of Fame. Very few realize that dream.

We will concentrate on the Pro Football Hall of Fame for a while. The enshrinement (no mere induction for the National Football League; it is an enshrinement) of players/coaches/owners/executives into the Pro Football Hall of Fame will be taking place soon, on August 5. That made me think of this subject. This year there are six former players (Morten Andersen, Terrell Davis, Kenny Easley, Jason Taylor, LaDainian Tomlinson, and Kurt Warner) and one owner (Dallas Cowboys, Jerry Jones), who will be enshrined in the Hall of Fame there in Canton. All very deserving enshrinees.

They were put through a rigorous selection process they had to go through to become Hall of Fame enshrinees. It started with a long list of nominees, which was eventually whittled down to 25. Then from there, after another round of discussion and voting, to 15 modern-day players and coaches. Then a Senior Committee of older (retired) ballplayers adds two more historic players (those from before the era of the modern day) and a "contributor" (an executive or owner or even a journalist that they feel should be in the Hall of

Fame). Then at the Selection Meeting, the Selection Committee (comprised of 48 football media members, one from each city that has a team, plus several more) vote first on the historic players and contributor. In order to pass the section, each one of these three has to get 80% of the votes for approval. Then the modern-era players are voted on in three stages: The list drops from 15 to 10 to 5 names over these three votes, and then the remaining five are voted on individually for membership into the Hall of Fame. So, lots of voting going on in this Selection Committee to finally pick the ones who will be—not inducted—enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

You can see that it is quite difficult to get elected. You have to pass the bar many times in order to be elected. So it is a great honor that they are finally named to the Hall of Fame.

You might wonder what they get for this honor. Do they get royalties? Do they get some kind of cash award? Do they get a new car? It may surprise you, but they actually receive very little for being enshrined in the Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame pays for the trip to Canton for the Enshrinement Ceremony, including deluxe accommodations, and they eat really well. The enshrinee is given a Hall of Fame mustard yellow jacket, and they also later receive a Hall of Fame. His bronze bust and a plaque of his accomplishments are placed in the Hall itself in the museum, along with perhaps a jersey or a pair of shoes or a helmet or maybe something that is significant to him is also placed there. And that's about it, other than the honor of being selected.

There is no money given to the enshrinee. They do not get even a small cut of the memorabilia profits from the things sold in the Hall of Fame gift shop, even if it contains their names and likenesses. They do not even get a penny out of them. To most of them, it's all about the honor of being selected.

We could say that this honor—of being enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame—is the football player's or coach's form of immortality. As long as the Hall of Fame exists, as long as football is played, their names will shine as the luminaries of their sport. People in future generations—fans; analysts; historians—will be comparing those Hall of Famers to players of their day,

wondering what it was like to see them play in person. Were they really that good? After we have seen how rigorous their selection process was, yes, they were really that good.

It reminds me of what Paul states in I Corinthians 9:25:

I Corinthians 9:25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate [or exercises self-control or self-discipline] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

We could say that our calling and conversion has put us on the first ballot for *God's* Hall of Fame, and all we need to do—and I know this sounds a bit simple—is to go on to perfection and endure to the end, and we will be enshrined among the firstfruits of God, the “greats” of Christianity.

And more than the Pro Football Hall of Famers, we will receive infinitely, eternally more than they. The Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 2-3 lists our rewards for faithful endurance and obedience:

- We get to eat from the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God;
- We will not be hurt by the second death;
- We will be given a white stone on which our new name is written, which no one else knows;
- We will receive power over the nations and the morning star;
- We will be clothed in white garments, and Christ will confess our names before the Father;
- We will be made a pillar in God's Temple and never leave it, and Christ will write on us the name of God, the name of New Jerusalem, and His own name; and
- We will sit with Christ on His throne.

This begs the question: How is our Hall of Fame career going? Are we living up to the hype? Are we performing up to our abilities for the Coach and the Owner? Are we playing worthy of the high draft pick They spent on us? Are we gaining good yardage when we are out in the field? Are we scoring

touchdowns? Or are we dropping passes? Fumbling the ball? Missing our blocks? Finding ourselves punting way too often? Are we losing games because of dumb mistakes?

It's just an extended analogy. It breaks down after a while, but it's worth considering. Are we putting in the effort to reach God's Hall of Fame—not the very finite one in Canton or the one in Cooperstown, or even the one here in Charlotte, but the one that will soon open in the New Jerusalem?