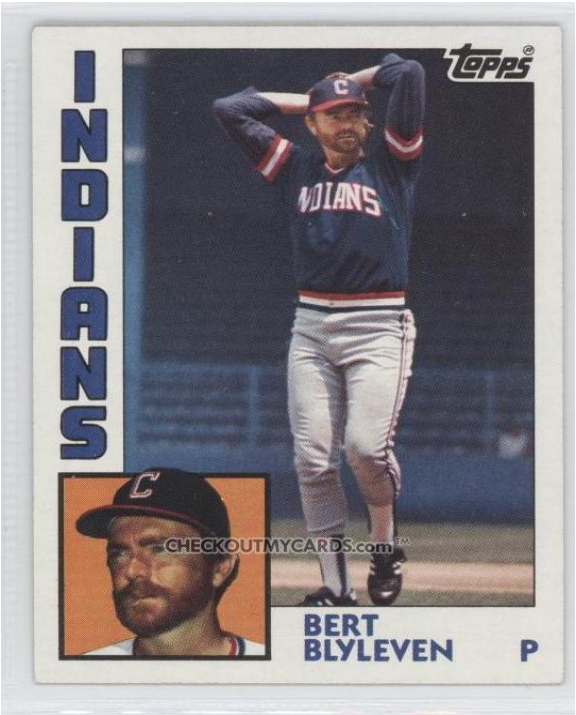


We’re seeing some nice media coverage of the gracious duo who will be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown next month. And Roberto Alomar and Bert Blyleven will each enter the Hall having toiled for our Indians. The memory of Robbie is fresher, so let’s take a minute to recall the pitcher who was the ace of the staff at old Cleveland Municipal Stadium in the early 1980s.

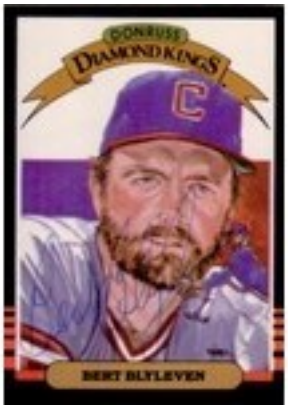
There are differences of opinion on whether Bert Blyleven should be enshrined in the Hall. My take on this is that among those who care a great deal, these differences lie on the fault line of fans who ‘feel’ what's right vs. those who ‘think’ they know the truth. To me, this seems similar to political debates. Let’s take a look.

The "Blyleven does not belong" crowd

They *feel* he was never a dominant major league pitcher. He never had the impact expected of a premier pitcher of his era (1970-1992). Sure, he would have been a nice #2 or #3 starter on any contending team. The naysayers will note he won 20 games only once, and even that season he lost 17. He never led the league in categories such as ERA or wins. He never won a Cy Young award. He finished his career with 287 wins- worthy of respect, but this was only 37 more games than he lost. If he looks like a Hall-of-Famer now, it’s partly because his era of eligibility falls in between two waves of top pitchers. He retired after Tom Seaver, Steve Carlton,

Jim Palmer and Nolan Ryan - and before Roger Clemens, Greg Maddux, Randy Johnson, Pedro Martinez, Tom Glavine and John Smoltz. Basically, right now it's Blyleven and Jack Morris. Bert Blyleven gave up a record 50 home runs in one season, for crying out loud- and allowed 46 the very next year!

The "put him in the Hall already" folks



They *think* it's high time justice prevailed, as the numbers speak for themselves. His ERA was better than the league average in 17 seasons of his career, and in 13 seasons, he had an ERA under 3.50. His career ERA was 3.31, and he had a 2.47 postseason ERA to boot (and whatever happened to a player's postseason resume influencing his legacy, by the way?). His statistics were favorable to premier contemporaries such as Ryan- this was due to the low number of walks issued by Blyleven. His strikeout:walk ratio was around 3:1- this contributed to his low ERAs. He struck out 3701 batters- that's in the top five, all-time. He'd led his league in strikeouts. He led his league in shutouts three times (and is ninth all-time for career shutouts). In fact, in total, Bert Blyleven threw 60 shutouts. S-I-X-T-Y. He threw 242 complete games. (Nope, that's not a typo. Kind of tough to average over 10 CG/season for that long if you aren't an exceptional pitcher over your entire career. And his career overlapped the current era of managers limiting the number of pitches of the starters). He led his league in innings pitched in two separate seasons, back-to-back. He was a Comeback Player of the Year once, and he threw a no-hitter early in his career. He pitched his best after the All-Star game during many seasons; this no doubt impacted the number of times he was selected to appear in the Midsummer Classic.

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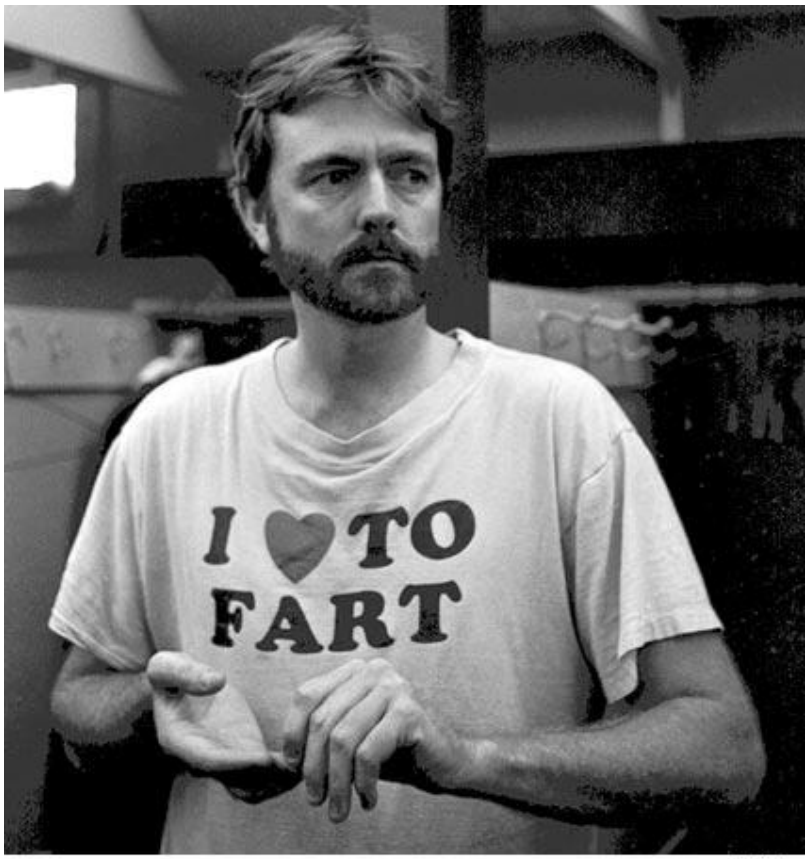

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