If there's nothing else on TV at night, I'll go search out Baseball Tonight and turn it on. I don't care about the highlights of National League teams. I don't care about who hit home runs. I don't care about whatever else gets air time because ESPN feels the need to create stories. Occasionally, I'll watch to see what they have to say about the Indians, especially if they're playing really well or really poorly. But, like most people, I care to see the Web Gems.

Some of the plays that are made in the field are nearly beyond comprehension. Diving catches, barehand grab-and-throws, cannons from right field to nail a runner at third, short hop picks at third, and all kinds of other scenarios that make up terrific defensive plays.

Certain plays at shortshop will remind me of probably the best fielder I will ever see in my lifetime – Omar Vizquel. What that man could do with the glove, or without it, was simply unnatural. His range, his awareness, and even his arm strength, left fans in cities across Major League Baseball in awe. The quality that might have been Vizquel's best in the field was how he made difficult plays routine.

Fielding, Gold Gloves, and highlight reel plays aside, Vizquel was actually a pretty decent hitter. Considering where he came from, an all-glove, no bat player in the Seattle Mariners organization, we're looking at a guy who really worked hard to improve in the batter's box. He also had good speed and was a very intelligent base stealer. Really, outside of having power, Vizquel was a pretty complete player. It's amazing to think that he had a .241 average in the minors and still had a 24-year career in the bigs.

This past week, Omar Vizquel announced that he would retire after the season. I've always argued that Vizquel should be a Hall of Famer, though, admittedly, I'm biased. I thought for this week's View from the Porch, in honor of Omar, I'd take a look at his career credentials and see if he truly is worthy of a plaque in Cooperstown.

On Omar's hitting alone, it's hard to consider him a Hall of Famer. In fact, all numbers aside, the average totals for a Hall of Fame hitter are as follows: .303/.376/.462/.838, 2399 hits, 211 HR, and 65 WAR/pos, which stands for wins above replacement player for position players.

Vizquel is clearly below all of the average numbers except for hits. Baseball-Reference lists his WAR at 40.8, which is good, but well below the average for Hall of Famers. The only reason I reference WAR here is because the media members have to vote Vizquel into the Hall of Fame and some are more sabermetrically-inclined than others.

However, if we're just comparing Vizquel to the average Hall of Famer, we're clearly doing him a disservice. He's not the type of hitter to belt 40 HR a season, drive in 120, and hit over .300. In his 24-year career, he finished one season over .300, hitting .333 in 1999.

It's unfortunate that Omar won't play long enough to get 3000 hits, as that would make him nearly a shoe-in for the Hall. Only Pete Rose and Rafael Palmeiro amassed 3000 hits in their careers and failed to get into Cooperstown, though we know why that is. Rose is banned from baseball and Palmeiro was proven a steroid-using liar. However, let's assume that he gets 20 more hits this season. That's a reasonable assumption to make as he has one hit for every two games played and is playing once every 2.67 games. That puts him around 60 games for the season, and with 28 played thus far, that would give him about 16 more hits, but I'll give him the benefit of the doubt.

At 2875 hits, Vizquel would have more hits than Babe Ruth (22 seasons), Brooks Robinson (23), Ken Griffey (22), Lou Gehrig (18), Joe Morgan (22), and countless others who are in the Hall of Fame. Considering that Vizquel has been a part-time player for the last four or five

seasons, there's no reason that his additional few years should have voters souring on his hit totals.

What about his fielding? Where does that rank? In terms of dWAR, defensive wins above replacement player, Vizquel is 12th all-time at 28.1. Ozzie Smith is the career leader with 43.4. Brooks Robinson is third at 38.8. Luis Aparicio checks in sixth at 31.6. Gold Glove wise, Vizquel has won 11 of them, though there's probably some dissention within the baseball media community on how much Gold Gloves actually mean. In some cases, they're based solely on reputation and not on performance. Obviously, with Vizquel, we know that his are based on performance, but the overall uncertainty for the award could render Gold Gloves useless in Vizquel's voting.

The safest way to make a case for Vizquel is to look at the comparable players. There are two of them in the Hall of Fame who are considered the cream of the crop for slick fielding shortstops with average offensive skills. Both Ozzie Smith and Luis Aparicio are very, very similar players to Vizquel and both of them

Of course, there's also Vizquel's childhood idol, and the reason he wore #13, Dave Concepcion who is not in the Hall of Fame.

Let's do a side-by-side comparison of these four players and try to make a case for Vizquel that way.

Player:
Vizquel
Smith
Aparicio

Concepcion

Games:

2936

2573

2599

2488

At Bats:

10494

9396

10230

8723

Hits:

2855

2460

2677

2326

Runs:

1437

1257

1335

993

2B:

451

402

394

389

HR:

80

28

83

101

RBI:

946

793

791

950

SB:

402

580

506

321

AVG:

.272

.262

.262

.267

OBP:

.337

.337

.311

.322

SLG:

.352

.328

.343

.357

OPS:

.689

.666

.654

.679

dWAR:

28.1

43.4

31.6

20.9

Gold Gloves:
11
13
9
5

% of Vote:
N/A
91.7%
84.6%
16.9%

Looking solely at the numbers, we have to consider if Omar Vizquel is more like Ozzie Smith

and Luis Aparicio or just a really, really good player like his hero Dave Concepcion. For whatever reason, Concepcion wasn't viewed as favorably as his counterparts. Consider that part of the reason may just be that when Concepcion was playing the second half of his career, Ozzie Smith had jumped onto the scene and was scooping up the Gold Gloves and the accolades. Concepcion did get double digit percentages in voting from 1996-2008, but was never close to the required 75% for election.

Another comparable I neglected to mention was Phil Rizzuto. Rizzuto may be the most similar player to Vizquel in terms of statistics, though he did miss three seasons to fight the good fight in World War II.

Jay Jaffe of SI.com wrote up a piece this past week on why Vizquel is not and should not be a Hall of Famer . As the article is written, Jaffe uses the relatively new WAR stat to go along with a creation of his own that uses "peak WAR", or the player's wins above replacement player during the peak seven seasons of his career, to create an average he creatively calls the "JAWS" or Jaffe WARP score. By Jaffe's calculations, Vizquel would be the fourth-worst shortstop to be in the Hall of Fame if he were elected and decidedly below the average HoF SS at 62.9.

Ultimately, what the Vizquel Hall of Fame argument will come down to is what each individual writer values and how they see Vizquel's career. Nobody will deny that Vizquel is a great player who has had a great career. But, there is bound to be some dissention on if it is a Hall of Fame career. For media members who vote using modern statistics and sabermetrics, no, Vizquel is not worthy. For media members who evaluate who is already in the Hall and view Vizquel in the

same light as Ozzie Smith and Luis Aparicio, then he should have a bust in Cooperstown. He's also a well-liked guy, who has been good to reporters, and that can sway a voter on the fence.

Some writers will also discredit the offensive production Omar had because of the era in which it came. That's not to say that anybody is implying that Vizquel took any sort of steroids or PEDs, but the prime of his career in the 90s took place during one of the best offensive periods in baseball history. While it may or may not have affected Vizquel's production, you know there's an asterisk applied to anybody who played in that era.

Given the writers that I follow or Twitter or read regularly, I would deduce that Vizquel will fall short of the required 75% of the vote and never get into the Hall of Fame. Is it a travesty that he probably won't get in? Not really, if you compare him to the shortstops who are already in. But, for Clevelanders, who have always thought the world of Omar Vizquel, it will serve as an injustice against one of the best players we will ever see.