



# The Huntsville Times

## Mincher, Holloway among 8 inductees to Hall of Fame

Sunday, December 02, 2007

By **JOHN PRUETT**

Times Sports Editor [john.pruett@htimes.com](mailto:john.pruett@htimes.com)

Multi-talented duo to be inducted on May 31

Don Mincher and Condredge Holloway, two sons of Huntsville, have been elected to the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.

Mincher, the president of the Southern League of professional baseball, and Holloway, an assistant athletic director at the University of Tennessee, join six others in the Class of 2008.

They'll be honored at the 40th Alabama Sports Hall of Fame induction banquet in Birmingham on May 31, 2008.

The six other new members of the Hall of Fame include former Auburn linebacker Gregg Carr, former Alabama defensive back Don McNeal, former UAB basketball star Oliver Robinson, pro golfer Steve Lowery, and two former football stars of yesteryear: Sim Byrd of Troy and Jerry Wilson of Auburn.

The eight bring the total membership of the ASHOF to 275 since the inaugural induction class in 1969.

"I'm so thankful that I was blessed with the talent to play the great game of baseball at the highest level and to be a part of the game for all these years," Mincher said. "And I'm so thankful to be recognized in this special way.

"I've thought a lot these last couple of days about this honor and about going in the same class with Condredge. It's strange. We both played all the sports in high school. I wound up choosing baseball over football and he choose football over baseball. It goes to show that you can be a success in life whatever direction you choose. With hard work and perseverance, you can make it either way."

"I'm really happy for Don and for myself, too," said Holloway, who was named to the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame in 1993 and the Canadian Football Hall of Fame in 1998. "I respect it and I'm humbled.

"I only wish my dad had lived to see it."

Mincher, born in Huntsville on June 24, 1938, was a three-sport standout at Butler High School in the mid-1950s. He turned down a football scholarship to Alabama for a career in professional baseball and went on to play for five different clubs in the major leagues from 1960-72.

A slugging first baseman, he hit 200 home runs and compiled a lifetime batting average of .249 and 643 RBI in 1,400 games. He played for five clubs - Washington, Seattle, Minnesota, California and Oakland - and appeared in two World Series and two All-Star games.

Mincher was the first general manager of the Huntsville Stars in 1985 and later bought the club with a group of local investors. He was named interim president of the Southern League in 2000 and elevated to president in 2001.

Holloway, the son of a former high school coach, was born in Huntsville on Jan. 25, 1954. An all-state player in football, baseball and basketball at Lee High School, he turned down a major league baseball bonus to accept a football scholarship at Tennessee, where he became the first African-American quarterback in the Southeastern Conference.

The SEC Sophomore of the Year in 1972 and the All-SEC quarterback in '72, Holloway went on to play 13 seasons in the Canadian Football League, setting numerous passing records. He was elected to the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame in 1993 and the CFL Hall of Fame in 1998.

Holloway worked in the front office for the Huntsville Channel Cats hockey team before returning to Knoxville as a member of Phillip Fulmer's administrative football staff.

Mincher and Holloway had been finalists on the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame balloting for a number of years.

"Throughout those early years after I retired from baseball in '72 and on into the '80s, I felt I might get into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame some day," Mincher said. "As time went by and it didn't happen, I'm afraid I began feeling a little negative about it.

"Then about 10 years ago, I began realizing how selfish it was to feel that way. I'd been so honored to be inducted into the Athletic Boosters Club's Hall of Fame along with Milton Frank, and getting into the Madison County Athletic Hall of Fame was one of the highlights of my life.

"I was selfishly worried about the state Hall of Fame, but I finally just came to understand that it was a waste of time to feel that way. So I got the selfishness out of me. Instead it became a situation of, 'If it's to be, it'll be.' Now here, late in life, I'm feel thankful and blessed."

Holloway's thoughts turned to his father, Condredge Sr., who died last year.

"This would've meant even more if it'd happened while my dad was still alive," Holloway said. "He was the one who talked about it and dreamed about it the most.

"I'm just old school, I guess. But this was my feeling all these years: I thought if you just went out and played the game and your accomplishments were enough, it'd happen if it was meant to be. I just didn't know how the game was played.

"But now that it's here, I'm elated and really happy. I've got nothing but good feelings. No negativity at all. I remember my dad used to tell me that when I get to play quarterback at Tennessee, the things you do are important because you've got to make it a positive situation for the next guy who comes along. You've got to make it a positive because of what it'll mean for the future.

"I was always at ease with that. I still am."

Asked how this honor compares to his other honors, Holloway said: "Even after having some time to think about it, I don't quite know how to answer that.

"I know this is a big deal because it's my home state .But I also know it's about a lot more people than me. It's about all those guys I grew up with, going all the way back to the Lakewood YMCA, all the way back to high school at Lee. It's about all those players and coaches and friends and all those guys who were a part of it when Lee retired my football number this season."

Reflecting on his lifelong love of baseball, Mincher recalled the day in 1956 when he passed on a football scholarship to Alabama and signed a pro baseball contract with the Chicago White Sox.

"My dad sat down with me," he said, "and he asked, 'Don, do you really love football, or do you love baseball more?' And I said, 'I truly love baseball more.' And he said, 'Do what you need to do. Follow your heart.' That's what I did, and it has been a wonderful life."

He didn't really know whether he could play the game at the major league level until his first game at

Yankee Stadium in 1960. "Whitey Ford was the pitcher, and I hit a home run. I don't know how, but I did. After that, I knew I could play up there."

Throughout his career in the game, first as a player and later as a minor league general manager, then an owner, then as the president of the league, he always flew by the seat of his pants, Mincher said.

"Everything I've done, I've had on-the-job training," he said. "When I first left Huntsville in '56, I knew nothing about the game of baseball except how to swing a bat. But I learned. When I retired and came home and opened a trophy store, Pat and I learned to be successful by 'OJT.' When Larry Schmittou brought the Stars to Huntsville and suddenly made me the general manager, I learned very quickly, the same way.

"Same thing when I became the owner of the Stars, with the help of a group of local people who'll always mean the world to me. Same thing when I was named interim president of the Southern League, and then president.

"And now, late in life, along comes this honor from the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame," Mincher said. "You know, this wouldn't have happened if I had remained selfish. Selfishness is an ugly word. Thank God I got over it.

"Next May is going to be very exciting, not only because of this honor but also because four of my grandchildren are going to be graduating from one place or another. This is about my family and my church family.

"This is all about being blessed with a great wife and three wonderful children and six of the most gorgeous grandchildren in the world."

© 2007 The Huntsville Times

© 2007 al.com All Rights Reserved.