Hall of Fame slugger Mike Schmidt said that comes with the territory.

NEW YORK (AP) -- Nobody was happier about the Hall of Fame shutout than the Hall of Famers themselves.

Goose Gossage, Al Kaline, Dennis Eckersley and others are in no rush to open the door to Cooperstown for anyone linked to steroids.

Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Sammy Sosa: Keep `em all out of our club.

"If they let these guys in ever - at any point - it's a big black eye for the Hall and for baseball," Gossage said in a phone interview with The Associated Press. "It's like telling our kids you can cheat, you can do whatever you want, and it's not going to matter."

For only the second time in 42 years, baseball writers failed to elect anyone to the Hall of Fame on Wednesday, sending a firm signal that stars of the Steroids Era will be held to a different standard.

All the awards and accomplishments collected over storied careers by Bonds, Clemens and Sosa - all eligible for the first time - could not offset suspicions those exploits were artificially boosted by performance-enhancing drugs.

"I'm kind of glad that nobody got in this year," Kaline said. "I feel honored to be in the Hall of Fame. And I would've felt a little uneasy sitting up there on the stage, listening to some of these new guys talk about how great they were."

Gossage went even further.

"I think the steroids guys that are under suspicion got too many votes," he said. "I don't know why they're making this such a question and why there's so much debate. To me, they cheated. Are we going to reward these guys?"

Not this year, at least.

Bonds received just 36.2 percent of the vote and Clemens 37.6 in totals announced by the Hall and the Baseball Writers' Association of America, both well short of the 75 percent needed for election - yet still too close for Gossage's taste. Sosa, eighth on the career home run list, got 12.5 percent.

"Wow! Baseball writers make a statement," Eckersley wrote on Twitter. "Feels right."

The results keep the sport's career home run leader (Bonds) and most decorated pitcher (Clemens) out of Cooperstown - for now. Bonds, Clemens and Sosa have up to 14 more years on the writers' ballot to gain baseball's highest honor.

Bonds, baseball's only seven-time MVP, hit 762 home runs - including a record 73 in 2001. He

has denied knowingly using performance-enhancing drugs and was convicted of one count of obstruction of justice for giving an evasive answer in 2003 to a grand jury investigating PEDs.

Clemens, the game's lone seven-time Cy Young Award winner, is third in career strikeouts (4,672) and ninth in wins (354). He was acquitted of perjury charges stemming from congressional testimony during which he denied using PEDs.

"If you don't think Roger Clemens cheated, you're burying your head in the sand," Gossage said.

Sosa, who finished with 609 home runs, was among those who tested positive in MLB's 2003 anonymous survey, The New York Times reported in 2009. He told a congressional committee in 2005 that he never took illegal performance-enhancing drugs. He also was caught using a corked bat during his career.

"What really gets me is seeing how some of these players associated with drugs have jumped over many of the greats in our game," Kaline said. "Numbers mean a lot in baseball, maybe more so than in any other sport. And going back to Babe Ruth, and players like Harmon Killebrew and Frank Robinson and Willie Mays, seeing people jump over them with 600, 700 home runs, I don't like to see that.

"I don't know how great some of these players up for election would've been without drugs. But to me, it's cheating," he added. "Numbers are important, but so is integrity and character. Some of these guys might get in someday. But for a year or two, I'm glad they didn't."

Gossage, noting that cyclist Lance Armstrong was stripped of his seven Tour de France titles following allegations that he used performance-enhancing drugs, believes baseball should go just as far. He thinks the record book should be overhauled, taking away the accomplishments of players like Bonds, Sosa, Rafael Palmeiro and Mark McGwire - who has admitted using steroids and human growth hormone during his playing days.

McGwire, 10th on the career home run chart, received 16.9 percent of the vote on his seventh

Hall try, down from 19.5 last year.

"I don't know if baseball knows how to deal with this at all," Gossage said. "Why don't they strip these guys of all these numbers? You've got to suffer the consequences. You get caught cheating on a test, you get expelled from school."

Juan Marichal is one Hall of Famer who doesn't see it that way. The former pitcher believes Bonds, Clemens and Sosa belong in Cooperstown.

"I think that they have been unfair to guys who were never found guilty of anything," Marichal said. "Their stats define them as immortals. That's the reality and that cannot be denied."

The BBWAA election rules say "voting shall be based upon the player's record, playing ability, integrity, sportsmanship, character, and contributions to the team(s) on which the player played."

While much of the focus this year was on Bonds, Clemens and Sosa, every other player with Cooperstown credentials was denied, too.

Craig Biggio, 20th on the career list with 3,060 hits, came the closest. He was chosen on 68.2 percent of the 569 ballots, 39 shy of election. Among other first-year eligibles, Mike Piazza received 57.8 percent and Curt Schilling 38.8. Jack Morris topped holdovers with 67.7 percent.

None of those players have been publicly linked to PED use, so it's difficult to determine whether they fell short due to suspicion, their stats - or the overall stench of the era they played in.

"What we're witnessing here is innocent people paying for the sinners," Marichal said.

Hall of Fame slugger Mike Schmidt said that comes with the territory.

"It's not news that Bonds, Clemens, Sosa, Palmeiro, and McGwire didn't get in, but that they received hardly any consideration at all. The real news is that Biggio and Piazza were well under the 75 percent needed," Schmidt wrote in an email to the AP.

"Curt Schilling made a good point. Everyone was guilty. Either you used PEDs, or you did nothing to stop their use. This generation got rich. Seems there was a price to pay."

At ceremonies in Cooperstown on July 28, the only inductees will be three men who died more than 70 years ago: Yankees owner Jacob Ruppert, umpire Hank O'Day and barehanded catcher Deacon White. They were chosen last month by the 16-member panel considering individuals from the era before integration in 1947.