

Brand new MLB Hall of Fame tradition begins

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. (AP) — On the day another Hall of Fame tradition began, Dave Van Horne, Bill Conlin and Roland Hemond were the center of attention.

The three were honored Saturday in a ceremony at Doubleday Field. Van Horne received the Ford C. Frick Award for his contributions in broadcasting, Conlin was given the J.G. Taylor Spink Award for sports writing, and Hemond the Buck O'Neil Lifetime Achievement Award. It's the first time the awards have not been given on induction Sunday.

"It's a little bit overwhelming," Hemond said. "I'm very happy and humble to be getting the Buck O'Neil Award. I was fortunate to meet Buck on several occasions, and he made a lasting impression upon me. It's beyond my wildest dreams that I'm here today."

Nearby, Conlin talked about the

lity of other great baseball writers honored with the Spink Award.

"I got a lot of tough love from Dick Young," Conlin said, referring to the late, longtime New York sports writer and Hall of Famer.

Van Horne still had trouble expressing his thanks for the honor.

"I said at the time that when I got the call from (Hall of Fame President) Jeff Idelson that the call left me overwhelmed, humbled and very excited. And that's exactly how I feel on this day," Van Horne said. "One of the things that makes this so special is that I'm going to share this with about 30-35 members of the Van Horne extended family."

"And when I look at that list, the other 34 names on that list, it's just mind-boggling that when the (Hall of Fame) Yearbook comes out next year I'll look down and see the past winners of the Ford C. Frick Award and

opposite 2011 I'll be looking at my name. I still haven't gotten my head around that."

The late afternoon featured an inductee press conference held on the Clark Sports Center's gymnasium floor, where the trio of Bert Blyleven, Roberto Alomar and Pat Gillick answered questions from the assembled media. They will be inducted on Sunday.

"I'm very honored," Gillick said. "Hopefully, we're going to get some more people out of management into the Hall of Fame. I feel like that I represent the guys in the trenches — the scouts, the player development people, people below the radar that don't get all the publicity but do all the heavy lifting, a lot of the grunt work. So that's why I'm really humbled and honored to receive this award."

Blyleven spent time talking about his late father, a very important per-

son in his life.

"My dad's here, as far as his spirit. I feel him," Blyleven said. "So maybe he's not here body-wise, but he's here spirit-wise. He's the one in my speech tomorrow I'm going to thank a lot because he's the one that mentored me. He introduced me to the game of baseball. He's here."

Alomar shared his thoughts on being the first Hall of Famer whose image will feature a Toronto Blue Jays cap on his bronze plaque.

"It's an honor to be inducted wearing a Blue Jays cap," Alomar said. "When I was a little boy I never dreamed that one day I'd make it here to the Hall of Fame. And I played five years with the Toronto Blue Jays. Those are the best five years of my career. Wearing that cap means a lot to me."



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