

Gil Brandt and Pat Bowlen have been nominated

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CANTON [David Long Jersey](#) , Ohio (AP) — for the Pro Football Hall of Fame as contributors to the game. Currently a consultant to the NFL and one of the key figures in the staging of the draft, Brandt was one of the key contributors to the building of the Dallas Cowboys. As vice president of player personnel from 1960-89, Brandt helped Dallas grow into one of the most powerful and popular sports franchises in America. Among the Cowboys' innovations were extensive use of computers and deeply scouting the historically black colleges for talent. "This is, without question, one of the greatest things that have happened in my life," Brandt said Thursday. Bowlen, the longtime owner of the Denver Broncos, is the only owner in NFL history with 300 overall victories during his first 30 seasons. Under his leadership, the Broncos had a sensational run of success <http://www.losangelesramsteaonline.com/bobby-evans-jersey>

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, winning three Super Bowls and seven conference titles. "This is an exciting day for our family and the Broncos fans who have been so supportive of Pat Bowlen for the Pro Football Hall of Fame," Bowlen's family said in a statement. "Pat would be the first to say it's not just about him but a credit to the many players, coaches and executives he worked with over the years. We're thankful to the contributor committee for recognizing the incredible impact Pat's had on the NFL. "As we look forward to the final vote, our family also congratulates Gil Brandt on his well-deserved nomination." The contributors committee is comprised of nine members of the overall selection committee. The 2019 contributor nominees were reduced to 10 semifinalists. Then, on a rotating basis, five of the nine members of the committee met at the Hall of Fame to discuss each of the nominees. The category is for individuals who made outstanding contributions to professional football in capacities other than playing or coaching. To be elected to the hall, Bowlen and Brandt each must receive 80 percent voting support by the entire 48-member selection committee in February on the day before the Super Bowl. Previously, the senior committee nominated former Kansas City Chiefs defensive back Johnny Robinson. BOSTON (AP) — The party's over for Rob Gronkowski. Then again, it might just be getting started. The New England Patriots' fun-loving

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, touchdown-spike tight end announced Sunday that he is retiring from the NFL after nine mostly dominant, Super Bowl-filled seasons. The four-time All-Pro posted his decision on Instagram , saying that a few months shy of his 30th birthday "it's time to move forward and move forward with a big smile." "It all started at 20 years old on stage at the NFL draft when my dream came true, and now here I am about to turn 30 in a few months with a decision I feel is the biggest of my life so far," Gronkowski wrote in his post. "I will be retiring from the game of football today." Drew Rosenhaus, Gronkowski's agent, confirmed his client's decision to retire. The playmaking tight end, who turns 30 in May, leaves as a three-time Super Bowl champion who established himself as one of the most dominant players at his position and one of Tom Brady's favorite targets. His personality — on and off the field — was as big as his biceps

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, and he always seemed to be the life of the party. "In the nine years that I have known Rob Gronkowski, I have never known him to have a bad day," Patriots owner Robert Kraft said in a statement. "He always has a youthful exuberance about him and is a joy to be around. But Gronkowski has been dogged in recent seasons by back, knee, ankle and arm injuries that have limited his ability to stay on the field. It led him to hint at retirement following New England's Super Bowl loss to the Philadelphia Eagles to end the 2017 season and again last month after the Patriots' Super Bowl win over the Los Angeles Rams. In his Instagram post, Gronkowski thanked the Patriots organization, coach Bill Belichick and New England's fans for their support during his nine NFL seasons. "Thank you for everyone accepting who I am and the dedication I have put into my work to be the best player I could be," Gronkowski wrote. Belichick said Gronkowski was a major reason the Patriots won championships. "His production spoke for itself, but his daily attitude

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, unmistakably positive energy wherever he went and toward whoever he touched will never be forgotten,” Belichick said in a statement. Gronkowski’s teammates also almost immediately began to flood social media with well-wishes. “Love you man!!” Brady wrote on Instagram, along with an emoji of a goat to refer to Gronkowski as the greatest of all-time. “Couldn’t be a better person or teammate!!!!” It was a sentiment shared by receiver Julian Edelman. “The other goat,” Edelman posted on his Instagram page, also referring to Brady. Though he won’t have the longevity of some of his contemporaries at tight end, Gronkowski is expected to get strong consideration for the Pro Football Hall of Fame when eligible. Gronkowski, a second-round pick in the 2010 draft, had his fourth career 1,000-yard receiving season in 2017 and was an All-Pro for the fourth time that season. But at times he looked like a shell of himself during the Patriots’ Super Bowl run this past season. Gronkowski finished the 2018 regular season with just 47 catches for 682 yards and three touchdowns. He had one of his best games of the season in the Patriots’ Super Bowl win over the Rams

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, hauling in six catches for 87 yards, including two receptions on New England’s only touchdown drive during their 13-3 victory. A fan favorite in New England for his gregarious and playful persona that included awkward dance moves and touchdown celebrations, Gronkowski was one of the most dominant tight ends of his era. His 12 career postseason touchdown receptions are the most by a tight end in NFL playoff history. His 81 career postseason catches are also best among tight ends. He’ll also retire with 79 career TD catches — regular season and playoffs — which is third all-time by a tight end behind only Antonio Gates (116) and Tony Gonzalez (111). Brady and Gronkowski connected on 78 TD passes. It is the second-most scoring connections between a quarterback and a tight end in NFL history behind only Philip Rivers and Gates (89) and is fifth overall between quarterbacks and all pass-catchers. “Rob will leave an indelible mark on the Patriots organization and the game,” Brady said, “as among the best, most complete players at his position to ever play.”

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