



## SOMETIMES, WRITING A COLUMN CAN BE TOUGH

By Kerry Schmidt 02-27-2005

Writing a syndicated sports column is usually a lot of fun. Just about every fan has strong opinions on sports related matters, and virtually all of them will vent loud and long on their gripes/likes, especially after a few cold ones. However, only their drunken friends hear them.

As a published columnist, I get to vent my sometimes outlandish opinions just like the every day fan, except that my sibilating is out there for thousands to read. And I get paid for my nonsense.

Plus, as a perk, I get to attend some of the best sporting events, Super Bowls, best college bowl games, etc.

However, there can be a downside, and right now is one of those times.

Why? Because there is literally nothing going on worth writing about.

But, the saying in the biz is "...make chicken soup out of chicken ..."

Given the dead time, most sports writers are beating the steroid thing to death. That's why last Wednesday, when Barry Bonds reported to the Giants training camp, there were over 300 reporters, plus 12 TV crews and many radio media.

The vast majority of them wrote bad things about Bonds and his comments and waxed not eloquently on the horrors that steroids are doing to baseball.

I will not dwell anymore on my stated feelings, except to say those writers are just trying to make themselves look good by saying all the so-called politically correct things.

But one writer dared to speak the truth. Dan Shanoff, writing in an ESPN piece, had this to say of the media's deluge on Bonds.

"The medial has an obligation to ask, of course, but we're quickly approaching the tipping point of (sic) obsessiveness where fans will tune the media out," then he added "raving columnists especially."

Then, when the media asked Bonds about lying, he said, "All you guys (media) lied. Should you have asterisks by your name? All of you have dirt. (Clean your closet's before you clean anyone else's.)"

Shanoff replied, Score the point for Barry. If the curtain ever got pulled back on the media...oh boy..."

I have seen many a media man pound down plenty of bar "juice" and then write their story. Now it's true that some of that stuff is their best work – hey, to quote the late, great Hunter Thompson, "it works for me" – but that's OK for them.

A related story came out several weeks ago on how this spring has seen huge free-agent spending. 41 free agents have signed contracts worth over \$1.1 billion, or about \$8 mill each.

The reason they can do this is that attendance, and thus revenue are up over 12%. And the reason they are is the increased number of long home runs. Bonds alone accounts for a whopping 31% increase in attendance for every park he plays in.

So don't tell me that the owners and fans hate whatever is/isn't going on with him.

As for some others like Jose Canseco, all it has done for them is make them a joke.



## OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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Let's look at some crazy ideas on this steroid stuff.

What if the umpires were on the juice? Think of it. Then, when an ump throws a player or manager out of the game, he can actually do so. Pick that sucker up and heave him three-four rows into the seats. I mean, if an Oakland A's player can throw a chair into the stands, why not let the ump heave Sammy Sosa into the second deck.

Here's my favorite. Since the players have agreed to random testing, how about having some pretty young female "urine tester" (No. 4 in USA TODAY's worst jobs) run out during the 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch and get a sample. Whoa!

Go to the web and look up this subject. You can find that during Babe Ruth's time, trainers, et al, would furnish him and others with whatever was available at that time to rid him of his hangover and get him "up" for the game.

And, "greenies," or uppers as they area called, were plentiful way back in the 40's. Still are today.

My point is that players have been using whatever was/is available during their times to enhance their performance. Science today is more advanced, plus there are thousands of media scrutinizing every moment, versus virtually none in the older days. And if writers did find something, they never wrote about it.

So shut up and enjoy. Bonds will, barring injury, break Hank Aaron's record, and there will be no damn asterisk.

You want to talk about "cheating?"

If writers need stuff, go after George Steinbrenner. His Yankees paid more in luxury tax last season than the Florida Marlins' total payroll the year before, when they beat the Yanks in the WS. And Georgie boy will pay even more this year. What a joke. The salary cap is set to have parity, but Steinbrenner ignores the rules and pays the millions in penalties. That is cheating. Where are the writers and baseball purists when they really have a cheater on their hands?

Steinbrenner pays baseball millions which is divided up by the owners. So, no complaints or sportswriters bashing Georgie boy. Bonds earns the owners more millions than Georgie by the fans he brings in, but since he may –or may not - have taken a "substance," oh, the horror of it all!

What a bunch of hypocrites!

Speaking of a player making an owner money. The Cleveland Cavaliers' assessed value by Forbes in 2003 was \$222 million. Dan Gilbert bought the team for \$375 million in 2004 after LeBron James was on board.

And a player spending his money. English soccer star David Beckham and his wife Victoria (Spice) paid a butler \$1,800.00 to help unwrap their Christmas gifts last year. See, I gave you "chicken soup."