



BARRY BONDS. AGAIN AND AGAIN.... AND AGAIN

By Kerry Schmidt 05-20-2007

The NBA Finals are about to start. Ditto the NHL, someone reminded me, but no one cares about that, so forget it.

Dale Earnhardt and his split from stepwotch is still hot stuff.

A number of MLB stories are front and center, especially the New York Yankees, those "Damn Yankees" with far and away the highest payroll in baseball (nearly \$200 million, thus paying some \$50,000 in penalty tax), and at press time, they are four games under .500 and 10 games behind arch rival Boston. The steam coming off George Steinbrenner's head could run a power plant. Plus, big news is the return of Curt Schilling, he of the 42-year old pitcher who will make some \$18 million for pitching about 1/3 of a season.

Plus, if Street Sense should have won the Preakness yesterday, another Triple Crown hype will be front and center.

And last week, stop the presses, Tiger Woods faltered and "Lefty" Michelson took the TPA. That in itself should have been THE story of the week.

But no, what, or who in this case, is on the front Page – and the feature story, in the current Sports Illustrated?

Barry Bonds.

I think only 9/11 has gotten more ink than Barry. And, it is redundant and as ridiculous as ever!

Other than the fact that Bonds is only 10 HR's behind Hank Aaron, why does SI pick now to push all the other more current and better stuff to the back pages?

Answer? I really have no freakin idea!

I mean, it's not like this is a hot, new breaking story. It has been festering for years. But, for some unknown reasons, the idiots that run SI decided this was better stuff. Stir up some more age-old, redundant controversy.

Since they did, however, let's examine some of the same old stuff we have already heard about over and over and over.

Before we get into their same old stuff, let me state some of my same old stuff.

Whatever stuff Barry did or did not take prior to the 2003 season is irrelevant. It was not until the 2003 season that all that stuff was made illegal.

Thus, whether Barry did or did not take anything, it was NOT against the rules.

Also, since the stiff rules and new testing and screening processes that were implemented, I believe that virtually any player of suspect would most certainly not imbibe, since the chance of getting caught is now very high.

And his detractors would love to point out how far his production has fallen since the new, tightened rules have been implemented. Last year, on bad knees, he still hit nearly .300 and 21 HR's.

This year, at press time, he is batting over .300, is 3rd in the National League in HRs (11), is 1st in all baseball for slugging percentage, on-base%, walks and on-base/slugging



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

combined. And this for a man who is 42 years old. He is not one to be scorned, he is one who just may be the greatest player of all time!

In other words, no matter what people think, or in many cases, want to think, there is nothing close to evidence showing Bonds has done anything wrong. He simply is a great player!

Between BALCO and ex-Senator George Mitchell's 6-year hunt, they have nothing at all on Barry. The closest they have is to see if they can get him for perjury during his grand jury testimony a few years back. In that, he said he never "Knowingly" used illegal steroids."

Part of the illegally leaked Grand Jury testimony said he took flaxseed oil and arthritis balm. If that qualifies as performance enhancing drugs, then so does Gatorade.

So why all the, well, hatred, is the word I feel is appropriate, rushing to the surface again? Simply because sports writers have nothing better to do and they want to keep this garbage front and center.

First, let me make a couple of statements. I spent seven years as a full-time sports writer, and I can flatly state that A, nearly 1/2 of the writers I watched had spent some time in the bottle before writing their story, and B, that fact that Bonds has been – and still is, albeit it calmed down a bit, a giant jerk. He is aloof, conceited, rude and unavailable to interviews and, at times, just downright nasty.

Detroit Tigers' Gary Sheffield, who years ago was one of Bonds' closest friends, says he no longer can stand by him

He calls Bonds rude, insecure, jealous and a control freak. But he also insisted that if Bonds breaks Aaron's record, he deserves to be called baseball's all-time home run king. "I may not like him, but you have to respect him."

He has cleaned up his act a good bit, but he is still, and rightly so, very wary of sportswriters. They don't write what he actually says, they simply take a few words of that and then make the rest fit into the story they want to make him look bad.

But, you will continue to see the Bonds issue intensify the closer he gets to Aaron's record. (At press time, he is at 745 with the record being 755).

I could write for hours on all the stuff just in the SI issue, not to mention the 3-page coverage USA/TODAY gave it last Friday.

Instead, let's look at a few particular facts.

Many people just flat-out don't like him, for any one of several reasons. The popular statement, of course, is that he "cheated," so his records should not count. Of course, it does no good to say, again, that he has NEVER failed a test and all the stuff said about him is only alleged.

Ralph Barbieri co-hosts a hit radio talk show on San Francisco's KNBR, the station of the Giants. He ended one session with a chuckle, saying (of the SF Chronicle's) persistent pursuit of Bonds, "Of course the Chronicle coverage was a bit skewed on (the BALCO thing). Anything related to that gets more attention than the Iraq war."

He added that when Bonds gets around 755, the same old stuff will come up again." And his final parting comment was, "Yea, and when the Grand Jury decides what it will do five years from now, it will come up one final time."



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

USA/TODAY came out with several polls Friday on people's thoughts. But first, let's look at an ESPN/ABC poll taken last week.

28% of white fans want Bonds to break the record and 76% of them believe he took steroids. On the other side, 74% of black fans want him to break it and only 37% believe he took steroids. Thus, like it or not, if you can believe all the "alleged" stuff written, you certainly can see that race plays a part in this situation!

Over 50% of players say he either did not take them or that he is certainly innocent until proven otherwise.

62% of all fans say he is guilty regardless of the facts (see racial differences).

Despite the lack of evidence, 72% of fans think he did use them, while only 22% of players believed he did so.

Again, I strongly believe all these polls are factored by race and individuals like/dislike of Bonds.

As far as Bonds being voted into the Hall of Fame, the above issues do not seem to come into play.

62% of all fans say he should be in the Hall, and a whopping 88% of players say he should be in.

One final controversy is brewing, one that should not even be in question.

You and I can have whatever opinions we want to on this issue, and state them.

But Commissioner Bud Selig does not fit into that group. He may have his opinion – and I am pretty sure he does, based on his veiled statements and actions, but he damn sure needs to shut up on this issue.

Of the three major sports, Selig is by far the worst commissioner of all. He is a flat-out joke. The guy makes \$14 million a year for being an unfunny clown. The guy couldn't make a decent decision if a judge tattooed it on his forehead.

He is from the old school, the Barry Kuhn and beyond group. I will not say he is racist, but I do not believe he is totally neutral on the subject.

Anyway, he is making a spectacle of himself by stating he is not sure he will attend the game wherein Bonds breaks Aaron's record. That is absolutely pathetic.

Again, Bonds has not even come close to having been shown to have used steroids, and, well, see the above polls.

It's akin to a judge saying he will not attend the verdict and sentencing part of a trial simply because the facts make no difference. It's a matter of what he thinks, so he'll just skip that part.

More stupid polls. 56% of fans say he should be there, and 76% of players say likewise.

"I think it should be mandatory," Yankees first baseman Doug Mientkiewicz says.

"Whether you like him or circumstances around him, he's playing the game you're the commissioner for."

For Selig to not show up at the game where the home run record was broken would be a huge insult to the game. Should he not show, he should be removed as commissioner. He doesn't do a damn thing anyway.

Like him or hate him, he is one of the greatest players ever to play the game. Over 41% of players say he is the all time best.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Until someone can finally plant some dust or mud on him, leave this issue alone, celebrate the new king when it happens, and move on to covering NEW stuff!

NOTE: Schilling made some very unflattering remarks about Bonds. It would be great if he could hit a 450-foot HR off of him to break the record.