

## **Selig Can't Be Judge, Jury, Executioner**

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Major League Baseball has a major credibility problem, but its steroid scandal is small potatoes in the overall scheme of day-to-day life in the United States. Someone violated and compromised the judicial system by leaking grand jury testimony to a San Francisco newspaper, and that's a far bigger problem than if Jason Giambi and Barry Bonds used steroids.

Giambi and Bonds were answering questions in secrecy and that testimony was supposed to be sealed. That's a major breach and Attorney General John Ashcroft or his successor needs to address that breach.

As far as baseball goes, steroid usage is illegal unless a physician prescribes it. Apparently Giambi and Bonds got their steroids from a trainer, but that will eventually be decided by the judicial system. That is where baseball needs to start its probe of steroid use in the sport.

Both Giambi and Bonds did something illegal.

Whether or not Bonds, Giambi and others have "tainted" the game in the same manner that say Pete Rose did when he allegedly bet on baseball is uncertain. But by using steroids, they have violated U.S. law, although they are no different than the average guy or woman who uses steroids at the local gym to build up their bodies or high school athletes who take illegal drugs to perform better and attract college or pro offers.

That is the reality of steroid use in sports, from high school to the pros. It exists no matter how many people deny it.

Meanwhile, can Commissioner Bud Selig or New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner be credible judges in handing out penalties to Bonds, Giambi and possibly others who testified in the BALCO case? Selig must hire an independent panel to investigate the BALCO issues. He also must disqualify himself because he was part of the group of owners who were found guilty by an arbitrator for colluding and depressing salaries illegally following the 1985, 1986 and 1987 seasons.

Selig was also one of the 28 owners who were found guilty of bad faith bargaining in the 1994–95 baseball strike. Steinbrenner was a convicted felon for giving illegal contributions to Richard Nixon's 1972 presidential campaign and was twice suspended from the game. Steinbrenner was pardoned in 1989 by President Reagan in one of his final official acts in office.

After the *San Francisco Chronicle* broke the Giambi testimony, Selig said, "I've been saying for many months: I instituted a very, very tough program in the minor leagues on steroids in 2001. We need to have that program at the major league level. We're going to leave no stone unturned until we have that policy in place by spring training 2005."

While Selig has been talking tough, there seems to be a failure in the recognition that steroid use is illegal.

There is a failure of recognition from both the owners' side and the players association side. Both sides are using steroids as a bargaining issue in the upcoming collective bargaining talks. The problem is fueled by both sides knowing that baseball fans really don't care whether players take the juice or not and are more concerned about who hit the ball over the fence and how far it went. Tape measure homeruns are a selling point, a television highlight that might sell tickets to individual fans, amuse luxury box and club seat patrons. Baseball is big business and doesn't seem to care much about its performers' health no matter what lip service Selig and the players association gives to the steroid/human growth hormone problem.

Sports has a poster boy for what happens when someone takes steroids. One time Denver Broncos, Cleveland Browns and Los Angeles Raiders defensive lineman Lyle Alzado died on May 14, 1992 at the age of 43 from brain cancer.

Alzado, before his death, said he suffered from a rare lymphoma of the central nervous system which he claimed was caused by his extensive use of anabolic steroids including Dianabol.

"I started taking anabolic steroids in 1969 and never stopped. It was addicting, mentally addicting. Now I'm sick, and I'm scared... I became very violent on the field and off it. I did things only crazy people do," he recalled. "Once a guy sideswiped my car and I beat the hell out of him. Now look at me. My hair's gone, I wobble when I

walk and have to hold on to someone for support, and I have trouble remembering things.”

Alzado’s story should have been repeated countless times in all football, baseball, basketball, hockey and sports circles. Instead, newer forms of steroids and other human growth hormones have been developed since his death and so have masks to hide its usage. Alzado’s tale did nothing to stop Ken Caminiti who admitted using steroids during 1996 when he was the National League’s most valuable player.

Jose Canseco was dismissed by sportswriters when he planned to write a tell all book including who used steroids. Canseco may have been a character, but there seems to be something worth investigating.

Maybe baseball and the union don’t want to know and are hiding their heads in the sand because they know fans don’t care except for how far the ball was hit. That’s why baseball cannot internally do a steroid investigation and needs to turn outward and hire an independent board to see just how widespread a problem steroids really are in the industry.