

Michael Doren
December 17, 2007
Advanced Expository Writing
Professor Morgan

Steroids Plague America's Pastime

On August 2, 2007, with one stroke of the bat, Barry Lamar Bonds may have all but assured himself a spot in the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame. With a count of three balls and two strikes, he hit his record-breaking 756th homerun to the deepest part of AT&T Park in San Francisco, threw his arms in the air in celebration and proceeded to make his way around the bases. Henry "Hank" Aaron, the man who held the homerun record for over three decades, was not on hand for the historic moment nor was MLB Commissioner Bud Selig ("Bonds Breaks"). Why would those two men not be on hand to witness as one of the most prized records in baseball was broken? Because they both know what everyone else knows—Barry Bonds is on steroids.

Bonds broke the single season homerun record in 2001 by clobbering 73 long-balls compared to just the 49 that he had the season before. He also holds the record for most walks in a single season, most intentional walks in a single season, highest on-base percentage in a season, plus many others. Sure, there are reports that Barry used anabolic steroids, but who can blame him? He is far from the only one who used steroids, just ask Jose Canseco, and he certainly will not be the last to use them either. He just wanted to break a few monumental records that were arguably the most cherished in all of sports and he, like many others, did whatever it took to get there.

The increasing use of steroids by athletes is a terrible trend on the rise in professional sports and it is threatening to ruin the games that fans love. Players are trying to get the edge

over their fellow athletes by taking performance enhancing drugs to improve their game. These drugs range from Human Growth Hormone, herein referred to as HGH, anabolic steroids, creatine, and many others. These drugs make it easier for athletes to gain muscle with less work, thus improving their power and enhancing their performances. As more and more athletes take the drugs, more and more are being caught and as they are caught, fans will continue to leave the game because they feel that the players and team to which they have been devoted had deceived them.

On September 24, 2007 word leaked to the press of a massive drug raid which spanned the North American and Asian continents pertaining to illegal steroid distribution, potentially to professional athletes. A list was recovered of all of the recipients of the steroids which has the capability to bring the professional sports world to their collective knees (Schmidt). If names such as Alex Rodriguez, Peyton Manning and Kobe Bryant are on that list, the MLB, NFL, and NBA, respectively, will have no choice but to punish the best players in their sports just as severely as they punish the nobodies; however, that is not the most severe consequence. If big name players are charged with steroid use, the major sports will see a huge drop off in the number of fans and will subsequently lose millions of dollars. One might argue that Barry Bonds has a big enough name to bring catastrophic consequences to the MLB, but fans have not left the game in huge groups as one might expect.

Some argue that Bonds has not been formally charged with using steroids, just accused, but as the



Figure 1: Barry Bonds in 1985 (left) and 2006

Source: http://r_harrison.tripod.com/Agonist/BarryBonds.jpg

saying goes “a picture is worth a thousand words.” As one can see in Figure 1, Bonds is significantly larger in the picture from 2006 (right) than in the picture from his rookie season (left). Between 1985 and 2007, Bond’s jersey size increased from 42 to 52, his hat size increased from 7 ¼ inches to 7 ¾ inches and Barry’s feet size, once he was already a fully-grown man, increased from 10 ½ to 13. (Robinson) Barry’s numbers from 1985 multiplied over the past 22 seasons would likely amount to a Hall of Fame career without the use of steroids, especially in combination with his great defense and late game heroics. However, Bonds obviously did not want to take the chance that he might miss the Hall, so he guaranteed it, though only for the moment. If the MLB uncovers factual, conclusive evidence that proves beyond a reasonable doubt that Barry Bonds used performance enhancing steroids, he will not be allowed into the Hall just as Pete Rose is not and his records will either have an asterisk next to them or will be removed

from the record books all together.

While the majority of the buzz around the steroid scandal surrounds Barry Bonds, there are many other faces and names who are finding

themselves in the spotlight for all of the wrong reasons. Rick Ankiel, a former pitching phenom for the St. Louis Cardinals, was wild in his pitching and struggled immensely in nearly every outing. Ankiel gave up on his pitching career and left the major leagues for St. Louis’ single-A

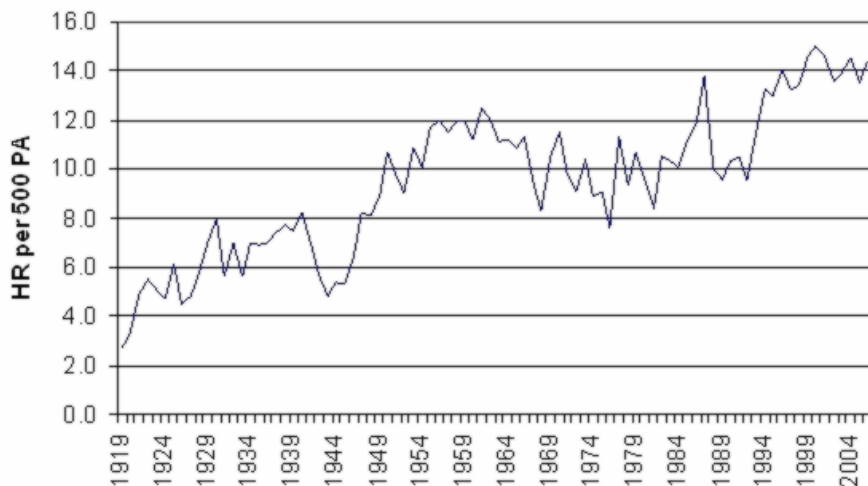


Figure 2: Homeruns per 500 Plate Appearances 1919-2004

Source: <http://baseballanalysts.com/archives/DV1.gif>

affiliate following the 2004 season. He worked on his hitting and fielding, leaving his pitching skills in the clubhouse, and has now found his way back to the MLB. In his first major league game since returning from the minor leagues, Ankiel lined a pitch over the right field fence for his third career homerun and has not looked back since then; however, this feel good story does not feel so right any more. The *New York Daily News* reported that Ankiel received a 12-month supply of Human Growth Hormone from a Florida pharmacy recently charged with illegally distributing drugs (Quinn, et al). Ankiel said that all of the drugs which he has taken

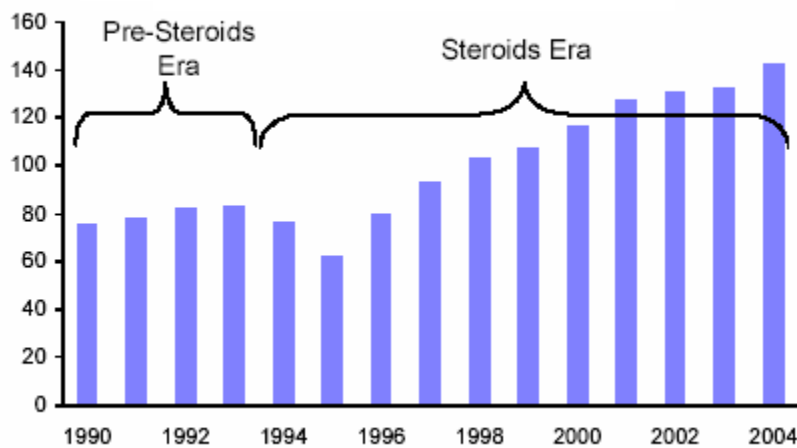


Figure3: Average MLB Franchise Revenues (\$M)
 Source: <http://faculty.haas.berkeley.edu/rjmorgan/mba211/Steroids%20and%20Major%20League%20Baseball.pdf>
 despite the fact that he would not be punished by the MLB. Ankiel maintains that he did not

have been prescriptions prescribed to him by his doctor and that HGH was amongst those he received. The MLB did not ban HGH until 2005, but Ankiel has not changed his story

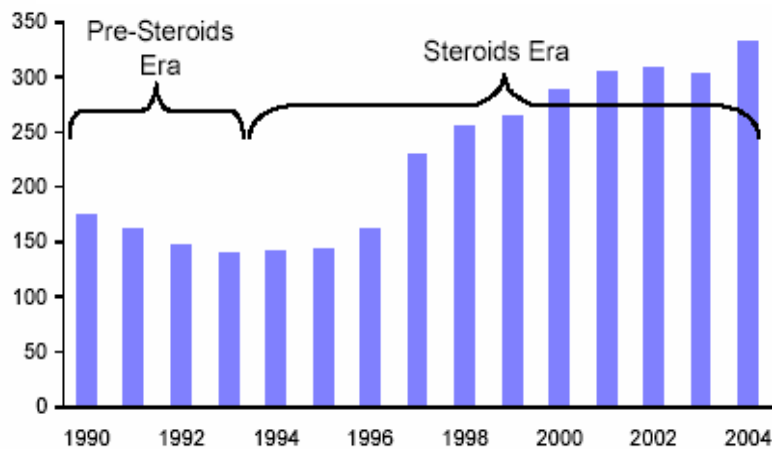


Figure4: Average MLB Franchise Value (\$M)
 Source: <http://faculty.haas.berkeley.edu/rjmorgan/mba211/Steroids%20and%20Major%20League%20Baseball.pdf>

use any drugs for an unfair advantage, saying "I respect the integrity of the game and am on the same playing level that everyone else is on" (qtd. in

"Everything").

The steroids are not just affecting the players who use the steroids, but they are affecting entire leagues and their legions of dedicated fans. The economic impact on the sport is obvious as the value of individual contracts nears \$30 million per season and the value of franchises approach and exceeds \$1 billion. The steroid era is considered to have begun in 1994 right in the middle of the MLB Players Union's strike with the MLB. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, numbers have increased sharply from 1995 (post-strike year) through 2004. A small portion of the increase in revenues can be attributed to growth of the fan base through the 10 years depicted in the graph; however, the increase of franchise revenues escalated from 3.4% pre-steroid era to 5.0% in the post steroid era, which translates to more money to pay the players, more money for the owners and more money for the officials (Grossman, et al 7-8). The excess money is nearly impossible for baseball executives and team owners to turn away from and to many fans, it seems as though they are pretending not to notice the steroid use in exchange for the extra profit they receive.

"Operation Raw Deal," an undercover drug sting covering the North American and Asian continents, uncovered nearly 100 sites where illegal steroids were either produced or distributed. The Drug Enforcement Agency worked in cooperation with the Chinese government to round up 124 people as well as a master list which is rumored to have the names of over 10,000 people who received the drugs (Schmidt). Since the raids occurred, there has been very little news about exactly what was discovered and whose names were on the list. It is making some wonder whether the government and professional sports leagues came to an agreement to not release the names because of the impact that it would have on the sports.

There is no quick fix for the steroid problem in baseball and it seems as though there are only two ways to approach the problem: ignore it while it ruins America's pastime or take action against each and every player who previously and currently used performance-enhancing drugs. However, therein lays a problem. Fans can choose to ignore the problem, but that is highly unlikely and they would much rather see action taken against the players who took the drugs. Owners and executives love the extra money from players who use steroids so it is highly unlikely that they will ever take any action against their players. The fans are stuck at an impasse until a body higher than the MLB, such as the government, steps in and takes control of the drug testing and its policies. The only way that these sports will be saved is if the government works separately from the individual leagues because each, especially the MLB, will do whatever they can to prevent any harmful information from being released. However, that information could potentially be the only thing that will save these sports from the inevitable.

Works Cited

- "Barry Bonds Breaks Home Run Record." CBS News. 8 Aug. 2007. 30 Sept. 2007
<<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/08/08/sportsline/main3144504.shtml>>.
- "Everything Was Legal" Sports Illustrated. 7 Sept. 2007. 20 Sept. 2007
<<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2007/baseball/mlb/09/07/cardinals.ankiel.hgh.ap/index.html>>.
- Grossman, Mitchell, Timothy Kimsey, Joshua Moreen, and Matthew Owings. "Steroids and Major League Baseball." Berkley University. 30 Sept. 2007
<<http://faculty.haas.berkeley.edu/rjmorgan/mba211/Steroids%20and%20Major%20League%20Baseball.pdf>>.
- Quinn, T.J., Christian Red, Michael O'Keefe, and Bill Madden . "Rick Ankiel received 12-month supply of HGH, News learns." New York Daily News. 10 Sept. 2007. 2 Oct. 2007.
<http://www.nydailynews.com/sports/baseball/2007/09/06/2007-09-06_rick_ankiel_received_12month_supply_of_h.html>
- "Rick Ankiel." Rick Ankiel-St. Louis Cardinals. 30 Sept. 2007
<<http://sports.yahoo.com/mlb/players/6320>>.
- Robinson, Doug. "Bonds' Growth Suspect." Deseret Morning News. 5 Mar. 2007. 30 Sept. 2007
<<http://www.deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,660200642,00.html>>.
- Schmidt, Michael S. "U.S. Arrests 124 in Raids on Global Steroid Ring." New York Times. 24 Sept. 2007. 30 Sept. 2007 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/24/sports/24cnd-steroid.html?_r=1&ref=sports&oref=slogin>.