

More Questions Than Answers

Written by {ga=paulcousineau}
Thursday, December 13 2007 7:00 PM -

The Mitchell Report has finally arrived, full of names of offenders and cheaters that have been implicated for taking performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs). With all of the hype surrounding the release and the "naming of names", the talk by the players' union of a "witch hunt", and the alleged bullying of team trainers to compile names in the Report, Paulie Cousineau's first reaction is - "That's It?";



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This is what has had players quaking in their cleats, had GM's and trainers stiff-arming investigators, and had all sorts of media outlets ready to pounce on MLB's imitation of an ostrich for the last 15 years?

[This list of players](#) is the fruit of the investigation?

Frankly, I'm surprised and a little disappointed that this is the net result of the whole investigation. Most of these names were already known due to suspensions, documented shipments of PEDs reported by the media, or by assertions and implications by Jose Canseco, Jason Grimsley and others. The new names that appear on the list are generally marginal MLB players and, unless those were the only players looking for an edge to put them above the level of a AAAA player, I find the scarcity of players' names on this list fairly shocking.

Sure, it fingered the likes of Clemens and Gagne - but are any of these names really THAT surprising?

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Was the Fountain of Youth that Clemens found in Toronto ever thought to be anything but filled with PEDs? He was on the downward slope of his career with 192 career wins when Boston let him go at the age of 33 - what do people think happened to him? A new training regimen...a new pitch?

Didn't Gagne's sudden rise to dominance, and subsequent precipitous drop-off just scream that he was working under false pretenses?

How about John Rocker's best imitation of Haley's Comet?

It seems that the Mitchell Report is meant to merely serve as a warning to players, unfortunately only scratching the surface of players that have likely used PEDs in one form or another in the past 5 years. Obviously, the Report's hands were tied by the uncooperative nature of the players and specifically the players' union, intent on "protecting their members' privacy", or the teams not willing to admit what they knew and when they knew it.

But it seems that the names on the list simply are linked to four main sources - BALCO, Jason Grimsley, former personal trainer Brian McNamee, and former Mets' clubhouse attendant Kirk Radomski. If these names are what were born of those four sources (the only ones that were willing to talk to the Mitchell Report), how many other names remain unknown due to the code of silence or by a simple lack of evidence? If this many players can be named simply through a few webs of deceit, how many more exist out there that are breathing a sigh of relief today?

If any fan is naïve to be surprised by the Mitchell Report, they simply haven't been paying attention to the influx and proliferation of PEDs in all aspects of sports. Performance-enhancing drugs are a problem in all sports (not merely baseball) for star players evidenced most obviously this year by the suspension of Patriots' S Rodney Harrison and last year's suspension of Chargers' LB Shawne Merriman - two players whom, after serving their suspension, returned back to work without the infamy or scrutiny that seems to have been placed on MLB.

I suppose that a part of me was hoping that the Mitchell Report would pull back the curtain on the ugliness of how widespread the impact that PEDs had on MLB, particularly in the late 1990's and early 2000's. But, again, I find myself disappointed that it didn't go far enough - that it didn't wait until every rock was turned over and evidence of every cheater was found. That, unfortunately, was likely wishful thinking and certainly could have had a much more lasting impact on

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MLB than the list of these players.

Some could say that the Mitchell Report is long overdue, and rightfully so; but to me, the results of the investigation are far from satisfactory and MLB should have completed a full and exhaustive investigation (which this does not seem to be) if they were truly interested in cleaning up the sport to the level that it needs. The investigative arms of different media outlets had seemingly done most of the legwork for the Mitchell Report and the question about whether these players (the ones still playing, that is) are even going to be disciplined makes the Report even more toothless and limited than it seems at first glance.

If the Mitchell Report is simply a first step to clean up the game, it has achieved the goal of breaking the ice and identifying how widespread a problem PEDs have been in MLB for some time now. If, however, it is seen as the definitive report on PEDs and will be viewed as some sort of long-standing Monroe Doctrine that will be used in MLB's fight against PEDs, it will become outdated as soon as chemists and cheaters find a way to circumvent the rules in a new, more creative, way.

MLB must, in stark comparison to the way they've handled this problem in the past, remain diligent in combating and doing their best to eliminate PEDs from the game as best possible. If they feel that the results of the Mitchell Report will do that, they're fooling themselves and will become a laughingstock as chemistry and creativity pass them by.

The Mitchell Report is a start, nothing else.

It serves as a warning that nobody is above being exposed as a cheater as Roger Clemens has suddenly (and rightfully) joined Barry Bonds on the Asterisk List. But, beyond the scare tactics, the real work remains to be done to truly clean up the game and retain the sanctity and the trust among fans that the players are not clean and will be held responsible if they are not. If that next step remains far off on the horizon, MLB is no better off today than it was yesterday morning. If MLB is willing to take a proactive stance on the problem, regardless of the impact at the gate and in public perception, the impact in the short term will be negative; but the long-term health of the game will benefit from the aggressive removal of this element from MLB to emerge as the viable (and honestly viable) sport that we have all grown to love.