

The Real Culprit

Written by {ga=mrburns}

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Unable to punish Alex Rodriguez for flunking a drug test that was supposed to be anonymous, Bud Selig could only chastise him. And did this morning, saying Rodriguez "shamed the game" by using PED's. Selig's comments don't sit well with Nick Allburn, who blames Selig for the steroid era in baseball. Nick says there are two possibilities. Selig was either aware it was happening, and enabling it, or was such a chump that he truly didn't know what was going on, in which case he's honest, but clearly unfit to be commissioner.



If Bud Selig entertaining the notion of penalizing Alex Rodriguez for his positive PED test from 2003 comes as a surprise, it shouldn't. Selig has made a career of jumping to incorrect conclusions and making poor choices. Had Selig adopted George Costanza's dogma of simply "doing the opposite" when he took over as commissioner in 1992, he might be considered the best commissioner in sports.

Yes, Alex Rodriguez cheated, and it's despicable. But he also deserves to be treated fairly, and the fact remains that his positive test came under the conditions of public confidentiality and zero repercussions. When the players submitted to that drug test in 2003, those were the terms. The list of those who tested positive includes 103 other players, none of whom have had their names leaked, and none of whom are in line for punishment from Selig.

If anything, it's Rodriguez who has the right to be miffed about his name being released; an inappropriate move by Sports Illustrated reporter Selena Roberts. If Rodriguez wasn't in damage control mode, attempting to repair what's left of his public image or at least stop the bleeding, I wouldn't blame him for feeling a bit litigious.

As [Walter Sobchak](#) so eloquently put it, "This is not 'Nam -- there are rules." If Commissioner Selig were to discipline Rodriguez, he would have no choice but to punish the other 103 players who tested positive, which would not only violate the consequence-free terms of the testing, but also the confidentiality agreement.

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We also need to be straight here. Rodriguez's name was leaked to Roberts by a source who must have had access to the list, and also must have had motivation to launch a vendetta against Rodriguez. The release of only A-Rod's name makes that clear. By threatening to punish Rodriguez, Selig is merely making himself a part of said vendetta, and is clearly just trying to redirect the steroids spotlight away from himself. This is old hat. After all, it wasn't long ago that Selig was trying to pass the blame for the steroid era onto Barry Bonds.

When it comes to Selig, one of two things had to be going on during the steroid era. Either Selig was aware of the problem and simply chose to ignore it, thus making him complicit and a de-factor accessory to the players' abuses of PEDs, or Selig was such a chump that he truly didn't know what was going on, in which case he's honest, but clearly unfit to be commissioner. Considering that steroid use had been baseball's elephant in the room for the better part of a decade before Selig finally took action, the latter is an awfully tough sell.

But it was Barry Bonds who really pushed things over the edge. When Bonds shattered Mark McGwire's single-season home run record only three seasons after it was set, and then appeared primed to zero in on Hank Aaron's 755 -- the most revered stat in American sports -- Selig was forced to act. ESPN was singing off the same song sheet; to say that they slightly spun the steroids story to make it about Bonds and not baseball in general would be a gross understatement.

In fairness, Bonds wasn't just persecuted because of steroid abuse and the home run chase, but because he had an uncanny ability to rub everyone the wrong way, especially media members. Some might see a racist undertone in the public's general distaste for Bonds, but I'm not buying it because of a) Bonds' demeanor, which made him about as lovable as Marilyn Manson, and b) he took the career home run record away from Hank Aaron, a fellow African-American. Bonds was guilty of using steroids, and he was a jerk, too. But if he was going to be crucified, then hundreds of other crosses should have been erected.

The point is that like Bonds, A-Rod is being treated differently than other steroid users because of his excellence and the fact that he's in line to challenge some of baseball's most storied records. And just like before, Selig is trying to pass the buck onto a household name, instead of standing up and admitting that he played as significant a role as anyone in the steroids era.

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Of course Selig wasn't in locker rooms shooting guys up, but his inexcusable negligence makes him culpable. Selig knew about the steroids culture that was prevalent in many clubhouses, but until his hand was forced, he did nothing to squash it. As long as the turnstiles kept clicking and the hot dogs kept selling, Bud kept looking the other way, and that makes him the ultimate enabler.

Depending on your point of view, the face of the steroids era might be Barry Bonds, Jose Canseco, Roger Clemens, or even Mark McGwire, but if commissioner Selig is still searching for the real culprit, the nearest bathroom mirror is a good place to start.