

■ In my opinion

# Steroid-users don't just cheat the game, they cheat the fans

Rafael Palmeiro was booed and heckled with a mixture of cheers at his home ballpark Sunday during his first game since his 10-day suspension for steroid use. It appears that once-Hall-of-Fame-bound Palmeiro is taking the brunt of the frustration fans have had pent up since this issue came to the forefront of baseball.



CLAYTON JONES  
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

Sure, there have been other ball players that have tested positive, but this is a guy with over 3,000 hits and 500 home runs.

Palmeiro is the guy that waved that famous finger during a congressional hearing and strongly denied EVER taking steroids.

The Oriole first baseman is an easy target, as he is the only one to deny steroid allegations and get caught.

It would be ignorant to think more Hall of Fame caliber ball players have not dabbled in illegal "performance-enhancing drugs."

One name always in this discussion is Mark McGwire.

I've never seen a 6-foot-5, 250-pound guy who was able to go into hiding so well. His most recent sitting was during the congressional hearings, and he pleaded the fifth when asked about his steroid use, which condemned him to guilt in the court of public opinion.

Back in 1987, McGwire came out to the scene as a thin first baseman out of USC and destroyed the home-run record for rookies with 49. As he continued to put numbers up,

his body started to grow. By the time he was traded to St. Louis in 1997, the guy had forearms that looked like tree trunks. He would hit balls that appeared unhitatable out of the ballpark, all culminating to a record-breaking 70-home-run season in 1998.

After two injury-riddled seasons in which he still hit 61 homers in 186 games, McGwire retired with possibly another couple of seasons in him.

Of course, we will never know whether McGwire used steroids, though the always entertaining Jose Canseco (did you see him on that reality show doing a burlesque style dance? Jose: Don't give up your ... well whatever you do to make money) says he shot up McGwire with the juice.

Another guy that has been quiet through all of this is Barry Bonds. While he has been rehabilitating this season after going under multiple knee operations, the man in the middle of the BALCO investigation has shaded himself from the light of the steroid epidemic.

Bonds, never a fan of the media

even while playing, hasn't been in a game since the mandatory steroid testing policy went into place and some are questioning whether he will ever play in a game again. Many believe it's because of his knees, but others think it's because he doesn't want to deal with steroid testing.

I'm not here to put a label on who has done steroids, because there are many players who are under the gun of steroid-use allegations.

I'm here to say, as a member of the media and as a fan, we want the integrity of America's pastime to be restored.

These men, who get paid quite handsomely to play this great game, owe it to the players of past generations and to the fans to conduct themselves professionally and ethically.

Fans are angered and disappointed by their major league heroes right now.

What's hard for a me and many other 20-somethings to take is that some of the greatest memories we have as baseball fans are going to be tainted with the label of "steroids."

So while some fans found it in their hearts to forgive Palmeiro and cheer for him on Sunday, there will be no forgiveness coming from me — not for somebody who took the easy way out and shot up steroids.

Not only did he cheat himself and the game, but he cheated us.

claytonjones@dailyemerald.com

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