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Fay Vincent, Pete Rose, and Reinstatement

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Pete Rose just won't go away. He just doesn't seem to understand, and probably never will. His ban from baseball was not about his popularity, whatever that might have been, or is. His ban from baseball is the result of the Commissioner of Baseball concluding that there was sufficient evidence that he had been gambling on baseball. He did not contest the finding, but then he also refuses to acknowledge the finding.

As with so much else in Pete Rose's career he seems to think that bulldog tenacity will somehow overcome reality. He somehow thinks that because he is popular, and because the polls show the public is for him, that somehow reality does not count.

During the recent World Series when Jim Gray bulldogged the bulldog and the fans, including this one, did not like it, Rose assumed that he could now ride a wave of sympathy back into baseball. It will not happen. It can not be allowed to happen. Gambling does strike at the integrity of the game and it is absolutely forbidden. Rose knew that and he gambled on baseball anyway. He did not think this sacrosanct rule of baseball applied to him, or if he did, he didn't care. He would gamble and to hell with the consequences. Besides he was Pete Rose, Mr. Baseball, Charlie Hustle, who had willed himself to major league status. Certainly he could bowl over this rule, just like he had bowled over Ray Fosse in the All-Star Game.

In Wednesday's New York Times former baseball commissioner Fay Vincent wrote that he sometimes thinks, "Pete Rose will be with me until I die." You can count on that Mr. Vincent. That's how bulldogs operate.

Vincent goes on to point out that gambling is the only capital crime in baseball, and that such a level of punishment has been reasonably effective in minimizing gambling within the game. Without this strong unbending rule Vincent believes that gambling would surely spread within baseball, as the evidence is overwhelming that there are gamblers out there everywhere trying to influence the outcome of games of all types at all levels.

The ban of Rose, Vincent points out, is not about Rose, it is about baseball and its integrity. "Any commissioner who reinstates Rose has to accept responsibility for lessening the deterrent to gambling that has been almost totally successful."

Rose of course continues to believe it is about him. That it is about how he has suffered, and indeed how he has now suffered enough. In one sense it may be about Rose, but not in the way he thinks.

Vincent said that he and Giamatti believed that Rose would seek reinstatement, but only after going through some treatment and after accepting responsibility for his actions. Rose has not done that. He has instead attacked the commissioner's office and Vincent and played the role of the wounded bulldog, tough but innocent.

If you have any doubt about this description of events that Vincent has laid out, or if you have any doubt about the lack of substance or contrition by Rose you can look at two telling web sites. First make your way to "dowdreport.com" and examine both the summary and the full text of John Dowd's findings concerning Rose's extensive gambling activities.

Now visit "sportcut.com" the web site supporting the reinstatement of Pete Rose. Here you will find all the denial and all the fluff you care to read. Here you can express your opinion in a poll about Pete and the Hall of Fame. Yes, this is America, where you can send the Commissioner of Baseball a message. "Let Bud know how you feel." Here you can also read Charlie Hustle's speculation that had Bart Giamatti lived, Rose would have been reinstated because Bart was a kind and forgiving guy. Apparently Rose not only doesn't understand Giamatti's ban nor has he heard of Giamatti's treatment of the Yale custodial staff.

For once I must say I find myself in agreement with Fay Vincent. This isn't about Pete. It isn't about Bud. It isn't about Bart. It isn't even about Jim Gray. It is only about the integrity of baseball.

If Pete Rose wants to go home and get his head straight and come to some understanding of what has happened, that would be good. Perhaps Pete should read the Dowd Report. Perhaps

then he could come face to face with what has happened to him. Until he does, all we are likely to get is denial, denial, denial.

For those who admired Pete Rose, who found him the quintessential baseball player, I feel sorry. They should feel betrayed. For Pete Rose I can feel nothing. I find his behavior now no more irritating than I have always found his public persona. All I now ask of Pete Rose is that he go away. I have no desire to see any more of this self-inflicted public embarrassment.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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