

ANOTHER VIEW

Mitchell report proves honesty is best policy ...

MARK GRABOWSKI

Since the Mitchell report, the investigation into the use of steroids and other substances in Major League Baseball, was released Thursday, retired player David Justice has been vociferous in claiming that he never took illegal performance enhancing drugs. Meanwhile, former Phillies catcher Gary Bennett confirmed using human growth hormone, calling it "a stupid decision."

Other players on the lengthy list that was appended to the report should follow suit. Instead of remaining quiet or hiding behind lawyers, alleged cheaters should be honest with the public.

It's true that George Mitchell's investigative report relies on hearsay and other questionable evidence that might not hold up in court, as some players' lawyers contend. But we live in a society where people are innocent only until accused otherwise. Perhaps, understandably so. There's a difference between legal guilt and factual guilt.

Remember that eight Chicago White Sox players who became known as the "Black Sox" were acquitted of fixing games in court in 1919, but were kicked out of Major League Baseball for life. Playing professional sports is a privilege, not a right.

Whether players listed in Mitchell's report should maintain that privilege probably will be decided in the court of public opinion. Baseball's commissioner and team owners will likely do what the fan base wants. The public's perception will be shaped by how players on the list respond to allegations.

Not commenting or speaking through a lawyer will lead many to conclude that a player is hiding something. Consider that Mark McGwire went from being a Hall of Fame shoo-in to a pariah after taking a no-comment stance on his alleged steroid use.

If a player is innocent, then, by all means, he should fight to clear his name and get justice. A suspected cheater can go to

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roid user. He can enlist the help of family members, players and team officials to vouch that they were constantly around him and never saw any wrongdoing.

On the other hand, if a player did take performance-enhancing drugs, he needs to come clean. Sure, he will have to pay a price. But, in the long run, he'll be better off 'fessing up now. That's because Americans tend to err on the side of forgiving transgressors. But they hate being lied to.

In 2003, for example, Kobe Bryant's image took a big hit when he cheated on his wife and was accused of sexual assault. But the basketball star made a public mea culpa to the victim and the incident eventually faded away in the media. Now, Bryant's jersey is once again selling well and endorsement deals are piling up.

Michael Vick of the Atlanta Falcons learned the hard way, however, that honesty is the best policy. After being accused of organizing dog fights, the NFL star continued to maintain his innocence until he no longer could. The widespread perception was that he finally apologized because he had run out of options. Because his apology seemed insincere, he received a much harsher sentence than he otherwise would have.

In sports scandals, the truth inevitably comes out. The Mitchell List will likely spur more allegations and bring more evidence to light about the steroids problem in baseball. Ignoring or lying about what happened is only going to make things a lot worse for the accused players.

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Polari ruin

MARIE COCCO

Of all the upsets that can sour a holiday season — pinched wallets, contaminated toys and sugar overload — is there anything that can dull the spirit like a presidential primary season unfolding in its midst?

Republicans argue about who can be tougher on immigrants and purer in disdain for anything resembling a tax. Democrats argue about — well, not much, really. That's the dispiriting part. The Democratic candidates agree broadly on everything from ending the Iraq War to initiating a form of universal health insurance to rolling back the gilded Bush-era tax cuts for the wealthiest. Their argument is about who is more "polarizing," or hogtied by contentious battles of the past.

So compelling is this "polarization" argument that it's migrated to the Republican camp. Mike Huckabee, a former Arkansas governor and Baptist minister who openly advertises himself as a "Christian" his religion as a tactic to thwart I Romney, presented himself in the debate among Republicans as — the un-polarizer. "We are right polarized country, and that polarization has led to a paralyzed governor."

Honestly, it's the other way around: government is paralyzed, but is it really polarized? Not so much.

Americans are in remarkable agreement lately on an awful lot. They agree was a mistake, and that the United States should start getting out. They think my is lousy and the country is on track. They want government to pay for health insurance to everyone and overwhelmingly believe the bipartisan effort to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is a good idea.

About three-quarters agree with the statement: "Today it's really true that the rich get richer while the poor get poorer," the 2007 Pew Research Center survey found.

WITNESSES TO THE PRO-BASEBALL



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