

The National Pastime

With Barry Bonds closing in on the Major League Baseball home run record, the country really has to decide what the true national pastime really is: Baseball, or cheating.

There is no question that Mr. Bonds used chemical enhancements to pump up his body and his batting statistics. It really doesn't matter what the man took, it only matters that he did not achieve his statistical position naturally, as Hank Aaron did.

Thus, there should be no celebration marking the occasion of Mr. Bonds passing Mr. Aaron for hitting the most home runs in Major League history. The League should give Bonds the ball, let him take a bow, and that's it.

The truth is that Major League Baseball enabled Barry Bonds and others to play with performance-enhancing chemicals in their systems. The baseball commissioner, Bud Selig, knew what was going on but all those home runs were good for business so Selig, and the union representing the players, did nothing. Baseball's image will never be the same.

There are legions of apologists for Barry Bonds—Mark McGuire, Sammy Sosa and the other chemical guys. But I don't want to hear it. Cheating is cheating. Mr. Aaron, Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, and other great baseball stars used their God-given abilities to achieve their records and earn their money. Their performances did not come out of a bottle.

But in present day America, many believe the end justifies the means, so success is success no matter how you get it. Young people especially are buying into this. According to a 2006 study by the Josephson Institute, 60% of American high school students have cheated on tests. Despite that number, 92% of the kids said they were satisfied with their personal ethics.

That "no remorse" stance is the key number. Do you think Barry Bonds is sorry he took chemicals? I don't. The man has made millions and is heavily lobbying to be recognized alongside the brave and honest Hank Aaron. Success for Bonds is all that matters.

Hank Aaron says he will not take part in any ceremony that includes Barry Bonds. Some may think that is small, but I think it's a courageous stand. There is no place in American life for achievement based upon deception. That is not what our competitive society is all about.

But I am most worried about young Americans, mostly male, who think the incredible bulk, Barry Bonds, is a cool guy, and so what if he took a few needles? It is obvious from the Josephson study that a culture of cheating is now firmly in place in the youth zone. A celebration of Bonds would simply reinforce that culture.

I don't want to be cruel to Mr. Bonds, who has been vilified for years. But he does not deserve respect, and he does not deserve applause.

He should tell everybody exactly how he pumped himself up, apologize profusely, and tour the nation telling kids not to do what he did.

Then Hank Aaron might be seen with him.