

What evidence backs Clemens or McNamee?

by Nick Canepa

OK, it's official. I'm totally sick and tired of baseball's steroid/HGH/tutti-frutti issues. To tell you the truth, I no longer care if these guys are injecting themselves with maple syrup behind trees in George Mitchell's Vermont orchard.

Go ahead. Take it to the edge, fellas, where anything goes. Other than testimony - I-said, he-said - I have yet to see one smidgen of real evidence, except that Roger Clemens' wife looked a bit more buff than she should have in that SI swimsuit issue (I guess).

Should I really care? Why should I? Why should you? Baseball simply pretends that it cares, cares about its precious records being destroyed by make-believe pharmacists, scared to death by Washington pols lurking like vultures to pick on an athlete's carcass to get a vote.

Baseball is a cockroach. It's never going away. No matter how stupid the game gets and how ridiculous the players behave, the fans come back. If they came back after Bud Selig killed the World Series, they will come back after a stupid Capitol Hill hearing that could have been run by SpongeBob SquarePants (and, come to think of it, committee Chairman Henry Waxman, the toughest questioner since Perry Mason, reminds me of S.S.).

I'm tired of a lack of proof. I'm tired of grandstanding politicians getting face time for nearly five hours, asking the "tough" questions and getting weak answers. Why should we believe any of these people, including the inquisitors?

Watching Wednesday's congressional interrogation of Roger Clemens and his supposed syringe caddie, Brian McNamee, I was, as I usually am, reminded of the scene in "Godfather II." I was waiting for Frankie Pentangeli's brother to come from Sicily to shut him up without saying a word.

He would have been welcome relief.

Really, if any of these guys on The Hill think they're Estes Kefauver taking on the mob, they're going to have similar results. Forgive me, Estes. I'm wrong. Organized crime went away.

I thought Wednesday's show, what I saw of it (and I saw enough), was sickening. I no longer need my time taken up by anything sickening. We do not need this.

We're in an election year. Thousands of Americans have been killed in Iraq (Lord knows how many Iraqis). The economy is on life support. Foreclosures are real estate's blue plate special.

And we're taking up public time and money on Roger Clemens and Brian McNamee? Arlen Specter is firing away at Roger Goodell? There has to be a way to get our priorities in order.

As it is, the Mitchell Report on steroids in baseball has ruined Clemens' name. Did he juice? Hell, I imagine. But, hell, I don't know. I wasn't in that toilet stall with Clemens and Andy Pettitte.

Am I supposed to believe McNamee, a trainer basically called a drug-dealing ex-cop in Wednesday's hearing, or Clemens' good friend/canary, Pettitte, who is blowing more whistles than an NBA ref on crack cocaine?

Am I supposed to believe this guy McNamee kept used syringes in a beer can for seven years because he thought one day Clemens might need to be outed? Johnnie Cochran would do backflips.

Sure, I'm stupid. I know that. But, if you're on a jury and they don't present any hard evidence, how are you going to vote? McNamee was a very bad witness. In fact, he absolutely stunk. He looked heavily constipated and couldn't sit up straight.

And Clemens, other than defending himself, wasn't much better, except he had good posture. Roger had a lot of trouble giving lucid answers, but I'm sure he signed a lot of autographs in the hallway for congressional pages.

All we came away with is that Clemens didn't do anything wrong and that McNamee, like Mongo, was a "pawn in game of life."

As I rule, I try to delve into the believable. That's what I'm paid to do. I went to journalism school. But how do we get ourselves a sieve-full of lies and a little truth and try to determine what to put in the batter?

We can't. Because we don't know. And we're in an era when we think we know everything. But we don't. And we're never going to know. There's no proof, because baseball didn't want proof when it really mattered.

The worst was at the end, when Waxman yelled at Clemens for interrupting him. "That doesn't mean he was not mistaken," Clemens said of McNamee. Waxman: "This is not your time to argue with me!"

So Clemens may have lied and McNamee may have lied. But the ugliest part of this ceremony was delivered by Waxman, who has been sworn to uphold the supposed laws of this country. Hey, Henry, this was not the Scopes Trial.

How many Cy Youngs has Waxman won? It was an embarrassing moment. Tell you what, Waxman could run unopposed and I wouldn't vote for him if he were a relative. He came off as a jackass, and some of his contemporaries didn't come off much better.

They're not going to get Roger Clemens. No chance. But they got him. They got his reputation.

This, as far as I'm concerned, is America at its worst. We're not in Salem anymore.

Where's Joe McCarthy when we really need him?

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