

THE RAJAH, SLAMMIN' SAMMY, BIC MAC, AND BARRY BOMBS:  
An Analysis of Hegemonic Masculinity in the  
Press Coverage of Four Home Run Hitters

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## ABSTRACT

This paper primarily analyzes the press coverage of modern-day home run hitters and how the press portrays their masculine characteristics in both a positive and negative light. When Roger Maris challenged the single-season home run record, the press focused on his masculinity. Similarly, when Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire, and Barry Bonds challenged the same record, the press magnified their masculinity in order to show that they were worthy contenders. After the steroid scandal, however, the press became more critical. This paper not only shows how the press reacts when an athlete challenges a record, but also how the press portrays athletes during a scandal.

Previous scholarship on the relationship between sports and gender reveals that newspapers have historically defined an athlete's success based on gender. As a result, the image of the successful male athlete is embedded in American culture. Using Nick Trujillo's article, "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," specific categories of hegemonic masculinity are observed: *physical force and control*, *occupational achievement*, *familial patriarchy*, and *frontiersmanship*. In addition, this paper analyzes and explains two additional characteristics. First, because each of these players challenged the single-season home run record, the way in which writers react to the breaking of records is considered. Second, because Sosa, McGwire, and Bonds were accused of using steroids, this paper also observes the way in which press coverage evolves in the midst of a scandal.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introducing the Lineup**

The image of the dominant male figure has without a doubt been perpetuated by the media. While advertisements, movies, and television programs have gone to great lengths to promote this image, perhaps no social institution has had more success than that of professional sports. Each day millions of Americans turn on their television sets and become spectators involved in the success or failure of their favorite teams. In fact, the physical qualities of professional athletes are often admired or even envied by young Americans who hope one day to emulate these role models. These characteristics represent the hegemonic masculinity that has come to symbolize athletes, and when these athletes are shown in the media, such qualities are further magnified.

This paper analyzes the hegemonic masculinity present in the press coverage of four home run hitters: Roger Maris, Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire, and Barry Bonds. These players were well known during their careers primarily for their power hitting abilities and sportswriters often described them as heroes to the game. However, when the world of professional baseball was plagued by a steroid scandal in 2003, three of these players were accused of cheating. The public and the press no longer described Sosa, McGwire, and Bonds with positive masculine characteristics. Instead they described them as cheaters who hurt the game.

In order to analyze the press coverage of these athletes, articles were surveyed from two time periods. One group of representative articles was selected during the season in which the player was challenging the home run record while a second group of articles was chosen from the height of the steroid controversy. Because there was no

scandal when Maris played, his press coverage was surveyed from a group of articles chosen solely from the 1961 season when he broke Babe Ruth's single-season home run record.

The artifacts were observed with the goal of analyzing characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Nick Trujillo's article, "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture"<sup>1</sup> serves as the framework article for this analysis. Specifically, this paper features four themes that Trujillo observes: *physical force and control*, *occupational achievement*, *familial patriarchy*, and *frontiersmanship*. In addition, this paper also observes additional characteristics present in press coverage that further emphasize masculinity.

The next chapter begins with a summary of previous research of in the area of sports-related communication and gender issues followed by a description of Trujillo's research. In addition, chapters three through six are dedicated to each player and include historical background as well as an in-depth analysis of press coverage of the era. The paper concludes with a seventh chapter devoted to ethical considerations as well as the impact that descriptions of hegemonic masculinity have on American culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Trujillo, Nick. "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8 (1991), 290-308.

## CHAPTER 2

### Previous Research in Sports Communication

Because this paper investigates how gender affects the press coverage of home run hitters, it is necessary to consider previous research on gender and sports. In addition, it is important to review previous scholarship concerning sports in general. This research includes investigation of relationships between fans and athletes as well as research on public relations and sports scandals. After reviewing these studies, this section concludes with research on important gender issues.

First, there has been significant research on the relationship between the fans and sports teams. Nick Trujillo is one researcher who has focused specifically on baseball, as evident in his article "Interpreting (the Work and the Talk of) Baseball: Perspectives on Ballpark Culture."<sup>2</sup> Trujillo investigated the culture that is created at baseball stadiums, ultimately concluding that the ballpark serves as a microcosm of a capitalistic society and that many aspects of the day-to-day business are commodified. Furthermore important values exist as well as essential problems that are also apparent in the real world. Trujillo explains that if we understand the day-to-day operations of the ballpark, fans can make parallels to their daily lives.

Although Andrew Walker's article "The Development of the Provincial Press in England, c. 1780-1914" examines the impact of sports journalism from a more historical perspective, it also shows the impact of sportswriting at the local level.<sup>3</sup> Walker explains that by the twentieth century more local newspapers began to cover sports and

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<sup>2</sup> Trujillo, Nick. "Interpreting (the Work and the Talk of) Baseball: Perspectives on Ballpark Culture." *Western Journal of Communication* 56 (1992): 350-371.

<sup>3</sup> Walker, Andrew. "The Development of the Provincial Press in England, c. 1780-1914." *Journalism Studies* 7.3 (2006): 452-462.

differentiated from rival newspapers in the way that they covered popular athletes. The article also concluded that newspapers were often characterized by the quality and styles of their sports coverage.

Nick Trujillo and Leah R. Ekdorn investigate the relationship between fans and their favorite teams in their article, "Sportswriting and American Cultural Values: The 1984 Chicago Cubs."<sup>4</sup> Trujillo and Ekdorn examined how sportswriters used specific themes in order to describe how players and teams are portrayed. Both authors also wrote about the challenge of having to describe the success and failure of a team that had been expected to finish in last place: "Sportswriters met this explanatory challenge by invoking more general interpretive schema – schema based on cultural values and embedded in the themes of winning and losing, tradition and change, teamwork and individualism, work and play, experience and youth, and logic and luck."<sup>5</sup>

Research on the relationship between sports and the media is not limited to the written press. Kenneth S. Zagacki and Dan Grano, authors of "Radio Sports Talk and the Fantasies of Sport," focus their attention on radio and how sports commentators and fans perceive the sports world through this medium.<sup>6</sup> Both researchers hoped that by researching radio sports talk, they could better understand how the community celebrates victories and reacts to losses. Through Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis, Zagacki and Grano concluded that when the home team wins a big game the fans are proud and the community reacts positively. Yet when the home team falls victim to the opposition,

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<sup>4</sup>Trujillo, Nick and Leah R. Ekdorn. "Sportswriting and American Cultural Values: The 1984 Chicago Cubs." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2 (1985): 262-281.

<sup>5</sup>Trujillo and Ekdorn, 279.

<sup>6</sup>Zagacki, Kenneth S. and Dan Grano. "Radio Sports Talk and the Fantasies of Sport." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22.1 (2005): 45-63.

the setting changes. Fans suddenly turn against their own allegiances and the community calls for changes or requests an explanation from the team's leader or coach.

Although fans primarily use mediums such as radio to discuss their favorite teams, athletes have commonly communicated through the media as well. Because athletes can choose to interact with the press through a variety of channels, many times these channels are intertwined. In Nathaniel Poor's article "Playing Internet Curveball with Traditional Media Gatekeepers: Pitcher Curt Schilling and Boston Red Sox Fans," Poor wrote about the competition between radio and newspapers, while emphasizing the recent revolution of the Internet.<sup>7</sup> When pitcher Curt Schilling was signed by the Boston Red Sox in 2004, he chose to use both the Internet and talk radio to communicate with baseball fans. Poor wondered what kinds of reasoning Schilling used when choosing these outlets, what the future may hold for these mediums, and how athletes use the media to reach out to their fans. Ultimately he cited the fact that Schilling was intrigued by computers to explain his decision to use the internet, and adds that Schilling also believed that true baseball fans also listened to sports talk radio. Thus, the personal tastes of the athlete played an important role in the decision-making process.<sup>8</sup>

A second area of research concerns the relationship between the press and a team's public relations staff. The public relations staff often serves as the bridge between the media and the athletes. Because athletes are in high demand to be interviewed, a team can often influence which athletes are covered and the ways in which they are

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<sup>7</sup> Poor, Nathaniel. "Playing Internet Curveball with Traditional Media Gatekeepers: Pitcher Curt Schilling and Boston Red Sox Fans." *The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 12.1 (2006): 41-53.

<sup>8</sup> Poor, 41-53.

portrayed by the media. This is largely accomplished through a team's public relations department. J. Sean McCleneghan wrote his article "The Sports Information Director – No Attention, No Respect, and a PR Practitioner in Trouble" on the life of the prototypical Sports Information Director.<sup>9</sup> Often referred to as the SID, the Sports Information Director serves as the head of media relations for a university's sports program. McCleneghan polled public relations directors across the country and compared how they operated on the regional level. The article describes the characteristics of the profession and touches on the rise of media coverage of sports and how these public relations representatives are responding to these changes.

The third category of research concerns sports scandals. Controversies in sports have often jeopardized the relationship between fans and the game. In the early 1950s Major League Baseball was investigated by Congress for questionable business dealings. William B. Anderson wrote about the situation in his article "Major League Baseball Under Investigation: How the Industry Used Public Relations to Promote its Past to Save its Present."<sup>10</sup> He analyzed B.K. Berger's four characteristics of organizational public relations and applied them to the controversy. More recently, Bryan E. Denham investigated the relationship between the media and the recent steroid scandal in his article "*Sports Illustrated*, the Mainstream Press and the Enactment of Drug Policy in Major League Baseball."<sup>11</sup> Denham structured his argument on agenda-building theory, claiming the existence of a relationship between the media and policymakers. Ultimately,

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<sup>9</sup> McCleneghan, J. Sean. "The Sports Information Director – No Attention, No Respect, and a PR Practitioner in Trouble." *Public Relations Quarterly* 40.2 (1995): 28-32.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, William B. "Major League Baseball Under Investigation: How the Industry Used Public Relations to Promote its Past to Save its Present." *Public Relations Review* 30 (2004): 439-445.

<sup>11</sup> Denham, Bryan E. "Sports Illustrated, the Mainstream Press and the Enactment of Drug Policy in Major League Baseball: A Study in Agenda-Building Theory." *SAGE Publications* 5.1 (2004): 51-68.

Denham claimed that as a result of a June 2002 *Sports Illustrated* article on the use of steroids in baseball, policymakers in Congress and Major League Baseball were called to take action and eventually succeeded in following through with initiating steps to rid the sport of performance-enhancing drugs.

William J. Brown, Michael D. Basil, and Mihai C. Bocarnea also touched upon the scandal in their article "The Influence of Famous Athletes on Health Beliefs and Practices: Mark McGwire, Child Abuse Prevention, and Androstenedione."<sup>12</sup> The article emphasizes the tendencies of the public to identify with the attitudes and beliefs of public role models. Although McGwire, a potential future Hall of Fame baseball player, is an advocate of child abuse programs, he has also freely admitted to using androstenedione, a muscle-building supplement that is allowed by Major League Baseball but banned in many other sports. This article ultimately concluded that as a consequence of following McGwire in the media, the public is more likely to try the drug.

Finally, when it comes to reviewing previous research of sports-related issues, there has been a significant amount interest in gender. Males are usually described with adjectives that magnify their physical characteristics and highlight their masculinity. Female athletes may have similar success on the field or on the court, yet the fact that they are female often affects how the media portrays them. As Julia T. Wood explains, "Many of the images dispensed by the media are unrealistic. Most men are not as strong, bold, and successful as males on the screen. Few women are as slender, gorgeous, and

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, William J. and Michael D. Basil and Mihai C. Bocarnea. "The Influence of Famous Athletes on Health Beliefs and Practices: Mark McGwire, Child Abuse Prevention, and Androstenedione." *Journal of Health Communication* 8 (2003): 41-57.

well dressed as stars and models."<sup>13</sup> As Wood later concluded, people interpret what they see on television or read in the newspaper as reality. In many cases, journalists differ in how they portray male and female athletes. There is an obvious dichotomy between how both genders are described.

Guy Reel's article, "This Wicked World: Masculinities and the Portrayals of Sex, Crime, and Sports in *The National Police Gazette*, 1879-1906," investigates how the desired masculine characteristics of male athletes evolved during the nineteenth century and were magnified in the press.<sup>14</sup> He quoted historian Gail Bederman as saying, "In the 1860s, the middle class had seen the ideal male body as lean and wiry. By the 1890s, however, an ideal male body required bulk and well defined muscles."<sup>15</sup> These characteristics were also evident in certain issues of the publication, proving that physical qualities defined masculinity at the turn of the century.

Another article focusing on male athletes is Steven P. Schacht's, "Misogyny On and Off the 'Pitch.'"<sup>16</sup> Schacht observed the gendered world of male rugby players from both an individual and a societal level, concluding that male rugby athletes promote the subjugation of females to males: "From the interaction that occurs on the playing field, 'the pitch,' to the equally important after-game social activities, rugby is a historically grounded sporting ritual firmly entrenched in a masculine world."<sup>17</sup> Thus males are able to reinforce their dominance through sports, and this dominance is evident outside of the sports environment as well.

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<sup>13</sup> Wood, Julia T. *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 2001, 199.

<sup>14</sup> Reel, Guy. "This Wicked World: Masculinities and the Portrayals of Sex, Crime, and Sports in *The National Police Gazette*, 1879-1906." *American Journalism* 22(1) (2005): 61-94.

<sup>15</sup> Reel, 71.

<sup>16</sup> Schacht, Steven P. "Misogyny On and Off the 'Pitch.'" *Gender and Society* 10.5 (1996): 550-565.

<sup>17</sup> Schacht, 551.

Philip Sullivan's article, "Communication Differences between Male and Female Team Sport Athletes," further develops the similarities and contrasts between male and female athletes.<sup>18</sup> While Sullivan theorized that male and female athletes may communicate differently due to the differences in nature between men's and women's sports, he ultimately concluded that there is not that big of a difference in communication after all. In fact, according to the article, male and female athletes communicate similarly when playing their respective sports.

Bryan Denham also teamed up with Andrew C. Billings and Kelby K. Halone to investigate the sports broadcast commentary of both sexes in the article "'Man, That was a Pretty Shot': An Analysis of Gendered Broadcast Commentary Surrounding the 2000 Men's and Women's NCAA Final Four Basketball Championships."<sup>19</sup> The researchers analyzed three men's basketball games and three women's games to observe how broadcasters described the players and observed a distinct difference in how both genders were portrayed: "Female athletes were accounted for primarily with respect to (a) where they come from, (b) having a good night, (c) having a good personality, and (d) what they look like."<sup>20</sup> The emphasis on the physical appearance of women is a reoccurring theme that is consistent with other research.

The contrasting descriptions of male and female athletes were further analyzed by Robyn Goodman, Lisa L. Duke, and John Sutherland. In their article, "Olympic Athletes and Heroism in Advertising: Gendered Concepts of Valor?" they explained that

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<sup>18</sup> Sullivan, Philip. "Communication Differences between Male and Female Team Sport Athletes." *Communication Reports* 17.2 (2004): 121-129.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew W. Billings, Kelby K. Halone, Bryan E. Denham. "'Man, That Was a Pretty Shot': An Analysis of Gendered Broadcast Commentary Surrounding the 2000 Men's and Women's NCAA Final Four Basketball Championships." *Mass Communication and Society* 5(3) (2002): 295-315.

<sup>20</sup> Billings, Halone, and Denham, 313.

successful athletes are often described as heroes.<sup>21</sup> However, as Goodman, Duke, and Sutherland further note, successful males are described differently than successful females: "The Warrior archetype is expressed in direct opposition to characteristics positively associated with the feminine... images that evoke the Warrior frequently occur in sports that are traditionally considered inappropriate for women."<sup>22</sup> When women are described under the "warrior theme," they are highly sexualized.

The way in which the media portrays female athletes has also been researched by Kimberly L. Bissell, who touches upon these issues in her article, "Sports Model/Sports Mind: The Relationship Between Entertainment and Sports Media Exposure, Sports Participation, and Body Image Distortion in Division I Female Athletes."<sup>23</sup> Bissell performed a research project in which she observed how female athletes responded to media coverage of other female athletes. She concluded that often the respondents strove to shape their bodies like those of the females featured in the media: "The results also indicate that interest in body-improvement television and magazines was positively and significantly correlated to bulimia and drive for thinness, whereas frequency of participating in a competitive sport was positively and significantly correlated to the drive for thinness scale."<sup>24</sup>

The media's perception of female athletes is further analyzed in the article, "She Shoots, She Scores: Mediated Constructions of Contemporary Female Athletes in

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<sup>21</sup> J. Robyn Goodman, Lisa L. Duke, and John Sutherland. "Olympic Athletes and Heroism in Advertising: Gendered Concepts of Valor?" *J & JMC Quarterly* 2 (Summer 2002): 374-393.

<sup>22</sup> Goodman, Duke, and Sutherland, 387.

<sup>23</sup> Bissell, Kimberly L. "Sports Model/Sports Mind: The Relationship Between Entertainment and Sports Media Exposure, Sports Participation, and Body Image Distortion in Division I Female Athletes." *Mass Communication & Society* 7(4) (2004): 453-473.

<sup>24</sup> Bissell, 465.

Coverage of the 1999 US Women's Soccer Team," written by Helene A. Shugart.<sup>25</sup> Shugart focused her research on how the media interprets successful female athletes. Using the 1999 national team as her example, Shugart concluded the women are objectified in the media: "Women have been and continue to be, in large part, portrayed as subservient; dependent... and physically and mentally deficient, explicitly or implicitly in comparison with men."<sup>26</sup> The media's coverage of the team further shows the sexual portrayal of women, as several sexual images and descriptions were often used when the media covered the team's victories. Shugart adds, "Analysis of the coverage of the US Women's National Soccer Team reveals that the sexualization of female athletes by virtue of passive objectification remains a key feature of their mediated representations."<sup>27</sup>

The way in which the media constructs femininity has also been researched by Janet S. Fink and Linda Jean Kensicki. Their article, "An Imperceptible Difference: Visual and Textual Constructions of Femininity in *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*" was inspired by the success of female athletes during the 1996 summer Olympics.<sup>28</sup> The authors concluded that women are portrayed under a consistent stereotype. Furthermore, they questioned the motives behind such stereotypical descriptions, which they credit in large part to the needs of advertisers. Fink and Kensicki add, "The manner of the coverage or how the issue is framed has proven

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<sup>25</sup> Shugart, Helene A. "She Shoots, She Scores: Mediated Constructions of Contemporary Female Athletes in Coverage of the 1999 US Women's Soccer Team." *Western Journal of Communication* 67 (1) (Winter 2003): 1-31.

<sup>26</sup> Shugart, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Shugart, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Janet S. Fink and Linda Jean Kensicki. "An Imperceptible Difference: Visual and Textual Constructions of Femininity in *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*." *Mass Communication & Society* 5(3) (2002): 317-339.

vital to the continual feminization of women; that is, the ways in which female athletes are portrayed by the media have reinforced a patriarchal ideology."<sup>29</sup>

Through this literature review, we have observed how researchers have investigated the relationship between media and sports and how the media treats athletes of both sexes. There has been a significant amount of research concerning how female athletes are portrayed, and much of the research consistently concludes that women are highly sexualized and are described as weak and inferior to their male counterparts. Yet in order to fully understand why the media specifically treats males and females independently, it is also necessary to investigate how male athletes are portrayed and the types of masculine characteristics that are featured in the media.

### **The Man as the Protagonist: Hegemonic Masculinity**

This section of the paper summarizes Trujillo's previous studies of hegemonic masculinity. Trujillo is one of the leading scholars of sports communication and rhetoric. In particular, he has investigated how characteristics of an athlete's masculinity are portrayed to the public. Trujillo's article, "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," presents his study of features of masculinity in American culture.<sup>30</sup> The four central components of masculinity, as explained by Trujillo, include *physical force and control*, *occupational achievement*, *familial patriarchy*, and *frontiersmanship*.

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<sup>29</sup> Fink and Kensicki, 310.

<sup>30</sup> Trujillo, Nick. "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 290-308.

The first characteristic is *physical force and control*. Trujillo cites R. W. Connell's research of the symbolism of the male body. According to Connell, the male body defines the strength of man: "force and competence are... translations into the language of the body of the social relations which define men as holders of power, women as subordinate [and] this is one of the main ways in which the superiority of men becomes naturalized."<sup>31</sup> Essentially the strength of man is what keeps him ahead of women on the gender hierarchy. More often than not, this force is a virtue that becomes representative of his power.

The second characteristic of hegemonic masculinity is the symbolism of *occupational achievement* through man's actions and achievements. Trujillo explains that "work itself can become defined along gender lines."<sup>32</sup> The article refers to previous research by Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee, who write that the definition of *work* has a connotation of the male gender. Different types of work can be considered more masculine than others.

The third example, *familial patriarchy*, also reflects the importance of the male figure in society. Specifically, Trujillo uses phrases such as "breadwinners" and "protectors," contrasting men with women in the family who to the contrary are "housewives" or "nurturing mothers."<sup>33</sup> When males are referenced in relation to their families, they are viewed as being the leaders of the clan. Trujillo cites the argument of Lynne Segal, who claims that the representation of man as being "sensitive" still falls

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<sup>31</sup> Connell qtd. in Trujillo "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 291.

<sup>32</sup> Trujillo, "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 291.

<sup>33</sup> Trujillo, "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 291.

under the category of hegemonic because "the contemporary revalorization of fatherhood has enabled many men to have the best of both worlds."<sup>34</sup>

The final characteristic is the description of the male figure as a *frontiersman*. Trujillo builds upon Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis" and writes that athletes are often described through the prototypical cowboy image. Writers portray him as the "American hero who embodies the values of our frontier past."<sup>35</sup> Trujillo also explains that the frontiersman displays a certain amount of humility when he is rewarded for his accomplishments.

This paper primarily analyzes the press coverage of modern-day home run hitters and how the press portrays their masculine characteristics in both a positive and negative light. When Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire, and Barry Bonds challenged the single-season home run record, the press magnified their masculinity in order to show that they were worthy to contend for the single-season home run record. After the steroid scandal, however, the press became more critical of their actions. This paper not only shows how the press reacts when an athlete challenges a record, but also how the press portrays athletes during a scandal. In order to best show this evolution, this discussion begins with an analysis of how the press covered Roger Maris during the 1961 baseball season when he broke Babe Ruth's single-season home run record. A discussion of Maris provides a solid foundation for the later analysis of the modern-day players.

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<sup>34</sup> Segal qtd. in Trujillo "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 291.

<sup>35</sup> Trujillo, "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 300.

### CHAPTER 3

#### Roger Maris: "The Savior of the Yankees"<sup>36</sup>

A country boy from North Dakota, Roger Maris found himself at baseball's center of attention during the summer of 1961. During that season he broke Babe Ruth's single-season home run record – a mark that was considered by many writers and fans to be untouchable. Yet despite that accomplishment, Maris also faced several challenges. Living in New York City, he experienced culture shock in trying to adapt to the new way of life. Furthermore, while under the immense pressure of chasing Ruth's record, he struggled with being accepted by the fans and media. Despite these obstacles, Maris' 61 home runs would later become etched into the record books for 37 years, and the 1961 season would be considered one of the most legendary in sports.

#### A Look at the Road to 61

Roger Maris grew up in Fargo, North Dakota, where he was a standout athlete at Bishop Shanley High School. Although he was a highly recruited football prospect, Maris chose to pursue baseball and signed with the Cleveland Indians in 1957.<sup>37</sup> His early career, however, was marked by numerous struggles with injuries and poor offensive production. The Indians soon lost faith in Maris and traded him to the Kansas City Athletics. During the 1958 season, while in Kansas City, Maris and his wife settled in Raytown, Missouri, where they started a family. Although Maris desired to remain in Missouri, he was traded the following off season to the New York Yankees. Maris' biographer Edward J. Tassinari wrote that "Maris quickly provided the caliber of play

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<sup>36</sup> Drebinger, John. "A Real Surprise Package." *The New York Times* 22 July 1960, 15.

<sup>37</sup> Tassinari, Edward J. "Roger Eugene Maris." *The Scribner Encyclopedia of American Lives*. 1 (1998).

desperately sought by the Yankees management. His all-out playing style and quiet, solid demeanor fit in well with his teammates and the image-conscious Yankees organization."<sup>38</sup>

Fans noticed Maris' hard work during his first season in New York, as he hit 39 home runs and earned the Most Valuable Player Award. In fact, Maris made an early chase for Ruth's record and surprised his new team.<sup>39</sup> Although Maris was expected to come to the city to hit home runs, star teammates such as Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra were expected to carry the load. As John Drebinger wrote that summer in *The New York Times*, "They knew he was good, but they didn't expect he'd be that good."<sup>40</sup>

Maris' first season in New York would serve as a precursor to the 1961 season. In July of 1960, while chasing the record, many writers portrayed Maris as rude and selfish. *The New York Times* wrote of the deteriorating relationship between Maris and the local sportswriters: "Roger Maris, the majors' leading home run hitter, and the savior of the Yankees, has become somewhat harassed after a month of seemingly endless questioning by writers who desperately want to know what he eats for breakfast (pancakes and sausages); if he likes New York ('no, it's too big for me')... and if he will break Babe Ruth's record ('the hell with it...')."<sup>41</sup> Although some writers such as Drebinger had given Maris the benefit of the doubt and described him as a misunderstood country-boy, other writers were often overly critical.

After his standout season in 1960, Maris hoped for a strong return the following year. However, his strained relationship with local sportswriters continued to deteriorate.

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<sup>38</sup> Tassinari, Edward J.

<sup>39</sup> "Roger Maris." *Contemporary Newsmakers*. (1986)

<sup>40</sup> Drebinger, John. "A Real Surprise Package."

<sup>41</sup> Drebinger, John. "A Real Surprise Package."

When asked about his new contract, Maris tersely responded, "I don't think it's anyone's business."<sup>42</sup> When he was awarded the MVP trophy during a home plate ceremony before the first game of the season, columnist Arthur Daley focused on how Maris didn't even respond with a simple 'thank you.'<sup>43</sup>

Once the season started, Maris struggled during the first two months and hit only 13 home runs.<sup>44</sup> To help Maris improve, manager Ralph Houk decided to switch Maris and Mantle in the lineup<sup>45</sup> As it turned out, Maris finished the month of June with 27 home runs. The switch worked equally well for Mantle, who ended the month with 25 homers. Like the previous season, the talk of Ruth's record resurfaced, but this time Maris was not alone in the chase. Mantle's hot start convinced some writers that he would be the one to break the historic mark of 60 home runs.

The race also captured the attention of the nation. President John F. Kennedy halted a press conference to announce an update on the two players.<sup>46</sup> Drebinger wrote in July, "Suddenly everyone has become home run happy. It seems no one can run home fast enough to turn on the radio and find out how many more homers Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris have hit."<sup>47</sup> Many writers also questioned the legitimacy of the home run surge. Critics wondered whether or not technological changes in bats and balls were contributing to the recent chase, and if Ruth's record would be tarnished. Another issue was also considered: the length of the schedule. Previously, the schedule consisted of 154 games. However, with the league's expansion in 1961, the schedule was increased

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<sup>42</sup> Effrat, Louis. "Maris Signs 1961 Contract With Yankees Calling for About \$36,000 a Year; RAISE ESTIMATED AT ALMOST \$15,000 Maris, American League's Most Valuable Player in 1960, Hopes to Improve." *The New York Times* 31 January 1961, 32.

<sup>43</sup> Daley, Arthur. "Overheard at the Stadium." *The New York Times* 12 April 1961, 50.

<sup>44</sup> Tassinari, Edward J.

<sup>45</sup> 61\*. Dir. Billy Crystal. Perfs. Thomas Jane, Barry Pepper. Film. Home Box Office, 2001.

<sup>46</sup> 61\*. Dir. Billy Crystal.

<sup>47</sup> Drebinger, John. "The Home Run Whirligig." *The New York Times* 30 July 1960, S2.

by eight games. Thus, because Ruth had hit 60 home runs in 154 games, many critics wondered whether or not Major League Baseball would only consider what was accomplished prior to the final 8 games.<sup>48</sup> By the middle of July, Baseball Commissioner Ford C. Frick settled the issue: "Concerned that the newly expanded 162-game American League playing schedule might taint Ruth's record, (Frick) ruled that a new home-run record would only be recognized if it was achieved within the first 154 games."<sup>49</sup>

As the end of the season grew nearer, tensions began to rise inside the Yankees clubhouse. Although Maris and Mantle had shared an apartment together and got along well, reporters sparked rumors of a feud between the two players. Maris, growing distrustful of the media and attempting to preserve his privacy, chose not to talk to the press after games. His wife and children, still living in Missouri, also received death threats.<sup>50</sup> Despite these distractions off the field, Maris put himself in position to break the record on the 154<sup>th</sup> day of the season. Although he fell short by only one home run, he would eventually hit two additional homers during the final eight games, including his 61<sup>st</sup> on the season's final day. Commissioner Frick decided that Maris' 61 home runs would be written into the record books with an asterisk. This decision meant that Babe Ruth's record would still be considered valid. The asterisk wasn't lifted until 1991, six years after Maris' death.<sup>51</sup>

Although Maris would go on to play seven more seasons, the 1961 season would be considered one of the most exciting in the history of baseball. He received his second MVP award that year, and he would later be heralded as one of the greatest Yankees to

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<sup>48</sup> 61\*. Dir. Billy Crystal.

<sup>49</sup> Tassinari, Edward J.

<sup>50</sup> 61\*. Dir. Billy Crystal.

<sup>51</sup> 61\*. Dir. Billy Crystal.

play the game. Despite his offensive production during those seasons, Maris spent the rest of his career battling injuries that prevented him from repeating his historic chase. Tassinari wrote, "He should be remembered as an excellent ballplayer of considerable courage who had the temerity to shatter the most revered single-season record in American sport and who faced the impossible tasks of living up to the mythical magnitude of his predecessor Ruth and his contemporary teammate, friend, and rival Mantle."<sup>52</sup>

### **"I'm Just Trying To Do What I Get Paid To Do"<sup>53</sup> : An Analysis of Maris' Press Coverage**

During the 1961 season, Maris faced the public's criticism of breaking Babe Ruth's record. Despite these obstacles, he continued to work hard on a daily basis to confront this challenge. Thus, this section of analysis investigates the way in which the press portrayed Maris as a capitalist worker striving for occupational achievement. It is also important to identify how writers reacted to Maris breaking the record. First, writers focused on Maris' shy personality and argued that he wasn't deserving of the record. Some critics wrote that Mantle was more deserving of Ruth's place in the record books. Second, although writers pointed to factors such as stadium size to explain the home run surge, writers and fans were generally disappointed when Maris failed to break the record in 154 games. In order to best observe press coverage, representative articles were chosen from the *New York Daily News* as well as the *New York Post* during the months of September and October of the 1961 season.

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<sup>52</sup> Tassinari, Edward J.

<sup>53</sup> Schecter, Leonard. "Time Running Out on the M Boys." *New York Post* 15 September 1961, 92.

The first characteristic of the coverage is the press' descriptions of Maris' quiet persona and apparent disinterest in talking to writers following games. *Daily News* columnist Dick Young admitted in early September that Maris "generally blurts candid answers to all questions."<sup>54</sup> Sometimes these answers weren't as detailed as sportswriters would have preferred, and if the questions confused Maris he would choose not to answer them at all. In one example, Leonard Shechter of the *Post* described an occasion in which Maris complained that some writers were publishing stories that he told them off the record. Maris told Shechter, "I didn't think they'd be in the paper." Shechter then responded, "But Roger, 20 reporters with notebooks..." Maris quipped back, "Well, they didn't get it right. Wait'll they try to get me to say anything tonight."<sup>55</sup> Whether or not the press' treatment of Maris was fair, the pressure on Maris to hit 61 home runs seemed to be taking a toll on his relationships with the writers.

Although Maris didn't appear to be helping his situation by choosing not to answer questions after games, some writers described Maris as the victim rather than the cause of tension. In fact, these portrayals best exemplify Maris under Trujillo's description of the masculine athlete framed as a capitalist worker. In one description, Young wrote, "The reporters stood there, circling the mouth of the corner locker in the rear of the room while Maris peeled to his shorts. Roger plunked down onto the stool, wearily, and called out: 'Hey Spud, get me a cool beer, will you?'"<sup>56</sup> Young then listed a number of questions that were asked, some of which had nothing to do with that night's game. Young concluded that the writers needed to think of new questions, and suggested that the writers were to blame for the tension. Furthermore, Young's portrayal of Maris

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<sup>54</sup> Young, Dick. "Maris Hits 54<sup>th</sup>; Yanks Romp, 8-0." *New York Daily News* 7 September 1961, 68.

<sup>55</sup> Shechter, Leonard. "A Rainy Night with Roger Maris." *New York Post* 14 September 1961, 68.

<sup>56</sup> Young, Dick. "Maris' 55<sup>th</sup> Leaves Scribes Agape." *New York Daily News* 6 September 1961, 64.

sipping a cold beer also showed Maris' modest persona. After a long day at work he humbly returns to his locker where he yearns for a return to a normal, private life. However, he is met with a circle of writers and doesn't even have enough time or a private space to change his clothes. Even in the midst of his surroundings, Maris still maintains a positive attitude and conveys the achievement of success after a hard day at work.

But Maris wasn't always viewed as a victim of circumstance by all baseball writers. After hitting his next home run, *Daily News* writer Joe Trimble described Maris as "[secluding] himself in the training quarters of Tiger Stadium. Looking like a culprit trying to hide, all he would say was that he would have to hit a couple here in the next two games to have any chance."<sup>57</sup> This image is certainly different than the previous description of Maris. In this portrayal, Maris won't even give the press the time to ask their questions. By labeling Maris as a "culprit," Trimble exonerates the media of any blame. Because Maris won't answer any questions, Trimble does not victimize Maris the same way that Young did only few days earlier.

*Post* writer Leonard Koppett wrote a column earlier in the month in attempt to defend Maris from writers like Trimble. As was the case with the Young article, Koppett described Maris with similar characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Koppett wrote, "Among the discourtesies Maris has been subjected to in recent weeks is a widespread refusal to listen, understand and believe what he says very plainly hundreds of times by now: 'I don't care how many homers I hit as long as we win. If we do win, of course I

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<sup>57</sup> Trimble, Joe. "M+M-0! Yanks' HR Mark at 223 in 11-1, 2-4 Split." *New York Daily News* 16 September 1961, 26.

hope I hit 60 or 70 or any number I can – but only if I win."<sup>58</sup> Koppet described Maris as a leader. Like many leaders, Maris is only worried about the end result and accomplishing one goal. He admits that if the goal is accomplished then he will re-evaluate his own personal performance. However, Maris is mainly concerned with how well the Yankees do during the postseason. Trujillo affirms that hard work is an essential characteristic of a successful businessman. Through these descriptions, Maris is only concerned about the achievement of the company.

Schechter also affirmed this observation in a later article: "What Maris says about the home run record at the moment is: 'I don't give a damn. I'm just trying to do what I'm paid to do. I don't know what it is, but that's what I'm trying to do.'"<sup>59</sup> As Trujillo explains, many times the success of an athlete is "quantified in records of individual achievement."<sup>60</sup> With the obvious focus on the increasing number of home runs and chase to hit 61, Maris tries to keep his focus on the task at hand by modestly earning his wages through his daily work ethic. Schechter also described Maris in October as feeling relieved after finally hitting 61 home runs: "This wasn't the same Maris who jiggled nervously for weeks waiting for the ax to fall on the 154<sup>th</sup> game... it was a Maris who seemed a foot taller now that a terrible load had been taken off him, now that he had the 61 home runs, now that the season was over."<sup>61</sup> For Maris, the focus was on the team's goals, and his own occupational achievements would be measured by the success of the team rather than an individual record.

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<sup>58</sup> Koppett, Leonard. "Maris: There's More To the Game than HRs." *New York Post* 5 September 1961, 72.

<sup>59</sup> Schechter, Leonard. "Time Running Out on the M Boys."

<sup>60</sup> Trujillo, Nick. "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 295.

<sup>61</sup> Schechter, Leonard. "Maris Was Trying For it All the Way." *New York Post* 2 October 1961, 52.

Interestingly enough, despite Maris' point of view, Mantle seemed to be gaining even more support for his effort to hit 61 home runs. Schechter wrote that many of the fans shared much of the writers' sentiments: "[Fans] booed Mantle for 10 years but now that somebody comes along to challenge his position they react like a tigress defending her cubs. Others believe that Maris simply isn't worthy of the honor."<sup>62</sup> Because Mantle had spent so much time in New York, fans supported him as their hometown boy. Maris, on the other hand, had just arrived to New York one year earlier. In fact, he had made it clear that he had no interest in living in the city and after the season he would get as far away from the city as he could.<sup>63</sup> After Mantle had broken out of a minor slump in early September, fans gave him a standing ovation after hitting a home run. Shechter believed that this ovation proved that he was a fan favorite: "What emerged from the game was that suddenly the people regard Maris as a usurper and they're trying to show Mantle that they really loved him all the time."<sup>64</sup> The fact that Maris continued to perform on the field despite the fact that most fans had a love for Mantle showed that he focused on the success of the Yankees. He would not be distracted by fans who preferred one player over another. This characteristic also supports Trujillo's description of the masculine athlete striving for occupational achievement rather than individual praise.

The second observation of the Maris' press coverage in September of 1961 was the way in which some writers found ways to take away from Maris' accomplishments. Perhaps it was due to the fear that a player like Maris, who had no real meaning to Yankees fans, would steal Ruth's record. Young wrote in late September that the

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<sup>62</sup> Shechter, Leonard. "What MM Are Up Against – Casey Had a Word for It." *New York Post* 13 September 1961.

<sup>63</sup> Gross, Milton. "For Roger Maris – A Long Year." *New York Post* 11 September 1961, 36.

<sup>64</sup> Shechter, Leonard. "Jeers Turn to Cheers for Mantle; Dodgers Run Into a Giant Roadblock." *New York Post* 10 September 1961, 36.

ballparks were easier to hit in during the modern era of baseball and that Ruth was walked more than Maris. Young even pointed to livelier bats and balls to explain the home run surge.<sup>65</sup> Trimble mentioned ballpark dimensions when previewing the final series: "New screen along right field lower deck to right center could hurt [Maris].... In Ruth's day, there was no double-tier stand in right."<sup>66</sup>

In a historic move, Frick chose to only acknowledge the record if it was broken in the first 154 games. After Maris finished with 59 home runs on the 154<sup>th</sup> day, the *Daily News* published a cartoon with Frick's hand forcefully closing the record book and a headline that read "Case Closed."<sup>67</sup> The cartoonist magnified the size of Frick's hand and sketched in dust that flew from the book when the cover was slammed shut. The *Post* also ran a cartoon after Maris failed to break the record in 154 games with Maris standing straight and facing a large cloud formed in the shape of Babe Ruth who said, "You gave it a good try, kid!"<sup>68</sup> In this cartoon, readers can only see the "9" on the back of Maris' uniform. The sketch symbolizes a child who had given a valiant and noble effort, yet had failed in the final hour. Despite the fact that Maris had reminded writers that the record was not important to him, his head in the cartoon faces the ground, as if disappointed that he fell short. These noble perceptions of Maris helped mold his image after the 1961 season as a modest worker who had been caught the interest of the nation by simply working hard and putting in an honest effort.

Fans also had negative reactions to the asterisk. Although they had initially supported Mantle, he fell out of the race with only a few weeks left in the season because

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<sup>65</sup> Young Dick. "Race for Ruth's 'Sacred Sixty' Over, But Homer Hassle Goes Extra Innings." *New York Daily News* 24 September 1961, Section 2.

<sup>66</sup> Trimble, Joe. "M+M-0! Yanks' HR Mark at 223 in 11-1, 2-4 Split."

<sup>67</sup> Gallo. "Cased Closed." *New York Daily News* 21 September 1961, 76.

<sup>68</sup> *New York Post* 21 September 1961, 72.

of an injury. Thus, when it became possible that Maris would break the record, many fans protested Frick's decision. Young wrote in the *Daily News*, "[Fans] machine-gunned Frick with asterisks. They whipped up sympathy for Maris with asterisks. Poor Rodge, they wept; all he would get for his noble effort would be an (\*) in the record book."<sup>69</sup> In the *Post*, Schecter criticized the asterisk, inferring that the season had wrongly belonged to Frick instead of Maris.<sup>70</sup> Columnist Jimmy Powers wrote in the *Daily News* that the fans benefited the most from the chase: "What pleases this observer is the genuine glow this feat gave millions. It is now generally agreed cautious critics are in the minority, their pipsqueak complaints and objections drowned by a mighty roar of approval. We were told the ball is livelier, and it may be for all we know, but who cares?"<sup>71</sup>

By the end of the 1961 season, Maris had captured the hearts of most Yankees fans. Although many fans had initially preferred Mantle over Maris during the race, they had evolved to accept Maris. Writers immediately supported and praised his effort, ultimately arguing against Frick's decision to represent the record with an asterisk. Overall, Maris' work ethic remained consistent throughout the month. Even as the 154<sup>th</sup> game grew nearer, he continued to insist that he was more concerned with the success of the team rather than breaking any individual feats. The descriptions of Maris portrayed him as a humble player who didn't feel that he was deserving of the attention. His goal was simply to work hard each day for the good of the team. By portraying Maris in this fashion, sportswriters presented Maris to the public as a hard worker who always had good intentions with occupational achievement as his central goal.

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<sup>69</sup> Young, Dick. "Young Ideas." *New York Daily News* 22 September 1961.

<sup>70</sup> Schecter, Leonard. "P.S. – The Yankees Won Another Flag." *New York Post* 21 September 1961, 72.

<sup>71</sup> Powers, Jimmy. "The Powerhouse." *New York Daily News* 28 September 1961.

It is also important to consider that the press coverage of Maris showed an athlete who was playing during an era in which records were not tainted by steroid use. When Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire, and Barry Bonds were linked to steroids after having broken the mark of 61 home runs, it was the first time in the modern history of the game in which the game's most high profile athletes were labeled as cheaters. Thus, the following chapters describe the way in which the media continued to portray athletes primarily by their masculine characteristics during both the rise and fall of their careers.

## CHAPTER 4

### Sammy Sosa: "Rags to Riches"<sup>72</sup>

Sammy Sosa's rise to stardom follows the traditional "rags to riches" theme. Growing up poor in the Dominican Republic, baseball was Sosa's only ticket out of poverty. After playing the game as a teenager, he was finally noticed by scouts in the mid-1980s and would later settle down in Chicago playing for the Cubs. There he slowly obtained a reputation as a power hitter. Coincidentally the same year that Mark McGwire broke Roger Maris' single-season home run mark, Sosa also reached the sacred mark of 61 home runs, finishing with 66 homers. After becoming a hero in both Chicago and his home country after the 1998 season, Sosa shocked the baseball world in 2003 when he was found to be cheating by using a corked bat. Complementing this controversy was his eventual testimony in front of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Although it was never proven that Sosa used steroids, the legitimacy of his career would soon be questioned.

#### **Sosa's American Dream**

Growing up in the Dominican Republic, Sammy Sosa spent his afternoons shining shoes and working in a clothing factory. "My father died when I was seven years old," Sosa would later reflect. "I would say to my mother, 'Don't worry about it, I'm going to take care of you. I'm going to take care of you.'"<sup>73</sup> Despite all of the challenges that Sosa faced, he always had his sights set on making it big in America. Associated Press writer

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<sup>72</sup> Justice, Richard. "From Rags to Riches." *The Oregonian* 4 September 1998, D01.

<sup>73</sup> Wildrick, Jim. "From Now on, Just Call Him Sammy Sosa." *The State Journal-Register* 2 September 1998, 29.

Chris Hawley visited Sosa's home town of San Pedro de Macoris and later wrote of Sosa's reputation: "There's a statue of [Sosa] in the courtyard and a disco, Sammy's Hit Club, that has seen business soar.... In the nearby Papi Sports Bar, the talk was of baseball records and lore."<sup>74</sup> David Kindred of *The Sporting News* wrote of San Macoris being, "a city of hovels made of cardboard, tin and dirt."<sup>75</sup> Kindred added, "For the citizens of San Macoris, baseball is life. Thousands of young men hope to live the dream that Sosa has achieved, although only about a dozen have been able to live out their dreams."<sup>76</sup>

Sosa's dream came to fruition 1984 when he signed with the Texas Rangers for just under four thousand dollars. During his first few years in the minor leagues, Sosa was criticized for a lack of discipline at the plate – a criticism that would follow him through his early years in the majors. After spending some time playing for the Chicago White Sox, Sosa moved to the north side of Chicago to play right field for the Cubs, where his hitting instantly improved. In 1993, he hit 33 home runs and stole 36 bases. These numbers would remain consistent for the next four seasons and Sosa would finally solidify himself as a consistent hitter.<sup>77</sup>

Sosa's breakout season however was not until 1998. He hit thirty more home runs than he had the previous year and competed with Mark McGwire to break Roger Maris' single-season record. During that season it was Sosa's outgoing personality and vibrant nature that helped transform him into a national icon. While McGwire was arguably the more popular of the two players, a curiosity surrounded Sosa that ultimately drew fans to

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<sup>74</sup> Hawley, Chris. "In a Town of Baseball Dreams, Sammy Sosa Keeps Hope Alive." *The Associated Press* 17 September 1998.

<sup>75</sup> Kindred, Dave. "The Class of '98." *The Sporting News* 21 December 1998, 10.

<sup>76</sup> Kindred, Dave, 10.

<sup>77</sup> Kindred, Dave, 10.

like him. He had a modest character that gave him a likeable public persona. When asked about McGwire's success, Sosa once told a reporter: "Mark is my idol, and I always say Mark is the man," Sosa said. "I've got my money on him."<sup>78</sup>

After the 1998 season had ended, San Pedro de Macoris was hit hard by Hurricane Georges. Sosa immediately began raising funds for his country – an act that garnered international attention and praise. He sent three planeloads of food and supplies to victims of the hurricane. Mayor Sergio Cedeno later said, "For being a humble person who has reached the hearts of many people, he's the best ambassador we could have to show the disaster that has stricken us."<sup>79</sup>

Despite the distraction of the hurricane during the off season, Sosa returned to the field in 1999 and his success continued. His power numbers remained consistent, and he once again hit over 60 home runs. In fact, Sosa would hit over 40 home runs each of the next four seasons. While McGwire's statistics quickly dwindled after his monumental year in 1998, Sosa had proven that he could continue to contribute.

Sosa's popularity hit a road block however in 2003 during an early June home game against the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. In the first inning, Sosa broke his bat on a routine groundout. Head umpire Tim McClelland took notice of one of the broken shards and then closely investigated the rest of the bat. As it turned out, Sosa had corked his bat before the game, an illegal act that enables batters to swing with enhanced power. McClelland instantly ejected Sosa and Major League Baseball subsequently suspended Sosa for six additional games. This incident led to heavy criticism from the media and the fans. Sosa later admitted that he used corked bats during batting practice to entertain

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<sup>78</sup> Wildrick, Jim, 29.

<sup>79</sup> Glantz, Derek. "Thousands of Dominicans Welcome Sammy Sosa." *The Associated Press* 21 October 1998.

the fans and had mistakenly grabbed the wrong bat before he stepped to the plate: "I just took the wrong bat and went up there and it happened," Sosa said after the game. "It's a mistake, I know that. I feel sorry. I just apologize to everybody that I embarrassed."<sup>80</sup>

The corked bat incident served to symbolize the beginning of Sosa's downfall.

Sportswriter Tim Tucker the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* wrote, "We don't know how often Sammy Sosa has used corked bats. We don't know how many, if any, of his 505 home runs have been hit with them.... It makes you feel like a sucker for having trusted [him]."<sup>81</sup> Sosa's fan base also dwindled. Although he was given an ovation by the home crowd during his next home start, many fans from around the country began to question whether or not he had betrayed them.

Sosa faced more trouble that same year. After *Sports Illustrated* reported a steroids story and federal agents raided a steroid distributor's laboratory, the public became even more skeptical.<sup>82</sup> These events led to a closer investigation on the part of the United States Congress that soon included both Sosa and McGwire. Although Sosa denied ever having used steroids, the panel received heavy criticism following the hearing. California Democrat Tom Lantos was quoted as saying during the hearings that, "I increasingly feel the feeling of the theater of the absurd here."<sup>83</sup> Sosa was guilty by association.

Sosa would return to the field in full form the following season. He hit 35 homers in 2004, although he failed to drive in 100 runners and was dropped to sixth in the lineup.

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<sup>80</sup> Borden, Sam. "Say it Ain't Sosa, But Yes it is! Faces Infamy for Corked Bat." *New York Daily News* 4 June 2003, 59.

<sup>81</sup> Tucker, Tim. "Shattered!; Trust Between Fans, Players Takes a Big Hit." *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* 5 June 2003, 1C.

<sup>82</sup> In 2003, federal agents raided the BALCO facilities in California and recovered lists of Major League Baseball players who were in contact with steroid distributors.

<sup>83</sup> Quinn, T.J. "Bud, Baseball Brushed Back. Commish & Players Strike out in D.C." *New York Daily News* 18 March 2005, 90.

The cheers that had once graced right field in Wrigley had turned to boos by October. Writer Rick Hummel of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* coined the eventual split between the Cubs and Sosa as a "divorce of convenience," citing the fact that the Cubs were hoping to dump Sosa's salary and that Sosa himself was no longer happy.<sup>84</sup> Rick Telander of the *Chicago-Sun Times* wrote, "The unbridled ego. The lack of concern for others. The shrugging off of any personal shortcomings. The disregard of criticism by outside fools, meaning everybody. The breezy dismissal of wreckage left in one's wake. The ease in being swollen and satisfied in one's own little universe. That's Sammy."<sup>85</sup> Sosa seemed to be happy to rid himself of the Cubs, and the fans in Chicago were just as happy to rid themselves of him.

Although in 2005 Sosa signed a hefty contract with the Baltimore Orioles, it was apparent that his best years were behind him. He experienced even more injury problems and hit only 14 home runs in 102 games.<sup>86</sup> Before the next season he quietly removed himself from professional baseball. It wasn't until just before the 2007 season that he signed a contract with the Texas Rangers in an attempt to resurrect his career. The lack of media attention concerning his return further confirmed that Sosa's fame was far from what it once was. Because of the corked bat incident and his testimony before the congressional committee, it appeared that Sosa was no longer accepted by the public. These incidents further called Sosa's statistics into question. Despite several attempts by Sosa to legitimize his career, his name was been largely tainted by these controversies.

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<sup>84</sup> Hummel, Rick. "Sosa Starts Anew with Baltimore Orioles." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 14 March 2005, E1.

<sup>85</sup> Telander, Rick. "Bonds, Sosa, Moss Cut from the Same Cloth." *Chicago-Sun Times* 25 February 2005, 182.

<sup>86</sup> "Sammy Sosa Career Statistics." 1989-2007. 15 February 2007. <<http://www.mlb.com>>.

**"A Metaphorical Cowboy"<sup>87</sup> :  
The Portrayal of Sosa as a Dominican Frontiersman**

Trujillo's description of the male athlete portrayed as a frontiersman was observed in the analysis of Sosa's press coverage. Although Sosa is from the Dominican Republic, he exhibits a unique form of frontiersmanship because of his pursuit of the American dream. In 1998, when Sosa was chasing the home run record, the press described him as a hero to the Dominican people. Having left his country for a successful baseball career in the United States, he became the Dominican equivalent of the American cowboy and was described with similar characteristics that helped define his masculinity. In 2005, after the steroid scandal and corked bat incident, the perception of Sosa was very different and he no longer reflected this heroic image. In fact, sportswriters mainly pointed to his nationality as a major cause of his downfall. The portrayal of Sosa as a frontiersman was observed in articles chosen from both seasons.

Trujillo writes that the frontiersman is an "American hero who embodies the values of our frontier past."<sup>88</sup> Trujillo explains that the frontiersman is a white male who is a "metaphorical cowboy."<sup>89</sup> Sosa was not born in the United States, and he didn't immigrate to the United States until he was a teenager. However, the press coverage of Sosa's 1998 season reveals many of the characteristics of the "metaphorical cowboy" through his pursuit of the American dream.

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<sup>87</sup> Trujillo, Nick. "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 300.

<sup>88</sup> Trujillo, Nick. "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 300.

<sup>89</sup> Trujillo, "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," 300.

One important characteristic of the frontiersman is that he is a heroic figure. During the 1998 season, writers focused on Sosa as a hero in the Dominican Republic. One writer for *The Chicago-Sun Times* wrote in August that Sosa was a national hero.<sup>90</sup> This heroism was a fact of life for Sosa in his home country, but it carried over into the United States as well. David W. Chen of *The New York Times* wrote, "On the hot asphalt of West 170<sup>th</sup> Street near Audubon Avenue, just before dinner time, a boy, wearing a turned-around Chicago Cubs cap and carrying a baseball bat, bellowed: 'I'm Sosa! I'm Sosa!'"<sup>91</sup> Sosa's race for 61 home runs impacted many immigrants that had followed his steps to the United States. More importantly, Sosa became an ambassador to the rest of the world. Each time his name appeared in the headlines, his country was represented: "For the Dominicans, Sosa's pursuit is also a story about a local boy who stands for all that can be good in their beleaguered homeland, a national hero whose every home run seems to validate an entire people."<sup>92</sup>

When Hurricane Georges hit the Dominican Republic during the 1998 season, Sosa became even more of a heroic figure. With much of the country in ruins, a Dominican man from Sosa's home town told the press he was relying on Sosa's personal contribution to the relief effort instead of aid from the Dominican government. Geoff Baker of *The Toronto Star* wrote, "He feels Sosa will help his country's plight 'because that's the kind of person he is. The government doesn't seem very interested in me.'"<sup>93</sup> When Sosa returned to the United States, he was given a hero's welcome. In New York City, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani organized a parade through Washington Heights, where

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<sup>90</sup> Slezak, Carol. "No Matter What Language, Sammy Speaks from the Heart." *The Chicago-Sun Times* 19 August 1998, 122.

<sup>91</sup> Chen, David W.

<sup>92</sup> Chen, David W.

<sup>93</sup> Baker, Geoff. "Baseball Heroes Become Saviours." *The Toronto Star* 12 October 1998.

many Dominican immigrants had settled and awarded Sosa the key to the city:

"Speaking to a crowd of thousands, Mr. Giuliani called Mr. Sosa a Dominican hero, an American hero, a hero around the world."<sup>94</sup> Sosa appeared to have become a statesman for his country.

However the press coverage of the Sosa-McGwire race reveals that there was a difference in the way the American public supported both athletes. Commonly American baseball fans had an affinity toward McGwire because he more traditionally embodied the American culture. *The New York Times* quoted one Dominican fan as saying, "It's always McGwire, McGwire, McGwire.... I think it's because McGwire is American, and white, and Sosa is a Dominican, and black. Americans want to see McGwire break the record."<sup>95</sup> Columnist Leonard Pitts, Jr. of *The Houston Chronicle*, explained that this difference was also evident in how corporate sponsors embraced McGwire instead of Sosa: "To them, Sosa, a brown Hispanic born in the Dominican Republic, is not 'all-American' enough to appeal to a broad audience."<sup>96</sup> Yet one of Sosa's frontiersman characteristics was that he was proud of his heritage. Bob Elliot of *The Toronto Sun* quoted Sosa as saying, "[McGwire] is the man in the United States, I am the man in the Dominican Republic."<sup>97</sup> As Americans witnessed the proud Sosa play on the field, fans also became more inclined to embrace him as one of their own. Cubs president Andy MacPhail explained that more Americans began rooting for Sosa once they got to know him.<sup>98</sup> When Sosa was on the verge of hitting his 62<sup>nd</sup> home run, he talked to the press

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<sup>94</sup> Thompson, Ginger. "Celebrating a Dream Come True." *The New York Times* 18 October 1998.

<sup>95</sup> Chen, David W.

<sup>96</sup> Pitts Jr., Leonard. "The Issue of Race Intrudes on 'All-American' Standards." *The Houston Chronicle* 9 October 1998, 2.

<sup>97</sup> Elliot, Bob. "Non-Answers Harm McGwire." *The Toronto Sun* 20 March 2005, SP7.

<sup>98</sup> Justice, Richard. "From Rags to Riches."

about his achieving the American dream: "It's nice when I have my family with me. It brings a lot of memories.... It makes me happy to have them all together in America. It is something I appreciate."<sup>99</sup> As the season continued fans became more accepting of Sosa and they were able to reconcile the fact that he wasn't American. They even admired him more for it. Rick Telander of *The Chicago-Sun Times* explained that "Sammy is simply the proud immigrant who has made good. A true American."<sup>100</sup>

As fans familiarized themselves with Sosa, they also began to accept his modest display of class – another important characteristic of the frontiersman. When Sosa witnessed McGwire break Maris' record before him, the two exchanged hugs. Later in the season, much of the press complimented Sosa when he received the MVP award, noting that although McGwire won the home run chase, Sosa had been able to establish himself as being the better player. When writers interviewed Sosa about being better than McGwire, he responded, "I consider myself a great player. But Mark McGwire, for me, that's 'The Man.'"<sup>101</sup> Later when he was asked about celebrating the award, Sosa told the press, "I don't have that much time to celebrate. I have to take care of a lot of people. They are suffering."<sup>102</sup> According to Trujillo, the frontiersman acts in a dignified manner after he receives praise. The press admired the way in which Sosa humbly responded when McGwire broke the record and after he won the MVP award. This image helped mold him as a true American hero.

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<sup>99</sup> Timmerman, Tom. "Sosa Stays at 63 as Reds Beat Cubs." *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 20 September 1998, F1.

<sup>100</sup> Telander, Rick. "Sosa Valuable in So Many Different Ways." *The Chicago-Sun Times* 20 November 1998.

<sup>101</sup> Telander, Rick. "Sosa Valuable in So Many Different Ways."

<sup>102</sup> Telander, Rick. "Sosa Valuable in So Many Different Ways."

The perception of Sosa quickly changed following the steroid controversy and the praise he had received soon diminished. Although Sosa was admired for caring for others during the home run chase, he was instead portrayed as selfish in the midst of the scandal. In one example, many writers pointed out that Sosa's selfishness should be blamed for his deteriorating relationship with the Cubs. Jay Mariotti of *The Chicago-Sun Times* wrote that Sosa "kept blowing up the bridge, sabotaging the Wrigleyville love affair with his self-destructive, egomaniacal and strangely insecure episodes."<sup>103</sup> Hal Bodley of *USA Today* also cited Sosa's corked bat controversy and his publicized disagreements with Cubs manager Dusty Baker, who was considered by many players to be a player's manager. Bodley wrote, "The Cubs couldn't wait to get rid of Sosa, even paying \$16.5 million to say goodbye... maybe it was the whispers of steroid use, which Sosa has vehemently denied."<sup>104</sup> The article even points to the fact that Sosa was caught on video cameras leaving a game early, an act that was believed to have sealed his fate with the Cubs fans. Even after Sosa left Chicago, his selfish persona was still highlighted in the news. Stephanie Myles of *The Gazette* caught Sosa taking his own personal helicopter to a spring training game, despite the fact that he had previously denied taking personal transportation to away games. After Sosa negatively responded to the allegations, Myles wrote, "He wasn't under oath, there was no need to get aggravated; hopefully Sosa was just embarrassed to be found out because he didn't have the courtesy to ask any of his new teammates to join him."<sup>105</sup> Instead of reading descriptions of Sosa's humanitarian efforts or his positive attitude, fans viewed him as an individual who had no

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<sup>103</sup> Mariotti, Jay. "Sammy's Stuff Isn't That of Legends." *The Chicago Sun-Times* 31 January 2005, 119.

<sup>104</sup> Bodley, Hal. "Sosa's Two Sides Contrast Sharply." *USA Today* 4 February 2005, 4C.

<sup>105</sup> Stephanie Myles. "You Can't Handle The Truth." *The Gazette (Montreal)* 29 March 2005, C3.

concern for others. Writers began portraying him as a defensive, egotistical player who didn't care about anyone other than himself.

As described earlier, Sosa grew up poor in the Dominican Republic and was still able to successfully pursue the American dream. By 2005, however, sportswriters began to focus on this characteristic as having caused his downfall. *The Toronto Star* investigated the steroid culture that had grown in the Dominican Republic: "These substances are legal here, sold over the counter in pharmacies and pet stores and given to players as young as 13 by parents and guru-like, freelance state agents... hoping to share in any future professional contract."<sup>106</sup> According to the *Star*, the island was a breeding ground for baseball players who relied on performance-enhancing drugs. Thus, the perceptions of Sosa as well as his home country quickly began to change.

Writers even began to portray Sosa as a swindling Dominican. The image of the "American Dream Sosa" that existed in 1998 was replaced with a "Dominican Sosa" and was mocked by the press. When Sosa testified in front of the congressional committee on steroid use in Major League Baseball, he had his lawyer read a statement after claiming that he had difficulty understanding the English language. Sports columnist Woody Paige of *The Denver Post* wrote, "Sosa's attorney read his statement; then [Sosa] responded to questions by agreeing with everybody about everything. Sosa was doing his best Chico Esquela impersonation. For the record, Sosa speaks clear English, and he understands the language better than I do."<sup>107</sup> Gordon Edes of the *Boston Globe* also emphasized Sosa's homeland in questioning whether or not Sosa had been juicing: "No Dominican player has been subject to more suspicion in the Steroid Era than Sammy

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<sup>106</sup> "Life in Needle Park." *The Toronto Star* 14 May 2005, E01.

<sup>107</sup> Paige, Woody. "Big Mac, Sosa, Legacies Tarnished." *The Denver Post* 20 March 2005, B-04.

Sosa... In a shaky appearance before the House Committee on Government Reform, Sosa primarily relied on a translator to speak for him, but denied ever using steroids."<sup>108</sup> Ian O'Connor of *USA Today* was also critical of Sosa's decision to have a translator read his testimony: "Sammy Sosa was acting as if he left the English language in his locker."<sup>109</sup> There was a comedic element in these descriptions of Sosa. It was obvious that the press had lost the respect for an athlete that they had heralded as one of the game's most admired stars seven years earlier.

The image of Sosa in the center of the steroid controversy was certainly different than the frontiersman image that was apparent during the home run chase. During the summer of 1998, Americans across the country learned of Sosa's struggles and had come to admire his vibrant and outgoing personality. For many baseball fans, Sosa had symbolized the narrative of the American dream. Growing up shining shoes for his mother in the tiny village of San Pedro de Macoras, Sosa would eventually make the trip to America where his achievements on the baseball diamond would transform him into not only a hero, but also a statesman for his country. Americans quickly adopted Sosa as one of their own, and he became a symbolic hero for two distinct cultures.

By 2005, the steroids scandal had changed everything and the American dream narrative took a shocking twist. American sportswriters were the first to denounce Sosa and he was quickly stripped of any "American" characteristics. Although he had still accomplished the American dream, he was looked on as a cheater with the many other baseball stars also associated with the steroids scandal. His appearance in front of the congressional committee and his decision to have a lawyer translate his testimony was

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<sup>108</sup> Edes, Gordon. "Suspicion Touches Them All." *Boston Globe* 3 April 2005, C12.

<sup>109</sup> O'Connor, Ian. "An Unbelievable Turnaround for a Former Hero." *USA Today* 2 August 2005, 3C.

viewed by writers as an attempt to fool both baseball fans as well as the panel. Mariotti's description of Sosa best describes the sentiment of many writers: "Maybe a guy who grows up impoverished in the Dominican Republic, using a milk carton for a glove and shining shoes to pay for his family's next meal, never stops worrying that his wonderful life will be taken away."<sup>110</sup> Sosa will not lose the life of luxury that he achieved in America, but whether or not Americans will believe that he earned his "wonderful life" in a modest fashion would remain in doubt.

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<sup>110</sup> Mariotti, Jay. "Sammy's Stuff Isn't That of Legends."

**CHAPTER 5**  
**Mark McGwire:**  
**"He's the Fifth Beatle. You've Got John, Paul, George, Ringo, and Mark"<sup>111</sup>**

Like Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire's success during his fifteen years in the Major Leagues defined him as one of the game's best power hitters. Yet his success didn't come without its troubles. Between his personal problems off the field and his injury problems that nearly ended his career, McGwire was forced to work hard to rise above adversity and ultimately put together some of the most productive seasons ever accomplished in the history of baseball. In 1998, McGwire shattered Roger Maris' 37-year-old home run record and later became the first player to hit over 60 home runs in back-to-back seasons. Although McGwire's power surge was considered by many writers to have saved the game of baseball from the controversial cancellation of the 1994 season, he faced further criticism when investigations into steroid use began in 2003.<sup>112</sup> When he disappeared from the public eye after retirement, McGwire was eventually called to speak before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, where he maintained that it was wrong to use steroids, yet refused to answer questions about his past. This decision publicly hurt his reputation. McGwire's rejection from the Hall of Fame in 2007 suggests that like many home run hitters during the 1990s, McGwire had fallen victim to the steroid scandal.

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<sup>111</sup> Schroeder, George. "Mind and Body." *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* 29 March 1998, C8.

<sup>112</sup> During the 1994 season, owners and players were unable to agree on a new collective bargaining agreement. As a result, the negotiations resulted in the fourth work stoppage in 23 years and the cancellation of the World Series for the first time in baseball history.

## Rise to Fame and Quest for 61

Mark McGwire's career began to take form at the University of Southern California. By 1984, his reputation as a collegiate star earned him a spot on the U.S. Olympic team, and he was later chosen as the tenth pick in the Major League Baseball draft by the Oakland Athletics.<sup>113</sup> Three years later, McGwire was the unanimous selection as the American League Rookie of the Year. Along with former teammate Jose Canseco, McGwire was popularly referred to as one half of the "Bash Brothers." As the league's two top power hitters, batting side by side in the lineup, the duo quickly became popular in Oakland. In 1989, the speedy Ricky Henderson was also inserted at the top of the lineup, and Oakland was quickly contending for a World Series.<sup>114</sup>

McGwire's early success also presented its challenges. In 1991, he began to face distractions off the field that affected his offensive production. His marriage had ended and a relationship with a new girlfriend was also deteriorating. During that season McGwire hit .201 with only 22 home runs. In fact, Oakland Athletics Manager Tony LaRussa admitted to benching McGwire on the final day of the season to protect his average from falling below the .200 mark.<sup>115</sup> McGwire would later explain, "I was in a deep hole, and I didn't think I could climb out. I was walking on air – in a bad sense, not a good sense. I wasn't grounded in any firm beliefs about how to live my life. I allowed no positive energy into my life."<sup>116</sup> Reporter Larry Stone of *The Seattle Times* reported

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<sup>113</sup> Schroeder, George.

<sup>114</sup> Bodley, Hal. "McGwire Happy as the Forgotten Man." *USA Today* 13 October 1989, 4C.

<sup>115</sup> Schroeder, George.

<sup>116</sup> Stone, Larry. "Gentle Giant – Up Close, Mark McGwire Isn't So Fearsome." *The Seattle Times* 29 March 1998, S5.

that McGwire was seeing a psychiatrist as well as beginning a new weight training regimen in order to improve on the field.

McGwire's newfound perspective on life had an immediate impact on his hitting, as he would nearly double his home run production the following season. However a series of injuries sidelined him for the next two seasons and Stone reported that McGwire even considered retirement. Although he would continue to battle injuries for the rest of his career, McGwire cleared his personal life of distractions and continued his consistent hitting. His popularity rose considerably during the 1997 season when he almost tied Maris' home run record despite the fact he was traded from Oakland to the St. Louis Cardinals in the middle of the season.<sup>117</sup> At the end of the season, he was rewarded with a new three-year thirty million dollar contract with the Cardinals. As he had done early in his career in Oakland, McGwire formed a close relationship with his new city. Cardinals General Manager Walt Jocketty admitted, "We thought the fans would embrace him, and they did. And he embraced them right back."<sup>118</sup> McGwire's son was also comfortable in the new setting, a factor that motivated McGwire to re-sign.

McGwire also fell into the good graces of fans through contributions to charities during the off season. He spent three million dollars on the Mark McGwire Foundation for Children, formed to help abused children. During a press conference to announce the foundation, McGwire became emotional and began "weeping."<sup>119</sup> For the first time fans witnessed a more emotional athlete than the stoic figure they had come to know on the field. In fact, Robert Cohen, McGwire's agent at the time later admitted, "He is at peace

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<sup>117</sup> Fallstrom, R.B. "Mark McGwire: Renewable Source of Power." *The Associated Press* 16 March 1998.

<sup>118</sup> Schroeder, George.

<sup>119</sup> Schroeder, George.

with himself. He's at the top of his career, from a physical and mental standpoint."<sup>120</sup>

The public, as well as the press, became enamored with McGwire's sincerity and genuine personality.

While the 1997 season symbolized McGwire's peace of mind off the field, the following season would become one of the most remembered seasons in baseball history. He would break Roger Maris' single-season home run record of 61 and pound his way to an astounding 70 homers. Four years after the baseball strike paralyzed America's national pastime, many sportswriters perceived McGwire's chase to 61 as resurrecting the sport. As early as April, Steve Marantz, a senior writer for *The Sporting News* wrote, "McGwire is so hot that baseball's marketing specialists... could not in their wildest dreams concoct a better vehicle to promote the game."<sup>121</sup> He had become one of the most popular athletes in professional sports. Teammate Gary Gaetti explained, "Even after two and a half hours there must have been one thousand people standing where our bus was. He's the fifth Beatle. You've got John, Paul, George, Ringo and Mark."<sup>122</sup>

With McGwire's popularity eclipsing other professional athletes, he became an instant marketing tool. In opposing cities, teams had promotions and gave away prizes if McGwire hit a home run. Surprisingly, fans of other teams even began to root for McGwire. Marantz wrote of White Sox pitcher Jim Parque who gave up McGwire's 30<sup>th</sup> home run in Chicago and heard cheers from the home crowd. Later in the same game, Parque walked McGwire and heard boos from the fans. Parque would later admit, "You can't win."<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Schroeder, George.

<sup>121</sup> Marantz, Steve. "Grand Opening." *The Sporting News* 13 April 1998, 24.

<sup>122</sup> Schroeder, George.

<sup>123</sup> Schroeder, George.

Part of the reason that the home run record received so much attention in 1998 was also because of Sammy Sosa, who was having a breakout season with the Chicago Cubs. On twenty different occasions they hit home runs on the same day. "I absolutely enjoy watching him play," McGwire said about his affinity for Sosa. "He is having an absolutely magical year and, you know, I root him on just like anybody else."<sup>124</sup> Eventually McGwire would win the race by four home runs and capture sole possession of the single-season home run record, earning himself the Associated Press' annual award for Male Athlete of the Year.

Yet McGwire's record season was not without controversy. He received some criticism from the media when he admitted to regularly taking an over-the-counter supplement, androstenedione. Although the drug was permitted by Major League Baseball, it was banned by other major sports, including the Olympics. This led to speculation that the drug presented health risks to athletes as well as giving players an unfair advantage. Because he had become a public figure and a role model to younger athletes, many writers wondered whether or not he had acted irresponsibly. Marantz later wrote, "Millions of young athletes are watching his every move and listening to his every word. He needs to send a more balanced message, carefully measuring risk, needs and circumstances."<sup>125</sup> Marantz was one of the first writers to criticize McGwire's lack of responsibility. However, while many writers were critical of McGwire's use of over-the-counter supplements, there was little speculation that he had ever used illegal performance-enhancing drugs. When McGwire retired in 2001, he was still heralded as one of the greatest power hitters ever to play the game.

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<sup>124</sup> Richer, Shawna. "Sosa Plays the Clown Prince of Baseball Cubs' Happy-Go-Lucky Slugger Lightens up News Conference with Sombre McGwire." *The Globe and Mail* 8 September 1998, S3.

<sup>125</sup> Marantz, Steve and Michael Knisley. "American Hero." *The Sporting News* 21 September 1998, 12.

The androstenedione issue was only magnified in a *Sports Illustrated* article that had revealed that steroids were prevalent in Major League Baseball. Because of the later BALCO controversy in 2003, McGwire became an easy target as a steroids user even though he had been removed from the game for five seasons. McGwire remained silent until 2005, when former teammate Jose Canseco published a book that had accused McGwire of using steroids. The book even suggested that McGwire planted the androstenedione in his locker as decoy so the media would not look further and discover that he was indeed juicing.<sup>126</sup> That same year McGwire was called to testify in front of the congressional committee that was investigating the prevalence of illegal drugs in baseball. In what would later become an infamous statement, McGwire tearfully stated, "I'm not here to talk about the past."<sup>127</sup> McGwire also refused to reveal names, although he did criticize the credibility of Canseco's book.

When McGwire announced before Congress that he was against steroid use, the media began to criticize the former slugger because he refused to reveal his personal history. T. J. Quinn of the *New York Daily News* wrote, "By saying nothing, McGwire confirmed for many in the court of public opinion what Jose Canseco said in his book and what the *New York Daily News* reported four days before his testimony – that he had been a hardcore steroids user."<sup>128</sup> Steve Winn, of the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote that "Peering over his wire-rims at the congressional hearings and muttering his way around the facts, the once-omnipotent McGwire was like an aging wizard whose power has been

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<sup>126</sup> Nowlin, Bill. "'Juiced' Slugger Goes to Bat For Steroids; Jose Canseco Tells His Story in Brash Style." *Boston Globe* 2 March 2005.

<sup>127</sup> Vecsey, George. "Avoiding the Past, A Role Model is History." *The New York Times* 18 March 2005, 1.

<sup>128</sup> Quinn, T.J. "How McGwire Went Wrong in Washington." *New York Daily News* 29 March 2005, 1.

exposed as so much smoke and flashing lights. It was painful and humiliating to watch."<sup>129</sup>

Many sportswriters instantly began to predict whether or not McGwire's showing in Congress had hurt his chances for the Hall of Fame. The next season another well-known player, Rafael Palmeiro, failed a steroids test after he had vehemently denied steroid use during the hearing. The public, having received a confirmation that Palmeiro had blatantly lied, began to assume the worst about McGwire. In early 2007, McGwire was eligible for the Hall of Fame for the first time and barely received one-fourth of the ballots in his name. Tom Verducci of *Sports Illustrated* cited McGwire's silence as one of the primary reasons for not supporting McGwire: "If McGwire, with his professional reputation at stake, cannot defend his own career, how can a writer?"<sup>130</sup> Joe Posnanski of *The Kansas City Star* affirmed, "I still believe McGwire knowingly cheated and broke laws to become one of the greatest home run hitters who ever lived."<sup>131</sup> Evidence has yet to surface proving that McGwire ever took steroids. However, for much of the media, his testimony at the congressional hearing spoke for itself. By choosing not to confirm or deny the use of performance-enhancing drugs, the legitimacy of McGwire's baseball career would remain in question.

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<sup>129</sup> Winn, Steve. "Steroids or No, We're All on the Juice Together." *San Francisco Chronicle* 24 March 2005, E1.

<sup>130</sup> Walker, Childs. "McGwire Spurned; Steroid Suspicions Limit Slugger to 23% of Vote; Falling Short." *The Baltimore Sun* 10 January 2007, 9E.

<sup>131</sup> Walker, Childs.

**"Pulverizing Baseballs with a Fury"<sup>132</sup> :  
The Perception of McGwire as the Successful Male Athlete**

Three of Trujillo's characteristics of hegemonic masculinity were observed in the analysis of McGwire's press coverage: physical force and control, occupational achievement, and familial patriarchy. In addition, a fourth characteristic was analyzed: the perception of McGwire as a modest team player. Each of these four aspects was found in articles surveyed from 1998, when McGwire was chasing Maris' single-season home run record, and in articles surveyed in 2005, when McGwire testified in front of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

The first characteristic of hegemonic masculinity, as described by Trujillo, is physical force and control. At the beginning of the 1998 season, before it was apparent that McGwire would even challenge the home run record, the press focused on his physical qualities. R.B. Fallstrom of *The Associated Press* described McGwire as "pulverizing baseballs with a fury,"<sup>133</sup> while Stone wrote that McGwire was "a goliath in polyester."<sup>134</sup> He was consistently described as a player whose strength had made him immortal. Stone added, "It is easy to view him as some sort of home-run machine, more automaton than human."<sup>135</sup> Marantz even compared McGwire to the mythical hero, Paul Bunyan.<sup>136</sup> Sportswriters magnified McGwire's physical strength and portrayed him with these characteristics before the season had even started. Schroeder described McGwire's hand as a "mammoth paw" that made his bat look more like a toothpick.<sup>137</sup> Sportswriters

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<sup>132</sup> Fallstrom, R.B.

<sup>133</sup> Fallstrom, R.B.

<sup>134</sup> Stone, Larry.

<sup>135</sup> Stone, Larry.

<sup>136</sup> Marantz, Steve.

<sup>137</sup> Schroeder, George.

were in awe by what he was able to accomplish on the field and had credited much of McGwire's success to his physical stature.

When McGwire was linked with the steroids scandal, the way in which writers described him quickly changed. The Bunyan references were still used in 2005, but now the references appeared in a different context. Bob Smizik of *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* wrote, "Once upon a time, Mark McGwire was the Paul Bunyan of baseball. The manner with which he walloped home runs and the manner in which he conducted himself made him an American hero... that's ancient history today."<sup>138</sup> Mike Lupica of the *New York Daily News* wrote that McGwire's body was breaking down: "We weren't supposed to worry about what steroids might have done to him, he was just a wounded warrior who'd carried his sport on his back once, and now didn't want us to see him as a shell of what he was."<sup>139</sup> Bruce Jenkins of the *Chronicle* shared similar sentiments and wrote that the home run hitting machine once known as McGwire was now "broken."<sup>140</sup> Jim Souhan of *The Star Tribune* quoted Gwen Knapp of the *Chronicle* as writing, "No doubt, the anguish on his face was real. He had made a hellish bed for himself, and his creaky, 40-year-old knees won't help him climb out of it."<sup>141</sup> The press acknowledged that McGwire's strength had not only helped him find success, but had caused his downfall.

The second category of hegemonic masculinity, occupational achievement, was also highlighted by the press in 1998. Although McGwire was consistently hounded by

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<sup>138</sup> Smizik, Bob. "McGwire Was Weak, Stupid, But Did Not Break the Rules." *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* 20 March 2005, D-3.

<sup>139</sup> Lupica, Mike. "Any Witch Way You Look, No Hunt." *New York Daily News* 27 March 2005, 56.

<sup>140</sup> Jenkins, Bruce. "McGwire and Bonds Should Take My Advice." *San Francisco Chronicle* 25 March 2005, D1.

<sup>141</sup> Souhan, Jim. "Steroid Suspension is Proper Embarrassment." *The Star Tribune* 27 March 2005, 3C.

reporters who wanted to know what he changed in his swing to spark the home run surge, McGwire reiterated that he had not changed anything during the off season. On one occasion he told Michael Knisley of *The Sporting News*, "I'm not doing anything any differently than I did for all those years in Oakland,' he says. 'Then all of a sudden I get traded to St. Louis, and the media craze has gone nuts.'"<sup>142</sup> Responses like this one showed that McGwire was able to accomplish his feat by simply working hard. He was described as a blue collar worker who was trying to earn a living by showing up to work each day and putting in a strong effort. Fallstrom even quoted McGwire as saying that he didn't even sit down and try to diagnose hitting, and that he didn't think that size had anything to do with hitting home runs.<sup>143</sup> This example of modesty was emphasized by reporters when they covered the home run chase. Michael Silverman of the *Boston Herald* added, "With his mind clear and strong, McGwire just has to keep stepping up to the plate and swinging. Eventually, by the end of the season, he'll be where he's worked so hard to get to."<sup>144</sup> Writers also believed that the home run chase had saved the sport. When *The Associated Press* announced McGwire as their winner of the Male Athlete of the Year award, the organization wrote that "McGwire did far more in 1998 than shatter the most revered record in sports and set a home-run standard that may outlive even him. With 70 big swings, he helped save the game of baseball."<sup>145</sup> By working hard at the ballpark each day, he was able to achieve what no other ballplayer had ever been able to accomplish. His hard work had paid off.

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<sup>142</sup> Knisley, Michael. "Wielding His Bat like an Ax, Mark McGwire is Turning Fans of All Ages into Gawking Kids with his Bunyanesque Feats – and the Eye-Popping Begins Long before Game Time." *The Sporting News* 13 July 1998, 10.

<sup>143</sup> Fallstrom, R.B.

<sup>144</sup> Silverman, Michael. "McCool, McCalm and McCollected." *Boston Herald* 23 August 1998, B18.

<sup>145</sup> "McGwire Captures AP Honor; Mark McGwire, Who Hit a Record-Setting 70 Homers, Is Picked as AP's Male Athlete of the Year." *The Associated Press* 29 December 1998.

Although writers portrayed McGwire as a hard worker during the 1998 season, the press began to criticize his work ethic during the steroids controversy. In 2005, after watching McGwire's testimony, Dan Shaughnessy of the *Boston Globe* concluded that McGwire had cheated and that the public had been fooled. McGwire had not worked hard after all: "Sorry, readers. I was duped. You were duped. It was phonyball... the game suffered and reputations were tarnished – none more than McGwire's."<sup>146</sup> Smizik even alluded to the idea that McGwire's millions of dollars were made by breaking the law.<sup>147</sup> Souhan wrote that although McGwire may have worked for his money, it was his ego that eventually led to his downfall: "Big-league ballplayers make lots of money, but income does not shield their most vulnerable pressure point."<sup>148</sup> Writers also minimized the impact of McGwire's home run chase on the game. Quinn covered the reaction after McGwire's testimony and wrote that one representative "expected more from the man who 'saved' baseball in 1998."<sup>149</sup> The press no longer viewed McGwire in the same positive light and no longer credited him with saving the sport.

The third category of hegemonic masculinity is familial patriarchy. When writers described McGwire's life off the field, they almost always referred to his relationship with his son, Matthew. Additionally, the press also focused on McGwire's foundation to help abused children. Stone wrote that the home run record was not as important to McGwire as spending time with his young son: "Give him a free afternoon with his 10-year-old son, Matthew, and [McGwire] is the happiest man in the world."<sup>150</sup> In one light,

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<sup>146</sup> Shaughnessy, Dan. "Suddenly, '98 Unbelievable McGwire's Feats Had Us Fooled." *Boston Globe* 19 March 2005, E6.

<sup>147</sup> Smizik, Bob.

<sup>148</sup> Souhan, Jim.

<sup>149</sup> Quinn, T.J. "Why Big Mac Struck Out."

<sup>150</sup> Stone, Larry.

McGwire was seen as a star baseball player on the field who was on the verge of accomplishing a feat of mythical proportions. But off the field, he was a sensitive father who wanted the best for his son and his family. Despite the fact that he was a divorced single father, he had admirably kept a strong relationship with his son. Marantz and Knisley wrote, "As parents, we cherish the glimpses of love we see between McGwire and his son. This, sadly, is the age of the deadbeat dad in big-time sports.... Moments before McGwire hit 61, he told Matt, 'I love you.'"<sup>151</sup> Marantz and Knisley later added that McGwire's relationship with his son should be a model for other parents. McGwire talked to *The Associated Press* about his friend, Ali Dickinson, who was a principal at a local high school. She helped him get involved with community service with abused children. McGwire explained, "I can't even drive by that school without getting emotional."<sup>152</sup> His dedication to abused children further showed a genuine side of McGwire that people could look up to.

During the height of the steroids scandal in 2005, however, writers were skeptical of McGwire's genuine show of emotion. During his congressional testimony, he focused on the necessity to educate young children about the consequences of using steroids and insisted that there was no place for steroids in baseball. Tim Sullivan of *The San Diego Union-Tribune* wrote, "He read his opening statement in a halting voice, and, evidently, with a dry throat. He kept reaching for his water bottle and more than once appeared to be teetering on the verge of tears."<sup>153</sup> Howard Bryant of the *Boston Herald* also took notice of McGwire's emotional presentation, but would not be fooled: "His breakdown

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<sup>151</sup> Marantz, Steve and Michael Knisley.

<sup>152</sup> "Mark McGwire Issues Checks in Program for Abused Children." *The Associated Press* 23 December 1998.

<sup>153</sup> Sullivan, Tim. "McGwire and Conseco'credibility-challenged." *The San Diego Union-Tribune* 18 March 2005, D-1.

was poignant, as if his appearance before the audience was revealing a man torn by guilt and introspection and pride."<sup>154</sup> Bryant then criticized McGwire for using his emotions as a façade in order to protect himself and his teammates. *The New York Daily News* even ran the headline, "TEARS OF A CLOWN"<sup>155</sup> and Lupica wrote that McGwire "wanted to cry instead of telling the truth."<sup>156</sup> McGwire's emotions were now criticized rather than praised. The press now believed that McGwire was using his emotions as a means of distracting the media from the real issues. He was not a genuine person after all. His tears could not restore the broken trust.

A characteristic of hegemonic masculinity that is not mentioned by Trujillo, yet is still apparent in the artifacts, is the perception of McGwire as a team player. Repeatedly sportswriters described McGwire as a modest teammate who puts his team before himself. As McGwire had described to Falstrom during spring training, "[My teammates] can drive the ball to the gaps, doubles and triples. This is definitely the fastest team I've been on. These guys are jack rabbits."<sup>157</sup> He told Stone that despite all of the pressure on him to hit home runs, he was still a human being.<sup>158</sup> McGwire had a practical perspective on his success, and often his views contradicted those of the writers. Perhaps most fascinating was the way in which McGwire treated Sosa. When it was obvious that Sosa was a contender for Maris' record, McGwire openly supported his competitor. Cheryl Rosenberg of the *Palm Beach Post* quoted McGwire as saying, "It's the Sammy show, too," and added "The reason people care so much, why it's bringing fans back to the sport,

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<sup>154</sup> Bryant, Howard. "Steroid Scandal: McGwire Taints His Legacy; Ex-Slugger Whiffs with His Silence." *Boston Herald* 18 March 2005, 004.

<sup>155</sup> Shaughnessy, Dan. "Suddenly, '98 Unbelievable McGwire's Feats Had Us Fooled."

<sup>156</sup> Lupica, Mike. "Maris Still at Top of My Book." *New York Daily News* 20 March 2005, 64.

<sup>157</sup> Falstrom, R.B.

<sup>158</sup> Stone, Larry.

is certainly an appreciation of the individual pursuit of a seemingly untouchable record."<sup>159</sup> When McGwire broke the record, he gave Sosa a big hug and allowed him to partake in the ceremony.<sup>160</sup>

However, during the steroids controversy in 2005, McGwire was no longer portrayed as a modest teammate. Sullivan explained that McGwire was too concerned with protecting his own image rather than caring about the game during his congressional testimony: "McGwire volunteered to serve as a force for reform, but steadfastly refused to address the source of his own strength... even on the basis on which he believes steroids are 'bad.'"<sup>161</sup> Bill Harris of *The Toronto Sun* also mentioned McGwire's selfishness. In one article he quoted Pete Rose as saying, "For the athletes involved, I think it's a shame – in particular Mark McGwire (who) just doesn't own up to the fact that he committed the act."<sup>162</sup> Lupica wrote that McGwire "wanted to admit baseball has a problem, but not him."<sup>163</sup> Jenkins believed that he was no better than any of his former teammates that had been taking steroids: "McGwire joined the massive flock of sheep on the baseball landscape, looking for the 'edge.' And he got his edge. He's peering over it as we speak, and the descent is a free-fall into public ridicule."<sup>164</sup> Although McGwire was once viewed as a selfless team player who had differentiated himself from the rest of the league, his congressional testimony had confirmed that he was no better than any of the other players in the league that were taking steroids. He had once been perceived as an honest athlete who would do the best thing for his teammates and the best thing for the

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<sup>159</sup> Rosenberg, Cheryl. "McGwire: After You, Sammy Sosa: No, I Insist You First." *The Palm Beach Post* 7 September 1998, 1C.

<sup>160</sup> Marantz, Steve and Michael Knisley.

<sup>161</sup> Sullivan, Tim. "McGwire and Canseco 'credibility-challenged.'"

<sup>162</sup> Harris, Bill. "Rose is No Fan of Steroids... or Lying." *The Toronto Sun* 19 March 2005, S4.

<sup>163</sup> Lupica, Mike. "Maris Still at Top of My Book."

<sup>164</sup> Jenkins, Bruce.

game. However in the midst of the scandal, he was portrayed as someone who only thought about himself.

During the historical context summary of this chapter, it was mentioned that McGwire had a faced difficult challenges early during his career. His marriage had fallen apart and he had barely hit over .200 during the 1991 season. McGwire had hit rock bottom and was looking for a way to spiritually find himself. Stone explained that, "[McGwire] drove from Oakland to Los Angeles after the season, radio turned off, and searched his soul for new perspective. He began seeing a psychiatrist... he rededicated himself to the weight room to improve his self-esteem."<sup>165</sup> Over the next few years, McGwire's rebirth off of the field would parallel a rebirth on the field. He turned his career around and had finally come to find peace within himself. The 1998 season symbolized this rebirth. McGwire's real life experiences had followed a storyline that had appeared to culminate with his breaking of Roger Maris' single-season home run record.

But there was still another chapter to the story. When the steroid controversy was first publicized, McGwire's silence and his testimony in front of the congressional committee suggested that McGwire's legacy would not be defined by his 1998 season. Fans quickly turned their backs on McGwire and had seemed to have forgotten all of his qualities that they had praised only a few years earlier. His rejection from the Hall of Fame in early 2007 confirmed this twist. Although McGwire seemed to be reborn by the 1998 season, the steroid controversy would appear to permanently define his legacy.

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<sup>165</sup> Stone, Larry.

## CHAPTER 6

### Barry Bonds: "What Barry Bonds Needs is a Good Spanking"<sup>166</sup>

There are few athletes in all of professional sports that can match the statistical accomplishments of Barry Bonds. After the 2006 baseball season, Bonds was a 7-time MVP, leading all-time San Francisco Giants hitters with a .314 batting average and 558 home runs. Perhaps best known is Bonds' single-season home run record of 73 that he hit in 2001, as well as his 734 career home runs entering 2007, second all-time to Hank Aaron.<sup>167</sup> By achieving these statistics, Bonds has solidified himself as a potential first ballot Hall of Fame inductee. Yet in 2005 Bonds' accomplishments were called into question when the steroid scandal shook Major League Baseball. Bonds testified in front of a grand jury, and although proof never surfaced that Bonds knowingly took illegal performance-enhancing drugs, the public speculation had transformed Bonds from being baseball's greatest hitter to becoming the center of baseball's largest controversy.

#### **A Look at Bonds' Career in the Major Leagues**

Barry Bonds entered the Major Leagues in 1986 with a familiar last name. Bobby Bonds, Barry's father, had spent 13 years playing professional baseball and had a reputation as one of the speediest power hitters in the game.<sup>168</sup> When Barry was drafted by the Pittsburgh Pirates he initially struggled at the plate, yet showed the potential of living up to his father's name. Writer Richard Justice of *The Washington Post* praised

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<sup>166</sup> Ryan Bob. "Spoil system creates athletic ingrates the likes of Barry Bonds." *Boston Globe* 7 March 1991, pg. 69.

<sup>167</sup> "Barry Bonds Career Statistics." 2001-2006. 30 November 2006. <<http://www.mlb.com>>.

<sup>168</sup> "Bobby Bonds Career Statistics." 2001-2006. 30 November 2006. <<http://www.mlb.com>>.

Bonds' speed, labeling him a "mini-Rickey Henderson" in his second season.<sup>169</sup> In fact, by 1990 Bonds' hitting began to take form. Bonds was named National League MVP for the first time that year, and although he only led the league in one offensive category, his consistent hitting helped him earn the reputation as being one of the league's most well-rounded stars.<sup>170</sup>

Despite the fact that Bonds had been in the majors for only five seasons, he began to show signs of frustration off the field. In fact, Bonds' first indications of discontent were apparent during his daily encounters with the press. Sportswriter Tom Barnidge of *The Sporting News* pointed to the numerous comparisons of Barry with his father, and predicted that Barry's negative attitude had stemmed from the frustration of living in his father's shadow. Barnidge added, "Bonds' relationship with the media has not always been so cordial. He occasionally has been branded as moody and uncooperative. And just as frequently, he has resented the label. When a note pad nears Bonds' locker, the pages sometimes stand on end."<sup>171</sup> During spring training prior to the 1992 season, Bonds admitted that some of his teammates viewed him as a "jerk," and criticized autograph-seeking fans, whom he labeled as "unappreciative," claiming that they did not know "how good they have it" when it comes to accessing baseball players.<sup>172</sup> The media had also witnessed Bonds publicly lambaste members of the organization's front office, as well as an outburst with manager Jim Leyland. Longtime *Boston Globe* sports columnist Bob Ryan was one of the first sportswriters to turn against Bonds, likening Bonds to a

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<sup>169</sup> Justice, Richard. "Thrift: 'No One . . . Has Done a Better Job Than I Have.'" *The Washington Post* 31 August 1987, D6.

<sup>170</sup> Smith, Claire. "Bonds is voted M.V.P. in landslide." *New York Times* 20 November 1990, B13.

<sup>171</sup> Barnidge, Tom. "Paradoxical Bonds Reaches the Pinnacle; Father's Shadow No Longer Engulfs Him." *The Sporting News* 29 October 1990, pg. 15.

<sup>172</sup> Chass Murray. "Pirates in disarray." *New York Times* 15 March 1992, 8-3.

"spoiled" and "self-absorbed" athlete, and humorously suggesting that "what Barry Bonds needs is a good spanking."<sup>173</sup>

Bonds' troubles in Pittsburgh would eventually lead him to sign with the San Francisco Giants prior to the 1993 season. Although Bonds' displeasure had been widely publicized, his notoriety did not overshadow his performance on the field. Bonds earned a six-year contract with a staggering salary and continued to live up to his expectations over the next 13 years.<sup>174</sup> At the same time, Bonds also lived up to the same "expectations" off the field by demanding special treatment in the clubhouse. David Steele of the *Chronicle* observed, "Bonds has a big leather reclining chair and a TV next to his locker – or lockers, four of them taking up one entire end of the clubhouse, his own little fiefdom, missing only a mini-fridge full of beer and cold cuts."<sup>175</sup> Steele's opinion of Bonds reflected that of many sportswriters. A writer was either in favor of or against Bonds. If a writer favored Bonds, he or she wrote of his success on the field, such as his nine consecutive seasons of 30 or more home runs. Those journalists against Bonds tended to emphasize his poor reputation in the clubhouse, focusing instead on his infamous recliner or his outspoken feuds with teammates.

Yet, interestingly enough, there was one aspect of Bonds that was rarely written about. When Bonds met with the press prior to his spring training debut of that year, he had appeared physically larger than before. It may have been an improved workout regime or a new diet plan, but *Chronicle* columnist Gwen Knapp thought otherwise: "I said to myself: 'He's juiced.' I didn't say it in this column because, again, I didn't have

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<sup>173</sup> Ryan, Bob.

<sup>174</sup> Strauss, Joe. "It's Official: Bonds Joins Giants NL's White, Schott Work on Agreement." *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* 9 December 1992, C.

<sup>175</sup> Steele, David. "Bonds' String of Firsts Not What's on His Mind." *San Francisco Chronicle* 12 April 2000, B1.

proof. But I was sure of it."<sup>176</sup> As Knapp explained, because there was never any tangible evidence, the press stayed away from writing about the possibility of Bonds using steroids. In fact, as expected, Bonds would eventually use his size to his advantage that season, breaking Mark McGwire's single-season home run record. Yet Bonds' chase went largely unnoticed in the country because of a couple of factors. First off, Bonds broke the record only a few weeks after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. Second, the country had witnessed the home run chase between McGwire and Sosa just a couple of years earlier. For these reasons, it is possible to assume that the public viewed Bonds' success as anticlimactic. There was little public outcry or interest while few sportswriters even questioned the legitimacy of the new record.

However, in September of 2003, almost two years after the record was broken, Bonds' world began to unravel. Federal agents raided a nutrition laboratory, known publicly as BALCO, owned by a nutritionist named Victor Conte.<sup>177</sup> Agents discovered that the laboratory had been producing anabolic steroids and potentially supplying illegal supplements to its clients. The news of the raid instantly harmed Bonds publicly because he had been associated with Conte in the past, previously consulting with him on nutrition and training programs. Two days after the raid on BALCO, agents performed a search of the house of Bonds' personal trainer, Greg Anderson, where they also found anabolic steroids.<sup>178</sup> Bonds continued to reaffirm his innocence, claiming he had no knowledge that Conte and Anderson were supplying their clients with steroids. The next

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<sup>176</sup> Knapp, Gwen. "A Big Confession: I Lied About Bonds." *San Francisco Chronicle* 24 February 2005, D1.

<sup>177</sup> Union Tribune News Services. "Bay Area Nutrition Firm is Raided." *The San Diego Union-Tribune* 5 September 2003, D-7.

<sup>178</sup> Fainaru-Wada, Mark and Lance Williams. "Lab Linked to 'Undetectable' Steroid Use." *San Francisco Chronicle* 17 October 2003, A-1.

month Bonds and other selected athletes were subpoenaed to testify in front of a grand jury against Conte and Anderson.<sup>179</sup> Although the testimony was kept secret, over one year later writers Lance Williams and Mark Fainaru-Wada of the *Chronicle* reported a leak, claiming they had learned the following: "Bonds testified that he had received and used clear and cream [steroids] from his personal strength trainer, Greg Anderson, during the 2003 baseball season but was told they were the nutritional supplement flaxseed oil and a rubbing balm for arthritis."<sup>180</sup>

Over the next three seasons Bonds faced a firestorm of questions from the press regarding his involvement with BALCO. Although Bonds continued to maintain his innocence, much of the media still accused him of knowingly taking illegal performance-enhancing drugs. In March of 2005, after coming off of knee surgery, Bonds announced that he would probably not play that season. The barrage of steroid-related questions ensued. In a televised press conference outside the Giants spring training facility, Bonds blamed the media for his problems: "I'm tired of my kids crying. You wanted me to jump off a bridge, I finally did. You finally brought me and my family down... So now go pick a different person."<sup>181</sup> Bonds then requested that his 15-year-old son, Nikolai, also be videotaped in the interview. Bonds asked photographers, "Can you get my son in here, too... so you guys can show the pain you're causing my whole family?"<sup>182</sup>

That year would prove to be another difficult one for Bonds and the steroid scandal. One week prior to Bonds' press conference, McGwire testified in front of the

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<sup>179</sup> Fainaru-Wada, Mark and Lance Williams and Seth Rosenfeld. "Bonds Subpoenaed in Probe of Lab; Burlingame Firm Tied to Sports Steroids Scandal." *San Francisco Chronicle* 18 October 2003, A-1.

<sup>180</sup> Fainaru-Wada, Mark and Lance Williams. "What Bonds told BALCO grand jury." *San Francisco Chronicle* 3 December 2004, A1.

<sup>181</sup> "Superstar to Reporters: 'You Finally Got Me.'" *The Bergen Record* 23 March 2005, s01.

<sup>182</sup> Fainaru-Wada, Mark and Lance Williams. "What Bonds told BALCO grand jury."

congressional committee, and soon Rafael Palmeiro's suspension would be announced. Although Bonds would appear to escape the fate of these players, the mystery of his role in the controversy would continue to grow as more of the public and the media began to question whether or not Bonds was a cheater after all. Bonds would continue to play the game and pursue Hank Aaron's all-time home run record of 755 home runs. Bonds' new chase has only resulted in more speculation that his records have permanently tainted America's national pastime.

**"On a Home Run Binge like Nobody's Business"<sup>183</sup> :  
Bonds from the Masculine Perspective**

This section of the paper first associates the four aspects of hegemonic masculinity with Bonds. As explained by Trujillo, these characteristics are physical force and control, occupational achievement, familial patriarchy. Additionally observed were descriptions of Bonds as a man inspired by God and also as a modest, team player. These characteristics were observed in a group of articles chosen from the 2001 and 2005 seasons to best represent press coverage before and after the scandal.

The first characteristic of hegemonic masculinity observed is physical force and control. In 2001, Bonds was portrayed as an athlete who had achieved his success as a result of the superiority of his own body. Bonds had found success not because of his own achievements but because of what his body alone had accomplished. Often writers even treated Bonds' body as a separate object from Bonds himself. Henry Schulman of the *Chronicle* wrote in May that "Bonds had the muscle to hit six solo home runs in a

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<sup>183</sup> Weiss, Mike. "Very Barry." *San Francisco Chronicle* 8 July 2001.

three-game series, traveling together only 128 feet short of a half mile."<sup>184</sup> Bonds was further idolized the following month by John Shea of the *Chronicle* who wrote, "Bonds has built himself a striking body, an hour-glass figure. Wide and muscular shoulders, tight waist, long and strong legs. There might not be a better frame in baseball."<sup>185</sup> Sportswriters also described Bonds as a mythical figure, giving him the qualities and characteristics that portrayed him as the "perfect" athlete. Writer Mark Weiss, also of the *Chronicle*, described Bonds at the plate: "He spins from the hips, the bat descending toward the ball along a scythe-like arc, generating the maximum speed and lift. The struck ball rockets along a star-spangled trajectory into the night sky. Forty thousand throats roar. Barry Bombs has hit another."<sup>186</sup> The label of "Barry Bombs" also shows the force of Bonds' power. Barry's own strength and endurance has surpassed the potential of human ability. Weiss instilled Bonds with the capability to do the impossible. In an earlier article written by Schulman, he described Bonds after a home run in early April: "Barry Bonds had stomped on home plate with both feet, as if his only remaining task was driving the dish 3 feet underground."<sup>187</sup> This force in 2001 showed that the press had idolized his strength. Writers portrayed Bonds with the image of being the perfect ballplayer and the physical descriptions of Bonds portrayed him as having superhuman strength.

After the steroid scandal, however, many of these descriptions began to change, as representative in the 2005 sample of articles. By that year, there was little focus on

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<sup>184</sup> Schulman, Harry. "Brilliant Bonds Not Enough." *San Francisco Chronicle* 21 May 2001.

<sup>185</sup> Shea, John. "A Quartet of Reasons Why Barry Bonds' Home-Run Count is in the Clouds." *San Francisco Chronicle* 13 June 2001, B1.

<sup>186</sup> Weiss, Mike.

<sup>187</sup> Schulman, Harry. "Giants Slugger Barry Bonds Joins an Exclusive Club, and Beats the Rival Dodgers with a Dramatic and Historic Blast." *San Francisco Chronicle* 18 April 2001, E1.

Bonds' strength. Instead, sportswriters emphasized Bonds as making his own decisions to create his downfall. *Newsday's* Shaun Powell wrote in March of 2005 that "[Bonds] may be bigger than he was several years ago, but he isn't bigger than the game. Steroids haven't swelled him that much."<sup>188</sup> Art Spander agreed that "Barry Bonds, called the greatest player of his generation, even the greatest of all time, had found out what it is like to be defeated, by his own body, by his own hubris."<sup>189</sup> In the same article, Spander also referred to Bonds as the "fallen Giant." The same steroids that had initially given Bonds his perfect physique and success had now caused his collapse. Gerry Callahan of the *Boston Herald* jokingly compared Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling to Bonds saying, "One side is the World Series champ, and on the other, the home run champ... the man with big cajones vs. the guy whose maybe aren't so big anymore."<sup>190</sup> The tone of this article, along with others, shows that Callahan was one of the many writers who had lost complete respect for Bonds. The ballplayer had made the transition from the unstoppable Giant to a sad figure whose strength ultimately caused his defeat.

The second characteristic is that of occupational achievement. Weiss stated before the controversy that "Like it or not, [Bonds] is on a home-run binge like nobody's business."<sup>191</sup> Bonds was often described as not only an athlete, but as a player who took the sports seriously. For Bonds, baseball was his profession and hitting home runs was just another day at the office. John Henderson of *The Denver Post* wrote in September that "Bonds... at age 37... took his career to another level and he acts as if he not only

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<sup>188</sup> Powell, Shaun. "We Need a Break From You, Barry... an Extended One, if You Don't Mind." *Newsday* 29 March 2005.

<sup>189</sup> Spander, Art. "Barry Bonds, Baseball's Fallen Giant, is the Architect of his Own Misfortune." *The Daily Telegraph* 30 March 2005, 005.

<sup>190</sup> Callahan, Gerry. "Schilling Gets a Bad Rap; Bonds Should be Taking the Heat." *Boston Herald* 11 March 2005, 112.

<sup>191</sup> Weiss, Mike.

doesn't know, he doesn't want to know. He's not a big video guy, though he did spend the winter analyzing at-bats against lefties following 'the worst year of my life against left-handers.'"<sup>192</sup> Henderson showed how Bonds spends time not only working hard on the field, but also added that Bonds has to complete "homework" off the field, such as watching video between games. As Bonds was nearing the record in September, Shea quoted Bonds as reaffirming this fact: "Baseball, to me, is history. It's like a classroom. You study each individual, learn something from each one."<sup>193</sup> Although Bonds was performing in the national spotlight, descriptions such as this one showed that the public could relate with him

While Bonds was praised as a student of baseball in 2001, four years later the perspective was greatly different. In one example, a young baseball fan named Nic Layton wrote to *The Seattle Times*, "[Bonds] crushes home runs all the time, but did he work for them? Not as hard as Babe Ruth or Hank Aaron. He took the easy route and took drugs."<sup>194</sup> Bonds no longer worked hard for his awards. While he may have once been a student of the game, now he was portrayed as a cheater. When Bonds sat out the 2005 season, Matt Johanson of the *Chronicle* coined it a "layoff," implying that the Giants had no longer really wanted Bonds to return because of the extra baggage of controversy he brought with him.<sup>195</sup> In August, the *Chronicle's* Bruce Jenkins viewed the business relationship between Bonds and the Giants from the perspective of the Giants. Jenkins sarcastically wrote, "It must be nice to have a working relationship with your

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<sup>192</sup> Henderson, John. "Almost Everyone Believes Barry Bonds Can Reach the Home Run Record – Except Bonds." *The Denver Post* 2 September 2001, C-01.

<sup>193</sup> Shea, John. "60 and Counting: Bonds Joins Greats, Admits 'Anything is Possible.'" *San Francisco Chronicle* 7 September 2001.

<sup>194</sup> "Young Fan on Bonds: 'He'll Never be My Hero.'" *The Seattle Times* 27 March 2005, D2.

<sup>195</sup> Johanson, Matt. "Saying Goodbye to Bonds: Giants Deserve Better Than the Likes of Barry." *San Francisco Chronicle* 18 September 2005.

superstar. Bonds has embarrassed the team all season, to the point of cruelty."<sup>196</sup> Jenkins portrayed Bonds as a disgruntled businessman, not out to seek occupational achievement, but instead to sabotage the company.

The third discussed characteristic of hegemonic masculinity, as stated by Trujillo, is familial patriarchy. Bonds' father, Bobby, was a former baseball player, while his godfather, Willie Mays, was one of the game's all-time best hitters. After becoming only the 17<sup>th</sup> man to hit 500 home runs in April of 2001, Schulman wrote, "At that very moment, about 90 seconds after Bonds turned his name onto one of baseball's most hallowed lists, his godfather saw what he wanted to see."<sup>197</sup> While Bonds was commonly described as being the perfect son, he was also portrayed as a family man. Although Bonds had a tough divorce earlier in his career, *Sporting News* columnist Jay Mariotti quoted Bobby Bonds as saying, "[Barry] is really at peace with himself... things have to go right in your family life, and he's really feeling great about his wife and kids. Everything is flowing the way it's supposed to be flowing."<sup>198</sup> Anne M. Peterson of *The Associated Press* mentioned how Bonds spoke during a press conference with "2-year-old daughter Aisha perched on his lap."<sup>199</sup> The image of Bonds as the perfect father showed a new perspective. The institution of the family was an essential part of his life. Bonds was a respectable father off the field and had earned the public's respect.

In the midst of the steroid scandal, however, Bonds' reputation as a family man quickly changed. When Bonds gave a press conference during spring training in 2005, he

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<sup>196</sup> Jenkins, Bruce. "So What's the Deal? Whatever Barry's up to, He Should Tell the Giants." *San Francisco Chronicle* 3 August 2005.

<sup>197</sup> Schulman, Harry. "Giants Slugger Barry Bonds Joins an Exclusive Club, and Beats the Rival Dodgers with a Dramatic and Historic Blast."

<sup>198</sup> Mariotti, Jay. "The Rebirth of Barry Bonds." *The Sporting News* 4 June 2001, 8.

<sup>199</sup> Peterson, Anne M. "Barry Bonds is Finally Amazed About His Pace." *The Associated Press* 7 September 2001.

gave the impression to reporters that his family life had been ruined. Sportswriter T.J. Quinn of the *New York Daily News* wrote, "Bonds just kept looking at his son, Nikolai, who sat beside his father without saying a word. 'Me and my son, we're going to try to enjoy each other. That's all we've got.'"<sup>200</sup> Quinn also quoted Bonds in the same article as telling his son, "I tell my boy, 'If I see you doing steroids, I'll bust you up.' And I mean it." Quinn's article shows how Bonds' reputation as a father slowly deteriorated as a result of the scandal. In addition, *USA Today* columnist Joe Saraceno even criticized Barry's father, who had previously been idolized by the press: "Bonds' late baseball-playing father, Bobby, apparently convinced his son that the media are out to get him because the San Francisco Giants outfielder rarely opened up to us."<sup>201</sup> Suddenly, Bonds was not only criticized for being a bad father, but his upbringing was also scrutinized. The image of Bonds' family as being perfect was now viewed with a negative perspective. He was no longer a good father, and perhaps he had been misleading the public from the beginning.

Finally, while some writers suggested that Bonds was inspired by God, others gave Bonds a certain god-like status. When trying to figure out why Bonds was having so much success at a young age, Shea compared him to someone on a religious journey of discovery: "Make no mistake. He's on a mission... Now, he's a prophet."<sup>202</sup> Mariotti even quoted Bonds referring to himself as a religious figure: "The balls I used to line off the wall are lining out of the park, I can't tell you why. Call God. Ask him."<sup>203</sup> Mariotti further quoted Padres General Manager Kevin Towers as saying, "Barry is au naturel. He

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<sup>200</sup> Quinn, T.J. "Balky Bonds Takes a Walk: Blames Knee & Press for Exit." *New York Daily News* 23 March 2005, 64.

<sup>201</sup> Saraceno, Joe, "Bonds, McGwire Weighed Down by Steroid Issue." *USA Today* 25 March 2005, 12C.

<sup>202</sup> Shea, John.

<sup>203</sup> Mariotti, Jay. "The Rebirth of Barry Bonds."

is a wonderful athlete blessed with God-given ability... what he's doing is very real and very special."<sup>204</sup> Henderson wrote of the home run record as symbolizing "immortality."<sup>205</sup> Bonds was viewed by the public at the top the human hierarchy, with king-like status. Karen Crouse of the *Palm Beach Post* wrote, "His teammates respect him and the game he reveres pays him a king's ransom."<sup>206</sup> Crouse added, "Bonds was still chasing immortality, only the rest of us were feeling too mortal."<sup>207</sup> He was portrayed as being all-powerful, and was described as hitting home runs not only because of his own strength, but also with the divine grace of God.

On the contrary, Bonds was perceived as being human by 2005. In fact, out of all the articles that were analyzed during the scandal, none of the writers gave Bonds any god-like characteristics. Instead Bonds now represented the epitome of mortality. In his description of Bonds' early 2005 press conference Quinn made sure to mention Bonds' crutch.<sup>208</sup> Powell wrote, "If you placed the right hand of all baseball officials on a Bible, they'd tell you they wished Bonds would simply disappear."<sup>209</sup> Bonds was also sarcastically referred to as a "king" by some writers. Jenkins wrote: "The Giants' players have no use for Bonds. Most of them hope he never comes back. He made them all out to be stooges this year, waiting for the king to return on his mighty steed, when in fact they would love to... never see his face again."<sup>210</sup> From this perspective, Bonds had fallen from the hierarchy. The sports world had turned its back on him.

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<sup>204</sup> Mariotti, Jay. "The Rebirth of Barry Bonds."

<sup>205</sup> Henderson, John.

<sup>206</sup> Crouse, Karen. "One Day, the Bay Will See Greatness in Barry Bonds." *Palm Beach Post* 6 October 2001, 1C.

<sup>207</sup> Crouse, Karen.

<sup>208</sup> Quinn, T.J. "Balky Bonds Takes a Walk: Blames Knee & Press for Exit."

<sup>209</sup> Powell, Shaun.

<sup>210</sup> Jenkins, Bruce. "So What's the Deal? Whatever Barry's up to, He Should Tell the Giants."

The final characteristic of Bonds was that of a role model and team player. As Bonds continued his quest for McGwire's single-season home run record, he was the center of attention. Yet although he earned all of the media's attention, Bonds still tried to stay as modest as possible by putting more focus on the team rather than himself. After reflecting on his inability to win a World Championship, Bonds told Henderson, "I don't want 70. I don't need it. I want to win. What's 70 home runs going to do?"<sup>211</sup> Peterson quoted Bonds admiring other baseball players as well, such as McGwire. In fact, during one interview Bonds complimented McGwire, saying "I sat on the bench and thought, 'This ball I flew out to deep center, Mark would have it out of the stadium... he would've had three home runs today.' I don't have that kind of power. I can hit it a long way at times, but I'm not as consistent as he is."<sup>212</sup> The public soon picked up on this image. When Putsata Reang of the *San Jose Mercury News* interviewed students at Bonds' former high school a young student said, "If he breaks the world record, since I play baseball, I'll wonder if I could be just like him, maybe."<sup>213</sup> Bonds had become a true role model for children and young baseball players, and this image was promoted by the media.

As expected, Bonds' image as a team player and role model deteriorated by 2005. During this phase of his career, Bonds was portrayed as a selfish player, who only cared about himself. In Layton's letter to *The Seattle Times*, the young eleven year old wrote, "He didn't need steroids; he just takes them to make more money, be in the record books

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<sup>211</sup> Henderson, John.

<sup>212</sup> Peterson, Anne M. "Barry Bonds is Finally Amazed About His Pace." *The Associated Press* 7 September 2001.

<sup>213</sup> Reang, Putsata. "Barry Bonds' San Jose, Calif.-Area High School Donates to Charity." *San Jose Mercury News*. 31 August 2001.

and be a hero. Well, let me tell you, he'll never be my hero."<sup>214</sup> Bonds' reputation as a role model for future generations was also criticized by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, which wrote that "only in America can an alleged cheater, alleged adulterer, alleged tax evader, possible perjurer and convicted bad guy be so worshiped by so many who are blindly loyal."<sup>215</sup> This article shows that even those fans who may have still admired Bonds would be met with criticism from others, only preventing more people from supporting him. Bonds was no longer a role model or a team player. Instead he was now a selfish person who did not deserve the respect of the fans.

As discussed in the historical background section of this paper, the early years of Bonds' career were not considered to be successful in terms of his public reputation. In fact, Bonds was viewed as a selfish player who had no interest in anyone other than himself. Yet despite the negative perception of Bonds, his reputation began to improve in 2001. As he chased McGwire's record, more fans began to pay attention to Bonds on the field. They admired him from a physical perspective, and the media helped perpetuate his reputation as blue-collar worker who worked tirelessly for his achievements. Furthermore, he was also viewed as a team player and role model. As Mariotti had argued, the 2001 season represented Bonds' rebirth into the hearts of minds of baseball fans.<sup>216</sup> Despite years of criticism from fans and the media, he had finally earned their respect and was even idolized as a god-like religious figure. Bonds' reputation was praised off the field as well, and he was viewed as a loving father who would put his family first. Anyone could relate to Bonds, and his rebirth appeared to be complete.

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<sup>214</sup> "Young Fan on Bonds: 'He'll Never be My Hero.'"

<sup>215</sup> "Baseball's Blind Loyalists Really Pathetic." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* 10 April 2005, D1.

<sup>216</sup> Mariotti, Jay. "The Rebirth of Barry Bonds."

However, by 2005, this narrative had a surprising twist. With the steroid scandal plaguing the sport of baseball, Bonds' image became that of a cheater. Although he admitted to unknowingly taking steroids, which essentially made him innocent of any rule breaking, public opinion still mounted against him. The media seemingly forgot about 2001, when they had spent the summer praising Bonds as a both player and as a person. Gwen Knapp of the *Chronicle* wrote, "I have committed several more lies of omission since Bonds was implicated.... I covered his 700<sup>th</sup> home run and never once mentioned that maybe, just maybe, he didn't reach the milestone naturally. I had plenty of excuses – a brutal deadline, a reluctance to draw a cloud over the celebration, an inability to introduce such an important topic without letting it become the entire story."<sup>217</sup> As Knapp concluded, even the press had followed Bonds' story as the narrative of a hero. Four years later, however, Bonds' narrative was anything but heroic. Instead his legacy as a baseball player would be defined by his tragic downfall.

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<sup>217</sup> Knapp, Gwen.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **Looking Beyond the Controversy**

Probably the most interesting aspect of the steroid scandal is that many of the facts regarding the controversy are still unknown. As more baseball players retire, it is possible that more information may be revealed regarding their real connection with steroids. Furthermore, because the scandal began relatively soon before the writing of this paper, one can only predict the impact that the controversy will have on baseball and the American public. This section of the paper analyzes the tragedy of the four home run hitters by predicting potential effects that may result in the future.

One important consequence of the scandal regards the reputation of these players. In 2007 Bonds has an opportunity to break Hank Aaron's all-time home run record. For many fans, this record is considered even more important than the single-season record. There is no doubt that the press will continue to scrutinize Bonds' actions both on and off the field and it will be interesting to see if the media continues to criticize Bonds from the masculine perspective. Because of the seriousness of the controversy it is assumed that he is not currently taking steroids. Yet fans may wonder whether or not this assumption is shared by the media and if it will continue to play a part in how the media portrays him. Additionally, fans may also wonder how Major League Baseball will respond from a public relations perspective.

A second consequence is the treatment of other baseball players or prominent athletes in other sports. It wasn't until after Bonds broke the single-season record that writers began to question the validity of his statistics. Writers also quickly pointed fingers at McGwire and Sosa even though they had no knowledge of their involvement. Having

known through the grand jury leak that Bonds admitted to unknowingly taking steroids, it is interesting to wonder how players in the future will be perceived who deny allegations or choose not to respond. Will baseball stars have to defend themselves because of the public's mistrust? It seems that any baseball player who finds success on the field may have to defend himself even though he has not violated any of the rules. The way in which an innocent player is expected to respond to similar allegations may also change.

The tragedies of Sosa, McGwire, and Bonds may have a positive effect on how we perceive other athletes who have already retired from professional sports. For example, because steroids did not exist during the 1961 season, there is no reason to believe that Roger Maris cheated. His era represents a golden age of baseball because players' reputations were not tarnished by steroids and the game was free of scandal. Some sportswriters have admitted that they would not vote any player into the Hall of Fame that played during the 1990s because of the possibility that he could have been breaking the rules. Because of this mistrust, writers and fans alike may become more accepting of those players who played before the steroids era.

The impact of the steroids issue will have long term effects as well, including an impact on these players' legacies. One of the deciding factors that helps solidify a baseball player into the history books is the election into the Baseball Hall of Fame. There is no other sport in which an election to the Hall of Fame helps decide one's legacy. As the public recently discovered, the controversy surrounding McGwire's name on the ballot shows that steroid abuse is an issue. Which part of the narrative will the public choose? Do the events of 2005 transcend the importance of Bonds' previous decade long career in the majors?

Another effect concerns how long the scandal will resonate in the minds of the public. As mentioned, it is probable that fans will distrust other baseball players because of an assumption that they, like McGwire and Bonds, are taking performance-enhancing drugs. However the public also has a tendency to forgive and forget when it comes to athletes. A clear example is the Pete Rose gambling scandal. Rose, an obvious first-ballot Hall of Fame candidate has been outlawed from the game of baseball for almost two decades since he broke the league's gambling policy. Years later, many fans feel that Rose still deserves a coveted plaque in the Hall, despite the fact that he broke the rules. Over the long term, one may wonder whether or not steroid users in baseball will apologize and if an apology will be accepted by the fans.

The controversy will also have an ethical impact on the public. First, in regards to how the media covers athletes, one must hope that newspaper reporters remain an honest source of trust for the fans. When it comes to reporting, many journalists have a tendency to create stories for the sole purpose of writing entertaining articles. Writer Gwen Knapp apologized for not having written about the steroid assumptions earlier during Bonds' career for fear that she would have been criticized. Perhaps it would have been more ethical to write with an honest perspective from the start, clarifying her opinions rather than refraining because of a fear of criticism. After fans began to accuse Sosa of taking steroids, one newspaper launched a full-fledged investigation into the steroids culture that had that grown in the Dominican Republic. The investigation resulted in findings that showed that many young Dominican baseball players were told that the only way they could make the majors would be to take steroids.

Another ethical consideration concerns steroid awareness. Current players, as well as the media, have a responsibility to make the public more aware of the harmful effects of steroids. This responsibility includes making sure that younger baseball players at the high school and college levels are abiding by the rules. In addition, it is necessary to continue to test current professional players and enforce strict penalties upon those players who are caught. As time goes on, technology will possibly make some steroids more difficult to detect. It is the responsibility of drug-testing agencies and Major League Baseball to make sure that their drug testing technology is one step ahead of performance-enhancing drugs. This will help ensure that there are no more scandals in the future.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **The Impact of Hegemonic Masculinity on American Culture**

The press coverage of Maris, Sosa, McGwire, and Bonds, serves to show that sportswriters often describe the success of certain athletes by emphasizing their masculinity. In the case of Maris, the focus on his pursuit of occupational achievement portrayed him as a baseball player who was only concerned with the success of the team, thus identifying him as a capitalist worker. Sportswriters were also critical of Maris' chasing of Ruth's record and negatively portrayed Maris as a selfish player while also making excuses for the home run surge. When sportswriters followed Sammy Sosa's successful season in 1998, the descriptions followed the theme of the American dream. He was praised and quickly became the Dominican equivalent of an American cowboy. McGwire was often described by his physical appearance as well as his dedication to occupational achievement and his family. He was also initially portrayed in a positive light. Each of the attributes served to help him achieve his goal of setting the new single-season home run record. Although Bonds was portrayed as having similar characteristics, the press gave him immortal status with religious qualities. Each of these four home run hitters were shown to exhibit these qualities of masculinity and the press' emphasis on these qualities was consistent throughout the coverage.

Although the press consistently used these descriptions in their articles, the way in which the press described these players changed. At the end of the 1961 season, Maris was still described as a masculine figure, however the press sympathized with Maris after he failed to hit 61 home runs within 154 games. Seven years after sportswriters praised Sosa's courageous pursuit of the American dream, his nationality was later claimed to

have contributed to his downfall. Many writers also described McGwire in a comedic fashion. His tears in 1998 had led to descriptions of McGwire as a caring individual who was a protector of his family. However his sensitivity during the steroids scandal caused writers to believe he was intentionally misleading his fans. Bonds, like McGwire, was also described in a similar negative context.

Investigating the way in which the press described these athletes during the rise and fall of their careers allows researchers the opportunity to observe the way in which heroes and villains are created by the media. The newspaper coverage of these four home run hitters is representative of a larger issue that has come to characterize most of the male athletes that are publicized in daily newspapers across the country. Whether or not the media is in favor or against an athlete, gender will almost always play a role in how an athlete is described by a writer and perceived by readers. Hegemonic masculinity will continue to characterize the way in which sportswriters portray popular athletes.

It is important to acknowledge that the press coverage of these athletes serves to represent a larger issue in American culture. First, as discovered during the steroid controversy, the press doesn't always have the best judgment when it comes to deciding which athletes are the best role models. When an athlete is successful by leading a team or breaking a record, he is praised as a hero for his accomplishments. Such was the case with the home run hitters described in this paper. However, the press also criticizes those players who fail to live up to certain expectations. When Sosa, McGwire, and Bonds were linked with performance-enhancing drugs, the press instantly turned against these players and punished them in an effort to tarnish their reputations. The press showed its extraordinary power in judging these players and persuading public opinion.

Through emphasizing the masculine characteristics of athletes, sportswriters also create a stereotype of the prototypical hero. The press frames certain masculine characteristics and these qualities define what it means to be a successful athlete. If an athlete does not meet these requirements, then he cannot be considered a success. Furthermore, by magnifying these qualities, sportswriters emphasize certain characteristics that may not even be relevant to one's accomplishments. Because they are portrayed in this manner, successful male athletes become the most dominant image in our culture. These images also dominate magazine covers and television channels. At a young age children are taught by these images what they need to do in order to achieve the same stature in society. They often emulate these figures and strive for the same kind of success without recognizing the risks involved in pursuing this goal.

In addition, the impact of these images goes beyond sports. Not only does the press create the definition of the perfect athlete, but also the requirements for a successful male in general. People who read newspapers learn quickly through these portrayals that these athletes embody obvious masculine characteristics. Because the press admires these qualities, the writers have the power to set the standard of success in life. Women are described as secondary, and those males who cannot reach the same physical stature as these athletes are taught that they won't be able to reach the same pinnacle of success. The media creates these images and stereotypes these athletes. Soon, these images become an accepted and understood characteristic of American culture.

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