

# Sports Corner

## Steroids, mob mentality and prayer

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When news about the steroid scandal in sports broke recently, fans were not surprised—especially when they heard that many of the athletes implicated in the scandal were baseball players. After the 2003 season, Major League Baseball released the results of their 1,438 anonymous steroids test and more than five percent came back positive.

Over the past decade, several baseball players grew abnormally large muscles and, as home run records began to fall, fans became suspicious about rampant steroid usage. But before we unnecessarily harm the reputation of all players who are producing higher power numbers, we need to review what Major League Baseball officials have done to increase offensive output.

In 1968, pitchers were dominant. Seven starting pitchers won 20 or more games. Denny McClain won 31 games that season. Seven starting pitchers had an ERA under 2.00. Bob Gibson posted an ERA of 1.12 and had 13 shutouts. So, in 1969 Major League Baseball decided to give hitters a better chance. They lowered the pitcher's mound by five inches and decreased the strike zone.

In 1973, American League officials decided to try to boost offensive output even more by introducing the designated hitter (DH) for the teams in their league. For the past 32 seasons, the DH hit for the pitcher and didn't play the field. This extend-

ed the careers of many power hitters who had bodies that were too banged up to play the field any longer. So they hit more home runs than they would have been able to otherwise.

In the 1990's baseballs mysteriously became more lively, teams moved in their fences, more expansion teams were added and five man starting rotations became prominent. All of those factors led to more baseballs flying out of the park.

For more than 30 years, Major League Baseball officials have been making the game more conducive to offense. As offensive numbers increased, more players were motivated to eat better and follow strict workout regimens just so they could keep up with other players. And as a result, more players were in better shape for longer periods of time than in eras past. That led to better bat speed, more strength and, in some player's cases, more home runs.

Now we have a steroid scandal. Some players fell into the trap of justifying the use of steroids since they either knew or heard about other players who were doing it. They believed that they couldn't keep up with players who had an unfair advantage.

So, what is a Christian baseball fan supposed to think about



the scandal? If we lump every player who produces big numbers together by assuming that they are all doing steroids, we run the risk of assassinating the character of an innocent person.

Rather than joining the mob mentality of the fans and mainstream media who seem hungry to see more players implicated in the steroids scandal, let's do something radical: Let's pray for the players. For the players who aren't Christians, let's pray for God to bring strong believers across their paths, believers who have their priorities in the right order. For the Christian players, let's pray for God to deliver them from the temptation to take steroids and for them to let their light shine into the darkness of this scandal. †