



David Lias
Between The Lines

Maris makes history — again

When Mark McGwire broke the single season home run record back in 1998, it was electrifying. But now we know that when McGwire broke that record, he was cheating. He was using steroids.

In a statement released by the St. Louis Cardinals, where he is slated to start as the hitting coach in the spring, McGwire said he "always knew this day would come."

He said he began using steroids in the late 1980s, on occasion in the 1990s, but definitely in 1998 when he broke the home run record by hitting 70 home runs in a single season, breaking the record of 61 previously held by Roger Maris.

That moment invigorated the national pastime, which was still recovering from the fallout of the 1994 baseball strike. The famed head-to-head race between McGwire and Sammy Sosa, who finished the season with 66 home runs, was followed by millions of baseball fans around the country.

There had been whispers about McGwire and his bulging muscles for years, but he dodged questions from reporters and even Congress back in 2005. McGwire refused to answer questions at a congressional hearing on steroid use, at that time saying, "I'm not here to talk about the past."

An emotional McGwire told The Associated Press that he worried that being honest that day would put him in legal jeopardy. McGwire said that by fessing up, "I'm throwing my whole family, closest friends, and other people that were with me. I'm putting them in something for an act that I did."

Today, in his statement, he said, "I want to come clean."

McGwire said he took steroids to get back on the field following a series of injuries in the early 90s. "I experienced a lot of injuries, including a rib cage strain, a torn left heel muscle, a stress fracture of the left heel, and a torn right heel muscle. It was definitely a miserable bunch of years and I told myself that steroids could help me recover faster."

The 46-year-old McGwire, who retired in 2001, has become the second star baseball player in less than a year to admit using illegal steroids. Last February, the New York Yankees' Alex Rodriguez admitted to using the drugs. But he is only one of dozens of players over the past two decades who has admitted to steroid use.

In the spring of 2005, as baseball season was about to get underway, McGwire and several other professional baseball players were signing a different tune.

It was troubling back then to hear Jose Canseco, the 1988 AL MVP, admit to using performance-enhancing drugs.

It was troubling that his best-selling book accuses several stars of steroid use.

It was troubling, back in 2005, that McGwire, ex-Cub Sammy Sosa, Curt Schilling, Rafael Palmeiro and the White Sox's Frank Thomas were subpoenaed to testify before the House Government Reform Committee as it launched an investigation into Major League Baseball's weak steroid testing policies.

The results of those hearings, in case you've forgotten: Canseco stuck with his story. He claims that he and other players have used steroids.

Schilling, who is not linked to steroid use, said that he never saw steroids being used in the clubhouse and that he was willing to advocate a policy to ensure that all players were on an equal playing field.

Palmeiro said that he had never taken steroids and that he would tell children that his career was a model one that he was proud of.

And McGwire — the guy who in 1998 broke Roger Maris' record of 61 homers in a single season — would neither confirm nor deny steroid use.

Back in 2005, you didn't have to be an expert in athletic training or sports medicine to grow a bit suspicious. Especially when television cameras were constantly focused on McGwire, Canseco, and Palmeiro, their shirt collars straining to stay buttoned around necks the size of tree trunks as they testified.

Micky Mantle didn't share such a grotesque physical stature. In his prime, neither did Babe Ruth, Hank Aaron, Willie Mays, Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, George Brett, Rod Carew, Carlton Fisk, Harmon Killebrew or any other contemporary professional baseball player.

It's time to step back and put things in perspective. From 1914 to 1935, the length of Babe Ruth's career, he hit 714 homers. In 1927, he hit a record 60 home runs in a single season.

Ruth's season home run record stood for nearly three decades. In 1961, Roger Maris broke the record by hitting 61 pitches over the fence.

Ruth's all-time home run record remained intact for four decades. In 1974, Hank Aaron broke the record with home run #715.

Let's look at what's happened in recent years. McGwire broke Maris' record in 1998 by hitting 70 homers. Three years later, Bonds surpassed McGwire, hitting 73 home runs.

Bonds has beaten Maris' 61-homer record once. The retired McGwire surpassed it twice and Sammy Sosa has bettered it three times.

Players may deny they use steroids, but numbers don't lie. Drug-abusing athletes are unfairly excelling, and like a tsunami, they are wiping away the records set by men like Maris whose accomplishments can be credited to hard work, natural talent, and most of all, a love of the game.

It's become so painfully apparent this week that Maris, a child of the Great Plains (he was an American Legion baseball standout in Fargo, ND) had been posthumously robbed of his record.

Hopefully, all who truly love the sport of baseball will remember the true accomplishments of Maris, who hit his 61 home runs in 1961 using nothing but sheer athleticism and willpower.

Looking back, looking ahead

By Rep. Stephanie
Herseth Sandlin

GUEST COMMENTARY

With 2009 behind us and a New Year ahead of us, we've made progress on a number of critical priorities for South Dakota, but work remains for 2010.

There's no doubt that getting the economy back on track has been the top priority of 2009. While we have a long way to go, no one can argue against the fact that we're in a better position now than we were one year ago. We've made progress, but unemployment is still too high, banks are not yet lending enough, and there's not enough growth overall in our economy. I feel cautiously optimistic that in 2010 we will see that growth.

We also made strides — but need to do much more — when it comes to addressing our country's dangerous fiscal situation. A major accomplishment of the year was House passage of tough new pay-as-you-go rules that require Congress to spend within its means. We're still working to get Senate approval, but we know that the President will sign the bill once it reaches his desk. Pay-as-you-go rules were responsible for the bud-

get surpluses of the 1990s, and they can bring us back in the right direction again. This has long been a priority of Blue Dog Coalition, and I was proud to lead that group as we pushed the bill through the House this year.

Also this year, I've been pleased with the tremendous progress we've made in fulfilling our nation's promise to its veterans, including providing access to top-notch health care. As the Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, the House has passed five of my bills related to veterans over the past year. In particular, I was pleased that my legislation, the Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act passed the House unanimously this summer. The Senate has also passed its version of this bill and I'm hopeful it will be signed by the President in 2010.

Additionally, I was honored to join President Obama this year as he signed landmark legislation that provides funding for VA health care accounts one year in advance to ensure

timely and fair funding for veterans that is outside of yearly political fights. I was also proud to support a 10 percent increase in funding for veterans health care that will go into effect in 2010.

This year has also seen a renewed commitment from the Administration and the Congress to improving public safety and living conditions in Indian Country, after eight years of near neglect by the prior administration. In late October, Attorney General Holder endorsed my Tribal Law and Order Act of 2009 at a tribal listening session in St. Paul and a week later, President Obama endorsed the bill at the White House Tribal Nations Summit. Momentum is growing in Congress to not only address public safety, as demonstrated by recent hearings and legislative activity in both chambers, but to improve the woeful state of health care in Indian Country. As both public safety and health care are treaty obligations, the imperative to act is clear. I'm hopeful that the commitment from the Administration, along



Despite being primitive, Bob longs for train travel

Early day railroad travel for passengers was primitive at best. Before modern cars were invented, riders had to take their chances.

There was no room service because there weren't any rooms. People had to take what was available and there weren't many choices.

You traveled by cattle car, because that was the way railroads were. The bathroom was a urinal bottle. Fussy ladies had to wait until the train stopped at a place that was big enough to have a restroom.

People shipped bodies by rail then, and the grieving folks saw their loved ones

mishandled by the railroad workers who were only used to unbury western steers. Newspapers got better treatment. There were always people waiting for the train to toss off a bundle of the *Daily Bugle* so they could then pedal them at the local drinkin' house where the misplaced Easterners could read about what their stocks were

Bob Karolevitz

Writer At Large



mission to board the train at a particular stop to feed the patrons and he would be gone when the train started to move again. They got what they wanted provided the boy didn't run out before he got to them.

I just got to thinking about how it was in yesterday when in our town we had three trains running daily. Wouldn't it be nice if that were still happening and the locomotives chugged into the station through the snow belching out steam as they came to a full stop!

© 2010 Robert F. Karolevitz

Grocery store samples leave a lot to be desired

The other day, I was in the grocery store with my husband, Brian. It is rare for us to shop together, since he buys the groceries, which is the envy of all my friends.

When I do tag along, there's usually a lady in the meat section wearing a white apron and cooking cocktail weenies on a little cart or she's in the dairy section passing out Dixie cups of juice or yogurt.

Her line is always the same... "Would you like to try a sample?"

My response is the same every time... "Not today, thank you." I'm not sure why I say that. I never take samples at grocery stores.

One of the great mysteries in life is the hoard of grown adults waiting at her booth pretending to be interested.

These people probably just came from the Golden Buffet or have cupboard chock full of food. Yet, they will take not one, but two or three samples.

MyStory YourStory



Paula Damon

Columnist

I am wary of these shoppers, Brian being among them. On this run through the grocery store, he must have drifted past the cocktail weenie stand two or three times. I was so embarrassed I pretended I didn't know him.

How can people be so hungry that they need to stop and teensy-weensy food samples that have been exposed to shoppers coughing, sneezing, touching and breathing?

I admit the aroma of barbecue sauce does tempt me. However, the thought of the high percent of grocery store samples contaminated with bacteria and germs really

turns my stomach.

I know several people, my husband included, who consider a round or two of grocery store samples to be lunch!

Many shoppers do walk past the sample lady without indulging. They cast an "I don't do food samples" glance, while she tends to the flock of "tasters" gathering like cattle at a feeding trough.

They brake to taste test, faking their interest in the latest brand of frozen pizza or brats. These people gobble up a bunch of samples without purchasing even one box or container of the product, and then walk away with full stom-

achs and grocery carts loaded down with other stuff.

You know, it makes me wonder if they realize the sample lady is not paid to give out free food, she is paid to help sell products.

I'd like to think that we are a nation with more sincerity and nobility than to take food samples with no intentions of buying the product. Or maybe I'm being too idealistic.

A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula Damon is a national award-winning columnist. Her columns have won first-place in National Federation of Press Women, South Dakota Press Women and Iowa Press Women Communications Contests. In the 2009 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contest, Paula's columns took three first-place awards. To contact Paula, email pauladamon@ui.net, follow her blog at www.my-story-your-story.blogspot.com and find her on Facebook.

2010© Paula Damon

with a growing recognition from Congress of the need to address the dangerous and unacceptable conditions on reservations across the country and in South Dakota, we'll make substantive progress.

As the Congress continues to work through critical legislative priorities, I'm committed to finding solutions that do right by South Dakota. Recently, I supported a bill to reform regulations of Wall Street and our financial system in response to the events of last fall that led to massive bailouts of financial firms and other companies, bailouts that I opposed. The House also passed major legislation related to energy and climate change and health care this year. While each of these bills include good provisions, and seek to address urgent issues, they are not the right mix of policy for South Dakota. Going forward, I will evaluate legislation related to these issues for their effect on my constituents — individuals, families and businesses in South Dakota, as well as their impact on the future we leave to our children. I remain optimistic that we will find a way forward on these critical issues.

At the top of my list for 2010 is a focus on spending and the

deficit. I've been working with the administration and House and Senate leaders to push for a legislative package early next year that will include pay-as-you-go rules and a fiscal commission to tackle some of the hard questions about entitlement spending.

While we've made great progress in many areas, everyone acknowledges that we've got a lot of unfinished business as well. With two wars,

tens of thousands of troops serving overseas, an economy in recovery, and other priorities at home, our work is clearly not done. In the New Year, I'm looking forward to continuing my work on behalf of our great state to enact meaningful solutions to the challenges we face. I wish you and your family a happy and safe new year.

Vermillion
PLAIN TALK
Since 1884
Official County, City and School District Newspaper
201 W. Cherry, Vermillion, SD 57069
Publication No. USPS 657-720
Editor: David Lias
Published weekly by YANKTON MEDIA, Inc.
Periodicals postage paid at Vermillion, SD 57069.
Subscription rates for the *Plain Talk* by mail are \$27.56 a year in the city of Vermillion. Subscriptions in Clay, Turner, Union and Yankton counties are \$41.34 per year. Elsewhere in South Dakota, subscriptions are \$44.52, and out-of-state subscriptions are \$42.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Plain Talk, 201 West Cherry Street, Vermillion, SD 57069.
Vermillion Plain Talk Staff
Advertising Director: Michele Schievelbein. Advertising Sales Rep: Jennifer Newton. Composing Staff: Heidi Henson, Kathy Larson, Matt Richardson, and Tera Schmidt. Reception Office Manager: Penny Tucker. Distribution & Circulation Manager: David Jeffcoat.