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Local News

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# Will baseball scofflaws lose in the memorabilia game?

**By Frank DeFrank**  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Tiffany Tusa, an employee at Gameland Sports in Clinton Township, expected a customer to pick up a replica jersey Friday of one worn by a Detroit Tiger star.

"It's a (Gary) Sheffield," Tusa said.

Advertisement

The jersey was ordered long before former Sen. George Mitchell released his report on steroid use in Major League Baseball. That report named Sheffield as one of more than 80 current and former players linked to performance-enhancing drugs.

Tusa didn't expect the customer to cancel the Sheffield order. Nor did she anticipate a boycott on memorabilia associated with any of the stars mentioned in the report.

"I think it all depends on the (buyer)," she said. "... Look at Barry Bonds. He's still popular. People still love him."

The repercussions from Mitchell's report, in which he described as "widespread" the use of performance-enhancing drugs in baseball, will linger.

Will the allegations against Bonds and multiple-Cy Young award winner Roger Clemens keep them out of the Baseball Hall of Fame? Will they and other current players be

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suspended?

In the endorsement game, inclusion in the Mitchell report would figure to cost some big-time athletes some big bucks.

Norman Samnick, a labor and employment practice partner in New York, told MarketWatch.com high-profile companies are likely to shy away from athletes linked to drug use. That could mean the end of Clemens commercials for cell phones.

"In terms of merchandising, if it turns out a guy has done this stuff and he's not clean, (sponsors) might not do a deal," Samnick told MarketWatch. "It's going to be a circus for a while."

But while Nike might not want a drug-linked player pushing its apparel, collectors might be even more fascinated, suggested Michael Bernacci, a marketing professor at the University of Detroit.

"It will absolutely be more popular right now," Bernacci said. "(Mitchell's report) scored very well on the freak scale."

"We're a society that (is attracted) to folks that are on the dark side. We make heroes out of villains."

To illustrate, Bernacci, a Chicago native, said memorabilia associated with the Chicago Black Sox scandal is still popular.

"This scandal (steroids) might put that one into the minor leagues," he said.

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