

A's News Clips, Tuesday, January 12, 2010

Mark McGwire fallout: Teammates laud confession

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune 1/12/2010

As Mark McGwire's sudden steroid-use confession sent aftershocks throughout the baseball world Monday, those who knew McGwire as an A's teammate had varied thoughts about him finally coming clean.

"I know its been bothering him for a long time," former third baseman Carney Lansford said. "He knew this day was going to come. I think it's good he got it out there. Am I surprised a little bit? Yeah, but not shocked."

Lansford added that the timing of McGwire's admissions may help ease the scrutiny he'll receive in spring training as the St. Louis Cardinals' new hitting coach — the same position Lansford held with the Giants until he was fired after last season.

"It was a smart move to get it done now," Lansford said. "He's a sensitive guy, and if he gets too much stuff from fans, it'll affect him. I know him. He takes that stuff personal. Which is why he went into hiding. He has never loved the spotlight."

Former outfielder Jose Canseco, who identified McGwire by name as a user in his 2005 book "Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits and How Baseball Got Big," told Sirius XM Radio on Monday that once McGwire accepted a job in Major League Baseball, he was going to have to reveal his long-held secret.

"Mark was between a rock and a hard place," Canseco said. "He realized that it's not going to go away. He had to come clean. He had to tell the truth. The media is still going to address this in spring training. He's got to personally and physically face the media and tell the truth."

McGwire began that process Monday, talking to several media outlets and sitting down for a live one-on-one interview with Bob Costas on the MLB Network. Former A's pitcher Dave Stewart watched the Costas interview and came away sympathetic and impressed.

"I thought under the circumstances that (McGwire) did as good a job as you can to explain how he felt about what he did," Stewart said in a phone interview with Chronicle Live. "I thought he was outstanding. I know this guy. He answered those questions honestly. Most people wouldn't want to be in that seat. But he sat there and answered the questions as they were asked."

Lansford disputed McGwire's claim that his home run accomplishments weren't impacted by steroid use. McGwire told Costas that he didn't think steroids helped pad his home run totals.

"Nobody hits 70 home runs without using some kind of substance like that," said Lansford. "Look, 61 home runs was the record for all those years for a reason. When you're talking 70, now you're getting close to one every other game, and that's just silly. Obviously, the record is tainted. It can't not be."

Canseco agreed to a point but also lauded McGwire's natural gifts.

"I truly believe with or without steroids he's one of the best, if not the best, consistent right-hand power-hitting machines I've seen in my life," said Canseco. "We still don't know how much steroids can and may help any player, period. We still can't put an asterisk by it."

Lansford, Stewart and Canseco all felt empathy toward their former teammate.

"I was hoping that this statement would never be made," Stewart said. "I was hoping that this was not something that would become a reality, and that's because I know Mac and because I know the kind of guy he is. You just don't wish that kind of thing on him."

Said Lansford, "I feel bad for him, but I think I feel worse for the folks like the Maris family. Their dad's record is broken with guys doing steroids or HGH or whatever. Those are records that shouldn't be broken if it isn't done legitimately."

Added Canseco: "Mark, steroids or not, was one of the greatest nicest guys you could possibly meet. People make a mistake and say, 'Well, he used steroids. He's a bad guy. He's evil. He's not worthy.' I extremely regret telling the truth. I extremely regret writing that book. This thing has taken on a life of its own, and it's far from over, guys."

The A's issued a brief but formal statement.

"We commend Mark for being forthright and honest with his statements," the statement read. "We wish him well in his new role with the St. Louis Cardinals. ... We're glad that he's back in baseball."

Inman: Mark McGwire's steroid confessions rings true

By Cam Inman, Oakland Tribune 1/12/2010

MARK MCGWIRE finally talked about the past.

Just as we suspected, he took health-enhancing drugs during his home-run smashing days with the A's and St. Louis Cardinals.

Health-enhancing drugs? Well, that's how he envisions those steroids he took, preferably in oral fashion rather than ol' Mr. Needle, please.

He insisted Monday, eight years after he retired to peaceful Southern California, that he could have hit 70 home runs in a single season without steroids. A key flaw in that logic: He did admit taking steroids en route to surpassing Roger Maris' fabled record with 70 home runs in 1998.

"The only reason I took steroids was for my health purposes. I did not take steroids to get any gain for any strength purposes," McGwire told MLB Network's Bob Costas on Monday after releasing a written statement (or confession) earlier in the day.

That stance will hurt McGwire in the already biased court of public opinion. It's a shame. It overshadows all the good that should come from Monday's long-awaited revelations.

It's up to each of us to weigh whether he's earned safe passage back to the game he loves. By accepting an invitation from manager Tony La Russa to become the Cardinals hitting coach, Big Mac set in motion a stuck-in-the-mud wheel and cleared his conscience.

What we need to keep in mind is that this "health" excuse is his. Justifiable or not, it's his firm belief.

This was his secret, not yours. This is his legacy, not yours. This was his nearly five-year nightmare (after painfully balking before Congress), not yours.

Make your own judgment call. McGwire made his.

What shouldn't be lost on anyone, however, is that he agonizes over a mistake he admits — even if steroids enhanced his career and helped him belt home runs to the fans' wild delight in those daily doubleheaders (Act 1: batting practice; Act 2: ballgame).

This weren't hollow confessions (see: Rodriguez, Alex). This was a man desperate to live again. This will get underplayed, but he said he wanted to tell all in 2005 before Congress, only to have his lawyers advise him to stay silent in his and his family's best interests. McGwire also told Costas that Congressmen Tom Davis and Henry Waxman agreed before the hearing on McGwire following that strategy.

Monday's testimony might have made him a hero before Congress. It is not too little too late. Nor did he lie under oath, as he wisely pointed out with Costas.

He showed he has a conscience. Barry Bonds, your turn at bat. Roger Clemens, grab a helmet.

Tears welled in McGwire's eyes, and he constantly bit his lip to hold back tears during the Costas interview. His face reddened when he embarrassingly talked about confessing his steroid secrets — to his parents and son on Sunday, to his former manager La Russa and former Cardinals teammate Albert Pujols on Monday.

"I wish I had never touched steroids," McGwire said in his initial statement released to The Associated Press. "It was foolish and it was a mistake. I truly apologize. Looking back, I wish I had never played during the steroid era."

Problem is, he defines that era, as a talented player who resorted to improper methods so he could go on with the show. It's irrelevant if he indeed took steroids in low doses or primarily in the second half of seasons.

Of particular interest to A's fans is when he started doping. McGwire claimed he first acquired steroids from a local gym in the offseason that followed the 1989 A's World Series championship. He adamantly denied Jose Canseco's claims that they injected each other in the clubhouse bathroom.

"The gyms you worked out in back in the day, it was readily available. Guys at gyms talked about it," McGwire said. "I believe it was the winter of '89 into '90. I was given a couple weeks' worth. I tried it, never thought anything of it, just moved on from it. As far as using it on a consistent basis, the winter of '93-'94. I did it on health purposes."

Said La Russa: "I can remember those days. We were worried he wouldn't have the career he deserved to have because his body was betraying him."

La Russa stressed the A's had an official program to keep tabs on players' workout regimens. But when it came to what they did in private, well, now we know.

"He made the mistake of trying it," La Russa said. "He tried just a little bit. That was an offseason (in 1989/90) where he was giving in to availability and temptation at a gym. If you're trying for next season, strength training becomes an important part of preparation."

So apparently that 1989 title is not tainted? At all? Period?

We don't know what to believe anymore. We've learned harsh lessons thanks to performance-enhancing drug use in sports. So has McGwire, the health-enhanced slugger from an era gone by, or so we hope.

McGwire admits he took steroids

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Five years after one Bash Brother admitted to steroid use, the other came clean Monday. Like Jose Canseco, Mark McGwire said he used performance-enhancing drugs dating to his years with the A's.

McGwire made his admission in an eight-paragraph statement released by the St. Louis Cardinals, and conducted multiple teary-eyed interviews, repeatedly apologizing and saying he regretted turning to illegal drugs as a way to recover quicker from injuries.

"I wish I had never touched steroids," McGwire said in his statement. "It was foolish, and it was a mistake. I truly apologize. Looking back, I wish I had never played during the steroid era."

The Cardinals, who hired McGwire as their hitting coach in October, had promised that the former first baseman would be made available to the media "sooner rather than later." Three months later, McGwire addressed a subject he shunned during a Congressional steroid hearing on March 17, 2005, when he proclaimed, "I'm not here to talk about the past."

McGwire didn't say what performance-enhancing drugs he used other than human growth hormone (claiming he couldn't remember) and said he used only "low dosages." According to his timetable, he began using steroids after the 1989 season - his only World Series championship season, the A's sweeping the Giants - and further use was prompted on and off by his injuries, he said.

More significantly, he confessed to using steroids in 1998 when he hit 70 home runs to break Roger Maris' record of 61, set 37 years earlier. In the wake of McGwire's admission, one of Maris' sons, Rich, told The Chronicle, "Obviously, I think my dad still holds the record."

Barry Bonds, still facing trial on charges that he perjured himself at a federal grand-jury hearing by denying he intentionally used steroids, broke McGwire's record with 73 homers in 2001.

Told by MLB Network that the Maris family is disappointed and now believes 61 ought to be considered the record, McGwire said, "They have every right to think that. It's unfortunate I played in this era, and I wish so hard there was testing during that time. I can't turn back the clock. All I can say is sorry. This was the toughest day of my life."

During McGwire's MLB Network interview with Bob Costas, he curiously insisted he could have performed as well without steroids, saying, "I truly believe so. I believe I was given this gift. The only reason I took steroids was for my health purposes. I did not take steroids to get any gain for any strength purposes."

"I've always had bat speed. I just learned how to shorten my bat speed. I learned how to be a better hitter. There's not a pill or an injection that is going to give me - or any athlete - the hand-eye coordination to hit a baseball. A pill or an injection will not hit a baseball."

But former A's teammate Dave Parker said he noticed how McGwire evolved into a hitter who was "kind of abnormal."

Hall of Famer Henry Aaron said McGwire "has my forgiveness," but another Hall of Famer, Ryne Sandberg, said McGwire's admission puts his record-setting performance in 1998 "to shame."

Tony La Russa, McGwire's manager in both Oakland and St. Louis, repeatedly had defended McGwire. La Russa called McGwire a good teammate and pointed to McGwire's dedicated workout regimen and the A's weightlifting program, which La Russa called first rate.

McGwire said he didn't tell La Russa of his steroid use until Monday morning.

Asked by The Chronicle if he feels betrayed, La Russa said, "It's a good question. I was very careful to think about why I came out so strongly in his favor. I challenged myself with his opinion many times over the years, and I'm 100 percent confident with what I said."

"No, I don't feel betrayed. I'm disappointed in that whole time we were involved in steroids. As far as my defense of him, I've defended him for all the right reasons. They still exist."

In Canseco's 2005 book "Juiced," he wrote that he injected McGwire with steroids in a clubhouse bathroom stall, but McGwire denied it, saying, "Absolutely no truth to that."

Former Rep. Tom Davis, a Virginia Republican who chaired the House Government Reform Committee that called on McGwire, told the Associated Press, "It was very clear to everybody involved that he had taken steroids. Otherwise, he would have gotten up there and denied it, but he couldn't."

Davis confirmed McGwire's claim that he would have come clean during the hearing had he had been granted immunity, saying McGwire was denied by then-Attorney General Alberto Gonzales.

Commissioner Bud Selig said he was "pleased" that McGwire came clean and added, "This statement of contrition, I believe, will make Mark's re-entry into the game much smoother and easier."

McGwire said his Hall of Fame candidacy didn't play a part in his admission. He received less than one-quarter of the vote in his first four years on the ballot. Seventy-five percent is needed for induction.

Though Aaron seems open to McGwire getting inducted, Sandberg said of McGwire's chances, "That's like three strikes and you're out right there."

Rich Maris commended McGwire for phoning his mother, Patricia (Roger's widow), on Monday morning. Given that Bonds and McGwire both have been linked to steroid use, Maris clearly considers his dad's total to be the true standard.

"Too many things have gone on and now this has come out," Maris said. "It's just the way it is. We think baseball will end up doing the right things with the records. We think baseball will get it right, whether they restore the record or make some sort of mark on what's what. I think baseball will figure it out."

As for McGwire's call to Maris' mother, he said, "He told her he had something to tell her - he just wanted her to know the news was going to break and that he did do steroids. He apologized to her, to my dad, to us kids. That speaks volumes to the kind of guy he is. My mom was very touched by his call. She felt sorry for Mark - that he's going through this. She conveyed that we all make mistakes and move on from there."

McGwire's stats

Yr	Tm	G	AB	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG
'86	A's	18	53	3	9	4	18	.189	.259	.377
'87	A's	151	557	49	118	71	131	.289	.370	.618
'88	A's	155	550	32	99	76	117	.260	.352	.478
'89	A's	143	490	33	95	83	94	.231	.339	.467
'90	A's	156	523	39	108	110	116	.235	.370	.489
'91	A's	154	483	22	75	93	116	.201	.330	.383
'92	A's	139	467	42	104	90	105	.268	.385	.585
'93	A's	27	84	9	24	21	19	.333	.467	.726
'94	A's	47	135	9	25	37	40	.252	.413	.474
'95	A's	104	317	39	90	88	77	.274	.441	.685
'96	A's	130	423	52	113	116	112	.312	.467	.730
'97	A's, StL	156	540	58	123	101	159	.274	.393	.646
'98	StL	155	509	70	147	162	155	.299	.470	.752
'99	StL	153	521	65	147	133	141	.278	.424	.697
'00	StL	89	236	32	73	76	78	.305	.483	.746
'01	StL	97	299	29	64	56	118	.187	.316	.492
16 years	1874	6187	583	1414	1317	1596	.263	.394	.588	

Source: baseball-reference.com

A'S REACTION

Admission doesn't jolt ex-teammates

Ron Kroichick, Chronicle Staff Writer 1/12/2010

Mark McGwire's former A's teammates found themselves in a curious position Monday - glad McGwire finally came clean about his steroid use and adamant in insisting his admission does not tarnish what Oakland accomplished in the late 1980s and early '90s.

Those A's teams accomplished plenty - four American League West titles during a five-year stretch (1988-92), three World Series appearances (1988-90) and one championship ('89). McGwire now is the second key player to acknowledge steroid use, joining Jose Canseco.

McGwire, in his public statements, said he tried steroids briefly after the 1989 season but did not begin taking them consistently until after the '93 season.

"I would like to think we did it based on talent and the team Sandy (Alderson) and Tony (La Russa) put together," former third baseman Carney Lansford said of Oakland's run of success. "The only guy we suspected at the time was Jose, and we had no proof. What are you going to do?"

Lansford and other A's players of that era recalled an ongoing swirl of suspicion around Canseco. His teammates routinely teased him about steroids, including one - towering outfielder/designated hitter Dave Parker - who frequently called Canseco "test-tube baby."

There were few such suspicions about McGwire until later in his career, to hear his former teammates tell it. And they don't think Monday's news diminishes what the A's achieved.

"People are going to look at it the way they want," former pitcher Dave Stewart said. "We weren't a team built just on good hitting. We also were a good pitching team. If you say, 'Jose and Mac were steroid users, that team wouldn't have done what it did without them,' I say look at the way we pitched."

Said Hall of Fame reliever Dennis Eckersley: "Don't be tarnishing my only World Series, man. It doesn't take anything away from it, for me."

Eckersley pointed to the time frame McGwire provided. The core of those A's teams had been disassembled by the winter of 1993-94, when McGwire said he began regularly using steroids.

At any rate, McGwire's body had changed - dramatically - by the time he joined St. Louis in 1997. Lansford was a coach with the Cardinals then, and he became suspicious watching McGwire's home runs sail epic distances.

"I remember thinking, 'He's hitting these balls twice as far as he used to; what's different?' Steroids obviously were part of it," Lansford said. "... Mark always had naturally massive forearms and big thighs, but he was huge in St. Louis. He looked pretty much like Jose did in the late '80s and early '90s."

Lansford sounded conflicted on the question of whether Monday's admission should preclude McGwire from reaching the Hall of Fame. He received 23.7 percent of the votes cast for this year's class, far short of the 75 percent needed for election.

"I guess you can't treat him differently than anyone else who used - if you let one in, let them all in," Lansford said. "Or maybe you can't let any of them in."

Eckersley, one of two A's players of that era enshrined in Cooperstown (with Rickey Henderson), talked of the relief McGwire no doubt feels.

"Good for him - he can finally let it go," Eckersley said. "I don't think Mark gives a (s-) if he goes to the Hall. But now he can sleep at night."

McGwire didn't exactly come clean

Gwen Knapp, San Francisco Chronicle, 1/12/2010

Mark McGwire's confession to steroid use on Monday initially seemed historic, the most thorough doping disclosure by an athlete of his stature. Then he kept talking, and the asterisks started piling up.

In a 50-minute MLB Network interview with Bob Costas on Monday night, McGwire repeatedly asserted that he had turned to the steroids, banned by law unless prescribed for very limited purposes, only to treat injuries that repeatedly kept him off the field in the early 1990s. "I was a walking MASH unit," he said.

The staggering home run totals, including 70 in the magical summer of 1998, when he overtook Roger Maris? Those, he insisted several times, came primarily through talent and mental strength he received from "the man upstairs."

Between bouts of tears, McGwire came across as a man longing to unburden his conscience almost five years after awkwardly dodging questions during congressional testimony. But as much as the confession might have cleansed his soul, the details surrounding it leaned more toward scrubbing down his legacy and washing up Major League Baseball's reputation.

McGwire said he believed that baseball today is a new world and repeatedly expressed his wish that there had been drug testing in his day. Read: The instinct to cheat lay not in the heart of this erstwhile demigod, it lay in the permissive bylaws of the era.

Don't hate the player. Don't hate the game. Hate the collective-bargaining agreements, pre-2002.

Selig's self-congratulations

Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig greeted the confession with a self-congratulatory statement: "The so-called 'steroid era' - a reference that is resented by the many players who played in that era and never touched the substances - is clearly a thing of the past, and Mark's admission today is another step in the right direction."

At least Selig gave a nod toward the people who deserve more protection than McGwire's legacy. Clean athletes should be livid over the first baseman's contention that he didn't try to gain power from the steroids he took.

Instead, McGwire said, "it was brought to my attention that it would help me heal." He did not say who brought the idea to his attention, and Costas did not ask. Was it a doctor, a teammate, a trainer?

The interviewer, one of the most respected in the business, whiffed on several points. Like so many other people in the sports world, he seemed more concerned with the validity of McGwire's statistics and his viability for the Hall of Fame than about the risks associated with pumping artificial hormones into one's body. He failed to ask whether McGwire had any long-term health problems.

Costas did ask whether McGwire thought that using steroids had ever contributed to, more than healed, some of his baseball injuries. McGwire conceded that his body continued to break down after he started taking the drugs more extensively.

So why did he continue using the stuff? He said the drugs made him feel normal and that he took only light doses because he didn't want to look like "Arnold Schwarzenegger or Lou Ferrigno." But compared with many power hitters of the past, such as Roger Maris and Hank Aaron, McGwire looked like a freak.

Also, the injuries he cited as the reasons for his steroid regimen - a ribcage strain, a torn left heel muscle, a stress fracture of the left heel and a torn right heel muscle - all sound like the damage that can be wrought by rapid physical expansion tied to the use of performance-enhancing drugs. McGwire said he briefly sampled steroids in '89-90. Did that set up the avalanche of injuries in the '90s?

Big day for clean athletes

At the headquarters of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, chief executive Travis Tygart said he tended to look askance at claims that an athlete sought only the healing properties of steroids.

"But make no mistake," he said Monday, "this is still a big day for clean athletes who want to believe that the truth eventually comes out."

Even as he root, root, rooted for people to come out and see the Cardinals and their new demigod, Albert Pujols, rather than obsessing over the past, McGwire, the team's new hitting coach, said he hoped that future athletes would take a lesson from his shame.

"Look at me," he told Costas. "Look at what I have to do."

All in all, he has it pretty easy, especially compared with Barry Bonds, who could not legally duck questions during his 2003 grand jury testimony the way McGwire did in front of Congress. Bonds can't turn around now and free his conscience because he has a perjury charge hanging over him.

Still, McGwire clearly feels a humiliation so genuine that unlike the accompanying confession, it carries no asterisk.

Chronology of McGwire's career

1987: Playing for the A's in his first full season, at age 23, McGwire leads the majors with 49 home runs and is named American League Rookie of the Year.

1988: The A's, featuring McGwire and AL MVP Jose Canseco, reach the World Series, losing to the Dodgers.

1989: The A's win the World Series, defeating the Giants.

1993: Still with Oakland, McGwire plays in only 29 of 162 games. He would be limited by injuries over the next few seasons.

1997: McGwire is traded by the A's to the St. Louis Cardinals during the season and sets a personal best with 58 homers.

1998: McGwire and Sammy Sosa of the Chicago Cubs engage in an epic home run contest. They each surpass Roger Maris' record 61 homers - Sosa with 66, McGwire with 70. McGwire comes under some scrutiny during the season when a bottle of androstenedione, a steroid precursor, is seen in his locker. At the time, andro was not banned by baseball but was banned in other sports.

1999: In his final full season, McGwire hits 65 homers.

2001: At age 37, McGwire plays his final season. His final total of 583 home runs was then the fifth highest of all time.

2005: Canseco's book "Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits, and How Baseball Got Big" is published. In it, Canseco says that he used steroids with McGwire while they were with the A's, even injecting him with performance-enhancing substances in bathroom stalls.

In March, Canseco and McGwire are among those appearing in front of a congressional committee probing steroid use in baseball. McGwire does not respond to direct questions about whether he doped, saying "I'm not here to talk about the past."

2007: In his first year of eligibility for the Hall of Fame, McGwire is chosen by 23.5 percent of the voters, far short of the 75 percent required for election.

October 2009: Cardinals manager Tony La Russa, who managed McGwire with the A's and Cardinals, says McGwire will be the Cardinals' hitting coach.

Monday: McGwire issues a statement saying that he used steroids in the 1989-90 season and "on occasion" during the 1990s, including in 1998.

"I wish I had never touched steroids. It was foolish and it was a mistake. I truly apologize. Looking back, I wish I had never played during the steroid era. ...

I'm sure people will wonder if I could have hit all those home runs had I never taken steroids. I had good years when I didn't take any and I had bad years when I didn't take any. I had good years when I took steroids and I had bad years when I took steroids. But no matter what, I shouldn't have done it and for that I'm truly sorry."

MCGWIRE NEWS NOT EXACTLY A BOMBSHELL

By **Bob Highfill**, Stockton Record, 1/12/2010

An admission and a defection are the lead sports stories this week. Mark McGwire told us what we already knew, and Pete Carroll confirmed his re-entry into the NFL. The obvious and perhaps some surprises make up these random thoughts for a Tuesday:

» McGwire, the former A's and Cardinals slugger, admitted he took steroids and human growth hormone for a decade. He said, "I hid it from everybody." Not exactly, Gigantor. We kind of had an idea.

» Carroll, a former Pacific player and assistant coach, won't have the NCAA breathing down his neck as coach of the Seahawks, but he has an ugly trend to buck. Of the last 10 established college coaches who went to the NFL, only Jimmy Johnson took his team, the Cowboys, to the playoffs. The other nine went 121-212 in 22 seasons combined.

» Cliches that hopefully will be used less frequently this New Year: athletes saying, "It is what it is," all announcers saying, "Are you kidding me," football announcers saying, "He runs downhill," and sports news briefs leading with "... is under investigation for gun possession."

» Should Raiders owner Al Davis remove coach Tom Cable, he should look into hiring former Texas Tech coach and pirate enthusiast Mike Leach. Leach could wear an eye patch and carry a sword on the sideline, have a parrot on his shoulder shuttle in the plays, and lock quarterback JaMarcus Russell in a steam room until he loses 50 pounds.

» Wonder who Roberto Alomar spit on when he fell eight votes short in the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame voting last week.

» Former Chicago Sun-Times columnist Jay Mariotti turned in a blank baseball Hall of Fame ballot because he believed no one was worthy of induction this year. Then, he said he wanted to be kicked out of the Baseball Writers Association of America. Give the man what he wants.

» The Washington Wizards are trying to make Gilbert Arenas, nicknamed Agent Zero, a secret agent. In wake of his NBA suspension for bringing guns to the Wizards' arena, the team has told him not to attend team functions and has removed a huge banner featuring his photograph from the side of the arena. He also has been edited out of the video played before the start of the game, and Arenas-related merchandise is no longer for sale in the building.

» If Jerry Rice and Emmitt Smith aren't unanimous NFL Hall of Fame inductees Aug. 7, then (think Al Pacino in "... And Justice for All") there's something really wrong here.

» Baseball America named former Lodi resident, St. Mary's High, and Delta College infielder Jason Bartlett the San Diego Padres' best draft pick this past decade, though he never played a game as a Padre. Bartlett was a 13th-round selection in 2001 out of Oklahoma. San Diego traded him to the Twins, where he played from 2004-07, and he has played the past

two seasons with the Rays. He appeared in the World Series in 2008 and this past season was an American League All-Star.

Mark McGwire admits he used steroids

Associated Press 1/12/2010

Mark McGwire finally came clean, admitting he used steroids when he broke baseball's home run record in 1998.

McGwire said in a statement sent to The Associated Press on Monday that he used steroids on and off for nearly a decade. During a 20-minute telephone interview shortly afterward, his voice repeatedly cracked.

"It's very emotional, it's telling family members, friends and coaches, you know, it's former teammates to try to get ahold of, you know, that I'm coming clean and being honest," he said. "It's the first time they've ever heard me, you know, talk about this. I hid it from everybody."

The former A's slugger said he also used human growth hormone, and he didn't know if his use of performance-enhancing drugs contributed to some of the injuries that led to his retirement, at age 38, in 2001.

"That's a good question," he said.

He repeatedly expressed regret for his decision to use steroids, which he said was "foolish" and caused by his desire to overcome injuries, get back on the field and prove he was worth his multimillion salary.

"You don't know that you'll ever have to talk about the skeleton in your closet on a national level," he said. "I did this for health purposes. There's no way I did this for any type of strength use."

McGwire hit a then-record 70 homers in 1998 during a compelling race with Sammy Sosa, who finished with 66. More than anything else, the home-run spree revitalized baseball following the crippling strike that wiped out the 1994 World Series.

Now that McGwire has come clean, increased glare might fall on Sosa, who has denied using performance-enhancing drugs.

"I wish I had never played during the steroid era," McGwire said.

McGwire's decision to admit using steroids was prompted by his decision to become hitting coach of the St. Louis Cardinals, his final big league team. Tony La Russa, McGwire's manager in Oakland and St. Louis, has been among McGwire's biggest supporters and thinks returning to the field can restore the former slugger's reputation.

"I never knew when, but I always knew this day would come," McGwire said. "It's time for me to talk about the past and to confirm what people have suspected."

He became the second major baseball star in less than a year to admit using illegal steroids, following the New York Yankees' Alex Rodriguez last February.

Others have been tainted but have denied knowingly using illegal drugs, including Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens and David Ortiz.

Bonds has been indicted on charges he made false statements to a federal grand jury and obstructed justice. Clemens is under investigation by a federal grand jury trying to determine whether he lied to a congressional committee.

"I'm sure people will wonder if I could have hit all those home runs had I never taken steroids," McGwire said. "I had good years when I didn't take any, and I had bad years when I didn't take any. I had good years when I took steroids, and I had bad years when I took steroids. But no matter what, I shouldn't have done it and for that I'm truly sorry."

Big Mac's reputation has been in tatters since March 17, 2005, when he refused to answer questions at a Congressional hearing. Instead, he repeatedly said "I'm not here to talk about the past" when asked whether he took illegal steroids when he hit a then-record 70 home runs in 1998 or at any other time.

"After all this time, I want to come clean," he said. "I was not in a position to do that five years ago in my congressional testimony, but now I feel an obligation to discuss this and to answer questions about it. I'll do that, and then I just want to help my team."

McGwire said he wanted to tell the truth then but evaded questions at that hearing on the advice of his lawyers.

"That was the worst 48 hours of my life," McGwire said.

La Russa immediately praised McGwire's decision to go public.

"His willingness to admit mistakes, express his regret, and explain the circumstances that led him to use steroids add to my respect for him," the manager said.

McGwire disappeared from the public eye following his retirement as a player following the 2001 season. When the Cardinals hired the 47-year-old as coach on Oct. 26, they said he would address questions before spring training, and Monday's statement broke his silence.

"I remember trying steroids very briefly in the 1989/1990 offseason and then after I was injured in 1993, I used steroids again," McGwire said in his statement. "I used them on occasion throughout the '90s, including during the 1998 season."

McGwire said he took steroids to get back on the field, sounding much like the Yankees' Andy Pettitte two years ago when he admitted using HGH.

"During the mid-'90s, I went on the DL seven times and missed 228 games over five years," McGwire said. "I experienced a lot of injuries, including a ribcage 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. I thought they would help me heal and prevent injuries, too."

Since the congressional hearing, baseball owners and players toughened their drug program twice, increasing the penalty for a first steroids offense from 10 days to 50 games in November 2005 and strengthening the power of the independent administrator in April 2008, following the publication of the Mitchell Report.

"Baseball is really different now — it's been cleaned up," McGwire said. "The commissioner and the players' association implemented testing and they cracked down, and I'm glad they did."

The A's, for whom McGwire holds the franchise record for career home runs with 363, released a statement commending McGwire for coming forward.

"We commend Mark for being forthright and honest with his statements," the A's statement said. "We wish him well in his new role with the St. Louis Cardinals. We're glad that he's back in baseball."

Text of the statement Mark McGwire issued Monday, admitting he used steroids during his career:

"Now that I have become the hitting coach for the St. Louis Cardinals, I have the chance to do something that I wish I was able to do five years ago.

I never knew when, but I always knew this day would come. It's time for me to talk about the past and to confirm what people have suspected. I used steroids during my playing career and I apologize. I remember trying steroids very briefly in the 1989/1990 off season and then after I was injured in 1993, I used steroids again. I used them on occasion throughout the '90s, including during the 1998 season.

I wish I had never touched steroids. It was foolish and it was a mistake. I truly apologize. Looking back, I wish I had never played during the steroid era.

During the mid-'90s, I went on the DL seven times and missed 228 games over five years. I experienced a lot of injuries, including a ribcage 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. I thought they would help me heal and prevent injuries, too.

I'm sure people will wonder if I could have hit all those home runs had I never taken steroids. I had good years when I didn't take any and I had bad years when I didn't take any. I had good years when I took steroids and I had bad years when I took steroids. But no matter what, I shouldn't have done it and for that I'm truly sorry.

Baseball is really different now - it's been cleaned up. The commissioner and the players' association implemented testing and they cracked down, and I'm glad they did.

I'm grateful to the Cardinals for bringing me back to baseball. I want to say thank you to Cardinals owner Mr. DeWitt, to my GM, John Mozeliak, and to my manager, Tony La Russa. I can't wait to put the uniform on again and to be back on the field in front of the great fans in Saint Louis. I've always appreciated their support and I intend to earn it again, this time as hitting coach. I'm going to pour myself into this job and do everything I can to help the Cardinals hitters become the best players for years to come.

After all this time, I want to come clean. I was not in a position to do that five years ago in my congressional testimony, but now I feel an obligation to discuss this and to answer questions about it. I'll do that, and then I just want to help my team."

Reaction from around baseball to Mark McGwire's admission of steroid use

The Associated Press 1/12/2010

Reaction to St. Louis Cardinals hitting coach Mark McGwire's admission Monday that he used steroids and human growth hormone as a player:

"The so-called 'steroid era' — a reference that is resented by the many players who played in that era and never touched the substances — is clearly a thing of the past, and Mark's admission today is another step in the right direction." — Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig.

"I can't excuse the fact that players did this. They took performance-enhancing drugs to enhance their numbers and make more money. And they did it and made more money and enhanced their numbers. It bothers me that we always talk about those guys, and we seem to forget about the guys who didn't cheat. They get penalized twice. They don't make as much money, and when it comes to the Hall of Fame, their numbers are going to pale in comparison to the other guys." — Hall of Famer Joe Morgan.

"There were probably guys back then — in late 1980s and early '90s, pitchers and other players — who were one step away from the World Series, who were clean and going up against those A's teams that were loaded with steroids. Those are the people I feel sorry for." — Minnesota Twins outfielder Michael Cuddyer.

"It's a little black eye on baseball, but it's hard to fault a guy for doing it to bounce back from a heavy workout or to be better. ... I don't think he's alone. Mainly, I blame it on the fact the trainers completely changed their philosophy. I have no idea how many, but I'm sure there were a lot of people in that era using, I'm not just saying steroids, but using vitamins and drugs to help bounce back." — Davey Johnson, former major league player and manager now a senior adviser to the GM for the Washington Nationals.

"I admire him for doing it. I'm sure it wasn't easy. Maybe he's clearing his conscience. Again, every man has to live with himself." — Cincinnati Reds manager Dusty Baker.

"To have the truth out there, I think that'll help the fans and the game move on. I don't think it helps him in any way. He's on the ballot for the Hall of Fame and he's getting about 23 or 24 percent of the votes right now. And I think that number will just go down now, in my opinion." — Hall of Famer Ryne Sandberg.

"I'm not surprised. I think Mark has stepped back and realized probably being honest is the best way to go." — San Francisco Giants manager Bruce Bochy.

"I think this admission might help with voters who suspected McGwire wasn't being truthful with the fans about steroids. But I don't know if it helps him at all with voters determined to keep the taint of the drug-use era out of Cooperstown. Basically, McGwire has so many votes to make up, I'm not sure it makes that big a difference to the question of his Hall of Fame chances. But at least he's admitted to something suspected by many of us for a long time." — Baseball Writers' Association of America Hall of Fame voter Joe Ostermeier of the Belleville (Ill.) News-Democrat.

"He looked ridiculous to most of the public, but he didn't have many good options. We put him in a pretty tight spot. He was candid and honest in our interrogation of him. He said: 'Someday, I'll tell the story.'" — Former Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., who chaired the March 17, 2005, congressional hearing at which McGwire repeatedly said he would not "talk about the past."

"Mark McGwire is doing the right thing by telling the truth about his steroid use. His statement sends an important message to kids about the importance of avoiding steroids." — Rep. Henry Waxman of California, the ranking Democrat on Davis' committee in 2005.

Maris' son praises Mac, backs dad

Ron Kroichick, Chronicle Staff Writer 1/12/2010

Rich Maris, son of Roger Maris, mostly praised Mark McGwire in the wake of his steroid admission Monday - but the younger Maris also said, flatly, "Obviously, I think my dad still holds the record."

Roger Maris, of course, hit a single-season record 61 home runs for the New York Yankees in 1961. McGwire eclipsed the record in 1998, when he hit 70, and Barry Bonds subsequently smashed 73 in 2001.

Given that Bonds and McGwire both have been linked to steroid use, Maris clearly considers his dad's total to be the true standard.

"Too many things have gone on and now this has come out," Maris said in a telephone interview Monday with The Chronicle. "It's just the way it is. ... We think baseball will end up doing the right things with the records. We think baseball will get it right, whether they restore the record or make some sort of mark on what's what ... I think baseball will figure it out."

Maris would not specify how he hoped Major League Baseball might distinguish between his dad's achievement and the single-season totals of Bonds, McGwire and other players in the so-called steroid era.

Maris also said that his mom, Patricia Maris (Roger's widow), received a telephone call from McGwire earlier Monday, before the news broke of his steroid admission. Rich Maris described McGwire as "pretty choked up" during the call, made to Patricia Maris at her Florida home.

"He told her he had something to tell her - he just wanted her to know the news was going to break and that he did do steroids," Rich Maris said. "He apologized to her, to my dad, to us kids. That speaks volumes to the kind of guy he is. ...

"My mom was very touched by his call. She felt sorry for Mark - that he's going through this. She conveyed that we all make mistakes and move on from there. ...

"This (McGwire's steroid use) is something we thought all along. It wasn't so much a surprise, but I feel bad for Mark. He's a very genuine guy and we're close to him - we love him like a brother. I'm glad he got it out."

McGwire opens up about steroid use

Slugger apologizes, says he used PEDs 'for health purposes'

By Matthew Leach / MLB.com 1/12/2010

ST. LOUIS -- Mark McGwire apologized profusely and repeatedly for his actions on Monday. Just as emphatically, though, he refused to apologize for his statistics.

McGwire ended more than a decade of speculation when he acknowledged that he used steroids during much of his Major League playing career, including in 1998, when he broke Major League Baseball's single-season home run record. However, he insisted that he took the substances only to aid in his recovery from injury and only in low doses. And he said repeatedly that he did not believe the drugs had increased his ability to play once he took the field.

McGwire initially made the revelation in a statement issued to news outlets on Monday afternoon, then addressed the situation further in an interview with Bob Costas on MLB Network.

"I did it [for] health purposes," McGwire told Costas. "If you look at my career, injured '93, '94, '95, '96, I was a walking M*A*S*H unit. I told my dad yesterday when I finally had to tell him about this. I remember calling him in '96. I was so frustrated with injuries, I wanted to retire. He's the one who told me to stick it out. At that time I was using steroids thinking it was going to help me. It was brought to my attention that it was going to help me heal faster, make my body feel back to normal."

Asked repeatedly by Costas if he believed that his statistics and records were legitimate in light of the disclosure, McGwire did not budge.

"Absolutely," he said. "I truly believe so. I was given this gift by the man upstairs. My track record as far as hitting home runs ... my first at-bat in the league was a home run. They still talk about the home runs I hit in high school. They still talk about the home runs I hit in [American] Legion. They still talk about the home runs I hit in college [USC] -- I led the nation in home runs. They still talk about the home runs I hit in the Minor Leagues.

"I was given the gift to hit home runs. The thing is about the years you were talking about, you go back to '93 and '94, those are the two years that I was really injured where I missed basically three-quarters of the season. That was the first time in my life that I sat back and I really had to understand what this game was about. I started studying pitchers. I started understanding how they try to get you out. And during that, my swing was changing."

McGwire teared up several times during the interview and at times needed a moment to compose himself. He was visibly and audibly shaken by the experience. However, given an opportunity to take a break early in the interview, McGwire declined. Costas pressed him determinedly, subjecting him to pointed questions but not devolving into an attack.

The Cardinals announced in October that McGwire would be the team's hitting coach for the 2010 season, and in three separate statements on Monday, club representatives pledged their continuing support for him. McGwire said that the timing of his announcement was tied to the club's hiring of him. In fact, he said that he wanted to admit his actions in 2005, when he appeared before a Congressional panel to discuss steroids in baseball.

However, McGwire said, to do so could have exposed him to prosecution, because his attorneys were unable to secure immunity prior to his testimony. Thus, McGwire uttered the famous line that he was "not here to talk about the past," a line that has followed him ever since.

"I was ready, willing and prepared to talk about this," McGwire said. "I wanted to talk about this. I wanted to get this off my chest. ... It was killing me. It was absolutely killing my heart. But I had to do what I had to do to protect myself, to protect my family, to protect my friends."

Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig likewise issued a statement in support of the retired slugger.

"I am pleased that Mark McGwire has confronted his use of performance-enhancing substances as a player," Selig said. "Being truthful is always the correct course of action, which is why I had commissioned Senator George Mitchell to

conduct his investigation. This statement of contrition, I believe, will make Mark's reentry into the game much smoother and easier."

According to McGwire's statement, his usage of PEDs spanned a large portion of his career, which included parts or all of 16 seasons. He also told Costas that he tried human growth hormone "once, twice maybe." His first full season in the Majors was 1987, so McGwire acknowledges beginning to use after his third full season. The 1993 campaign was the first in which he played fewer than 139 games, as he was limited by foot injuries.

"The names [of the drugs], I don't remember," McGwire told Costas. "But I did injectables. I preferred the orals. The steroids that I did were on a very, very low dosage. I didn't want to take a lot of that. I didn't want to look like an Arnold Schwarzenegger or Lou Ferrigno. The most I ever got in weight, my weight was 250, and at the end of the season, 235-240. I took very, very low dosages just because I wanted my body to feel normal."

After missing large chunks of the 1993, 1994 and 1995 seasons, McGwire returned to form with a vengeance in 1996, hitting a then-career-high 52 home runs and batting .312 with a .467 on-base percentage. He followed that up with a big 1997, and was traded to St. Louis that year, then broke Roger Maris' single-season homer record when he hit 70 in 1998. He was insistent that the home runs were not a product of his physique or what he was taking.

Tony La Russa, who was McGwire's manager for the vast majority of his career, came to his friend's defense.

"No one on the teams I managed worked harder or better than Mark," La Russa said in a statement issued by the club. "And now, his willingness to admit mistakes, express his regret, and explain the circumstances that led him to use steroids add to my respect for him."

La Russa was one of many people to receive a phone call and an apology from McGwire prior to his announcement. McGwire also talked to some current teammates, including slugger Albert Pujols and infielder Brendan Ryan, and left a message for Matt Holliday. Ryan and Holliday are among several Cardinals who have received hitting instruction from McGwire in recent winters.

McGwire also said he called Pat Maris, the widow of Roger Maris. The Maris family's support of McGwire was one of the most compelling subplots of the 1998 home run chase.

"I think she was shocked that I called her," McGwire said. "I felt that I needed to do that. They had been great supporters of mine. She was disappointed, and she has every right to be. And I couldn't tell her [enough] how so sorry I was."

Despite his lengthy admissions, though, McGwire did take issue with one element of how his story has been portrayed. He adamantly denied the allegations from former teammate Jose Canseco that the two had injected steroids together repeatedly in the clubhouse prior to games.

"There's absolutely no truth to that whatsoever," McGwire said.

Oakland A's Off-Season Q&A: Farhan Zaidi, P.1

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Jan 12, 2010

Despite making only a handful of signings and two trades, it has been an eventful off-season for the Oakland A's, who have been rumored to be connected to a number of different players. We recently spoke with A's Director of Baseball Operations Farhan Zaidi about the A's off-season. Inside, part one of the conversation...

OaklandClubhouse: In discussing the off-season and given that today [Monday, January 11] was the day that the Aroldis Chapman deal with Cincinnati was announced, I thought the Chapman negotiation process would be a good place to start. From the outside, at least, it appeared that you guys were in the middle of the bidding for him. What was that experience like? It seems a lot different from any free agent bidding the organization has participated in before.

Farhan Zaidi: Yeah. We talked internally as the bid escalated – and we were pretty aggressive with our bid right out of the shoot – but thinking back, it quickly got to the point that we were guaranteeing more money to a pitcher than we certainly ever had in my five years here. The only guarantee that I could think of that was similar was when we signed Esteban Loaiza and that was \$21 million and we were obviously talking about a very different kind of pitcher. I think for everyone involved in the bidding, because Chapman was such a unique talent, it was a little bit out of everyone's comfort zone but it was just a process where you had to do your due diligence and come up with your value of the player and make your bid. It was either going to be good enough or it wasn't.

We obviously put together a pretty aggressive bid that we felt good about and we were there right until the end. As we sit here, we were one of the 29 teams that didn't get him and didn't think that the risks in terms of what he ultimately got made sense for us. We certainly feel good about the process we went through. We were very involved with his agent. We did a lot of due diligence on the player and this is just how it ended up.

OC: I thought it was interesting that so many teams like the A's and Cincinnati who aren't traditionally connected with these types of signings were involved in the bidding process. Do you think that because of the way resources are being allocated, that will be a continuing trend, or was it just a fluke that the Bostons and New Yorks of the world weren't leading on this bidding this time around?

FZ: I think this is one of the issues we face in modern baseball economics which is even when you look at what happened this off-season, even when a team has financial flexibility like we do, it isn't always easy to attract players here because of the stadium we play in and player perceptions about that. In a weird way, the sort of conventional channels of signing free agents, we may not have the same opportunities as a team that plays in a stadium or a market where players are more willing to or more attracted to playing in. As a result, we have to be more out-of-the-box in terms of how we look to spend our resources.

Ultimately, it all comes down to opportunity cost. If you are the Red Sox and there are a lot of free agents out there who want to play for you because you are a contender year-in and year-out and because of the market and the stadium that you play in, there is a pretty high opportunity cost for spending money on a guy like Chapman. For a team like us that has had some documented difficulties selling players on playing here over the past couple of years, I think our opportunity cost is a little bit lower. I think there is a very economic reason for why you see teams like us and the Reds bidding on a player like Chapman, and I think a lot of that has to do with opportunity cost.

OC: One guy who you were able to sign was Coco Crisp. I think that acquisition caught a lot of people by surprise given that there is the perception that the team has a lot of depth already in the outfield and that maybe the corner infield is a more pressing need. How do you see Crisp fitting into the 2010 roster?

FZ: I think it was documented in some of the articles that came out when we signed him that Coco is a guy we have liked for a long time, dating back to when he was with the Indians and Red Sox. He is a guy we tried to trade for a couple of times. We think he is really a difference-maker defensively out in centerfield. We have other outfielders who we think are outstanding defensively, but we think Coco's talents defensively in centerfield are very unique. As a player that we liked and as a player who we think, if he is healthy – and all of the reports right now are encouraging – we think he could really be that kind of difference-maker defensively in centerfield. He made a lot of sense. He is still relatively young and we signed him to a deal that gives us some flexibility because it is a one-year deal with a team option.

We certainly have some depth in the outfield both at the big league level and at Triple-A, and I think it is a situation where things will sort themselves out. There are certainly more pressing needs for our team, but we don't want to go out and sign players just to fill a need if they are players we don't like or don't feel confident in. That is how you wind-up making bad deals. We'd rather go out and pursue players that we have a history with that we like and that we feel confident are going to be good players going forward. The pieces ultimately will fall where they will. We certainly have a couple of places where we want to make improvements, but if we address those needs before going out after a player like Coco that we liked a lot, we wouldn't have gotten him. You don't always over the course of an off-season get to do things in the order of priority. You often have to do them as they come up. So that was the thinking on Coco.

OC: Now that Jack Cust is back, there isn't that fourth-outfielder-who-can-fill-the-DH role available. Given that, would you feel comfortable with a starting outfield that includes both Crisp and Rajai Davis, or do you feel like their skill-sets (centerfielders with good gloves and good speed) are somewhat redundant?

FZ: I appreciate that argument. I recognize that there is some concern that you are giving up some power, especially in one of the corner outfield spots, a position that is generally regarded as a spot where you want to have a guy who hits in the middle of your line-up. Ultimately, you win games with good players, whether their offensive contribution comes from hitting homeruns or stealing bases or hitting for average or playing good defense. There are good teams who don't hit homers and there are bad teams who do hit homers. There are many good players who don't hit homers and there are many average or below-average players who do have power.

I think that just saying that you can't play Player X in left field because he doesn't hit enough homers that argument as a standalone doesn't make a lot of sense if you have reasons for going with that player. If the player is also deficient in other ways, like he doesn't play well defensively or he doesn't hit for average, then I think that is one thing. But if you are just saying that the player doesn't hit enough homers, I think there is more subtlety to building a team than just saying "at these three positions, you need guys who hit a lot of homers."

That being said, the best three guys are going to play. I'm not necessarily saying that that is going to be the alignment. We have, like you said, four or five outfielders who potentially could be starters on Opening Day. I don't think there is a configuration that concerns us in terms of how much power it is going to generate. I think that it is a situation where we

are looking to play the best players.

OC: There are going to be a lot of people who make the connection between the acquisition of Jake Fox, the subsequent non-tender of Jack Cust and then the situation where he was brought back. Both players tend to be paired together. When you made the decision to trade for Jake Fox, was that to be a contingency in case you couldn't sign Jack Cust, or was there always the thought that both players would be on the same roster, if it could be worked out financially?

FZ: I certainly don't think we ever precluded having both players on the team and, in hindsight, it is obviously the case that we have both. We pursued Fox because he was a player who could fit in at a lot of different places on the team. If, ultimately, Jack went somewhere else, then Jake could be the DH. With Jack on the team, Jake is a guy who could get a lot of at-bats at third base, first base and in left field and a little bit at DH. That is the role that it looks like he will be playing. He is a guy that we like and that we had interest in last year. It certainly gave us some comfort that if Jack's price got out of our range, we were covered at DH, but I don't think that when we made the move for Fox that we were ruling out bringing Jack back. That is what we said and it was a genuine comment. It did give us a little bit of insurance at DH, however. Because Fox has some defensive versatility, he is one of those guys who can get 300 at-bats playing different positions with this team.

OC: So you feel comfortable with him playing games at third base and first base given the defensive struggles that he has had?

FZ: We've obviously seen him at those positions and in left field and I think he is a little bit underrated defensively. I'm not saying that he is a good defensive player, but I think that he can play for stretches at those spots and be fine. I think we are perfectly comfortable playing him at different spots around the field as needed as a way to get him at-bats.

OC: Now that Cust has been non-tendered and then re-signed as a free agent, is he a free agent again at the end of the year, or is he still under team control like he would have been if he had been offered arbitration and signed that way?

FZ: He'll still be arbitration-eligible at the end of the season. Any player who has fewer than six years of service, unless you explicitly state in his contract that he is a free agent at the end of the year, then he does default into being a part of the arbitration process.

Stay tuned throughout the week for the final segments of this interview in which we discuss the A's third base situation, the Michael Taylor-Brett Wallace trade, the future of Michael Ynoa, Fautino De Los Santos and Pedro Figueroa, and more...

A's ballpark opponents reorganizing for stadium battle

By Matthew Artz, Oakland Tribune 1/11/2010

In the words of baseball great Yogi Berra, it's *deja vu* all over again.

Nearly one year after A's co-owner Lew Wolff broke off talks with Fremont, the city once again is making a pitch for the team, and opponents are criticizing both the city's plan and the process, which has proceeded behind closed doors leading up to this evening's City Council meeting.

However, one thing has changed: The city now wants to take the stadium plan to voters in November.

Mayor Bob Wasserman, who opposed a stadium referendum two years ago, said a nonbinding vote this time around could show the A's that residents want them.

Hundreds of residents rallied against a previous stadium plan last year, with some saying they would welcome a vote and a chance to unseat council members who support the stadium.

"We're better armed this time," said Kathy McDonald, president of the Fremont Citizens Network, which worked to kill a previous stadium proposal.

"If this ridiculous thing actually goes to a vote in November, I guarantee that our campaign will not only be about defeating this proposal, but replacing a few heads."

On Friday, the city unveiled a plan for a ballpark on 120 acres owned by the NUMMI auto plant between Interstates 680 and 880, and a short walk from a new BART station.

If Major League Baseball thinks the plan is viable, it could ask A's owner Lew Wolff to negotiate with Fremont rather than pursuing a stadium in San Jose, which baseball considers to be San Francisco Giants territory.

The committee is expected to take its findings to Commissioner Bud Selig later this month, city officials said.

The new site, at the corner of Fremont and South Grimmer boulevards, has several advantages over the two previous proposed locations.

It is adjacent to the future Warm Springs BART station but a mile from a residential neighborhood, whose residents led the anti-stadium charge last year against plan to put a stadium closer to their homes.

However, the new plan also includes more public money than the previous plan — including \$62 million in infrastructure improvements and an undisclosed sum to purchase the land.

"I do not think a ballpark is a good economic generator," former council candidate Vinnie Bacon said. "It's an irresponsible use of money."

Former Mayor Gus Morrison, another stadium opponent, criticized the city for keeping the new approach under wraps.

"This effort should have been developed in public, after a council vote authorizing it, not sprung on the citizens 72 hours before a final decision with a report that has been festering for months," he wrote.

Fremont has spent nearly \$100,000 developing its new plan for the A's, City Manager Fred Diaz said. The city started working on the concept in August when NUMMI announced it was ceasing operations but only determined that it was feasible in December after the council had gone on recess.

Diaz said the \$62 million in infrastructure improvements likely would be necessary no matter what is developed on the site and that a ballpark could kick start development.

Councilmember Anu Natarajan said she was surprised that the plan was so detailed and had concerns about how much money the city would invest.

"If this is just a starting point for dialogue, I'm not upset," she said. "If this the final deal, yes, I'm absolutely upset."