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ECCENTRIC TANTRUMS The Alex Rodriguez Conundrum

What if Ted Williams Had Done Steroids?

Baseball has the distinction of being the sport with the most obsessive statistics fanatics. There are a dozen basic ways to measure batting skill and fans have come up with dozens more. The fact that *Moneyball* was as successful as it was is a testament to the lure of baseball statistics. But one of the points *Moneyball* was trying to make, and a phenomenon that has vexed baseball statisticians from the beginning, is how to measure someone who has a winning spirit, that is, a player who is determined to help his team win regardless of his personal statistics. As an example, all Yankee fans—and all honest baseball fans—will agree that Thurman Munson (pictured in last month's issue) was an indispensable part of the Yankee championship teams of the 1970s, in spite of his good but less-than-Hall-of-Fame level statistics. He lived for those times when his team needed him most and he rose to the occasion.

Then there are those players who are content with being merely great. They go to the ballpark, pad their numbers, but if their team wins or loses it makes little difference to them. The most famous example in baseball history is Ted Williams, considered by some to be the greatest hitter who ever lived and certainly in everyone's top four. But Ted was happy with just hitting his homers and getting on base. Williams had a career batting average of .344—eighth all-time—a .634 slugging average—second all time only to Babe Ruth, and a .482 on-base average that's the best in history. This means Ted Williams reached base in just under half of all his plate appearances—an almost unbelievable statistic. But what did all this do for his Red Sox team? In his 19 years with the Red Sox the team made it to the post season once. And in the 1946 World Series, Williams hit just .200 with no extra base hits and 1 RBI in 30 plate appearances.

Alex Rodriguez also fits into this category. Rodriguez has led the league in slugging average four times, runs scored five times, home runs five times, etc. But his teams don't go to the World Series. In the eight years prior to Rodriguez's arrival the Yankees made it to the World Series six times. But in the 10 years Rodriguez has been with the team the Yanks have made it to the

(continued in next column)



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Special Binghamton/Ithaca Series

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Series only once. And his other teams—Seattle and Texas—never made it to the Series at all when Rodriguez was a member.

Curiously, 2009—the year the Yanks made the Series—is the only year Rodriguez had the "look" of a winner. You could see it in his face. For most of his Yankee career his facial expression at the plate has been that combination of confusion and simmering anger common among steroid users. But during 2009, his countenance displayed more of the concentration and determination that are the hallmarks of winners. He helped his team get to the playoffs, then batted .455 and .429 in the league division series and league championship series, respectively, and had six RBIs in the six World Series games. What happened in 2009? That's for the investigators to find out.

The point is if you add steroids it may make it so you hit more home runs, but it still doesn't make you any more of a team player. In fact, those who take performance enhancing drugs tend to be more self centered anyway, less interested in helping the team than in helping their own fame. So what if Ted Williams had done steroids? Think Barry Bonds during the 2000 to 2004 period. When you take a player who already has Hall of Fame talent, as Bonds did, and add steroids it pushes a well-balanced game like baseball into the realm of the totally ridiculous. Ted Williams would have had 70 home runs every year, along with 200 intentional walks. But it's likely by the time he retired in 1960, Red Sox fans would still be saying "If only he'd hit better in 1946, we'd have a championship."

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CORRESPONDENCE Current Mail:

Reaction to Last Month's Zimmerman Articles FINDS HUMOR IN ZIMMERMAN CASE

Thank you for publishing that comedy piece about Zimmerman (August issue). I laughed out loud.

Imagine the nerve of that Zimmerman daring to defend himself when he felt he was in emanate danger of being killed. Obviously, he was a "weak-kneed panty waste" who had never played enforcer in ice hockey and was too stupid to know that Martin's sucker punching him and repeated bashing his skull into the concrete wasn't an attempt to kill him. ROTFLOL. So, clearly the jury should have found him guilty because it was a jury of all females who had obviously been in their share of street fights and ice hockey fights and would have known that Zimmerman was obviously not in danger of being killed by the taller and more athletic "child". Har-har-har.

Keep up the good work.

—Resop

The Police Gazette responds: We don't think the beating poor Mr. Zimmerman took at the hands of that Skittle-toting thug and the public persecution he's had to endure since are the laughing matter Resop thinks it is. He's going to have to go through the rest of his life hearing people say "There goes that weak-kneed, probably mentally retarded, panty waste who couldn't even handle what millions of parents and teachers handle on a daily basis without resorting to the coward's way out." Have a little sympathy.

TRAYVON THE NOTORIOUS

You know as well as I do that black people are notorious criminals. Why do you post pro nigger opinions on your web site? It's time to grow up sir and face the facts. You are obviously a liberal fool. Get with it, niggers are criminals and everyone knows it.

—DHK

The Police Gazette responds: Though we did not mention race as a factor in our Zimmerman articles last month, DHK tends to prove the point of those who say race did play a part. We just stuck with what could be proven according to the law.

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