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Andy Pettitte Fails to Take Responsibility

Posted February 18, 2008 | 03:48 PM (EST)

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Andy Pettitte is in the midst of a press conference discussing the abuse of steroids and HGH in baseball and his personal role in breaking the law. Sadly, he remains incapable of saying two simple words: "I cheated." Andy again tries to justify his actions as not that bad and not really cheating because he was only trying to recover from an injury. "Anyone that has followed my career knows that I have battled elbow problems the entire time. Again, like I said before, I never took this to get an edge on anyone. I did this to try to get off the DL and to do my job."

Remarkably, even in the context of religion and his faith, Andy continues to see his breaking of federal law and besmirching baseball as morally ok. "I felt like it was the right thing to do in my heart," insists Andy. "As far as my faith, I felt good about it."

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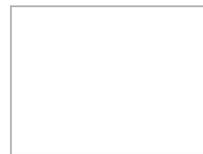
Huh? Andy says -- rightly -- that kids shouldn't do what he did. But if what he did was morally fine and he did it for the right reasons, is that only because under a technicality it's against federal law and against the morals clause of baseball? Andy cheated, pure and simple. But asked point blank, he says

again, "Do I think I'm a cheater? No, I don't. Was it stupid? Yeah." He also said, "If people think I'm lying, then they should call me a cheater."

Maybe the words to describe Andy are "in denial." Here's why.

- Using HGH to recover from an injury gives you an edge over other teams -- It gives your team an edge over other teams who have pitchers that are injured but refuse to cheat and break the law in order to recover more quickly.
- Using HGH to recover from an injury gives you an edge over your own teammates -- Pitchers are working together to win games but they're also in competition. If Andy is injured, that gives another pitcher a chance to start a major league game. It might even mean the chance for a minor leaguer to come up to the majors. And that means another minor leaguer might get a chance to

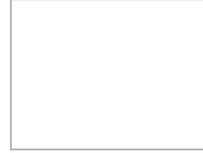
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jump from Double A ball to Triple A ball to fill their slot. The number of people that Andy cheated by potentially pitching when he should have been injured is hard to estimate but large. It also affects the people Andy faced on another team. Maybe an opposing pitcher who faced the guy he should have faced if Andy hadn't cheated would have won a game and changed their season. Or they would have lost it and that might have meant a minor leaguer came up and had a shot at the show. Again, it's impossible to know how many people that Andy cheated but it's many.

3. Using HGH for a short period of time guarantees the likelihood of getting caught via testing is nil -- unlike steroids, there's no test yet for HGH in baseball. Therefore, suggesting that his use of HGH instead of the far riskier steroids (as far as getting caught is concerned) is hardly more admirable.

4. Recovering from an injury fast brings personal glory, increases your market value and benefits you in every way -- every player wants to help their team win games. But cheating is no way to reach that goal. You're cheating if you're using steroids to build muscle mass. You're cheating if you trip up an opponent when no one is looking. And you're cheating if you illegally use drugs in order to recover more quickly.

5. Andy tries to pretend it wasn't technically illegal to use HGH -- "If it was illegal in baseball, I wouldn't have done it," he insists. Andy, it was AGAINST FEDERAL LAW. Baseball has a morals clause -- anything that brings disgrace to the game of baseball is against the rules. Cheating is cheating.

6. Andy says it hurt that people suspected he used steroids -- Why? Using steroids is cheating. Using HGH is cheating. Period. Cheating for years is worse? Sure. But Andy cheated twice over a several year period out of "desperation" as he put it. How he could be desperate, break the law and yet still believe he wasn't cheating is hard to swallow.

7. Andy says he should have had a prescription -- According to the *New York Times*, HGH is NEVER prescribed to professional athletes to recover from injuries. The rare instances in which it is legal to prescribe HGH (and it is the rare drug that specifically can NOT be used for anything other than what it is specifically approved for) include dwarfism, and wasting disease associated with AIDS. Andy is deeply confused about HGH if he thinks he could go to a doctor and get a prescription of it to fix a balky elbow.

I'd love for Andy to find some religious counselor, some ethicist, some moral leader who would tell us that breaking federal law, illegally obtaining a drug to recover from injuries faster than your teammates or your opponenets and getting a shot late at night from a shady fitness trainer ISN'T cheating and is in fact a-ok by them and in their opinion, by God. Maybe one reason he can stay in denial is because he's under no threat of being suspended for even a day. And that's one more black mark on the failed, disastrous legacy of Bud Selig and baseball.

Andy, you cheated. Pure and simple. Please, please wake up to that simple fact.

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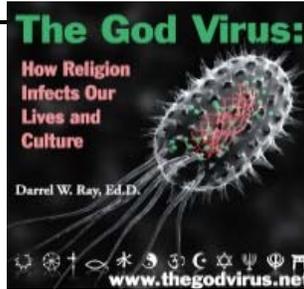
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The feeling okay in his heart thing sounded just like David Vitter to me.

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I'm not at all bothered what Pettitte did, but it sure seemed like he took full responsibility for it.

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You're not bothered that he broke federal law and risked his health in a stupid, ineffective way to gain an edge on his opponents? I hope you don't have kids who compete in sports.

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Is anyone dead behind his lies? Enough of this already. In a few years, no one will be discussing Pettitte, Clemens or any of the others and what war will we be engaged in while he sits back likely never having to work again in this life?

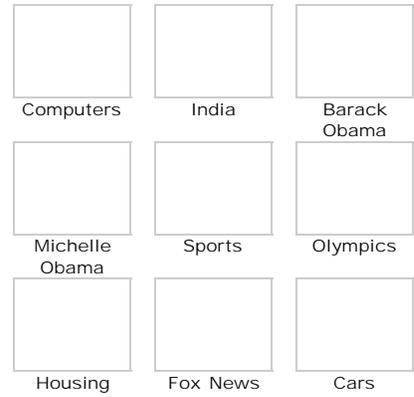
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You know, it is possible to discuss and debate and take a stand on global warming and the war in Iraq and the national debt and rampant cheating in baseball and universal health care and a host of other issues. In some ways, they're linked: a refusal to accept evidence (those who insist they're not convinced Clemens cheated), a refusal to accept science (those who insist we don't know if these drugs can help), a willingness to cut corners (cheating is rampant, everyone does it, so just accept it) and a refusal to accept responsibility (Clemens contradicting himself from moment to moment and Pettitte insisting God would be delighted with Pettitte's desire to break the law and risk his health to win a baseball game). Clemens thinks he can just keep repeating a lie over and over until people get bored and move on just

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like Bush did. Facts matter. Ethics matter. If you ignore cheating in baseball and sports, wy then you'll be more likely to accept it in politics and war. Presidents lie, of course, so what's the big deal? I think it's a big deal.

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It is old news, and baseball was allowed to let this happen because the owners were making tons of money, god was in his heaven and all was right with the world. Now if the Congress was as on top of Iran-Contra, the outing of a covert agent and those kinds of matters, then their pursuit of cheating ballplayers might have a greater legitimacy.

The use of steroids and HGH went on for years even though a casual observer had to know that something was going on when you see previously skinny men all of a sudden bursting uniform seams. Players performing at a level that was not justified by anything they had done earlier in their careers.

So who had their heads buried in the sand all this time? And if they find a way to punish all these players, do the owners, team physicians, and all those charged with maintaining the integrity of the game get off scott-free? Remember the bottle labeled "andro" in McGuire's locker?

Sport, particularly baseball has always celebrated its cheaters, from Ty Cobb's spikes to Gaylord Perry's spitballs and all the others, so it seems like days late and dollars short on this matter.

Quite frankly, I suggest that stolen elections are a slightly more important matter.

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Athletes cheat. It's the nature of being a great athlete, to find a competitive edge that others won't pursue. As a fan, I expect the players on teams I root for to do whatever is necessary to get that edge, including, if necessary, "cheat" to get off the disabled list. And since the usage of HGH (unlike roids) is a malum prohibitum violation of the rules, much like a college athlete taking money under the table, I'm not bothered by what Pettitte did, even though I'm not an Astros or Yankees fan.

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No Steve, you are completely wrong. Yes, some athletes are like Ty Cobb and despite massive talent they will still clobber and pummel and take advantage of every opportunity whether legal or not to gain an edge. But most are not. People don't breathlessly repeat stories of how they were at the Super Bowl and watched their favorite quarterback steal a signal or sneak over the line or somehow break the rules to win. They don't say, hey remember when we were at the Daytona 500 and our favorite racer smashed the machine of his opponent into pieces when the referees weren't looking? Gosh, that was great. it is in the nature of a great athlete to play a game beautifully and with extraordinary skill, whether you're Pele or Babe Ruth or Roger federer or Michael Jordan. What stories do you have of Michael Jordoan cheating? None. And if he did, he would be less admired. Your cynical "everyone cheats" attitude isn't borne out by any evidence, happily. Athletes who cheat are disgraced, not celebrated. Coaches who put winning first are controversial, not beloved.

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"I'd love for Andy to find some religious counselor, some ethicist, some moral leader who would tell us that breaking federal law, illegally obtaining a drug to recover from injuries faster than your teammates or your opponenets and getting a shot late at night from a shady fitness trainer ISN'T cheating and is in fact a-ok by them and in their opinion, by God."

If he doesn't realize what he's done is wrong already, he never will. No counselor or religious leader is likely to make him see reason.

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The day he sees reason, his career is done. Or vice versa. That is the whole point, reason has never really been a part of their lives. I remember when he left the Yanks because he thought that he had not been acknowledged by Steinbrenner after a great performance. Was George acting out of character? No. Was he paying Andy a handsome salary? Seems to me, at any rate.

They are athletes. If you ever have to deal with a brain surgeon, you'd like to have one at least as skilled as Andy has been. You could aim higher, but good is good. They just are not for where one goes looking for more than just a good game performance. When all is said and done, as you said, MG, I still got bills to pay.

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You're right, of course.

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on my drive to work (Beacon NY) I was listening to Boomer Esiason's show in WFAN. The one thing he predicted we'd hear from Pettitte was the words "God" or "my faith" etc. As if mouthing the words makes you a Christian and gets you a free pass from questioning. Unreal.

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Also very true. It was really remarkable to hear Andy insist he had good reasons to repeatedly lie for years and then finally insist that he actually did nothing wrong and God would approve of it. Good to know God approves of doping.

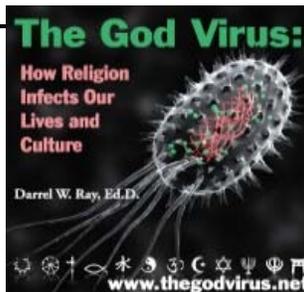
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