1

CONFRONTING BASEBALL'S FALLEN HEROES

On Thursday, March 17, 2005, Donald Hooton of Plano, Texas, was visiting Capitol Hill to attend the congressional hearings on steroid use in Major League Baseball (MLB). Hooton was a celebrity inside Room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building, where the rapid fire of camera shutters echoed down the hallway. It seemed everyone wanted to have a photo taken with the unassuming gentleman from Texas, although few people outside Washington, D.C., had ever heard of him—certainly not the baseball luminaries scheduled to appear before the House Government Reform Committee that day.

Mark McGwire, formerly of the St. Louis Cardinals, was expected to be a key witness. McGwire was also the biggest star at the hearings, having broken Roger Maris's single-season home-run record of 61 when he slugged 70 homers in 1998. Three other witnesses—Baltimore Orioles outfielder Sammy Sosa, McGwire's rival in the 1998 home-run chase; one-time Oakland Athletics slugger Jose Canseco, a former A's teammate of McGwire's; and Rafael Palmeiro, another top power hitter who played for the Orioles—also commanded attention. While Canseco had already admitted to using anabolic steroids to improve his offensive performance, McGwire, Sosa, and Palmeiro were suspected of juicing, and their hitting records were now being called into question. The presence of these all-stars attracted an overflow crowd to the packed House Oversight Committee hearing. Many news reporters and curiosity seekers were turned away, left to scramble for a seat in a nearby room to watch the televised hearings.[1]

Hooton was not an all-star baseball player, a journalist, or an autograph seeker. He'd been an executive in the telecommunications industry until he had resigned to establish and serve as the president of a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating students, parents, and coaches about the signs and dangers of appearance- and performance-enhancing drugs (APEDs) among adolescents. Like McGwire and company, Hooton had come to testify before the committee on the use of steroids in baseball. Unlike the major leaguers, he had appeared before congressional committees investigating the subject on two previous occasions. Impressed by his testimony, legislators insisted that he return so that he could deliver his sobering message directly to the ballplayers. On this early spring morning, Hooton planned to tell them what it was like to suffer the loss of a 17-year-old son who followed their lead and used anabolic steroids to improve his chances of making his high school's varsity baseball team.

Taylor Hooton, a 6'3", 175-pound pitcher at Plano West High School, appeared to have everything a teenager could desire: popularity, good looks, a 3.8 grade point average, excellent SAT scores, and a well-mannered disposition that endeared him to peers and adults alike. He also had the bloodlines to become a successful pitcher. His cousin, Burt Hooton, pitched for the Chicago Cubs, Los Angeles Dodgers, and Texas Rangers in the 1970s and 1980s. His older brother, Don Jr., hurled for Division I University of Texas at Arlington. But the thing Taylor wanted most of all was to measure up to other, more physically impressive athletes. He wanted to build body mass to become a starting pitcher for Plano West's varsity baseball team. A junior varsity (JV) coach reinforced this idea by suggesting that he get bigger.

In January 2003, Taylor began injecting himself with nandrolone decanoate, often referred to as "Deca 200," and taking Anadrol orally, steroids commonly used by weightlifters. That winter, Don and his wife, Gwen, began to notice changes in their son's physique and behavior. Taylor had been spending much more time in the weight room, lifting at a feverish pace. By early spring, his 6'3" frame was carrying 205 pounds, a dramatic increase of 30 pounds. He also began to develop acne on his back and to exhibit severe mood swings. Taylor would fly into a sudden rage and then express remorse for the outburst. He would pound the floor with his fists in anger and then become tearfully apologetic. Initially, Don and Gwen did not suspect steroid use, although Taylor was exhibiting many of the tell-tale signs. Desperate for answers, they had their son screened for recreational drugs. When the tests came back clean, Taylor snapped, "Told you so," and they were momentarily relieved. Blake Boydston, the varsity

baseball coach at Plano West, offered further assurance that nothing was wrong. Boydston told Don and Gwen that Taylor always came to the field "in good spirits," that he had noticed no troubling behavior, and that their son's added body mass appeared to be the natural result of weight training. Taylor had everyone fooled. Then his behavior grew more erratic.

Once, he hurled a phone through the wall, injuring a finger on his pitching hand. He pummeled his girlfriend's ex-boyfriend, sending him to the hospital with a wound that required nine stitches. He also took several hundred dollars from his parents' bank account without permission. Finally, in April 2003, Don and Gwen insisted that Taylor see a psychiatrist. Only then did the young pitcher admit that he had been doping. Although the psychiatrist convinced him to stop using steroids, the withdrawal resulted in a severe depression. On July 15, 2003, after the Hootons returned from vacation, Taylor fashioned a noose out of leather belts and hanged himself from his bedroom door. When the room was later inspected by police, vials of steroids, along with syringes and needles, were discovered. An autopsy by the Collin County medical examiner revealed the presence of metabolized steroids 19-Norandrosterone and 19-Noretiocholanolone in Taylor's system. Hooton attributed his son's death to the psychological effects of steroid use.[2]

Don Hooton was not the only parent who came to testify before Congress. Denise Garibaldi, a clinical psychologist from Petaluma, California, and her husband, Ray, were also scheduled to appear before the committee. They, too, had lost a son to steroid use. Rob Garibaldi, a polite, good-natured young man, had grown up with baseball. By age 13, the game was the most important thing in his life. At age 16, he was recruited to join a traveling all-star team sponsored by MLB's California Angels. The following year, he was named a high school All-American. Rob was a "four-tool" outfielder who could run, hit, throw, and field. But at just 5'11", 150 pounds, he lacked the muscle to achieve the vital "fifth tool"—hitting for power. To add muscle mass, the youngster began taking nutritional supplements, but to no avail. So, during the summer of 1997, he purchased steroids.

Rob would do anything to succeed in baseball, and he did not have to look far for role models. He idolized Barry Bonds, the muscle-bound San Francisco Giant outfielder who eclipsed McGwire's single-season home-run record by hitting 73 in 2001. Bonds's new record and his suspicious late-career renaissance suggested steroid use.[3] Rob also modeled himself after McGwire, who in 2010 would admit to taking steroids during his playing career as well as androstenedione, or "andro," a pill that produced testosterone for the intended purpose of building muscle mass.[4] Bonds and

McGwire, as well as a growing number of major leaguers, had benefited from the use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs). PEDs augmented the quickness essential to a hitter's swing or a base stealer's speed. They built muscle mass, giving players unprecedented power and increased aggression. They improved recovery speed, enabling players to heal faster from injury or muscle fatigue. Essentially, anabolic steroids allowed big league players not only to survive the grind of a 162-game season but also to pad their personal statistics and bank accounts substantially while increasing their national media exposure. At the same time, medical researchers linked megadoses of PEDs to tendon and ligament tears, kidney and liver damage, impotence, heart disease, and cancer.[5] But players like Bonds and McGwire were willing to take these risks because of the immediate gratification associated with the benefits. If major leaguers were willing to jeopardize their long-term health to achieve more immediate goals, why wouldn't an amateur player like Rob Garibaldi take that same risk to make it to the majors?

Rob matriculated to Santa Rosa Junior College and began injecting himself with Durabolin and Sustanon. By the fall of 1998, he had increased his weight to 165 pounds and hit .450 with 14 home runs and 77 runs batted in (RBI). Those numbers earned him the title of Northern California's "Junior College Player of the Year" as well as a scholarship to the University of Southern California (USC), a top Division I program and McGwire's alma mater. He had also been selected by the New York Yankees in the forty-first round of the 1999 amateur draft. But Rob chose to attend USC, where he continued his steroid use. His prodigious hitting helped the Trojans earn an appearance in the 2000 College World Series. The future looked bright. Rob had become the "five-tool" player scouts had predicted. *Baseball America* identified him as one of the country's top 100 college prospects.[6] But steroids also altered his personality and behavior. Over time, he became violent, delusional, and depressed. Cut from the team for being a "behavior problem" by the coaches at USC in 2001, within a year, Rob was placed on an involuntary hold at Psychiatric Emergency Services in Santa Rosa, California. He had assaulted his father and threatened suicide. When he finally confessed his steroid use, Rob explained to his parents that he had simply been following the actions of his role models, Bonds and McGwire. When seized by 'roid rage, he would scream, "I'm a ballplayer, and this is what ballplayers do!" Undrafted at age 24, Rob became despondent. Unable to see the connection between his steroid use, delusional behavior, and depression, he suffered from withdrawal and addiction for two years. Finally, on October 1, 2002, Rob fatally shot himself, putting a tragic end to a once-promising life cut short by APEDs.[7]

Mark McGwire and Jose Canseco, who formed Oakland's "Bash Brothers," led the A's to a world championship in 1989. Their prodigious offensive production was fueled by steroids. *(By Tom Dipace / Polaris Images.)*

The suicides of Taylor Hooton and Rob Garibaldi captured the attention of Congress, which launched an investigation on steroid use in MLB. The timing could not have been better, since the hearings coincided with the publication of Canseco's scandalous book, *Juiced*, which revealed the rampant use of steroids in the big leagues.

Canseco flattered himself as a pioneer, boasting that he had "singlehandedly changed baseball by introducing anabolic steroids into the game."[8] During his playing days, the Cuban American slugger attributed his prodigious power hitting to excessive weight training. But that was only part of his story. In fact, he began using anabolic steroids in 1985 when he was in the minor leagues. Juicing was rare among ballplayers at the time, so Canseco was a guinea pig for the PEDs that were just beginning to infiltrate the black market. In the process, he developed a chiseled physique and the phenomenal strength and speed required to set power-hitting and base-stealing records.[9]

In 1986, Canseco, who began his career with the Oakland A's, was voted the American League's Rookie of the Year for his 33 homers and 117 RBI. Two years later, he was the league's Most Valuable Player (MVP),

hitting 42 homers and stealing 40 bases, a very rare combination of speed and power among major league players at the time. Together with McGwire, Canseco formed Oakland's "Bash Brothers" and led the A's to a World Series title in 1989. By that time, he had experimented with anabolic steroids and human growth hormone (HGH) so extensively that he was known as "the Chemist" among ballplayers and trainers throughout the league. Canseco also shared his knowledge with fellow players, including McGwire and, after being traded to the Texas Rangers in 1992, Palmeiro, Juan Gonzalez, and Ivan Rodriguez.[10]

By the mid-1990s, the "steroid era" was in full swing, and doping spread throughout the major leagues. Motivated by the lure of big money, a place in the record books, or the simple desire to remain in the game, players began using anabolic steroids in increasing numbers, despite the fact that Commissioner Fay Vincent had issued a 1991 memo specifically prohibiting the drug's use.[11] Doping was an "open secret" in the major leagues, which still operates on the unspoken rule that "what's said and done in the clubhouse, stays in the clubhouse."[12] The evidence could be found in the unprecedented numbers of home runs being hit each season. Between 1995 and 2003, there was a total of eighteen 50-homer seasons.[13] To put things in perspective, there were only three 50-home-run seasons between 1961 (the year after Maris and Mickey Mantle both topped the mark) and 1994.[14] That's just three 50-homer seasons in thirty-two years, compared to the eighteen 50-homer seasons recorded in nine years during the steroid era.

At the height of the steroid era was the 1998 home-run race to break Maris's single season record of 61, which generated exceptionally positive publicity. McGwire and Sosa became national heroes that summer, revitalizing baseball after the 1994–1995 work stoppage. Fans flocked to the ballpark whenever the St. Louis Cardinals came to town just to watch McGwire take batting practice. The Associated Press and most television outlets paid close attention to the rivalry throughout the summer. It was a close race until August, when McGwire broke away. Finally, on September 8, the Cardinal first baseman hit his record-breaking 62nd home run of the season before a sellout crowd at Busch Stadium in St. Louis. Interestingly, the historic event came against Sosa's Chicago Cubs. The two rivals hugged each other before McGwire went into the stands to embrace Maris's children.[15] It was a made-for-national-TV moment.

McGwire would finish the season with 70 homers. Later, he would be hailed as one of the top 100 players of the twentieth century by *Sporting News* and one of the top 30 by MLB.[16] Ironically, the steroid scan-

dal began to unravel that same season when AP writer Steve Wilstein reported seeing a bottle of androstenedione, an over-the-counter muscle-enhancement product that boosts testosterone levels, in McGwire's locker.[17] Although "andro" was legal in the United States at the time and not banned by MLB, McGwire, embarrassed by the discovery, initially denied using the substance.[18] Nevertheless, the incident piqued the curiosity of sportswriters, who began to make the connection between PEDs and tape-measure home runs.

Public suspicion of steroid use in the majors was heightened in 2001, when Bonds eclipsed McGwire's single-season home-run record with 73. Suspected of doping since the late 1990s, Bonds had been long and lean and no more than 190 pounds when he played for the Pittsburgh Pirates earlier in his career. But by 2001, he weighed 225 pounds, most of it rock-hard muscle. His broad shoulders and huge biceps gave him the appearance of an NFL linebacker rather than a baseball player. In addition, Bonds's late-career explosion in offensive production was unparalleled in baseball history. Even as the San Francisco outfielder took aim at Hank Aaron's career home-run record of 755 in 2007, a grand jury was investigating him for possible perjury and tax-evasion charges stemming from his involvement with an alleged steroids ring.[19] Other events also suggested that MLB had a serious steroid problem.

In a *Sports Illustrated* (*SI*) cover story that ran in June 2002, Ken Caminiti, a former San Diego Padre, admitted that he had used steroids during his National League (NL) MVP-winning 1996 season, when he hit a career-high .326 with 40 home runs and 130 RBI, and for several seasons afterward. He expressed no regret about his use. "It's no secret what's going on in baseball," said the retired Caminiti. "At least half the guys are using steroids. They talk about it. They joke about it with each other." He also revealed that steroid use was a widely accepted—even necessary—choice for ballplayers looking for a competitive edge and financial security. "If a young player were to ask me what to do," Caminiti added, "I'm not going to tell him it's bad. Look at all the money in the game: You have a chance to set your family up, to get your daughter into a better school. . . . So I can't say, 'Don't do it,' not when the guy next to you is as big as a house and he's going to take your job and make the money."[20]

Caminiti's confession marked a major turning point in the steroid era. A week later, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) called for a Senate subcommittee hearing. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) opened the June 18, 2002, hearing by citing the *SI* cover story as a "call to action" to determine whether "legislative action was necessary." Before the hearing ended,

McCain and Dorgan told Commissioner Bud Selig and Players Association Executive Director Don Fehr that a strict drug-testing program at the Major League level must be negotiated during collective bargaining. Two weeks later, the players' union reversed its position and agreed to random drug testing for the first time in its history.[21]

Now, three years later, in March 2005, Congress was threatening to play hardball with baseball's antitrust exemption again.[22] This time, however, the issue hit closer to home. According to Representative Henry A. Waxman (D-CA), the ranking Democrat on the House Government Reform Committee, the growing use of steroids among adolescent youth was the primary reason for the hearings: "Kids are dying from the use of steroids. They're looking up to these major league leaders in terms of the enhancements that they're using. And we have to stop it."[23] Waxman's concern was echoed in the testimonies of Don Hooton and Denise Garibaldi.

Hooton, usually a soft-spoken, bespectacled individual, took a hardline approach. After telling his son's story, he informed the legislators that experts identified the "usage of steroids among our high school kids at about 5 to 6 percent of the overall population." Some of the experts said that "more like a million kids are doing steroids." "In some parts of the country," he continued, "studies show that the usage among high school junior and senior males is as high as 11 to 12 percent." Of course, Hooton was speaking of the entire adolescent athletic landscape—not just baseball—as well as a growing number of female teenagers who used steroids to enhance their appearance. In the most damning portion of his testimony, Hooton rebuked "the poor example being set by professional athletes as a major catalyst fueling the high usage of steroids amongst our kids." "Our kids look up to these guys," he said. "They want to do the things the pros do to be successful." He went on to deliver three sobering messages aimed directly at the players who were called to testify that day:

> First, I am sick and tired of having you tell us that you don't want to be considered role models. If you haven't figured it out yet, let me break the news to you that whether you like it or not—you are role models. And parents across America should hold you accountable for behavior that inspires our kids to do things that put their health at risk and teaches them that the ethics we try to teach them around our kitchen table somehow don't apply to them.
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> Second, our kids know that the use of anabolic steroids is high among professional athletes. They don't need to read Mr. Canseco's new book to know that something other than natural physi-

cal ability is providing many of you with the ability to break so many performance records, that provide you with the opportunity to make those millions of dollars. Our youngsters hear the message loud and clear—and it's wrong. [That message is] "If you want to achieve your goal, it's okay to use steroids to get you there because the pros are doing it." It's a real challenge for parents to overpower the strong message that's being sent to our children by your behavior.

Third, players who are guilty of taking steroids are not only cheaters—you are cowards! You're afraid to step on the field to compete for your positions and play the game without substances that are a felony to possess without a legitimate prescription, substances that have been banned from competition at all levels of athletics. Not only that: you are cowards when it comes to facing your fans and our children. Why don't you show our kids that you're man enough to face authority, tell the truth, and face the consequences. Instead, you hide behind the skirts of your union. And with the help of management and your lawyers, you've made every effort to resist facing the public today.

What message are you sending to our sons and daughters? That you're above the law? That you can continue to deny your behavior and get away with it? That somehow you're not a cheater unless you get caught?

It was a powerful indictment of the egotistical stars assembled that day and the fast-paced, synthetically altered, narcissistic culture they had created in the major leagues. Hooton challenged not only their manhood but also their failure to uphold the integrity of the national pastime and the heroes who shaped it. And he did not forget to address the players' union, which permitted the boorish behavior through its collective-bargaining agreement, or management, for its extremely lenient drug policy. Essentially, Hooton took on the entire baseball establishment, calling for all parties to get their proverbial house in order.[24]

Denise Garibaldi followed with an impassioned plea to parents, coaches, and athletes at all levels of sport. She asked that they view her son's death as a "wake-up call" on steroid usage. "Let's not fool ourselves," she said:

Kids use steroids because they work—and work well. Physical results are fast. High school and college students have the desire to look good. Pressure is enormous to do whatever it takes to

achieve the goals of being bigger, stronger, and faster. Both males and females bulk up to get that euphoric feeling of having athletic superiority or that perfect body. Once teammates start using, others may feel the need to use so as to be competitive. Steroid usage gives a competitive edge, but it's cheating by all ethical standards.

Garibaldi also criticized the "win-at-all-costs" attitude that prevails at all levels of sport, which has resulted in a "growing demand for steroids" among youngsters, who "absorb the influence and example of their role models" in professional sports. It has also resulted in "coaches who look the other way" and "parents who push their kids to obtain scholarships" in the sports they are playing. Instead, parents, coaches, and pro athletes must "accept the responsibility of encouraging the health and well-being" of young athletes. Garibaldi closed her remarks with a five-point reality check:

- Performance-enhancing dietary supplements promote a mindset that prompts steroid use later.
- The psychiatric symptoms associated with steroid withdrawal persist for a year or more after the abuser stops.
- An undetermined percentage of steroid users become addicted, continuing to take steroids in spite of physical or psychological problems, irritability, rage, depression, and negative effects on social relations.
- Drinking alcohol or taking any other drug, including prescription medication, compounds the adverse effects of steroids.
- The most dangerous effect of steroids is suicide.[25]

The connection between steroids, the role modeling of major league stars, and adolescent doping was not new. In 2004, U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona declared that teen steroid abuse was "less a moral and ethical issue than a public health issue." "If youngsters are seeing their role models practicing this kind of behavior, and it seems to be acceptable," he explained, "then we need to do something about it, because it is a serious health risk."[26] But Don Hooton and Denise Garibaldi gave an immediacy and powerful force to the problem by giving it a human face in the eyes of the public. They hoped their sobering testimonies would have a strong impact on the star performers who had come to testify, one that would give meaning to the tragic deaths of their sons. It was not much to ask of a sport and its players who had captured the imagi-

At the congressional hearings on steroids in baseball in March 2005, Don Hooton delivered powerful testimony on the fatal impact of steroids on his son and the responsibility of major league ballplayers as role models for young people. He was joined by Denise Garibaldi, a clinical psychologist who lost her son Rob to steroid addiction. Denise offered an impassioned plea to parents and coaches to develop a greater awareness of the symptoms and dangers of teen steroid use. *(By Jay L. Clendenin / Polaris Images.)*

nations of youngsters for generations. Baseball was, after all, a child's game played not only for the entertainment of youngsters but also for the lessons it teaches, such as "respect for one's health," "development of personal character" and "fair play." They are lessons that parents hope their children will learn and embrace to prepare themselves for the inevitable challenges that life brings their way, lessons often modeled by the heroes a youngster adopts in childhood and remembers for the rest of his or her life. That hope may sound naïve for a game that has become a multi-billion-dollar industry, but people like the Hootons and Garibaldis still entertain a deep-seated belief in heroes and their ability to deliver when needed most. For them, the hearings were not about baseball and the rampant use of steroids in the majors; they were about the health and psychological welfare of our country's children and the pressing need to prevent other youngsters from using anabolic steroids. They understood what was at stake. Sadly, the ballplayers did not. If Don Hooton and Denise Garibaldi believed that McGwire and the others would come clean, they were sorely disappointed.


Mark McGwire (*above left*) sat throughout the hearings, deflecting most of the questions directed to him with the refrain "I'm not here to talk about the past." *(By Andy Mills,* Newark Star-Ledger */ Polaris Images.)* Former teammate Jose Canseco (*above right*) was viewed by other players as a traitor when he published *Juiced,* a tell-all book about steroid use in Major League Baseball. *(By Chris Maddaloni,* Roll Call */ Polaris Images.)*

The players entered the hearing room trailed by an army of lawyers—insurance that they would not incriminate themselves. Once seated at the witness table, McGwire read an emotional opening statement that suggested he would make amends. "My heart goes out to every parent whose son or daughter was a victim of steroid use," said the former Cardinal slugger, expressing his sympathy for the Hooton and Garibaldi families. But any hope that McGwire would admit wrongdoing was quickly dashed when he declared, "My lawyers have advised me that I cannot answer these questions without jeopardizing my friends, my family, or myself." Afterward, Big Mac sat calmly, deflecting most of questions with the pathetic refrain, "I'm not here to talk about the past." For a man who had conducted himself with class and dignity during his quest to break Maris's single-season home-run mark in 1998, McGwire's refusal to cooperate was disgraceful—and he knew it.

Canseco, considered a traitor by the other players after publishing his tell-all book, was not much more forthcoming. Stating that he could not answer some questions unless he was "given immunity from prosecution," the former A's slugger insisted that an "overzealous prosecutor" in Florida might try to revoke his probation on an unrelated offense. The remark

diminished whatever admiration he may have enjoyed by coming forward in the first place. It aroused suspicions that Canseco's book was simply a scheme to generate the money to pay off the substantial legal bills he had run up. Sosa proved to be just as cowardly. Although he flatly denied using steroids, his words held little weight for anyone who had followed his career. Within one year of being traded from the White Sox to the Cubs in 1992, Sosa transformed himself from a scrawny shortstop into a muscle-bound slugger. Not wanting to explain the remarkable change in physique or the offensive numbers it had enabled him to achieve, the Dominican outfielder pretended that his English was not good enough to allow him to understand the questions asked by the congressional panel. It was a shameful performance.

Palmeiro was the most arrogant witness. Looking up from a prepared statement, he pointed his finger at the committee chairman, Representative Tom Davis (R-VA), and declared, "Let me start by telling you this: I have never used steroids. Period."[27] It is likely that few of those attending the hearing believed him. Prior to the 1995 season, Palmeiro had hit more than 30 home runs only once in slightly more than eight major league seasons. Setting aside 1993, when he hit 37 home runs, the native Cuban averaged 15 homers per season. But starting in 1995, Palmeiro began a streak of 38-plus home-run seasons that continued through 2003. If the Oriole first baseman believed he could dupe Congress, he was mistaken. Later that summer, Palmeiro became the first major baseball star to be suspended from the game after testing positive for the potent anabolic steroid Stanozolol, more commonly known as Winstrol.[28]

The behavior and scripted testimonies of these baseball stars were shameful. Steroid use in MLB was an open secret. Everyone associated with the game knew about the doping—the trainers who were treating injuries they had never seen before, the players who were injecting themselves and the teammates who were watching them do it, the sportswriters who were joking among themselves about the juicers, the general managers who were knowingly acquiring players on steroids, and the owners who were openly encouraging the home-run boom for the increasing profits it generated. None of them had the moral courage to speak out against it. Instead, they simply turned and looked the other way.[29] Just as pathetic was players' ignorance of the influential example they set as role models to our nation's youth. They simply failed to understand the implications of their doping on the adolescents who idolized them.

Unlike professional athletes, teenagers are much more susceptible to the physiological and psychological effects of steroid use because of the natural hormonal imbalance associated with adolescence. While elite athletes know the side effects of steroids and can afford to pay for the genuine article, kids are clueless and purchase less expensive substances that may be contaminated and hence even more dangerous. Adolescents also tend to believe that they are invincible, able to take dangerous risks without suffering the potential consequences. As a result, many teenagers desperate to enhance their athletic performance, improve their self-confidence, and/or attract the opposite sex are quick to resort to muscle-building steroids. Taylor Hooton and Rob Garibaldi had proven that the consequences of taking APEDs can be fatal.

McGwire, Canseco, Sosa, and Palmeiro just did not get it. If they did, they certainly did not have the moral courage to admit to their failures as role models. They embodied Don Hooton's earlier charge that ballplayers who juice are "not only cheaters [but] cowards."

Still, the biggest of the cheaters and cowards was not even present. Bonds was the one player who should have been forced to testify, the player whom Rob Garibaldi most idolized. But Bonds, already embroiled in an investigation of the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative (BALCO), a San Francisco–area sport supplement company that supplied anabolic steroids to professional athletes, was not subpoenaed by Congress at the request of prosecutors in that case.[30] His public humiliation began a year later with the publication of *Game of Shadows: Barry Bonds, BALCO, and the Steroids Scandal that Rocked Professional Sports* by Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams, investigative reporters for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The book alleges that Bonds used Stanozolol and a host of other steroids to propel himself into the history books as the game's greatest home-run hitter, and it quickly turned public opinion against the embattled Giants' slugger.[31] In 2011, his problems worsened when he was indicted on an obstruction of justice charge in the government's investigation of BALCO.[32] Bonds continued to be punished by baseball writers in 2013, when they denied him entry into the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility.[33]

Together with the weak defense of baseball's shallow drug policy by Commissioner Selig and Fehr, the executive director of the players' union, the spectacle of the ballplayers' pathetic performances left the Hooton and Garibaldi families infuriated and largely discouraged about the possibility for change. Still, they had at least one reason for optimism.

Deeply moved by the testimonies of Don Hooton and Denise Garibaldi, Commissioner Bud Selig made Major League Baseball a founding partner of the Taylor Hooton Foundation. *(Courtesy of the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY.)*

According to Don Hooton, after the hearings ended, Sandy Alderson, the executive vice president of baseball operations for the commissioner's office, assured him that his testimony would change MLB for the better.[34] He made a similar remark to Ray and Denise Garibaldi.[35] And then MLB immediately made good on its promise.

The next year, Selig enlisted former U.S. Senator George J. Mitchell (D-ME) to lead an investigation into the use of PEDs in MLB. On December 13, 2007, Mitchell released the results of his investigation in a 409-page report that identified the names of eighty-nine major league players suspected of having used steroids or drugs, evaluated the effectiveness of the MLB Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program, and made recommendations on the handling of illegal drug use in the past as well as in the future.[36] In response to the Mitchell Report, MLB adopted the strongest drug policy in all of professional sports, one that strictly forbids the use of anabolic steroids without a prescription and includes stiff penalties as well as a testing policy conducted on a random basis throughout the year.[37]

But Selig, deeply moved by the deaths of the two young ballplayers, was determined not only to clean up the game but also to prevent other youngsters and their families from falling victim to steroid abuse. To that end, MLB became a founding partner in the Taylor Hooton Foundation by donating $1 million in 2005 and pledging additional funding as well as other forms of support in the future.[38] In doing so, Selig enabled the foundation to launch the most aggressive grassroots antisteroid educational program in the nation.

In the end, Taylor Hooton and Rob Garibaldi had forced MLB to restore competitive balance and a sense of integrity to the national pastime as well as to honor the game's past history of providing worthy role models for American youth. What follows are the tragic stories that led to this change.