



Clemens's Career Remains Steroid-Tarnished Even After Denials

By Danielle Sessa

Jan. 7 (Bloomberg) -- Roger Clemens's record-setting baseball career may be stained beyond repair, no matter how often he denies using performance-enhancing drugs.

Clemens, who won a record seven Cy Young awards as the best pitcher in his league, was among the more than 80 players accused of using performance-enhancing drugs in former Senator George Mitchell's report. He appeared on CBS's "60 Minutes" yesterday to deny that his former trainer gave him steroid shots.

Being mentioned in the report will keep sponsors away from him because the public has a perception that his accomplishments came through cheating, said Jack Trout of Trout & Partners Ltd., an Old Greenwich, Connecticut-based marketing firm that lists Apple Inc. and Citigroup Inc. among its clients.

"The marketing and sponsorship crowd says, 'We are out of here,'" Trout said in an interview. "There is no incentive for them to stick around."

Clemens has become like Barry Bonds, who set Major League Baseball's career home run record in August, in the realm of public opinion, Trout said. Bonds pleaded not guilty to federal charges he lied about taking steroids. Bonds lacks endorsements other than baseball equipment makers or memorabilia companies.

On "60 Minutes," Clemens said the former trainer cited in the Mitchell report only injected him with vitamins and painkillers. The trainer, Brian McNamee, told Mitchell's investigation into steroid use in baseball that he gave Clemens shots of steroids and human growth hormone.

Meeting With Reporters

Clemens first denied the charges in a statement through his lawyer when the Mitchell report was released on Dec. 13. He then issued a statement through his agent on Dec. 18, released a video on his Web site Dec. 23 and taped the "60 Minutes" interview on Dec. 28. Clemens will meet with reporters for the first time today in Houston.

Lawmakers have asked Clemens to testify Jan. 16 before a House committee on the use of performance-enhancing drugs in the sport. McNamee, New York Yankees pitcher Andy Pettitte, former player Chuck Knoblauch and former clubhouse assistant Kirk Radomski have also been asked to speak.

Steroids are synthetic substances related to male hormones. While doctors prescribe them to patients with abnormally low testosterone, some athletes take them to artificially build or repair muscle, allowing for better physical performance.

Synthetic HGH, related to the pituitary glands' production of growth hormone that decreases with age, is designed to promote recovery from injuries and muscle breakdown.

Drug Policy

More than a dozen players have been suspended for violating baseball's performance-enhancing drug policy since the sport began punishing first-time offenders in 2005. Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig said after the Mitchell report that he would push to eliminate an advance-notice window on drug tests and increase research on testing for HGH.

Clemens's denials aren't likely to move a public that saw a crying Marion Jones, the Olympic gold-medal winner, admitting she took steroids after years of denying the charges. Former National Football League quarterback Michael Vick confessed to running a dogfighting ring after first proclaiming his innocence.

"We have seen in this last year such prominent athletes being so aggressive in their denials only to admit their guilt," said David Carter, founder of the Sports Business Group, a sports-marketing consulting company in Los

Angeles. ``That adds an additional obstacle and hasn't done much to make people feel comfortable."

Texas Baseball Coaches

Even in Clemens's home state of Texas, the allegations stirred doubts about his truthfulness. The Texas High School Baseball Coaches Association needed more than two weeks to decide they still wanted him to speak at their Jan. 12 convention.

``Roger has come out and defended himself and down here in Texas, we think somebody's word means something," said Jim Long, the association's president.

AT&T Inc. stopped featuring Clemens in a television commercial for its mobile phone service. Spokesman Michael Coe said the ad was scheduled to end in early November after the baseball season ended. He declined to comment further on Clemens or AT&T's relationship with him.

Clemens's agent Randy Hendricks didn't immediately respond to an e-mail seeking comment.

Not Under Contract

Clemens, 45, is not under contract with any baseball team for next year and told CBS he probably won't pitch again. He made \$19 million last season, as well as \$3.5 million in endorsements, according to Sports Illustrated.

Even though Clemens only faces accusations, there's nothing wrong with a business decision not to hire him, said W. Michael Hoffman, executive director of Bentley College's Center for Business Ethics in Waltham, Massachusetts.

``I don't see anything unethical about sports marketing companies making a decision that it's too risky to market Clemens under the circumstances," he said.

Clemens is just making the situation worse by continuing his denials, said Matt Traub, a crisis management specialist for public relations firm Dan Klores Communications in New York.

``You want to be able to create a situation where people can move on," Traub said in an interview with Bloomberg Radio. ``Unless there's some concrete evidence clearing him, he'll be remembered for his transgressions first and his achievements second."

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