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Can Rose lift 'Black Sox' shame?

By Stacy St. Clair Daily Herald Staff Writer

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Pete Rose gave Pat Anderson an unexpected gift this week when he admitted to gambling on baseball.

He gave her hope.

The 77-year-old Missouri woman believes the confession eventually could lead to Rose's reinstatement to baseball. If that happens, she thinks her late uncle – banned White Sox third baseman Buck Weaver – could be welcomed back, too.

"Pete Rose was a gambler and did a lot of bad things," she said. "If he can get back into baseball, why the heck can't Buck?"

Weaver was one of eight White Sox banned from baseball for knowing about players fixing the 1919 World Series.

If Rose can gain reinstatement after admitting he bet on his own team, it's possible some of the so-called Black Sox – particularly Weaver and star outfielder "Shoeless" Joe Jackson – could be redeemed, as well.

"We have high hopes," said Anderson, who was raised by Weaver in Chicago. "If Pete Rose was allowed back and Buck and Joe Jackson weren't, that would really be a huge blow. It would be so unfair."

Weaver was banned from baseball in 1921 after then-commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis determined the third baseman knew about his teammates' plan to throw the World Series, but never told the team owner. Weaver personally took no money and batted a strong .324 during the series with no fielding errors.

Jackson had 12 hits in the championship games, including 6 RBIs and the series' only home run. He took \$5,000, but later testified he tried to return it and tell team owner Charles Comiskey about the fix.

The Chicago lawyer who helped try to get Jackson reinstated in 1998 doubts Pete Rose's situation will benefit Jackson or Weaver.

For one, both men are dead and unable to plead their case to baseball Commissioner Bud Selig. They also cannot play upon the public's sympathy, attorney Louis Hegeman said.

"Rose is alive," he said. "He is the equivalent of the squeaky wheel. He's constantly in Selig's face."

Hegeman argues Jackson and Weaver are more deserving of reinstatement than Rose because they technically completed their lifetime sentences upon their deaths. Besides, he said, Rose, who later served less than two years in a federal prison for tax evasion, agreed to his punishment after a long investigation and counsel from good lawyers.

Weaver and Jackson, a semi-literate man, never accepted a ban nor had the same vast legal and financial resources as Rose.

"There is quite a bit of difference," Hegeman said. "He (Jackson) served his full

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sentence without complaint. ... Rose never served the sentence he was given, the sentence to which he agreed."

Jackson and Weaver supporters also contend the players' actions were far less egregious than Rose's gambling – and repeated lies about it.

"If Pete Rose is going to get his slate wiped clean, Mr. Jackson and Mr. Weaver should be afforded the same courtesy," Hegeman said.

If the trio is reinstated, it's possible Jackson and Rose could be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in the same year. Rose has the most hits in league history, while Jackson still boasts the third-highest batting average.

Selig would be foolish to pass up the opportunity, said David Fletcher, the Glen Ellyn native who spearheads the effort to reinstate Weaver.

"Can you imagine that?" Fletcher asked. "It would be great for baseball. It would be great PR."

Weaver's niece, however, has no such hall of fame hopes for her family. Her uncle doesn't have the numbers to justify induction.

But reinstatement, Anderson said, would be the greatest honor bestowed upon him in the past 85 years.

"It means things would finally be fair," she said. "It's an admission that Buck had a right to be in baseball."

Baseball: Jackson still has third-best batting average ever

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