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SPORTS

Baseball

Supporters still trying to clear Buck Weaver's name

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By Mark J. Konkol
Staff writer

Talk about the possible reinstatement of Pete Rose is giving hope to folks trying to clear the name of former White Sox star George "Buck" Weaver, who got his own lifetime ban from baseball after the 1919 team threw the World Series.

"If they can reinstate someone who gambled and admits what he did, they can clear a guy like Buck, who didn't do anything wrong," said Dr. David Fletcher, who organized an All-Star Game demonstration outside U.S. Cellular Field and sent Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig more than 10,000 signatures calling for Weaver's reinstatement.

"This isn't a little pond; we're creating a lake or ocean of supporters for Buck," Patricia Anderson said. "It's more than doing something for Buck. There's a lot of people who feel this way. Maybe baseball will realize a lot of people want Buck reinstated."

Weaver allegedly knew the fix was in, but didn't take payoff money or tell anyone about the scheme. Instead, he just played sparkling third base in the Series, committing no errors while hitting .324.

After word got out the Sox threw the Series, Weaver and seven teammates were banished from baseball forever.

For years after Weaver died, his niece, Marge Follett, repeatedly sent letters asking baseball commissioners to clear his name.

Follett died Oct. 10, leaving her cousin, Anderson, and Fletcher, a downstate physician, to take up the "Clear Buck" crusade.

Good news came in a Nov. 14 letter from Selig. The commissioner said the case to reinstate Weaver is still being considered.

"Any little branch that's held out is hope. Anything we can, we'll latch onto," said Anderson, who lived with Weaver when she was a girl.

Eliot Asinof, author of "Eight Men Out," the story of the 1919 White Sox, said he'd like to see Rose, Weaver and 1919 White Sox star "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, who admitted to taking money to fix the Series, all be reinstated.

"Pete Rose was the greatest baseball player of his time. What he did during his (playing) career was impeccable. Then he made some stupid mistakes ... but I won't judge him on it. I won't condemn a man who played like that," Asinof said.

"As for Buck, Buck should be accused of absolutely nothing. He was not part of the fix. He played great and should be reinstated. You could reinstate Jackson, the greatest player of the time, too. Not because he was innocent, but because he was a victim. Gamblers were all over the place. Games were fixed all over the place, even after the (1919) Series."

Jackson's niece, Frances Suddeth, 83, said she doesn't expect her uncle to ever be in the Hall of Fame.

"He should be, but it's not going to happen. I've given up," she said from her home in Greenville, S.C.

"There's nothing I can do. I was just his niece. Everyone else is gone."

Fletcher and Anderson, though, are keeping their quest to clear Weaver's name decades after his death.

Their next stop to round up support for their cause is White Sox Fan Fest, which takes place Jan. 30-Feb. 1.

"We were at the baseball winter meetings, we're going to Fan Fest, and we'll go to (the Hall of Fame in) Cooperstown. We're talking to everybody and we're very visible," Fletcher said. "The only person we didn't see at the winter meetings was Selig. We're not giving up."

Mark J. Konkol can be reached at mkonkol@dailysouthtown.com or (708) 633-5977.

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