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THE ROSE REINSTATEMENT CASE

Joe no shoo-in Rose accord might aid Jackson

By Michael Hirsley
Tribune staff reporter

The news that Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig may have opened the door to the reinstatement of Pete Rose offered new hope to those who believe that door should crack open just a little wider to admit "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, banned from baseball for his role in the 1919 Black Sox scandal.

"Once Rose gets a hearing, it establishes a precedent and a process for reinstatement hearings for those banned from baseball," said Ray Allen, co-founder of the Shoeless Joe Jackson Historical Society. "That is what we've been trying to get for 20 years."

Jackson has been a cause célèbre for years, picking up advocates such as the late Ted Williams. His .386 lifetime batting average is the third high-

est in major-league history and though he allegedly was involved in the conspiracy to fix the World Series, he led all hitters in the 1919 Fall Classic with a .375 average. Rose was banned for betting on baseball while managing the Cincinnati Reds. According to news reports, he would have to admit for the first time that he

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bet on games before Selig will consider reinstating him.

Although that might be a long shot, Jackson's supporters think Rose's case could be a springboard for their cause. So do supporters of Black Sox third baseman Buck Weaver, who proclaimed his innocence until his death in 1956.

"I'm not saying [Rose] shouldn't be reinstated to baseball, but why does he deserve to if Buck Weaver doesn't?" asked Marjorie Follert of Pontiac, Ill., one of Weaver's nieces. "I just cut Rose's picture out of the paper and wrote my message on it to Bud Selig. 'If Rose is cleared, then Buck Weaver should be.'"

A spokesman for Selig's office was cryptic in response, saying the Jackson case has not been closed: "It is a case under continuing examination, still under review."

Jerome Holtzman, baseball's official historian, has submitted a report to Selig on Jackson's role in the scandal and said Thursday it included facts both favorable and unfavorable to Jackson. But Holtzman, the longtime baseball writer for the Tribune, declined to speculate whether Rose would be reinstated or how it would affect Jackson's case.

"I'm just a monk in the abbey," he said.

Author Eliot Asinof, whose book "Eight Men Out" chronicled how Jackson and seven other White Sox players allegedly conspired with gamblers to fix the Series, does not see the connection between the two cases, except that Jackson and Rose "would both likely be quickly inducted into the Hall of Fame if they were reinstated."

He contends that since Jackson took bribe money, even though he tried to return it, he is more culpable than Weaver, who only attended a meeting discussing the scheme but did not report it.

As for Rose, Asinof said, "He

is the most innocent of the three because he didn't do anything crooked while he was playing."

But Chicago attorney Louis Hegeman, who drafted a petition to Selig on behalf of Jackson's advocates, is equally adamant in supporting Shoeless Joe. Jackson, he said, "never did anything wrong on the field," while investigators for Major League Baseball say Rose bet on games as a manager "and may have done so from the dug-out."

In addition, Hegeman said, Rose had "top legal counsel" while Jackson "never had the benefit of a good lawyer."

The White Sox slugger died in 1951 and "has served his lifetime sentence," Hegeman said. "Pete Rose hasn't served his sentence. I would think the equities lie with Joe Jackson."

Follert said she was not so interested in Weaver's chances of admission to the Hall of Fame, "but I do care about him getting his name cleared. All he did was not squeal on his teammates," she said. "And as a child, I saw him suffer for being banned from the game he loved."

Jackson society co-founder Lester Erwin, a former high school and American Legion baseball coach in Jackson's hometown of Greenville, S.C., feels just as strongly about reinstatement of Jackson.

If Rose is reinstated, Erwin said his question for Selig would be, "If you've done this for Pete Rose, and he agreed to a lifetime ban, will you do the same for a great ballplayer who died in 1951 and served his lifetime ban?"

Allen said Jackson's greatest flaw might have been accepting his punishment without complaint, unlike Rose.

"We can make a strong case for Joe Jackson on three points," Allen said. "He was not at the meetings with gamblers where the bribe was negotiated. He tried to tell White Sox owner Charles Comiskey about the bribe and tried to give the money back. And he played well in the Series."

For Rose, having to admit to the charges that got him banned from baseball may be a Catch-22 of sorts. But it would give him a chance at reinstatement and Hall of Fame induction.

But Jackson faces a far more permanent catch. He can't live to see the day he gets into the Hall of Fame.