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Sports

Mt Zion man still crusading

By TODD ENGLE - H&R Staff Writer

Reversing 85 years of history is an arduous process. It takes perseverance and passion.

Mount Zion resident Dr. David Fletcher has plenty of both.

He's been championing Buck Weaver's reinstatement into baseball. Weaver was one of the eight so-called "Black Sox" who were banished from baseball for life in 1921 after a plot to throw the 1919 World Series was revealed. He knew about the fix, but took no money and hit .324 with no fielding errors at third base in the eight-game series.

Fletcher has pursued Weaver's reinstatement for 11 years now, and 2003 was paramount to his campaign. He launched a Web site, www.clearbuck.com. He organized a pro-Weaver rally outside the 2003 All-Star game at U.S. Cellular Field.

Twelve months later, the campaign continues to forge ahead - to the point where Fletcher can see a resolution in the distance.

Of course, Weaver's reinstatement lies in the hands of baseball commissioner Bud Selig. A face-to-face meeting with Selig is a necessity.

"I would hope in the next six months," Fletcher said. "(Selig) keeps saying 'It's under review.' But we don't know who's reviewing it. It's getting him to understand the positive PR angle of it."

Weaver's reinstatement also got a positive boost in January when Pete Rose admitted to betting on baseball. Like Weaver, Rose is banned because of his involvement with gambling. Unlike Rose, most historians believe Weaver is innocent.

"We got a lot of national attention- The New York Times, AP wire, Sports Illustrated. We had quite a good dovetail on that," Fletcher said of Rose's admission.

In the meantime, Fletcher has managed to keep a regular presence in Chicago. His group had what he called an "informational meeting" at the base of the newly-unveiled Charles Comiskey statue at U.S. Cellular Field on April 22.

This story published online:
Tuesday, July 6, 2004 8:20 AM CDT



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There will also be a Black Sox symposium on Oct. 5, sponsored by the Chicago Historical Society. Eliot Asinof, author of "Eight Men Out," will be in attendance, as will representatives of Comiskey and "Shoeless" Joe Jackson.

Fletcher also hopes to build a Chicago baseball museum near U.S. Cellular Field in the future. In the meantime, clearing Weaver's name remains an all-consuming passion, especially since Marge Follett, Weaver's niece from Pontiac, died last October.

"Marge passed away in October, and the torch is passed," Fletcher said. "I really feel it's really close."

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