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## Mitchell Report should spark justice for Buck Weaver

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**By Paul Ladewski Staff writer**

Buck Weaver died in 1956, the headstone at Mount Hope Cemetery tells us. Was on his way to see his tax man when his heart gave out, the story goes. Staggered to a picket fence in front of a house on 71st Street then keeled over, dead at 65 years of age.

The official cause was a massive heart attack, but anyone with a fair bone in his body knows what killed Weaver on that cold, winter day on the South Side. The one-time White Sox third baseman died of a broken heart, the result of his rather innocent role in the 1919 World Series scandal.

If you think the Black Sox are ancient news, that nobody cares about some has-been who pushes up daisies at the moment, then you should meet his niece Patricia Anderson and her three daughters, one son, six grandchildren and two great grandchildren, every one of whom holds out hope that justice will be served eventually.

"I couldn't get a present or anything that would mean as much as to me as to have Buck reinstated," Anderson said in a emotional telephone interview from Missouri, where the 81-year-old resides. "That's what hurts me more than anything — to realize how much he loved the game and they took it away from him. We've done everything except stand on our heads to get Buck another chance, but few people want to listen."

If there's a sliver of good news to come out of the recent Mitchell Report, which revealed the names of 86 alleged users of illegal performance-enhancers, it's that it has made the case for Weaver that much stronger.

Weaver admitted that he knew of the fix beforehand, as did Manager Kid Gleason and team owner Charles Comiskey. But until the day he died, Weaver swore that he didn't take so much as a stinkin' penny from the gamblers.

Eighty-eight years later, there's still no hard evidence to suggest otherwise. He hit .324 and didn't commit an error in the eight games.

No matter. At age 31, in the prime of his career, Weaver was told by commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis that he had played his final major league game. Didn't get as much as a formal hearing from Major League Baseball, either.

"If anybody should be absolved, then it should be Buck Weaver moreso than Joe Jackson or any of the others," said Jerome Holtzman, the official historian for Major League Baseball. "Jackson was guilty as hell, but Weaver was an innocent bystander. He just got caught up in it, that's all. Weaver should have spoken up. Of course, it would have been pretty difficult for him to speak up and betray his teammates."

When Weaver decided not to rat on his buddies, he did nothing worse than the untold number of big leaguers who were aware of rampant steroids use for years but refused to break the code of silence.

What took place in the 1919 World Series remains one of the darkest chapters in sports history. But really, is it any worse than the the hundreds of steroid cheats who affected thousands of games, and sabotaged a record book we were led to believe was the most sacred of all?

So while Weaver continues to have what amounts to an asterisk attached permanently to his name, even the active players on the Mitchell list are likely to get off with a love tap and nothing more.

That's justice? Gimme a break.

"You're the first person who has brought this to light," said Dr. David Fletcher, who goes to bat for Weaver at his [www.ClearBuck.com](http://www.ClearBuck.com) Web site. "Buck Weaver was given a lifetime ban before there were any rules in place, while the current players have benefited from a similar situation in the steroids case. I mean, it's a perfect analogy."

Until comissioner Bud Selig can be convinced to take an active role, however, Weaver's story will remain one of

the saddest in all of sports.

“(Selig’s) response to me is that he has never overruled a prior commissioner,” said Fletcher, who has corresponded by mail with him but failed to get past first base. “My response back to him is, why was there segregation in baseball until 1944? Many people don’t realize that Charles Comiskey was to be the first owner to cross the color line after the Black Sox scandal, but Judge Landis prevented it. And Landis was overruled on Jackie Robinson years later, so it has been done before.”

As the founder and president of the Chicago Baseball Museum, Fletcher has a full plate at the moment, but a sitdown with Selig remains high on his to-do list. In the meantime, fans are urged to send a message to the commissioner at 245 Park Ave., 31st Floor, New York, NY 10167.

Weaver bid for reinstatement six times before his death and whiffed every time, hardly what one would expect of a guy who hit .331 and struck out all of 23 times in 629 at-bats in his final season. Remarkably, the Ginger Kid was never heard to complain about the rotten hand that he had been dealt. And he was the only Black Sox player not to quit on the South Side, where he spent his final years in semi-pro ball and the drugstore business.

“After Buck talked with another commissioner, he would come back and not say anything,” recalled Anderson, who lived with uncle Buck and aunt Helen (his wife) for several years after her father had passed away. “He’d say, ‘I’m going to lay down for awhile.’”

“He was just crushed, but he didn’t want us to realize it. Helen knew. She knew him that well. She realized that he carried a big burden even if he didn’t want us to know it.”

It’s a burden that Buck Weaver has taken to his grave. Isn’t it time to let him rest in peace?

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