

When the Game Left Charlie Hustle:
Why Pete Rose Should be Forgiven and be Eligible for the Hall of Fame

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When baseball fans hear the name of Pete Rose, many positive thoughts will go through their mind. Hit king. Hustle. Durability. The definition of how a baseball player wants to play and succeed in the game. His twenty-three year career is still considered one of the best ever. But while there are those good things, many people who did not know about or recognize his on field accomplishments would think of negative words too.

Gambler. Ineligible list. Conceited. He was not known for being a kind person. On August 23, 1989, Rose was banished, or put on the ineligible list, of Major League Baseball for his gambling on the Cincinnati Reds, the team he was managing at the time. The long-time player and manager of the Reds was banned from the game that he had shown that he loved and he wanted to be included in. Years later, the Hall of Fame made its decision to not include players on the ineligible list.

This has caused the debate of whether or not Rose should have been inducted into the Hall of Fame, although the real decision was up to the National Baseball Hall of Fame itself. Many people had their own opinions based on Rose's actions off the field, but also his accomplishments on the field. There were fans who grew up watching him, knowing they would not have the opportunity to celebrate Rose's career through the Hall of Fame, unless he was reinstated by Major League Baseball. Pete Rose should have been reinstated to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, regardless of his gambling on baseball that got him banned. The reasoning behind that is his impact of the game of baseball, record-setting accomplishments, and his excessive punishment from Major League Baseball.

Pete Rose's impact on the game of baseball was with more than just success in numbers. Fans appreciated more than the numbers, and Rose played the game hard and to

win. Jack Mader, a fan of Rose growing up, described this by saying that “he would foul off twenty-five balls before he walked, then run to first base,” and he told how Rose was the only player then to do that and still is one of the only players to this day to play the game that hard.¹ This is one of the reasons Rose should be included in the Hall of Fame, because many people say the Hall of Fame is for players that “change” the game, such as he has. Rose earned the name “Charlie Hustle” because of his well-known style of playing. People recognized Rose for these parts of his game when he was banned, saying he had become one of baseball’s “most dynamic and colorful personalities” to describe him.² He played the game to win, which is one of many traits that should allow him to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, regardless of his ban from baseball. Many people think that specific way he played the game made him an ignorant or rude person, which he could be at times. This should not keep him out of the Hall of Fame though, based on history of other players. Hall of Famer Ty Cobb was known to be a racist, as he had issues against African Americans off the field multiple times.³ Cobb is a Hall of Famer regardless, because people appreciated his on-field accomplishments more, as voters and fans should with Rose.⁴

With four thousand, two hundred fifty-six hits, Rose sits alone at the top of Major League Baseball’s all time hit leaderboard, above legends such as Hank Aaron and Derek Jeter.⁵ He also had the longest career ever, playing a record three thousand, five hundred

¹ Mader, Jack. Personal interview with the author. Lancaster, PA. October 10, 2016.

² Chass, Murray. "Rose, in Deal, Is Said to Accept Lifetime Ban for Betting on Reds." The New York Times. The New York Times, 24 Aug. 1989. Web. 26 Oct. 2016.

³ Pennington, Bill. "Baseball- Hall of Fame Has Always Made Room for Infamy." The New York Times. The New York Times, 8 Jan. 2013. Web. 27 Oct. 2016.

⁴ Cobb is one of the most successful players in baseball history, as he won twelve batting titles, and ranks second in all-time hits.

⁵ Those three place third and sixth on the all-time hit list, respectively.

sixty two games with the most ever at-bats also.⁶ It does not make sense that the all time leader in hits is not in the Hall of Fame. It could be compared to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar or Emmitt Smith not being in the National Football League or National Basketball Association Hall of Fames.⁷ Mader says that he considers Rose “a top-five player of all time, if not number one,” which is a representation of his career accomplishments. Major League Baseball should be embarrassed that in 2016, twenty-five of the thirty players with most hits are in the Hall of Fame, excluding Rose, the all-time hit king, Jeter, Alex Rodriguez, Ichiro Suzuki, and Rafael Palmeiro.⁸ The only people who should be kept out of the Hall of Fame are players who have been proven to have used Performance Enhancing Substances (PEDs), with names such as Mark McGwire, Barry Bonds, and Sammy Sosa still being eligible to be inducted, when they cheated their way through the game of baseball, unlike Rose. Mader thinks that a punishment would not impact much, but the media and fans would cause more destruction of the player’s career if they used steroids.

Well, I believe if they (Players who used steroids) go into the Hall of Fame then there should be an asterisk next to their name, but they’re not gonna be banned from managing or playing or anything, but for whatever brief period that they have to serve a ban for, or whatever the rules state. Their records are tainted and every hit that they got for that period of time is in question. That’s why I believe he (Rose) should be reinstated now. At this point (21st Century) he should be reinstated. Baseball has given itself a black eye by ignoring the issue because Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire had a home run spree one year that actually brought attention back to baseball after the ‘94 strike.⁹

⁶ "Pete Rose Statistics and History | Baseball-Reference.com." Baseball-Reference.com. Baseball Reference, n.d. Web. 27 Oct. 2016.

⁷ Abdul- Jabbar is the NBA all time leading scorer, and Emmitt Smith is the NFL’s all time leader is rushing yards.

⁸ Jeter, Suzuki, and Rodriguez are not yet eligible for the Hall of Fame because they either currently play or haven’t had enough time in retirement to be eligible. Palmeiro was proved to have used PEDs when he played, making voters not want to vote for him.

⁹ Mader, Jack. Personal interview with the author. Lancaster, PA. October 10, 2016.

Mader explained how he thinks Major League Baseball was aware of players like McGwire and Sosa using steroids and cheating on the game at the time, but neglected it for years because it brought more attention to their game during their home run record chase in 1998.¹⁰ He also told how steroids were so popular at the time, that even he could have used them playing high school football, but didn't. There are players with greater accomplishments than Rose, but used Performance Enhancing Drugs to complete those things, which puts every accomplishment of theirs second-guessed by many people. Rose was never proven or suspected to have use them when he played, so people know what he did on the field was a product of just himself. When he is compared to players that used Performance Enhancing Drugs, he is easily the better choice for the Hall of Fame over them with his record setting achievements.

Pete Rose agreed to a lifetime ban from Major League Baseball in 1989. He was the first person banned from baseball since 1943, and just the fifteenth to be banned.¹¹ He did not think that he would actually be kept out of it for a long period of time. He thought that although he was given a lifetime ban from baseball, he would be reinstated soon after. That was not the case. Rose's punishment was overly excessive for what he did. Punishment was undoubtedly necessary in the case, but a lifetime ban from baseball should not be the result in betting on baseball games. The only way a player should have received a lifetime ban is for PED use repeatedly.¹² If a player or any type of coach has been involved in multiple

¹⁰ This is when Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa both broke Roger Maris's record of sixty-one home runs in one season, with McGwire finishing with seventy, and Sosa finished with sixty-six.

¹¹ Walker, Ben, and Ronald Blum. "Banished: Pete Rose Banned from Baseball Indefinitely." Del Rio News Herald. Del Rio News Herald, n.d. Web. 5 Nov. 2016.

¹² The only other player to have been banned from baseball is former Mets reliever Jenrry Mejia, who was banished from Major League Baseball for life after his third PED suspension.

betting allegations, then it would have been more fitting for a lifetime ban. Major League Baseball's only "No Second Chances" punishment is in the area of betting, which is unfair to victims of it. Mader supports the fact that Rose's punishment from baseball was excessive. "He never actually threw a game. There are other people who have been caught gambling in other sports and they received suspensions and one game suspensions in football, and it just doesn't seem appropriate that he was completely banned from the game, that obviously he loves."¹³ A lifetime ban was clearly far too much of a punishment in the opinion of fans in 1989. So many people had an appreciation for him, and did not actually believe he would not be eligible for the Hall of Fame or that it would last at the time of his ban. Rose's punishment carried into the twenty-first century, and is still in effect in 2016.

In summary, Pete Rose should be in the National Baseball Hall of Fame for many different reasons, regardless of his lifetime ban from Major League Baseball on August 24, 1989. People who believed that Pete Rose should not have been inducted into the Hall of Fame should focus more on the positive words to describe him. His career changed baseball in many ways. His "play to win" mindset was something fans could remember most about him, and it helped him form himself a very successful resume in the game of baseball. He can be compared to legends in terms of his achievements. His punishment from the commissioner was taken too far for betting on Cincinnati Reds games. All in all, Rose could still be reinstated to the game, but it was a mistake by Major League Baseball to banish him from the game of baseball.

¹³ Mader, Jack. Personal interview with the author. Lancaster, PA. October 10, 2016.

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