

Fair or Foul?

Media neglects Sosa's achievement



BEVERLY MIRELES

A year of disappointment, they brought joy and achievement. Throughout a year of fame, they gave the public a ride. Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa may not be the hungry or the homeless, but they have already given American people some badly needed cheering heroes, and moreover, they are showing the world what racial equality in sports really is.

Why is there no one paying attention? During the race to reach Roger Maris' home-run record, McGwire and Sosa continually supported each other's efforts. However, the media continually portrayed McGwire as the true hero while Sosa was another hapless foreigner daring to test him.

This discrepancy was most evident when Sosa began to close in on McGwire's home-run status. While McGwire received the attentions of the commissioner of baseball, the major networks, *Even the Blue Angels*, Sosa was surrounded by the corps of reporters assigned to the media B-list. In an issue of *Illustrated*, Sosa was even referred to as "Sidebar Sammy" in comparison to the hero McGwire.

When Sosa reached 62 home runs, McGwire, the crowds roared, but the small big wigs were not around. They were too busy watching McGwire.

How could so many have dropped the ball when it came to Sosa's accomplishment? He had tied McGwire five times before the race was finished. In baseball, McGwire had reached an all-time high of 70 home runs, and Sosa was the first in line to congratulate him. Everyone came together to praise a conflict of baseball that brought back so much joy to a nation that really needed to be diverted from its woes. And that is great. But during all of this celebrating, did anyone think about the bias the media were creating by glorifying McGwire's visage all over American magazines and leaving the Hispanic papers?

Consider the situation had it been somewhat different.

Hypothesize back a few weeks, before the home-run record was set at 70. McGwire is the underdog in the race and Sosa is clearly ahead, both of them already national heroes. Then, a press release is issued stating Sosa regularly uses a performance-enhancing drug called androstenedione, while McGwire uses nothing but Flintstone vitamins. Now, is it not possible the media reaction to the drug would have been harsher? Would not McGwire have been praised as the role model, better than the one used pills to help him hit all those home runs?

The answer that no one wants to admit is, Yes, the reaction against Sosa would have been much worse because he is not "of us," and McGwire is a perfectly fitting American poster boy. That is why the commissioner of baseball was not surprised to see Sosa's 62nd home run, the one that tied McGwire. And that is why the McGwire family did not bother to show up at Sammy's game. It is because Sosa was not born an American ... nothing more, nothing less. Right?

Possibly. It is certainly acceptable for the public to cheer for their own. No one expects an American crowd at the Olympics to cheer for the Swiss, for ex-

ample. But had McGwire not been in the running, and Sosa was the only one in contention, so to speak, would the media have jumped all over him, making him the new cover for dozens of magazines, and claiming him to be a new American hero, regardless of the fact he came from the Dominican Republic?

For the most part, it is quite evident that the media was the one with the bias, and not the public. Which makes it all the more difficult to understand why the media would have such difficulty in recognizing Sosa's achievement alongside McGwire's new record.

In fact, it should have been easy, with the numbers so much in McGwire's favor. For him to tie at 62, Sosa had to churn out 53 home runs in the same number of games

McGwire's work deserves limelight



JEFF WEBB

On Sept. 25, 1998, Chicago Cubs outfielder Sammy Sosa hit home run No. 66 to pull ahead of St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Mark McGwire in what will go down in history as "The Great Home Run Chase of 1998."

For less than an hour, Sosa was perched on the peak of the derby, looking down at the red-headed, Paul-Bunyan-esque McGwire.

Until "Big Mac" hit No. 66 about 45 minutes later. For less than an hour, Sosa deserved all of the press. It was the second time all season Sosa actually held the lead in the race,

174. In 1995, McGwire hit 39 homers before getting injured, but he still hit one home run for every 8.1 at-bats, a rate higher than even Babe Ruth.

The stage was set for McGwire to take his shot at history, and the media waited, their pens at the ready and camera shutters cocked for action.

Who knew Sosa would make a game of it, a season to remember. Not only for his home runs, but for the wildcard play-off run that sent Chicago into the post-season for the first time since 1984.

McGwire began his campaign by hitting a grand slam on opening day and followed up by homering in each of the first four games of the season. Willie Mays was the only other major leaguer to do that, way back in 1971.

On May 19, McGwire hit three home runs against the Philadelphia Phillies. He reached the 20-home-run plateau faster than any baseball player in history. He also became the 12th player in history to hit a pair of three-homer games in one season.

On June 15, Sosa nailed only the second three-homer game of his career.

The baseball writers scrambled for more ink, and "Sportscenter" announcers had to invent new calls. McGwire was wearing them out too quickly.

On June 5, Mac hit his 28th. It set the club record for homers in Busch Stadium with 18, in only the third month of the season.

However, June was Sosa's month as he set fire to pitchers around the league and rode a home-run binge that set the major-league record for homers in a month with 20. The media took notice. Fans began to see more jumps out of the batters' box, more two-finger taps to the heart.

But McGwire still dominated the headlines.

Fast forward to September. McGwire and Sosa face off in the Cubs-Cardinals series. This was Sosa's chance to prove the media wrong and steal the spotlight from America's favorite slugger.

Big Mac left the yard again.

On Sept. 7, McGwire connected for No. 61 against the Cubs, and on Sept. 8, McGwire wrote himself into the history books by sending a Steve Trachsel pitch screaming over the left field wall. Race over.

The Maris family had no more obligation to see McGwire or Sosa. Their father was overshadowed on that day.

On Sept. 12, Sosa hit his 60th while McGwire was getting walked for a major-league record 152nd time. On Sept. 13, Sosa hit 61 and 62. Commissioner Bud Selig was not there. Neither were the Marises. And coincidentally, neither was history. For, now, the record already belonged to McGwire. Now it was just a question of who would come out on top.

On Sept. 25, Sosa pulled ahead of McGwire for a short time, but McGwire stormed right back. On Sept. 27, McGwire hit what is now the major league record 70 off of Carl Pavano, a Montreal Expos pitcher.

McGwire will go down in history as the greatest long-ball hitter to ever play the game. But do not be fooled — Sosa will be more than a mere footnote in the great chase of 1998. His flair and love of the game will garner him more than his share of attention next season. It just happened that Sosa, even with 66 home runs, fell just a few steps short of the spotlight.

U.S. ignores persecution



LISA FOOK

On the whole, Aggies do not like to think about martyrdom, religious persecution and murder.

After all, the average Texan has little need for these thoughts — or time to contemplate such notions with an array of dates, club meetings and classes to attend.

Aggies have more important things on their minds.

However, as the average Aggie goes to class pencil in hand, gripping about the professor, elsewhere in the world, people are being punished for who they are and what they believe.

It could even be someplace as nearby as Cuba, where Castro labeled Catholics as social scum and today promotes freedom of religion as long as it is the government's religion. Anyone who thinks differently gets placed into labor camps or has their church ruined in destruction reminiscent of Hitler's attacks on the Jews.

But destroying buildings is often only the beginning for religious devotees in these non-permissive societies.

In Sudan, Christians who try to practice their faith are sold as slaves or raped and mutilated. A common horrific practice is stuffing insects into the slaves' ears and sealing them with wax.

Most merely went insane.

But Christians are not the only sufferers. There are Muslims in Serbia who are being murdered by the hundreds. Their plight used to be described on the news and the world was outraged. Nothing was done, and now no one mentions them anymore.

There are the Jewish people who cannot practice their religion in Turkey. Divulging their religious convictions is like asking for a fight, exclusion from society or perhaps, in some extreme cases, death.

One Turkish student on campus could not go by his real name in Turkey as it identified him too accurately as being Jewish.

There are Jews in Israel, who cannot shop at the mall without running the risk of being attacked because various Arab nations would like to see the Jews thrown into the sea.

But perhaps most shocking is the fact so few people are aware of these atrocities.

Christians tend to refer to these sufferers as martyrs, but that is not entirely accurate. Martyrs know why they die. They are usually making a conscious decision to die for what they believe. Jewish history is filled with martyrs.

These people are not martyrs, but they are merely the victims of a cruel punishment for a crime not committed. They do not choose to die by the hundreds. They do not choose to be flickering flames whose lights were snuffed out. They make no choices when they ask simply to be left alone to practice their faith in peace.

Aggies do not need to worry about these stories as they make their trips to beauty salons and the Student Recreation Center.

They do not need to worry about the bishop who committed suicide because he saw his fellow Christians dying and felt too helpless to do anything. Few Aggies can even imagine that depth of hopelessness.

Often Americans feel they do not need to get involved. They worry that "our boys" will get killed, but it is time to put things into perspective.

These people are civilians and they are dying. Now is not the time to talk of the horror of bloodshed. That time has passed. The consequences of not being involved are more harmful to our souls than any loss of American blood could ever be.

The murder of innocent people for what they believe and who they are is abhorrent.

After the Holocaust, the world promised never to forget. Only 50 years later we see tragedies in Serbia, Sudan, Ireland and China. Surely there must be someone who remembers?



BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

and he led McGwire for less than two hours all season, so why would McGwire not deserve most of the attention?

In a race to a number, the magical 62nd homer that broke Roger Maris' 37-year-old record for home runs in a season, numbers tell the whole story between the two larger-than-life sluggers.

Entering the 1998 season, McGwire was the odds-on favorite to come out on top. In 1997, Mac hit 58 homers. Sosa led the league in 1997 — that is, in strikeouts with

and he led McGwire for less than two hours all season, so why would McGwire not deserve most of the attention?

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MAIL CALL

Column distorts religious actions

Response to Chris Huffines' Oct. column:

When Chris Huffines says "religions here have a fairly good understanding of religion," it seems clear he is not referring to himself.

Religion is not a bad thing — to have such a blanket statement is wrong. Though the actions of soldiers were brutal and un-Christian, the Crusades were inherently holy conquests. If you are going to mock Christianity, read the Bible. The God of the Old Testament and of Revelation is not a peaceful God, but he is still God. Southern Baptists (as well as the American Family Association, the Assembly of God, the Catholic League, Concerned Women for America and others) are justified in rejecting all Disraelis; you cannot support the good without indirectly supporting the bad. When Martin Luther King Jr. led a boycott of segregated Montgomery city buses, he did not refuse to ride

all buses except those that appeared "wholesome."

Huffines should not imply all Christians are Bible-beaters, all Muslims are bounty hunters and all Arabs are terrorists because of the actions of a few radical extremists.

Next time Huffines considers writing an article belittling the beliefs of the majority of the students on campus, he should ask himself the same question he so inappropriately devalues: What would Jesus do?

Terrence Hines
Class of '02

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

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