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Clemens' agents respond to professors

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By Tom Singer / MLB.com

Four college professors who had taken Roger Clemens' agents to task for their approach to a report defending his late-career pitching accomplishments -- under suspicion of having been abetted by performance-enhancing drugs -- have in turn been scolded by the agents.

Eric Bradlow, Shane Jensen, Justin Wolfers and Adi Wyner -- professors at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School -- turned into authors in Sunday's New York Times to take a critical look at the Roger Clemens Report.

Their conclusion: The 45-page, 18,000-word analysis "does not make a convincing case for his innocence."

Their rationale: By partly basing their arguments on comparisons of Clemens with other pitchers to enjoy late-career success -- including Nolan Ryan, Randy Johnson and Curt Schilling -- the agents' report is flawed by "selection bias."

Alan and Randy Hendricks quickly responded to the academicians' criticism on Sunday, saying the quartet misunderstood their report's aim and the basis of their comparative analyses.

An extensive statement issued by Hendricks Sports Management points out, "The purpose of the report is to provide the statistical background of Roger Clemens' career and to correct misconceptions about his career in the public forum," and not to "prove" anything.

The thrust of the Hendricks' report is to dispel the perception that Clemens' performance waned in the seasons prior to his 1996 departure from the Boston Red Sox, and subsequently picked up in the years he now is suspected of having taken steroids and human growth hormone.

The Wharton quartet contends that the report's methodology -- invoking selective comparisons to the latter years of a few other pitchers, and subjective statistics such as ERA -- is tainted.

"A better approach to this problem involves comparing the career trajectories of all highly durable starting pitchers," the authors wrote in the Times, specifically citing all pitchers who in the last 40 years "started at least 10 games in at least 15 seasons, and pitched at least 3,000 innings," not just the three others who had the best longevity.

In its defense, Hendricks Sports Management itemized fallacies by the professors on a point-by-point basis, as applied to the report's criteria, variables, and its uses of ERA and Clemens' age level to make its point.



The agents appeared most disturbed by one of the conclusions advanced by the professors, that their "comparisons do not provide evidence of [Clemens'] innocence; they simply fail to provide evidence of his guilt."

Added Messrs. Bradlow, Jensen, Wolfers, Wyner: "Our reading is that the available data on Clemens's career strongly hint that some unusual factors may have been at play in producing his excellent late-career statistics. In any analysis of his career statistics, it is impossible to say whether this unusual factor was performance-enhancing drugs."

Retorted Hendricks Sports: "The Clemens Report does not state that the statistics 'prove' anything, something missed by the four professors" who "have not added anything substantive to a discussion of Roger Clemens' career."

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