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Clemens has a strange way of pleading his innocence

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As Roger Clemens trawls Capitol Hill, playing catch, presumably, with House investigators, the question you have to ask yourself is, why would his accuser, Brian McNamee, lie?

Surely, he wasn't jilted out of one of those (wink, wink) lifetime *annuities*, like the one, we only half-jokingly assume, Greg Anderson will be getting from his Little League buddy Barry Bonds.

Why would he lie? Without subpoena power, the Mitchell Report was destined to be foisted on a foundation of straw, even without McNamee's dropping a dime on The Greatest Pitcher of Our Generation.

Indeed, under the reported deal that he agreed to with federal prosecutors, McNamee's absolute truth was a proviso of an expected lighter sentence. Perjury, he was told, will guarantee him prison time, for starters.

I believe him, even as I sit here and wonder, if he had the bloody gauze and syringes to implicate Clemens, why didn't he hand them over before the Mitchell Report saw public print? The report is fat with photocopies of canceled checks and overnight-shipping receipts. A photo of genuine Roger Clemens needles might have made the report's centerspread -- its Evidence of the Month.

Instead, McNamee knew when to hold 'em. He even played the wife card two days ago, saying that as long as he was injecting Roger with washboard abs, he was asked to do the same for the pitcher's spouse, Debbie.

Clemens' lawyer called McNamee "a colossal liar" for saying that, following the schoolyard rule that whoever can say "liar-liar, pants on fire" the most times wins.

But Clemens isn't winning. His defense is too flimsy. His lawyers are too disingenuous.

Plus, there could be a third-party eyewitness in the person of Clemens' pitching comrade, Andy Pettitte, whom McNamee says knows full well what sort of Rocket fuel Roger was using.

McNamee, if he's telling the truth, at least has gauze, syringes and old pizza boxes, perhaps with Roger's DNA all over them. Clemens has nothing.

Nothing except seven Cy Young Awards and his handshake, the latter of which he brandished for several hours last week during a goodwill tour of the House Office Building.

Oh. And he also has his legal pit bulls, barking at every headline that rolls by.

Clemens seems desperate to clear his name, and desperation, we have learned, is not pretty. Help me to understand:

The Mitchell investigators asked Clemens, among many others, to stop by and speak to them. Clemens refused. But now they can't get Clemens out of the Capitol Hill hallways.

Sounds guilty to me.

It's the old to-know-me-is-to-love-me approach. At least Roger was modest enough not to pass out old *Sports Illustrated* pictures of his wife on HGH.

The pit bulls, however, did previously have a book -- legal documentation that, the lawyers said,

convincingly makes the case that Clemens, at age 44, was like every other seven-time Cy Young winner. You could look it up.

Unfortunately for Clemens, a team of University of Pennsylvania Wharton School professors did just that, dissecting the hypotheses at the behest of *The New York Times* to conclude that the 18,000-word stats report issued last month by the Rocket's lawyers was rife with flawed logic.

Clemens' stats, however, are damning, as are Bonds'. Curious, too, are the ESPN videos of Clemens pitching as a 20-year-old Texas Longhorn. He's rail-thin, as opposed to the freight train that he's grown into. Again, the same case has been made against Bonds.

But Bonds didn't fail any steroids tests, nor did Clemens. It was Clemens who put his passionate denials into the daily headlines.

A wise idea? Yes, sort of. After the Mitchell Report, Clemens wasn't going to get any less guilty in the public's mind by sitting at home, saying nothing (see PALMEIRO, Rafael).

Thus, Mr. Clemens went to Washington last week. Maybe it helped. And maybe he overstated his case.

It didn't help that Rusty Hardin, one of Clemens' attorneys, compared the pitcher's plight to that of the three Duke lacrosse players who were falsely accused of rape.

A poor analogy, as it turns out. As columnist Mike Lupica pointed out in Sunday's New York *Daily News*, one of the men who defended one of the accused Duke players also happens to be a lawyer for Brian McNamee.

The attorney, Richard Emery, called the Duke reference an "incredibly inept metaphor."

"You want to know the real difference here?" Emery told Lupica. "Reade Seligmann [the acquitted Duke player] didn't do anything. Roger Clemens is doing this to himself."

Both Clemens and McNamee are scheduled to testify under oath Wednesday at a hearing of the House committee investigating the Mitchell Report findings.

One of them likely won't be telling the truth.

Knowing the consequences, however, why would Brian McNamee lie?