

TWO THIRD OF U.S. SPORTS FANS WANT STEROID ASSISTED RECORDS MARKED BY ASTERISK OR STRICKEN FROM THE BOOKS

Findings of Seton Hall Sports Poll Conducted by The Sharkey Institute in Association with ESPN Show Strong African-American Support for Barry Bonds

35% of African-Americans Think Bonds Singled Out Due to Race; Only 2% of Non African-Americans Agree

South Orange, NJ, May 15, 2006 – Two out of three American sports fans want records set by steroid-assisted athletes to be either marked with an asterisk or stricken from the records.

This was a finding of the latest Seton Hall Sports Poll, conducted by The Sharkey Institute in association with ESPN last week. The poll surveyed 501 people 18 and over, and has a margin of error due to sampling of +/- 4 percentage points.

On the question, “Should records set by players found to have used performance enhancing drugs like steroids be marked with an asterisk, not marked at all, or stricken from the record book”, 66% of respondents calling themselves sports fans said the records should be marked by an asterisk or stricken, while only 24% thought there should be no mark. 10% didn’t know or had no opinion.

But when it comes to Barry Bonds’ pursuit of Hank Aaron’s 755 career home run only a small majority (54%) think Bonds achievement should be the official record, owing to 77% support from African-American respondents, compared to 45% support from non African-Americans.

“Bonds is a focal point of the issue because he is chasing one of the most coveted records in sports,” noted Rick Gentile, Director of the Seton Hall Sports Poll and a professor at the Stillman School of Business, Center for Sport Management. “But if you take out Bonds as an individual factor, 54% of African-Americans want steroid-suspected records asterisked or deleted, compared to 67% of non African-Americans. It’s much closer.”

Another difference between African-Americans and other sports fans is that twice as many African-Americans want Bonds to break Aaron’s record. 34% of African-Americans feel this way while only 17% of the sports fans of other races want Bonds to succeed. Additionally, 35% of African-American respondents thought race was the most important reason for Bonds being the center of attention on the steroid questions, while only 2% of non African-Americans felt that race was the reason for Bonds being “singled out.”

Meanwhile, Bonds alleged use of performance enhancing drugs is likely of more interest to the media and sports commentators than it is to sports fans, according to the poll. 62% of sports fans have little or no interest in stories about Bonds and his alleged use. Only 11% have high interest.

A majority (55%) believe Bonds is being treated fairly by Major League Baseball. Fewer sports fans believe the media is being fair. Just 38% feel this way. And why is Bonds getting all this attention? The number one reason is his pursuit of Aaron’s record.

Sports fans have mixed views of Major League Baseball's new policy on the use of performance enhancing drugs. Many more think the new drug policy is fair (49%) than think it is unfair (20%). But they are less likely to think MLB should continue its pursuit of past drug abuses. By 55% to 39% sports fans would rather accept the past and move on rather than investigate past abuses.

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* The poll was conducted by telephone among a random digit dial sample of 501 adults ages 18 and older living in the continental United States. The poll was sponsored by Seton Hall University. The poll was weighted to account for an over-sample of areas where African American are more likely to reside and for differences in household size, age, race and gender. The margin of error due to sampling is +/- 4 percentage points for most estimates. Other factors also may affect the total error.