



I ran into Pete Rose in Philly airport a couple of months ago. Not like he ran into Ray Fosse in the 1970 All-Star game though - because that would hurt.

More about that game later.

Pete was at his gate waiting for a flight to Cincinnati. (Naturally) But he was wearing a Phillies ball cap. (Interesting!). As a Canadian, I saw no need to approach him for any reason whatsoever. Canadians and Americans deal with celebrities differently. I went back to the restaurant and informed my American wife of nearby celebrity, evidently also informing the eavesdropping lady at the next table, and both of them practically dropped their forks to head over to the Cincy gate.

I had actually met Rose before, as he signed baseball cards in a Vegas sport collectibles store. I remembered feeling sad for him. Which was odd, because his life has been such an incredible story - the fluky way he first got to the Majors; how he became one of the greatest players ever, and still holds Major League records for games (3562), at-bats (14053), hits (4256), and singles (3215). Three World Series wins later he gets accused of betting on baseball games, including ones involving the Reds - while managing the Reds. He denies, denies....and then, 15 years later, admits to it in his biography. He got a life-time ban from baseball, and from consideration for the Hall of Fame. He was then relegated to a life of card signing, reality shows, and stunts. There were allegations of sexual relations with a minor, and he also did 5 months of jail time for failing to report income from memorabilia signings, receiving a conviction for tax evasion.

Shakespearean tragic hero? Maybe. Pete had a great legacy, and was still in the game as a Manager, until his gambling addiction and errors in judgement, or a flaw in his character perhaps, took so much from him. Still, I can't help but think that the US is a country where heroes, when they become tainted or dirty, get to apologize, clean up, and offer up their newly chastened and sanitized selves upon the altar of public forgiveness. This is often followed by the inevitable reinstatement, repackaging, and brand update - a sort of resurrection, and with it, the return to the celebrity they once knew. But it was not to be for Pete Rose. He always felt that he got the raw deal and the public is still split on whether he should be considered for the Hall of Fame. He did go to jail for tax evasion, and even that episode was rife with irony.

I referred to Roy Fosse at the top of this piece. The Collision.

In 1970 with Cincinnati hosting, Rose and Fosse were involved in one of the most infamous All-Star Game plays.

In the 12th inning, Rose singled and advanced to second on another single by LA Dodgers' Billy Grabarkewitz. The Cubs' Jim Hickman then singled to center field. The KC Royal's Amos Otis' throw to home went past Cleveland's catcher Ray Fosse as Pete Rose barreled over Fosse to score the winning run. ( I say if you're a catcher blocking the plate and you don't have the ball, you're asking for it ) Fosse sustained a fractured and separated shoulder, which was undiagnosed and healed improperly for a full year, causing chronic pain that was never entirely resolved. This was the All-Star Game, and so the criticism of Rose was that the base running was over-the-top for the event. Fosse was a rookie and had a huge amount of promise, but he underperformed his first-year numbers for the rest of his career.

Why is this All-Star play related to his tax evasion conviction?

When Rose was convicted, the judge, who's sense of irony was exquisite, sentenced Rose to the minimum-security prison in Marion, Illinois to serve his time. Guess who was one of the most famous people to come from that small Illinois town?

Ray Fosse, of course.

This past week Rose petitioned MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred to remove his name from Major League Baseball's ineligible list, which would then allow him to be considered for induction into the Hall of Fame. His lawyers argued that Manfred has recently opted not to punish Houston Astros' players guilty of major game-changing rules infractions, and as a result, it would only be fair and just to end Rose's 30-year ban. (they stole pitching signs in 2017-18 and won the 2018 World Series, and, in a worse crime, they used sign-stealing to beat my Yankees in the ALCS the year before – they should be banned for life. Cheaters!)

I say he's paid the price. The Astros' crime was far greater and so when viewed through Baseball's ever-changing "malfeasance punishment regime" then you have to let Rose off the ineligible list

What do you think? Comment below. Even you Yankee-haters.