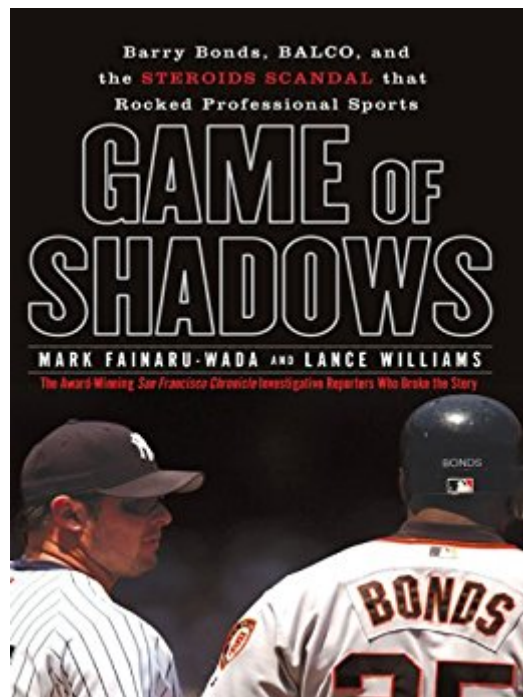




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Game Of Shadows: Barry Bonds, BALCO, And The Steroids Scandal That Rocked Professional Sports



Synopsis

In the summer of 1998 two of baseball leading sluggers, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, embarked on a race to break Babe Ruth's single season home run record. The nation was transfixed as Sosa went on to hit 66 home runs, and McGwire 70. Three years later, San Francisco Giants All-Star Barry Bonds surpassed McGwire by 3 home runs in the midst of what was perhaps the greatest offensive display in baseball history. Over the next three seasons, as Bonds regularly launched mammoth shots into the San Francisco Bay, baseball players across the country were hitting home runs at unprecedented rates. For years there had been rumors that perhaps some of these players owed their success to steroids. But crowd pleasing homers were big business, and sportswriters, fans, and officials alike simply turned a blind eye. Then, in December of 2004, after more than a year of investigation, San Francisco Chronicle reporters Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams broke the story that in a federal investigation of a nutritional supplement company called BALCO, Yankees slugger Jason Giambi had admitted taking steroids. Barry Bonds was also implicated. Immediately the issue of steroids became front page news. The revelations led to Congressional hearings on baseball's drug problems and continued to drive the effort to purge the U.S. Olympic movement of drug cheats. Now Fainaru-Wada and Williams expose for the first time the secrets of the BALCO investigation that has turned the sports world upside down.

Game of Shadows: Barry Bonds, BALCO, and the Steroid Scandal That Rocked Professional by award-winning investigative journalists Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams, is a riveting narrative about the biggest doping scandal in the history of sports, and how baseball's home run king, Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants, came to use steroids. Drawing on more than two years of reporting, including interviews with hundreds of people, and exclusive access to secret grand jury testimony, confidential documents, audio recordings, and more, the authors provide, for the first time, a definitive account of the shocking steroids scandal that made headlines across the country. The book traces the career of Victor Conte, founder of the BALCO laboratory, an egomaniacal former rock musician and self-proclaimed nutritionist, who set out to corrupt sports by providing athletes with "designer" steroids that would be undetectable on "state-of-the-art" doping tests. Conte gave the undetectable drugs to 28 of the world's greatest athletes—Olympians, NFL players and baseball stars, Bonds chief among them. A separate narrative thread details the steroids use of Bonds, an immensely talented, moody player who turned to performance-enhancing drugs after Mark McGwire of the St. Louis Cardinals set a new home run record in 1998. Through his personal trainer, Bonds gained access to BALCO drugs. All of the great athletes who visited BALCO benefited tremendously—Bonds

broke McGwire's record—but many had their careers disrupted after federal investigators raided BALCO and indicted Conte. The authors trace the course of the probe, and the baffling decision of federal prosecutors to protect the elite athletes who were involved. Highlights of Game of Shadows include: Barry Bonds A look at how Bonds was driven to use performance-enhancing drugs in part by jealousy over Mark McGwire's record-breaking 1998 season. It was shortly thereafter that Bonds—who had never used anything more performance enhancing than a protein shake from the health food store—first began using steroids. How Bonds's weight trainer, steroid dealer Greg Anderson, arranged to meet Victor Conte before the 2001 baseball season with...

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Customer Reviews

It's not so much that Fainaru-Wada presents the smoking gun -- by the time you finish this book it feels like you've seen an entire smoking armada. Overall, it's fairly compelling stuff. Using evidence from hundreds of sources, the authors implicate Barry Bonds and numerous other athletes for their

involvement in the BALCO doping scandal of the early 2000's. It's disappointing but eye-opening reading for anyone who got swept up in the excitement of the great homerun achievements of a decade-plus ago. The authors of this book assert that Barry Bonds took steroids for several years, and was fully aware that he was doing so. The former is fairly obvious, as supported by tons of documented evidence. It's the latter that's more difficult to prove. But that doesn't stop them from trying. To be sure, Bonds has a foul personality. But I couldn't help wondering whether his personality flaws contributed to the authors' reaching conclusions that they otherwise may not have reached. Helpfully, Fainaru-Wada and Williams don't dedicate the entire book to Barry Bonds. They also devote chapters to other big-time athletes, many of whom subsequently admitted to taking steroids. It paints a sobering picture. Sadly, Victor Conte, the disgraced BALCO CEO, was probably right. Professional athletes had little choice during that era: use dope, or lose out to those that do. That may have been the case, but it's just as well that the prevalence of doping has gradually been exposed by books like "Game of Shadows" and others, and the higher-ups who control the sporting industry have been forced to finally do something about all of the cheating.

never followed this when it was happening, but very interesting. amazing how many are doing this.

As Barry gets closer and closer to breaking the incomparable record that Hank Aaron set, Game of Shadows becomes even more relevant. The authors go into great clinical detail of Bond's drug regimen that was obtained thru leaked grand jury testimony. I find it extremely ironic that the lawyer who leaked the information is going to jail for two years while Barry (as well as Scooter Libby) remains free. Page after page, all the dates, dosages and drugs are listed. No, this isn't a Tom Clancy novel. It reads more like a medical textbook. Those who proclaim Bonds "innocent until proven guilty" status should read those chapters and then look at the physical changes Bonds went thru in that time frame. His personal trainer is still in jail for dealing steroids and Victor Conte, Bonds "nutritional advisor," just got out of jail. Sorry, but flaxseed oil and pumping iron won't transform a human into the grotesque being Barry has become. And they won't make your hat size increase, either. Anybody who thinks Bonds gained all that muscle "naturally" probably also believe O.J. continues to search every golf course in the country for his wife's killer. How can a man who never hit more than 46 home runs in a season (when he was 28) suddenly average over 51 home runs a year between the ages of 35 and 40? What, did Ponce de Leon spike the water cooler? What other player in history has shown that remarkable improvement in the tail end of his career? Does Barry get a bad rap from the press? Is he being picked on? Bonds is a baseball player of remarkable

ability, a rare combination of speed and power that were easily enough to get him into the Hall of Fame without drug abuse. His ego, and his arrogance, however, far exceeds his natural talents. As described in the book, jealousy over Mark McGwire's adulation drove him to take performance enhancing drugs. Bonds figured he would level the playing field by juicing like Mark. Then we'll see who's the best. Breaking the single season home run record was not enough for his grandiose personality. Now he has to break the record set by one of the most dignified and honest people in sports. As Rick Reilly puts it, when Barry breaks the record, it will be "like a man robbing a bank and then having a giant party to watch him count the money." The book isn't just a beat down on Barry. Many other athletes are exposed, particularly in track and field where undetectable doping is so vital to cheating the system. Unlike baseball, track and field takes doping very seriously. Sure, Barry has never tested positive for steroids, but when was he tested? Baseball did not even start testing until 2002. For two years, the tests were anonymous and results were not released. Only in 2004 were penalties invoked for testing positive. What a joke. Let's not forget, there is no test for human growth hormone, which is likely what Bonds continues to use to maintain his bloated musculature. It is July 26, 2007. I will make a few predictions. Bonds breaks the record in mid-August. The hapless Giants have no post season and Barry fades into anonymity for a few weeks. After the World Series in which the Mets beat the Red Sox (sorry Boston fans), Bonds gets indicted for perjury, obstruction of justice and tax evasion. The tax evasion charges will stick, they always do. Anytime you have an outflow of cash to a mistress or drug dealer, the source of that cash can be traced. It will be baseball card and autograph show cash that was never reported as taxable income. Barry will get convicted and do a little time, just like the other talented egoist, Pete Rose. And maybe like Pete, Barry will get into the Hall of Fame, posthumously.

Game of Shadows, by Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams, tells a factual story of how Victor Conte, the founder of BALCO, rose from being a self-proclaimed nutritionist to being the steroid supplier of choice to a large number of world-class athletes across a multitude of sports. Along with Conte himself and the cast of characters involved with BALCO, either as users, suppliers, or competitors, the story focuses on baseball player Barry Bonds. Mr Fainaru-Wada and Mr Williams detail how Barry Bonds was apparently jealous of the attention Mark McGuire (probably a steroid user) received when hitting a record-breaking 70 home runs during the 1998 season. Mr Bonds, per the book, successfully turned to steroids to become the greatest hitter of his generation, and perhaps even of all time, at an age when virtually all baseball players are in severe decline. The irony here is that even if Barry Bonds had prematurely retired instead of beginning to use steroids,

his performance to that point would have still been good enough to merit being voted into the baseball hall of fame, probably on the first ballot. Instead, assuming he's guilty (and the book presents reams of evidence in support of that guilt), he tarnished his reputation and legacy for all time, will not receive due credit for the bulk of his career when he was clean, and may never be voted into the hall of fame. The book also includes interesting description of how steroids help improve performance, and what some of the side effects and health problems that are likely to result from steroid use. This is a good book and I recommend it.

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