

Clemens takes lumps on Capitol Hill testimony

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Roger Clemens stuck out his famous right arm, the one that earned 354 major league wins, seven Cy Young Awards, \$160 million, and pointed in the direction of his accuser. Without looking at Brian McNamee, Clemens told Congress, "I have strong disagreements with what this man says about me."

Separated by only a few feet at a wooden witness table Wednesday, Clemens and McNamee were never further apart.

There they sat, the star pitcher and his former personal trainer, under oath and facing blistering questions. For 4 1/2 hours, both men held to their versions of the he-said, he-said disagreement over whether McNamee injected Clemens with steroids and human growth hormone.

Clemens insisted it never happened. McNamee insisted it did.

His reputation and Hall of Fame candidacy potentially at stake — not to mention the possibility of criminal charges, should he lie — Clemens said: "I have never taken steroids or HGH. No matter what we discuss here today, I am never going to have my name restored."

For some members of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Clemens' denials rang hollow, particularly in light of a new account of his discussion of HGH use, revealed by his friend and former teammate Andy Pettitte in a sworn affidavit. "It's hard to believe you, sir," Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., told Clemens. "I hate to say that. You're one of my heroes. But it's hard to believe."

Clemens and McNamee, by all accounts once good friends, rarely glanced at one another. When Clemens did turn to his right, it was with the Rocket's mound glare. Seated between them was the day's third witness, Charles Scheeler, a lawyer who helped compile the report on drug use in baseball headed by former Senate majority leader George Mitchell.

"Someone is lying in spectacular fashion," said Rep. Tom Davis of Virginia, the committee's ranking Republican.

Just like their stories, Clemens' Texas drawl was in strong contrast to the clipped cadences of McNamee, a former New York police of-

ficer. "I told the investigators I injected three people — two of whom I know confirmed my account," McNamee said. "The third is sitting at this table."

Ultimately, the matter could wind up with the Justice Department if prosecutors believe either man made false statements. The Justice Department is also reviewing used needles and bloody gauze pads McNamee turned over. His side says the items contained performance-enhancing drugs and Clemens' DNA.

"We found conflicts and inconsistencies in Mr. Clemens' accounts," said Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., the committee's chairman. "During his deposition, he made statements we know are untrue."

Eventually, the committee split largely along party lines, with the Democrats reserving their most pointed queries for Clemens, and the Republicans giving McNamee a rougher time.

"You're here under oath, and yet we have lie after lie after lie after lie," Rep. Dan Burton, R-Ind., told McNamee.

Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Conn., repeatedly called McNamee a "drug dealer."

One of McNamee's lawyers, Earl Ward, called it a "public flogging."

Waxman said afterward he hadn't "reached any conclusions" as to whether a criminal investigation is warranted, although several congressmen said a referral from the committee isn't needed to trigger one.

The session, held on the same day pitchers and catchers started reporting for spring training in Florida and Arizona, came exactly two months following the release of the Mitchell Report.

That investigation was prompted by another hearing on steroids held by the same committee in the same wood-paneled room, on March 17, 2005. That is best remembered for having tarnished the reputations of Mark McGwire — who infamously repeated, "I'm not here to talk about the past" — and Rafael Palmeiro — who wagged his finger and declared he never had used steroids, then failed a drug test months later.

In a reference to that day, Rep. Mark Souder, R-Ind., cautioned Clemens and McNamee: "It's better not to

talk about the past than to lie about the past."

Wednesday's hearing, which Waxman indicated would be his committee's last on the subject, was prompted by Clemens' various and vigorous denials of what McNamee told Mitchell. The Mitchell Report was the first public accounting of McNamee's allegations that he injected Clemens with HGH and steroids 16 to 21 times from 1998 to 2001. McNamee said Wednesday he now thinks those numbers

are too low.

"They don't disagree on a phone call or one meeting," Waxman said. "If Mr. McNamee is lying, he has acted inexcusably and he has made Mr. Clemens an innocent victim. If Mr. Clemens isn't telling the truth, then he is acting shamefully and has smeared Mr. McNamee. I don't think there is anything in between."

Waxman said he considered calling off the hearing, but said he was persuaded to go forth by Clemens' law-

yers, an account they disputed. He also accused Clemens of possibly trying to influence statements to the committee by the pitcher's former nanny.

Congressmen noted that Pettitte and another former Yankees teammate of Clemens, Chuck Knoblauch, both acknowledged that McNamee was correct when he said they used performance enhancers.

At times, Clemens struggled to find the right words as he was pressed by

lawmakers. Clemens said Pettitte "misremembers" things. He mispronounced McNamee's name at one point. Toward the end, Clemens raised his voice to interrupt Waxman's closing remarks. The chairman pounded his gavel and said, "Excuse me, but this is not your time to argue with me."

It seemed clear early that the committee would not treat Clemens with kid gloves, despite face-to-face meetings he did with repre-

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