

THORNY ISSUE

Morgan caught between Rose, Hall of Fame

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Joe Morgan calls Pete Rose his best friend.

It was Morgan, in fact, who arranged the meeting between Rose and baseball commissioner Bud Selig that could lead to the former Cincinnati great's reinstatement to baseball and induction into the Hall of Fame.

"Pete asked me to set up a meeting with Bud Selig, because he couldn't seem to get one," said Morgan, a Hall of Fame second baseman and the keynote speaker Friday for the Iowa Cubs FanFest luncheon at the Polk County Convention Complex. "He had written a letter a few years ago and Bud didn't respond."

In 1989, Rose agreed to a lifetime ban from baseball that makes him ineligible for the Hall of Fame, even though he is the majors' all-time hits leader with 4,256.

Selig is considering Rose's reinstatement, which may hinge on his admitting he bet on baseball -as recent reports suggest he is prepared to do. Selig may also ask for a public apology from Rose, while insisting on a probationary period for reinstatement should any new facts come to light.

Selig's decision, in fact, could be complicated by an Associated Press report Friday indicating Rose owes more than \$150,000 in back taxes, as well as by backlash from some Hall of Famers, current players and others in the baseball community.

"Pete Rose put a black mark on the game of baseball," said 20-year major league umpire Tim McClelland of Des Moines, who was at FanFest. "I think he's probably one of the greatest players to ever play the game. He deserves

to be in the Hall of Fame with the accomplishments, but he made a mistake and I think he has to pay for that mistake."

McClelland said when it comes to betting on baseball, the rules are clear.

"In every locker room, in every ballpark, whether it be umpires or players, it says you cannot bet on baseball," said McClelland, who worked last year's World Series. "It's not like he didn't know it."

Morgan pointed out that Rose has paid a stiff price, being out of baseball for 13 years, though he acknowledged that none of the 15 former players banned from the sport have been reinstated.

He also knows he has a conflict of interests.

"The one thing I got from Pete is that he played every game like it was the seventh game of the World Series," Morgan said. "I've seen a lot of players, and I don't think anyone else ever did that -myself included. That's the

friendship side.

"The other side is that I'm the vice chairman of the board of directors for the Hall of Fame. Pete's my best friend. Yet my job as vice chairman is to uphold the integrity of the game. So I have two different hats here, and they don't always meet in the middle."

For now, Rose's fate rests with Selig.

"I don't think there is a right or a wrong view on this," Morgan said. "The fans look at it as cut and dried, but I don't think it is. And I know Bud is going to take his time and do it right."

Does Morgan think Rose will ultimately win passage to Cooperstown?

"I think so, but I don't have anything to do with it," he said.