Abstract

This study critically analyzes Mark McGwire, Alex Rodriguez and Barry Bonds' defense of their steroid use and attempts at image repair during respective interviews, applying the theory of image restoration discourse (Benoit, 1994). Rodriguez and McGwire used the same basic strategies of bolstering, mortification and blame shifting, while Bonds used denial and attacking accuser. McGwire and Rodriguez used an "apologize-and-move-on" approach, while Bonds denied and continues to deny steroid use. The media continue to attack Bonds and search for contradictions in his denial, while Rodriguez and McGwire's stories have become monotonous. Teammates and respective fans showed support for Rodriguez and McGwire, while Bonds struggled with relatives and teammates speaking out against him. Fans forgive athletes more easily when the athlete belongs to a winning team, or makes a significant contribution to a winning team. I evaluate each athlete's strategies, the effectiveness of the strategies and the implications of actions and third party endorsements in attempts to restore their positive reputations.