

July 13, 2006

Ruined Friendship Could Imperil Bonds

By [DUFF WILSON](#)



The former best friend and business partner of [Barry Bonds](#) has told federal investigators that Bonds was a heavy steroids user and flew into “roid rages,” his lawyer, Michael Cardoza, said yesterday.

The man, Steve K. Hoskins, 44, of Redwood City, Calif., also says Bonds gave him thousands of dollars to pass on to two of Bonds’s girlfriends, Cardoza said in telephone interviews.

Two lawyers for Bonds responded yesterday that Hoskins was lying to get back at Bonds for accusing him of financial misconduct in their memorabilia business. The lawyers acknowledged that Bonds and Hoskins had been best friends before a falling-out in mid-2003, when Bonds reported Hoskins to the [F.B.I.](#)

Bonds is widely expected to be indicted soon by a federal grand jury, which meets today and again next Thursday at the federal courthouse in San Francisco. After that, its 18-month term apparently expires, providing impetus to wrap up the case.

Witnesses who have testified say the grand jury is investigating whether Bonds engaged in income-tax evasion, and if he committed perjury in denying steroid usage. Other sports figures are also being investigated, but Bonds is the biggest target.

Bonds, 41, hit a record 73 home runs in 2001 and has 720 career homers, trailing only Hank Aaron’s 755.

On Dec. 4, 2003, Bonds told an earlier grand jury that he did not knowingly use steroids, despite drastic changes to his physique and documents with his name on them from 2001 to 2003 showing drug schedules, billing information and test results, The San Francisco Chronicle has reported.

The private dispute between Bonds and Hoskins went public this week when Michael L. Rains, Bonds’s defense lawyer, told The New York Times that the government was relying on Hoskins and Bonds’s former girlfriend Kimberly Bell for its case.

Hoskins is president of Kent Collectibles of San Carlos, Calif., and was widely known in the [Giants](#)’ clubhouse as Bonds’s right-hand man. The two were close: Hoskins was the best man at Bonds’s 1998 wedding, and Hoskins’s sister introduced Bonds to a woman who was his girlfriend from 1994 to 2003.

Laura J. Enos, Bonds's lawyer for personal business matters since 1997, said in an interview yesterday that she and Bonds confronted Hoskins in June 2003 over the suspected forging of Bonds's signature on contracts.

"He came and we met in a conference room," Enos said. "He said: 'I have three doors. If you don't drop this memorabilia issue, I'm going to ruin Barry. Behind door No. 1 is an extramarital affair. Behind door No. 2 is failure to declare income tax. And behind door No. 3 is use of steroids. And I will go to the press and ruin Barry. His records will be ruined. He will never get into the Hall of Fame.' "

Enos said Bonds reported Hoskins anyway to the United States attorney and the F.B.I. in San Francisco in late June or early July 2003. Enos said Bonds was unaware at the time that the San Jose branch of the United States attorney's office was already investigating whether Bonds used steroids.

LaRae Quy, a special agent and spokeswoman for the F.B.I. in Northern California, confirmed yesterday that the F.B.I. checked into the complaint by Bonds against Hoskins. Quy declined to comment further.

Enos and Rains said the F.B.I. dropped the case against Hoskins when he turned on Bonds. But Hoskins's lawyer, Cardoza, said the F.B.I. cleared Hoskins when it found he had not forged the signatures and had kept meticulous records of cash transactions, including giving thousands of dollars to two girlfriends for Bonds. "We did not make a deal with the feds," Cardoza said.

Cardoza said he had warned Enos that the steroids activity would come out if Bonds complained about Hoskins to federal authorities.

"Barry and Stevie were friends for years," Cardoza said. "And Barry starts to get into steroids. And Barry has what's called roid rages, which start to affect his relationship with Stevie. Stevie was very concerned as a friend with his steroid use. In fact, he involved Bobby Bonds, the dad, you know, saying, 'You better get Barry off steroids because it's going to kill him.' " (Bobby Bonds died in 2003.)

Cardoza said Barry Bonds's steroid use and rages led to the end of Bonds's close relationship with Hoskins.

"Stevie would nag Barry to get off the stuff," Cardoza said. "Their relationship finally went in the toilet, business and personal. And with that, Barry is saying Stevie stole from me. It's not true. He reports that to the feds. The feds do a full-blown investigation."

Cardoza added: "So in your face, Barry. You're lying."

Asked whether Hoskins had firsthand knowledge of Bonds's steroid use, Cardoza said: "Steve was his best friend. Steve had a relationship with him that nobody else did."

Cardoza would not say whether Hoskins has testified before the grand jury, only that he had spoken with investigators.

Rains, Bonds's defense lawyer, said he thought Hoskins was the source for much of the derogatory information about Bonds, including details of suspected steroid usage, in the book

“Game of Shadows” by the reporters Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams of The Chronicle. Hoskins was not mentioned by name in the 332-page book.

Rains and Cardoza said Hoskins’s sister had introduced Bonds to Bell in the early 1990’s and that Hoskins had known Bell for even longer.

“And now they’ve united in an effort to try to take down Barry,” Rains said. “And the government is dumb enough to try to use them to take down Barry.”

Bell is a graphic artist from San Jose, Calif., who says she dated Bonds from 1994 to May 2003. Bell has said Bonds told her he used steroids and gave her \$80,000 cash.

Rains said Bell had tried to pressure Bonds to pay her money. Bell and her lawyer could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Enos said Hoskins and Bonds were childhood friends who became close as adults after Bonds returned to San Francisco from Pittsburgh in 1993. Hoskins was selling shoes at a Foot Locker when Bonds returned. Enos said Bonds helped Hoskins set up a business selling Bonds lithographs and memorabilia. .

Hoskins and Bell are now the key witnesses against Bonds, according to Rains. He said: “They won’t have any credibility once they get exposed. But I don’t know if the federal government bothered to tell the grand jury, once they heard their testimony, what liars they were.”

Rains said the only other witness the government was relying on was Greg Anderson. Anderson, Bonds’s trainer and a reputed steroid supplier, was sent to jail July 5 for refusing to testify to the grand jury.

Mark J. Geragos, a defense lawyer for Anderson, said he did not think that Bonds would be indicted in the next week or two because he did not think the government had a case. One of the elements of finding Anderson in contempt was that the government had to say it could not get the necessary evidence anywhere else, Geragos said.

Geragos said he anticipated that the government would try to keep Anderson in jail longer under a criminal contempt of court proceeding or by calling him in front of a new grand jury. Geragos said Anderson would never testify against Bonds.

Peter Keane, a law professor at Golden Gate University, said the government could empanel a new grand jury if it needed more time or wanted to pressure Anderson by keeping him in jail longer. Keane predicted that soon Bonds would be indicted “just as the night follows the day.”

The people known to have testified to the grand jury in the perjury investigation include Dr. Arthur Ting, Bonds’s orthopedic surgeon; Stan Conte, the San Francisco Giants’ head trainer; Dr. Larry Bowers of the [United States Anti-Doping Agency](#); and Dr. Don Catlin, an antidoping expert at U.C.L.A.