



MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL
Office of the Commissioner

Robert D. Manfred Jr.
Commissioner of Baseball

Via Electronic Mail

May 13, 2025

Jeffrey M. Lenkov
Zelms Erlich Lenkov
20920 Warner Center Lane
Suite B
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Dear Mr. Lenkov,

I write in response to your letter on behalf of the Rose family on January 8, 2025, and the request contained therein that Pete Rose be posthumously removed from the permanently ineligible list. As you know, I denied a prior request for reinstatement from Mr. Rose in 2015. In my view, the only salient fact that has changed since that decision is that Mr. Rose has recently passed away.

The question of whether an individual should remain on the permanently ineligible list after his death has never been formally addressed by Major League Baseball. Indeed, Mr. Rose is the first person banned by a Commissioner other than Kenesaw Mountain Landis to die while still on the ineligible list. As such, it is incumbent upon the Office of the Commissioner to reach a policy decision regarding this unprecedented issue in the modern era.

The phrase “lifetime ban” has often been used to describe the punishment agreed to by Mr. Rose and the Office of the Commissioner; however, the use of that phrase is not accurate. In fact, the 1989 agreement between Mr. Rose and the Office of the Commissioner tracks the actual language of Rule 21 and Mr. Rose was placed on the “permanently ineligible” list referenced in Rule 21.

In my view, a determination must be made regarding how the phrase “permanently ineligible” should be interpreted in light of the purposes and policies behind Rule 21. In my decision on Mr. Rose’s last request for reinstatement, I set forth the following standard for deciding that request: “I, as Commissioner of Baseball, must determine the risk that Mr. Rose will commit a violation of MLB’s rules (most significantly Rule 21) following his reinstatement that may impact the integrity of the game.” I went on to say: “While the Commissioner is

afforded certain discretion in considering an application under Major League Rule 15(d) for reinstatement from the permanently ineligible list, the Commissioner must exercise that discretion with great care, bearing in mind the intended deterrent effect for the mandatory penalty for a violation of Rule 21 and the best interests of Baseball.”

Taken together, these comments make clear that penalties imposed under Rule 21 are intended to: (1) protect the game from individuals who pose a risk to the integrity of the sport by prohibiting the participation of such individuals; and (2) create a deterrent effect that reduces the likelihood of future violations by others. In my view, once an individual has passed away, the purposes of Rule 21 have been served. Obviously, a person no longer with us cannot represent a threat to the integrity of the game. Moreover, it is hard to conceive of a penalty that has more deterrent effect than one that lasts a lifetime with no reprieve. Therefore, I have concluded that permanent ineligibility ends upon the passing of the disciplined individual, and Mr. Rose will be removed from the permanently ineligible list.

While it is my preference not to disturb decisions made by prior Commissioners, Mr. Rose was not placed on the permanently ineligible list by Commissioner action but rather as the result of a 1989 settlement of potential litigation with the Commissioner's Office. My decision today is consistent with Commissioner Giamatti's expectations of that agreement. In the press conference announcing the settlement with Mr. Rose, Commissioner Giamatti answered a question about the effect of the settlement on Mr. Rose's potential election to the Hall of Fame:

Giamatti: “Let me – I'm glad you – I wondered when I'd be asked about the Hall of Fame. Let me say this. This episode has been about, in many ways, has been about taking responsibility, and taking responsibility for one's own acts. I know I need not point out to the Baseball Writers of America that it is their responsibility who decides who goes into the Hall of Fame. It is not mine. You have the authority, and you have the responsibility. And you will make your own individual judgments. And when they are tallied by Mr. Lang, that's, will be it. I have never, as League President or Commissioner, and would never, in this or any other instance, express an opinion about the eligibility, viability or appropriateness of any candidate for the Hall of Fame. It is entirely in your – now, you have a responsibility, which I, of course, as a devoted reader of all of you, will look forward to listening and watching your debates on the relationship of life to art, which you will all have to work out for yourselves.”

Commissioner Giamatti's comments were completely reasonable given that, at the time, the Hall of Fame did not have a rule barring people on the permanently ineligible list from Hall of Fame consideration. In fact, Shoeless Joe Jackson was afforded the opportunity to be voted upon in 1936 and again in 1946.

In closing, I want to emphasize that it is not part of my authority or responsibility to express any view concerning Mr. Rose's consideration by or possible election to the Hall of Fame. I agree with Commissioner Giamatti that responsibility for that decision lies with the Hall of Fame.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert D. Manfred, Jr." in a cursive style.

Robert D. Manfred, Jr.