

# Hey, people, get out of Pete's face, says Joe Bob

I'm gettin sick and tired of people dump dump dumpin on Pete Rose just because of a little circumstantial evidence that one time, maybe, while he was temporarily insane, he might have bet on one little game of croquet or something. I've looked over the evidence, I've read every dang word of the report, and there is a perfectly good explanation for everything.

For example, they're making a big deal out of a little scrap of paper they found in Pete's house. He'd written down on there:

- \$2,000 Cubs W
- \$4,000 Reds L
- \$2,000 Astros W
- \$2,000 Lakers L
- \$3,400 Cleveland Rain

They're saying that a measly list like this proves the guy was betting on sports? That just shows you what happens when people who do not understand the game of baseball get in over their head and have to kick dirt on Charley Hustle to make themselves feel important. This is easy to explain.

Let's take the first line: "\$2,000 Cubs W." Obviously Pete was playing the Cubs that day and he wanted to be sure to remember something about his opponent. The "W" means "pitch wide," and the number 2,000 refers to the batting order — the second batter, Ryne Sandberg — followed by three zeros, indicating his runs, hits and errors for the previous day. Obviously Ryne was in a slump, and Pete wanted to pitch him wide, make him go after a pitch and strike out.

So the second line of the note becomes easy: for his own team, the fourth batter, Eric Davis, is being

## Joe Bob Briggs At the Drive-in

fooled by low pitches — hence the "L."

Old Pete's starting to look pretty harmless now, isn't he? You see what a little real investigation can do? But I know what you're thinking. How do you explain the last three entries, for the Astros, the Lakers and Cleveland? Even easier. "\$2,000 Astros W" doesn't refer to the Astros baseball team. It refers to a Puerto Rican player named Carlos Astros who once played Class A ball in Bluefield, West Virginia. Carlos was a pitcher who threw something called a Weasel Ball. It would actually go into the ground, burrow three inches below ground level and then pop up over the plate. So "Astros W" refers to the famous Weasel Ball, which Pete intended to demonstrate to relief pitcher Kent Tekulve later that day.

Next item: "\$2,000 Lakers L." This is actually a typographical error. That Pete never could spell! It was supposed to say "2:00 or Later." Many people saw this and confused it with the professional basketball team, the

Los Angeles Lakers. But Pete was merely reminding himself that he had agreed to visit the hospital after 2 p.m. that day, in order to autograph a baseball for a dying child. You see how the mean people in the world can take a kind human gesture like that and turn it into something dirty? And finally, "\$3,400 Cleveland Rain." Do I even have to explain this one?

OK, OK, I admit it. It looks a little suspicious. Pete may have placed a friendly little bet that day. But give the man a break! He's only human. Look how much he bet. Look where the decimal point is. He bet three dollars and 40 cents. And what did he bet it on? Whether it would rain in Cleveland. You can say all you want. You can say Pete should have known better. You can say an American hero like Pete Rose shouldn't be setting an example for kids of betting on the weather, especially in Cleveland, where the weather is so unpredictable. But I say, we are going to crucify this man over a rainstorm? I think not.

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PG-13

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