

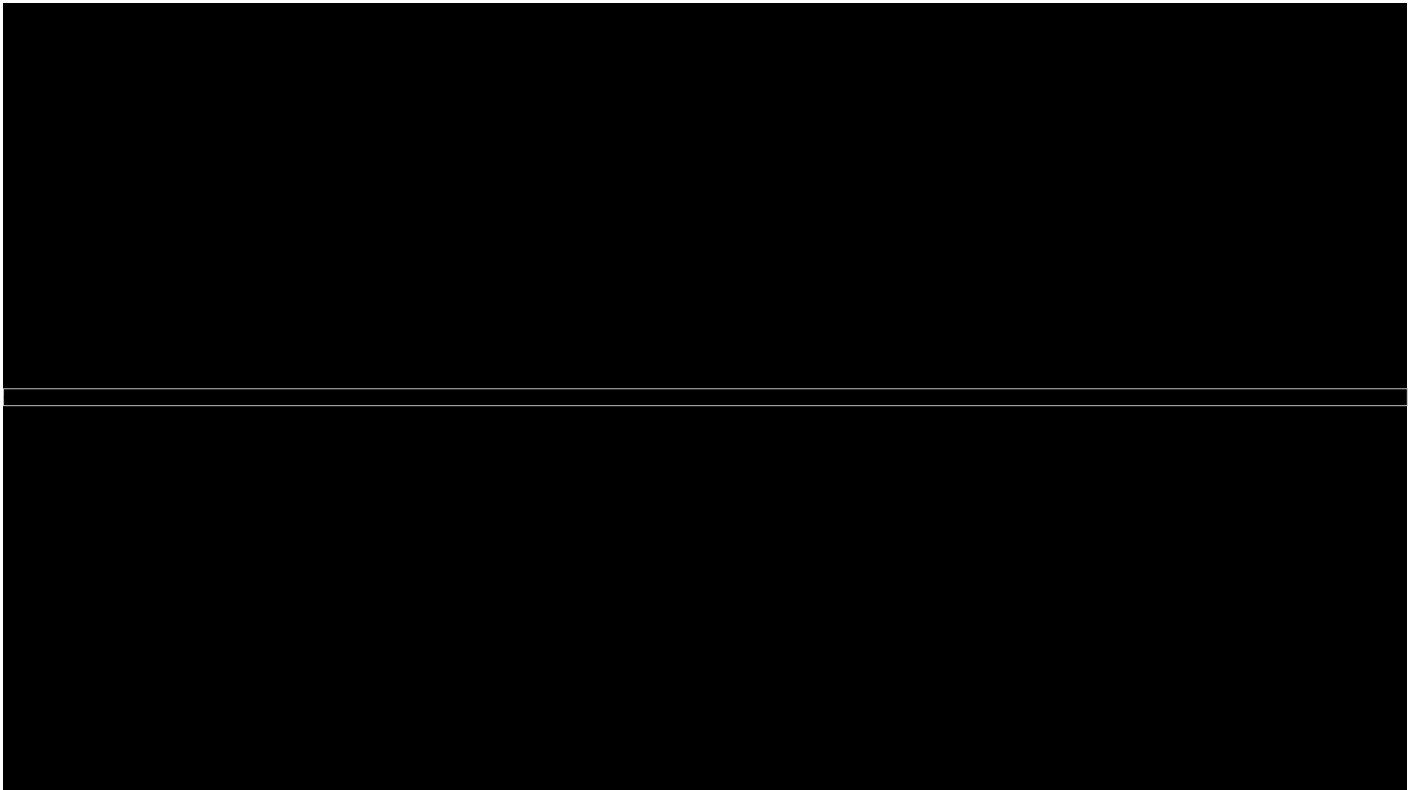


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Chris Davis discusses steroids: 'I have never taken them. I have no reason to'



Chris Davis feels baseball's true single-season home run record was Roger Maris' 61 in 1961. He said he doesn't fully count Barry Bonds' 73 in 2001 or Mark McGwire's 70 and Sammy Sosa's 66 in the unforgettable 1998 home run race. (Gene Sweeney Jr., Baltimore Sun)

By **Dan Connolly**

The Baltimore Sun

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Orioles first baseman **Chris Davis** understands that there are going to be whispers, and that those will grow louder if he continues his torrid home run pace.

He is, after all, a muscle-rippling power hitter with video-game home run totals. He knows the steroid accusations are inevitable and will accompany his pursuit of home run records this season.

"I think it sucks that guys in our day and age have to answer for mistakes that guys have made in the past. But it is part of it," said Davis, who has 33 home runs in his first 92 games for the Orioles this season. "That's what happened when [Major League Baseball](#) started addressing the issue. We knew we were going to have to deal with it."

So Davis is dealing with it. He's been asked by some national media types. He's been asked on [Twitter](#). He was asked again Thursday to address performance-enhancing drugs, and he addressed it at length.

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"I have never taken them. I have no reason to. I've always been a power hitter. With me, I think the biggest thing was the consistency of the contact," said Davis, who also hit 33 homers last year in first true full season in the majors. "When I was making contact, I was always hitting for power. I'm a guy that likes to work out a lot. I'm a guy that used to eat whatever I wanted to, but I started getting into my mid-20s, I've been seeing that change. So I've been taking better care of my body. I have a pretty strict diet. But I've never taken [performance-enhancing drugs]. I haven't felt the need to."

The questions – and the suspicions – have been coming up more frequently, Davis said. Recently, a young fan on Twitter asked him straight up if he had taken steroids.

His response was simply, "no" and even that fueled debate. One Twitter follower commented that because Davis didn't put a period at the end of his response – leaving his statement open – that it was an admission of guilt.

"I'm like, 'You're really reaching there, man,'" Davis said.

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He realizes he is suddenly in the middle of the court of public opinion, because he's 6-foot-3, 230 pounds and has been hitting baseballs a long way.

"People are going to believe what they want to believe. Whether they like me, whether they hate me. Whether they want to see me do well or they want me to fall flat on my face. I mean, I've taken tests. I've passed all my tests," said Davis, who had a blood test this spring like all of the Orioles players and has had three to four urine tests since – all have come back negative, he said. "I have never taken PEDs or steroids or whatever you want to call it. That's the way it is. And I think it is unfair to accuse a guy that there's nothing that leads to me doing it but speculation. But, at the same time, you are entitled to your own opinion."

And Davis has his own opinion, too. To him, baseball's true single-season home run record was Roger Maris' 61 in 1961, which broke Babe Ruth's mark of 60 set in 1927. Davis said he doesn't fully count Barry Bonds' 73 in 2001 or [Mark McGwire's](#) 70 and [Sammy Sosa's](#) 66 in the unforgettable 1998 home run race.

"I think when McGwire and Sosa did what they did in 1998, it was awesome to watch. And then when all the stuff came out with the PEDs and all of that, it was really disheartening," said Davis, who was 12 in 1998. "And if there are people that want to get upset with me saying that 61 is still, in my opinion, the single season record, I'm entitled to my own opinions and own beliefs. I was a fan before I played this game at the big league level, and I think what Roger Maris did is still considered by a lot of people to be the legitimate home run record."

Davis, of course, isn't predicting whether he has a chance to get to 61 – heading into Thursday he is on pace for 58. He's not touching that. And he says he's not criticizing Bonds and McGwire as people.

"Any time you are young and you are watching guys that you look up to and you find out they were doing something they weren't supposed to, I think it's disheartening," Davis said. "But at the same time I can't imagine what it was like to play in those days and be a guy that's going to hit 30 or 40 home runs and all of the sudden you are a middle-of-the-road guy because you see a bunch of guys hitting 50 and 60. I know it was probably a tough decision. I know a lot of those guys might regret what they did. But I'm not judging them as a person. I don't think any less of them as a person. I just wish they hadn't done it."

Davis said he has no problem addressing the steroid issue.

"I actually would prefer to talk about it because everybody is thinking in the back of their minds, 'A guy can't go from being this terrible to this good,'" Davis said. "But I think the biggest thing has been the consistency of contact and playing every day."

He also says he was never tempted to try them while he was attempting to make the majors

"It was something I was really oblivious to because I didn't really struggle in the minor leagues," he said. "And, to be honest, the thought of it kind of makes me cringe. I know there are a bunch of different ways to do it, but I can't imagine putting something like that in my body because eventually it's going to have a bad side effect. And as careful as I am about what I eat and the supplements I take, I feel like, consciously, I just don't think I would let myself do that. But I never really felt like I needed it. I was blessed since I was a little kid with a lot of strength. I was never one of those guys that was like, 'I want to be the strongest ever.' I was just concerned with my own strength."

One of his biggest backers – and closest observers – thinks Davis should get accolades not just for what he is doing this season, but how he is doing it.

"Back in the day, in the steroid era, guys were hitting 70 or whatever they were hitting. And this guy is doing it naturally," said Orioles hitting coach Jim Presley. "They are testing this guy every couple weeks. And what's he's got and what he's done on the field is a testament to what he does in the offseason, in the weight room and to his conditioning program. That's a testament to him."

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