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GOING...GOING...GONE

The greatest home-run hitter alive—no, of all time—never really retired. Baseball retired *him*. Now, as Barry Bonds continues his long wait to stand trial for lying under oath about taking steroids, Gabriel Sherman shadows the endlessly embattled slugger to answer a few simple questions: Why isn't he still playing? What is this trial really about? And what does the man *do* all day?

EXILED FROM BASEBALL, Bonds retreated behind the gates of Beverly Park with his wife, Liz, and his three children. When he did venture out, he did so in high style: skiing in Aspen, vacationing in the Bahamas (a photo from the trip was used on his Christmas card last year), golfing with his friend Vince Coleman, the former Cardinals left fielder, and flying to Vegas to hang with the Maloof brothers, owners of the Palms hotel and the Sacramento Kings. In the fall, Bonds told a crowd during a rare appearance at a charity event in downtown San Francisco, "I had fun. But I like my freedom."

Still, Bonds missed the game. Having played twenty-two straight major league seasons, he craved a competitive outlet and was angered that he couldn't get back into baseball. Last September, he told Magowan he was "frustrated that I'm still not playing" when he sat in the owner's box during a Giants game. In December, Bonds hosted a fund-raising dinner for UCSF Children's Hospital at Facebook's headquarters in Palo Alto, California. During an audience Q&A, an attendee asked Bonds if he planned to return to baseball. Bonds paused and then replied, "Maybe—you never know." In January, John Cangelosi, who played with Bonds in Pittsburgh and has kept in touch with him over the years, called his old friend to see how he was doing. Cangelosi, too, asked Bonds if he thought he might stage a comeback. Bonds responded cryptically: "Don't believe everything you read." When Cangelosi asked how he was keeping himself busy, Bonds said, "I ain't doing nothing. I ain't doing *nothing*."

Beyond missing the competition, Bonds, like many retired pro athletes, has struggled to come up with a second career that pays the bills. He is occasionally approached with business opportunities, and last year he toyed with the idea of developing a baseball-related iPhone application. But according to one friend who has detailed knowledge of Bonds's finances, the approximately \$20 million he has left (not counting the value of his homes in Beverly Hills and Aspen) has to pay for a cushy lifestyle and support staff, expenses that run into the high six figures a year. Then there are his legal bills, which will come due after the trial and could total more than \$1 million. "He's at the point where he's going to have to make a lifestyle change or make a ton more money," says the friend. "He needs to find a way to make money being Barry."

Which is hard to do when you get so little love from the public (and vice versa). Throughout his career, Bonds harbored a deep suspicion of traditional celebrity-endorsement deals and still bristles at the idea of collecting a fee to serve as a spokesperson for a company. When a sportswear company recently offered Bonds a six-figure contract to endorse their line, he rejected it. "Are you kidding?" he complained to a friend. "I only get this little amount?" Of course, even if his financial situation forced him to reconsider his distaste for being a pitchman, how many companies would want to hire Barry Bonds to be their public face, anyway? "This is a guy who definitely suffers from the I-need-to-let-you-know-I-don't-care-what-you-think syndrome," says Gideon Yu, the chief financial officer of Facebook, who has gotten to know Bonds through their mutual association with the UCSF hospital. "I wish everyone got to know the real Barry. I've never met Baseball Barry. I've only met the I-love-children-and-I-donate-a-lot-of-time-to-great-causes Barry. I'm like, 'Why don't you let people know the real you?' "

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