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## Bonds pleads not guilty to investigation charges

AFP, SAN FRANCISCO

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US baseball home run king Barry Bonds pleaded not guilty on Friday to perjury and obstruction of justice charges relating to the BALCO steroid distribution investigation.

Bonds, who etched his name into the record books in August by breaking Hank Aaron's long-standing all-time home run record, is accused of lying to investigators probing the steroid distribution case that rocked the sports world.

After the arraignment, Bonds' attorney Allen Ruby told the crush of media outside the Phillip Burton Federal Building that the slugger's defense team would make most of its position known through court documents.

"Almost everything we have to say about this case we'll say in court papers we'll file over the coming months," Ruby said.

"For today, Barry Bonds is innocent. He has trust and faith in the justice system. He will defend these charges, and we're confident of a good outcome," he said.

Along with Olympic sprinter Marion Jones -- who tearfully confessed to using illegal performance enhancing drugs in October and has admitted similar charges -- Bonds is the highest profile athlete to have been caught in the BALCO net.



Barry Bonds arrives at court on Friday in San Francisco, California, to face charges of perjury and obstruction of justice for allegedly lying to a grand jury four years ago about his use of performance-enhancing drugs.

PHOTO: AFP

**"For today, Barry Bonds is innocent. He has trust and faith in the justice system. He will defend these charges, and we're confident of a good outcome."** If convicted on four charges of perjury and one of obstruction of justice he faces up to 30 years in prison.

Bonds was released without travel restrictions on US\$500,000 personal recognizance, meaning he won't have to put up the money unless he violates the conditions of his release.

No trial date was set, but a status hearing in the case was scheduled for Feb. 7. At his lawyers' request, Bonds won't have to appear at that proceeding.

Ruby said the defense may yet seek to have the case dismissed.

**outcome."** "As we told the judge in court, there may be defects on the face of the indictment,"  
**Allen Ruby,** Ruby said. "If you just read it, you can see the defects."  
**attorney for**  
**Barry Bonds** "If we conclude that's the case, then there will be a motion to dismiss the indictment,"  
he said.

A throng of media and fans greeted Bonds when he arrived at the federal building, accompanied by his wife, Liz.

The indictment marked a dismal end to what should have been a triumphant year for Bonds, who passed Aaron to become baseball's all-time home run leader on Aug. 7.

The Giants slugger finished last season with 762 career homers, seven more than Aaron.

Bonds also set the one-season record of 73 homers in 2001. But his links to the BALCO case had cast a dope cheat cloud over the achievements despite his denial of wrongdoing.

According to the indictment, Bonds lied when he claimed he did not knowingly take steroids issued to him by his personal trainer Greg Anderson, one of the men who pleaded guilty in the BALCO steroid distribution case.

Publication by the *San Francisco Chronicle* of Bonds' grand jury testimony, which was to have remained secret, and of the book *Game of Shadows*, outlining Bonds' drug use, made him a pariah with fans.

Major League Baseball did not test for steroids during much of Bonds' career, but toughened testing programs under pressure from US lawmakers.

Despite the welter of evidence linking the player to steroid use, legal experts say his case will by no means be "a slam-dunk" for prosecutors when it eventually comes to trial sometime next year.

"Perjury traditionally has been a very difficult charge to prove for prosecutors because it usually relies on 'he-said, she-said' type testimony," said former federal prosecutor turned defense attorney Brad Simon.

"It's not a slam-dunk for the prosecution in any sense," he said.

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