Still smarting from catching the back of the Tribe's hand in the ALDS, the hated Yankees are undergoing a shift in power as George Steinbrenner continues to transfer decision making and face of the franchise honors over to his son Hank. In Gary's latest, he says that the apple didn't fall far from the tree here, and also reminds us that hating the Yankees is as American as Ford trucks, rock n' roll, and warm apple pie.

It's always nice when the acorn doesn't fall too far from the tree.

If anyone thought that when Yankees owner and former Clevelander George Steinbrenner voluntarily stepped aside from the daily grind in favor of his two sons, Hank and Hal, baseball's flagship franchise might be ready to find a better way to balance its self interest with the overall good of the game, think again.

In the short time since he's become the de facto face of Yankees, Hank Steinbrenner, is proving to be quite a successor to the rather large and boorish shoes of his more famous father.

When Alex Rodriguez initially refused to extend his contract and instead opted out, Hank blew the first of what's turning out to be many gaskets. He vowed not to negotiate any further with Rodriguez or his agent Scott Boras. A few days later, he was doing just that, ultimately signing Rodriguez to a new, equally ridiculous contract.

When the Minnesota Twins were busy trying to play the Yankees off the Boston Red Sox for the services of Johan Santana, Steinbrenner threw down an ultimatum, threatening to pull his offer off the table. The Twins didn't bite but the Yankees stayed in the talks. In fact, well after Steinbrenner's rant, the Yankees kept right on negotiating, up until the point that the New York Mets swept in and stole Santana from the Twins.

Maybe these were just examples of the neglected son finally getting the keys to the car he was ill-trained to handle. Maybe, except that these episodes did signal that Steinbrenner won't be much of an agent of change in stemming the tide of economic insanity that his father helped usher into this modern era of baseball. That hardly surprises. But where Hank could do some real good is on the issue of steroids. Unfortunately, that's the real test he's failing right out of the gate.

Exhibit A occurred when he claimed to be irked that baseball was supposedly being singled out while football in general and the NFL in particular were supposedly getting a free pass with respect to steroids and performance enhancing drugs. Unintentionally hilarious, Steinbrenner told the Associated Press last week "everybody that knows sports knows football is tailor-made for performance-enhancing drugs. I don't know how they managed to skate by. It irritates me. Don't tell me it's not more prevalent. The number in football is at least twice as many. Look at the speed and size of those players."

With nothing more than his own gut feeling to back this up, Steinbrenner completely failed to appreciate that as part of baseball's ownership elite, he and his family are as culpable as anyone in this mess baseball finds itself in.

The last time anyone looked Roger Clemens, Andy Pettitte, Jason Giambi and Chuck Knoblauch were all recipients of the Steinbrenner family's largesse and all three high profile players are at the heart of the steroids scandal. And let's not forget that it was the Steinbrenners, too, who employed Brian McNamee, an admitted steroids distributor. Steinbrenner also has been quick to embrace Pettitte's illegal use, despite the growing body of evidence that Pettitte signed his

latest contract with the Yankees, just days before the Mitchell Report was released, knowing but not disclosing to anyone that he would be named in it. If Steinbrenner is irritated, he needs look no further than the family album to figure out why.

But in case Steinbrenner isn't into self-reflection, then he can at least look at the differences between football's approach to steroids and that of his own sport. In that same story from the Associated Press, Greg Aiello, the NFL's spokesman noted "we've had year-round random testing with immediate suspensions since 1990 and we conduct approximately 12,000 steroids tests a year."

What Aiello didn't say but didn't have to was that the NFL and its union have mostly been out ahead of the steroids problem while baseball and its union had to literally be threatened by Congress with the loss of their antitrust exemption before embracing even a semi-meaningful testing program.

No one is foolish enough to think that simply having a testing program will completely eliminate the inherent stupidity of some players who think they are smart enough to beat the system time and time again. Indeed each and every NFL season brings its share of player suspensions. It's just that the public perceives, and for good reason, that the NFL has had a relatively effective mechanism for dealing with its problem players.

Baseball, as everyone knows, has treated steroids with a wink and a smile. It didn't start testing for steroids until about 10 years after the NFL. Moreover, it's not as if baseball owners have ever taken a particularly strong stance against them, refusing to draw a line in the sand each time the players' union refused to negotiate on the subject. By backing down instead of standing up, the owners let baseball's steroids era flourish. It's why, even to this day, the public still perceives that baseball's system for dealing with illegal drugs is a joke.

The other thing Steinbrenner seems to be forgetting is that baseball, under the

so-called leadership of Commissioner Bud Selig, purposely singled itself out by ordering the Mitchell Report in the first place. Having placed itself in that white-hot spotlight, it's a little disingenuous for the likes of Steinbrenner to now complain.

But that won't stop him of course. It's a Steinbrenner trait. In comments to the New York Post last week, Steinbrenner said that Red Sox fans shouldn't jeer Pettitte too loudly because "they [the Red Sox] had plenty of players doing this stuff, too. It's just that those players weren't mentioned in the Mitchell Report." On the one hand, he's probably right. Given the pervasive use of steroids in baseball, it's rather doubtful that some members of the Red Sox didn't have their own version of McNamee somewhere.

On the other hand, why would Steinbrenner think that Red Sox fans should act any differently than, say, Yankees fans? It's not as if his hometown faithful are known for treating the opposition with respect and dignity. And it's not as if the Yankees, along with their cross-town counterparts, the Mets, aren't ground zero in this latest scandal. But in what is looking to be a Steinbrenner family trait, it's better to attack than fix, deny rather than acknowledge.

At some point, hopefully before it's too late, Selig and the rest of the thumb suckers that run baseball will speak in one credible voice on all the ills that infect their game. It's the path to salvation for a sport in desperate need of some good news. But it looks like it won't happen soon. Given the rather fast start Hank Steinbrenner has gotten himself off to, it looks like Selig and his cronies would have a better chance of nailing Jello to a tree.