Not a good year for Roger Clemens. The guy has gone from an American legend to a steroid abusing liar with a washed up ex-country singer goomar on the side in just five short months. Allegedly of course. Clemens is claiming that Mindy McCready is just a "family friend". How come I can't picture her getting pedicures on a Sunday afternoon with Debbie Clemens? You knew Gary would be all over this one.

The calendar has barely turned the next page into the second quarter of 2008 and already my favorite story of the year has been published. I may ultimately change my mind come November or December, but right now it's hard to imagine how anything can top the story in Monday's New York *Daily News* that Roger Clemens may have had a 10-year affair with defrocked country singer Mindy McCready, unless it's the story in Tuesday's
Daily News
that McCready isn't denying it. Now Clemens finally knows what it's like to be on the business end of a fastball thrown at the head and somewhere a good portion of the baseball world is smirking.

When Clemens sold out his wife during his Congressional hearing by testifying that it was she, not he, taking the performance-enhancing drugs, it wasn't necessarily hard to see something like this coming. But the smart money was on the dust settling first followed by a painful separation and the inevitability of Mrs. Clemens tearfully telling all to Dr. Phil or Barbara Walters, for a fee, that Roger had his share of Baseball Annies strewn about North America. In other words, Clemens having something akin to Magic Johnson's love life wouldn't have been much of a surprise. But an alleged affair that began when Clemens was in his late 20s and his target was still a few years from being legal was a scud. Even

Woody Allen and Roman Polanski ducked for cover.

But really, should any of us be surprised? It may not be the Pythagorean Theorem but there is certainly a mathematical precision at work each time a high profile figure with a healthy dose of sanctimony eventually gets his comeuppance. In simple terms, the closer the ratio between the public figure and his public claims of pureness, the higher the likelihood that said public figure will fall by the same sword he wields. Indeed, increase the stature of the public figure and the more spectacular the fall becomes.

Plug in a congressman for example, multiply it by a public crusade against child abuse and exploitation and you get a disgraced Mark Foley resigning over sending sexually explicit messages to teenage boys serving as congressional pages. Plug in a U.S. Senator, multiply it by a public vote to ban same-sex marriages and it yields Larry Craig pleading guilty to disorderly conduct related to his wandering feet inside a stall in the men's bathroom in the Minneapolis Airport.

In this context, Clemens is just the latest to get hoisted up on his own petard. But what makes this story so rich is how truly self-inflicted and well deserved this all is. Drinking from his own lethal cocktail of an overabundance of self-confidence, an incredible sense of entitlement, and an amount of hubris unknown to the average person, Clemens has been a walking text book in how woefully off-course one can easily veer when dispossessed of reality. So certain that he could spin a more believable yarn than a hanger-on like former trainer Brian McNamee, Clemens was completely blind as to how bad things might get for him when his story got challenged.

Immediately lawyering up and conducting an almost laughable public relations battle for his so-called reputation, Clemens tried to portray himself as the victim of a former friend motivated to lie to avoid prison. The problem is that no one really bought that premise. McNamee's cooperation was reluctantly obtained in the first place and the only thing between him and prison is truthful testimony. The lies are too easy to discredit. But that's not the only thing Clemens got wrong. He's not

nearly as beloved as he likes to think he is, a few fawning Congressional sycophants notwithstanding.

Clemens has never been known as a great teammate. He's arrogant and standoffish, a me-first player in a team-first sport. He's one of the original carpetbaggers always willing to sell his services to the highest bidder. In his last several years he didn't even attempt to hide his contempt for his sport and his teammates by treating spring training as a ritual for those of lesser talent and stature than he.

But only the most hard core Clemens deniers think that his yearly retire/unretire ritual was motivated by a strong desire to spend more time with the family. Instead, it's been openly whispered for years that this shell game was designed to allow Clemens to evade league drug testing in the off season (as if that should ever have been a concern anyway) and come back when he was finally clean.

The reason that these sorts of things were only openly whispered is because Clemens is Clemens. His on the field achievements are among the greatest in the game and cast a large shadow over whatever other baggage he carries. He never lacked for talent, only character, and now those flaws are finally coming home to roost.

It was touching how Clemens played the family card during his Congressional testimony even while missing the abject irony of also acknowledging that his former trainer was spending a little private time in the Clemens bedroom with Mrs. Clemens juicing her up for a Sports Illustrated photo shoot. It's the same card he played as rationale for filing the suit the defamation suit against McNamee that ultimately is responsible for the revelations regarding his icky affair "family" relationship with a troubled B-list former country star. And as long as that suit continues, expect even more sordid revelations since Clemens' supposedly stellar reputation is at the heart of the litigation. As they say in boxing, he's lead with his chin and now it's open season for anyone with an axe to grind, and there are plenty.

What Clemens doesn't get is that it's not defamation if it's true. If Clemens thinks he was frustrated that more people didn't buy his Congressional testimony, wait until he finally grasps that even less will buy his explanation of his relationship with McCready. As he's sorting through this new mess, he should at least stop for the kind of personal reflection that has eluded him to this point.

If he does take that opportunity, then maybe he'll begin to realize how far he's sunk when he's dealing with a public far more inclined to believe an admitted drug pusher-McNamee-and a convicted, drug-addled country singer than a seven-time Cy Young winner.

But personal reflection has never seemed to be much of a Clemens strength, which is why the only chance of a better story coming along this year than the current Clemens saga is if another Clemens skeleton comes dancing out of what's turning out to be a huge, walk-in closet. And again, most of baseball is smirking.