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Father Steinbrenner's home for wayward men

The 1996 New York Yankees are more than just another baseball team - they are a natural experiment conducted without government money or foundation grants, which has demonstrated that troubled men can over-come their pasts.

No corporate boss can match George Steinbrenner for his progressive approach to putting ex-offenders to work. Forget baseball the Yankees have much to offer as an example of how a business can thrive by giving young men of all races a second (and sometimes third, fourth and fifth) chance to prove themselves in today's highly competitive economy.

When Wade Boggs, the Yankees' third baseman, played for the Red Sox, he made a name for himself as a sexual all-star as well as batting champion. While married with children, you may recall, Mr. Boggs brought a mistress along on almost every road trip from 1984 through 1987. Mr. Boggs' girlfriend, a southern California mortgage broker named Marge Adams, sold her story for \$100,000 to *Penthouse* in 1989 and sued her ex-lover for \$6 million. Like Dick Morris, Mr. Boggs didn't recognize the importance of paying for silence as well as for sex. Although Mr. Boggs lost his job as a spokesman for the New England-based Raytheon Company, he eventually wound up in the Bronx, where the fans are more accepting than the current inhabitants of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The Yankee pitching staff has historically been susceptible to evil influences. Almost 40 years ago, the Yankee star reliever was Ryne Duren, a fastball pitcher who drank even harder than he threw. That great Yankee tradition was continued in recent years in former Yankee bullpen ace Steve Howe, who was suspended seven times for drug- and alcohol-related problems and arrested this season at Kennedy International Airport for carrying a loaded .357 revolver soon after his baseball career had ended. Dwight Gooden, the ex-Met who won 11 games for the Yankees this season, has had a past that would have intimidated most bosses, especially given the Howe experiment, but not Boss Steinbrenner. At the age of 22, Mr. Gooden was treated at Smithers Alcoholism Treatment and Training Center, the Upper East Side clinic for the rich and famous that has given way to more profitable real estate purposes. At age 29, Mr. Gooden was treated at the Betty Ford Center for drug abuse, and last year, after signing with the Yankees, he was arrested in St. Petersburg, Fla., for going 117 miles per hour in a 55 m.p.h. zone, with two beers by his side and a 9-millimeter handgun (for which he had a permit) in his glove compartment.

The courageous starter David Cone, an ex-Met, ex-Bluejay and ex-Royal, has been reborn under Mr. Steinbrenner. Over the years, various women have accused Mr. Cone of sexual misconduct, but none of the charges stuck.

It's hard to imagine a banker, publisher or politician in this town who would hire someone with Darryl Strawberry's record. Mr. Strawberry, who hit three home runs in the recent series against

the Baltimore Orioles, has been lost for most of the 90's. He was treated for substance abuse, charged with spousal abuse and convicted of tax evasion for failing to disclose income from autographing baseballs and appearing at baseball card shows.

Of course, the Yankees' front office is also a full participant in the Steinbrenner Rehabilitation Program. Gene Michael, the former Yankee manager and general manager who remains on Mr. Steinbrenner's payroll, was arrested in March 1995 for driving under the influence of alcohol and leaving the scene after he hit a street pole and refused to take a Breathalyzer test.

Here's hoping that Mr. Steinbrenner who himself was found guilty of making illegal contributions to get Richard Nixon re-elected (and was later pardoned) can continue to work his magic until each of his reborn recidivists and rehab cases has a World Series ring. Mr. Steinbrenner may be the only boss in the city who runs a true meritocracy.

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