



Thursday, February 10, 2005

Torre: Trust is needed

FROM WIRE REPORTS

NEW YORK -- Joe Torre is used to addressing packs of reporters who are paid to cover his every word. Tuesday night, however, everyday fans, each paying \$29.99, were the ones asking the questions.

They peppered him about things ranging from whether he sees the advantages of yoga (he does) to where he gets his shades (from a friend who owns a sunglasses store).

But Torre, the Yankees' manager since 1996, also addressed more serious issues, like Major League Baseball's more stringent steroid policy.

"I think we're on the right path right now in having players having to be tested without being warned," he told about 800 people during a 90-minute question-and-answer session staged by the Learning Annex. According to the organization's rules, members of the news media were not allowed to ask questions.

"It doesn't necessarily have to be during the season," Torre added of the drug testing. "The players are the ones who pushed this, basically because they don't want to, you know, be painted with the same brush as guys who are using steroids.

"You know, this game has been too good for too long for people not to trust the players."

The boy who asked about steroids, among the 50 or so people who stood in a question line at the New York Society for Ethical Culture on Central Park West, could barely reach the microphone. Torre made sure the boy understood the dangers of taking performance-enhancing drugs.

"It's dangerous to the people who use them," he said. "You don't know what it does to your body. Unfortunately, young people like yourself like to copy the players that they really like.

"To me, it's like allowing some players to use aluminum bats and the rest of them have to use wood bats. It's not really fair. And I just feel, first off, that the health of the player is the most important thing."