



New York City Could be the Next to Ban Smokeless Tobacco in MLB Stadiums

By Ben Sieck, 2-5-2016

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A longtime staple of baseball culture, smokeless tobacco, is gradually seeing its influence come to an end at the highest level of competition. Fenway Park in Boston, Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles and AT&T Park in San Francisco have all banned players from using the substance on the field and in the clubhouse for the upcoming season. Now it could be New York's turn.

New York City Councilman Corey Johnson is set to introduce a bill today that will ban smokeless tobacco from Citi Field and Yankee Stadium, homes of the New York Mets and Yankees, respectively. Both teams have told Johnson they will support the bill, according to the New York Times.

The Washington advocacy group, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, is behind a lot of the pressure put on major league clubs by encouraging local politicians to pass laws against smokeless tobacco in stadiums.

Tony Gwynn, one of the greatest hitters in MLB history, died in 2014 at just 54 to salivary gland cancer — something he attributed to smokeless tobacco. However, there was still pushback to banning the substance outright in the wake of Gwynn's death. Widespread change, even in the realm of smokeless tobacco, tends to happen slowly, and this latest movement is a step in the right direction.

For those curious about enforcement, players and coaches who violate these new laws will be ejected from the stadium premises. It will be interesting to see just how stringently this is enforced.

When asked by the Times for his thoughts on the ban, Mets third baseman David Wright was diplomatic in his answer.

"On one hand, I would argue we are adults and that's a choice we choose to make," he wrote in an email. "On the other hand, we are role models and the last thing we want is for an underage kid to begin using because they watched their favorite players do it."

It is clear there will be some pushback to this sort of legislation, but it is hopefully a step towards curbing the use of a dangerous product in adults and children alike.