

## BALCO founder Victor Conte has tell-all book ready

Contributed by TERI THOMPSON in New York and NATHANIEL VINTON in San Francisco  
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SAN FRANCISCO -

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While the BALCO athletes, particularly Barry Bonds and Marion Jones, have been in the unwelcome spotlight in recent years, Conte, who enjoys speaking his mind, has been frustrated by being forced to assume an uncharacteristic measure of discretion because of legal jeopardy. (It has also been an expensive battle for Conte. In

BALCO founder Victor Conte is ready to point finger at government, but also at athletes, coaches and reporters, as he prepares tell-all book about steroid scandal for September release.

the case of

Jones, who is serving a prison sentence for lying to the government, Conte says he spent upwards of \$100,000 to defend a baseless \$25 million lawsuit Jones filed against him for saying she used performance-enhancing drugs).

Off criminal probation as

of midnight on Monday, Conte is expected to celebrate his return to freedom with a tell-all book spilling the juice on BALCO athletes and the federal agents who have been prosecuting them now for five years.

Conte, who has remained mostly silent as the government, the media and the athletes involved have examined, analyzed and dissected the most explosive drug case in sports history, says he will now tell his side of the story.

Slated for publication in September under the Skyhorse imprint, the book's working title is "BALCO: The Straight Dope on Barry Bonds, Marion Jones and What We Can Do To Save Sports." Conte, in conjunction with co-author Nathan Jendrick, promises to share "the dirt, the drugs, the doses, the names, dates and places, and a 'prescription' for a brighter future."

He promises the "complete truth in its honest, unadulterated and raw form" and says he is "ready to tell the world everything."

One of Conte's biggest targets is likely to be Jeff Novitzky, the federal agent who sniffed out the BALCO conspiracy in 2003 and has tenaciously chased down every twist in it ever since.

Conte claims Novitzky, who is on the witness stand today in the government's prosecution of cyclist Tammy Thomas (the first BALCO athlete to refuse a plea bargain and take her case to trial), fabricated a confession he says Conte gave on the day of the BALCO raid, and lied in court documents.

The 27 athletes Novitzky says Conte confessed to giving drugs to in the September, 2003 raid on BALCO?

"He made the list himself," Conte says.

Novitzky faces cross-examination Monday by Thomas' attorney, who may attack the credibility of the secretive agent and uncover weaknesses that lawyers for Barry Bonds can exploit when Bonds goes to trial next year.

Novitzky was also the subject of an internal investigation by the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) for leaking confidential investigative information about the case and for missing evidence, according to Conte.

"Novitzky and three other IRS special agents hired lawyers and signed proffers before cooperating with the investigation," Conte says. "There were inconsistencies with some of the statements. It was acknowledged in the report that the investigation could cause credibility issues for the agents if the BALCO case ever went to trial."

The investigation was apparently closed after six months.

In July 2005, Conte entered guilty pleas to two criminal counts and accepted a punishment of four months in prison and four months of house arrest. The prison term was also followed by a two-year probation period during which Conte's lawyers advised him to keep quiet about BALCO.

Now, says Conte, he is free to dish up what he calls the lies, the sex-for-drugs exchanges between athletes and coaches, the drug calendars of famous sports figures, the injections given and the pills taken, the

hypocrisies of some of the "reformed" athletes, factual errors he says exist in one of the books written about BALCO, and mostly, the government's abuses.

"It's my opinion that Novitzky is to law enforcement, what I was to sport," Conte says. "I helped athletes to use drugs, win medals and break records. I believe Novitzky has helped law enforcement to lie, steal and cheat in order to win cases. In both instances, the real question is whether or not the end has justified the means. It's my opinion that it has not, in either case. What's wrong is wrong and there is no justification for wrongdoing in sport or in law enforcement."

Conte says the book will also deal with what needs to be done to clean up doping in sports.

"It was not long ago when Bug Selig was claiming that baseball didn't have a drug problem. The world certainly knows now that there has been a rampant use of drugs in sport for decades. The anti-doping programs in place are still inept and this contributes to the use or lose mentality of many athletes. I will continue bring attention to the many loopholes that exist in the testing programs. Hopefully, one day athletes will be able to be clean and play on a level playing field at the same time.

"I see that I have the potential to make change - I can do that."