

"I'm not bad. I'm no Joe Morgan, but I'm pretty good for a white guy."

Pete Rose, comparing his speed to that of the hall-of-fame second baseman, who is black

■ In my opinion



CLAYTON JONES
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

A tutorial in talking trash, the right way

Gaining a mental edge in sports is almost as important as having a physical edge on an opponent.

Like Yogi Berra said, "Baseball is 90 percent mental, and the other half is physical."

Well, something like that.

A few tactics athletes use to gain a mental edge are trash-talking and taunting. Getting into another player's head is something that can come in handy.

Take basketball for instance.

When a player is on and he knows it, it's good to let an opponent know that "he can't guard you," or to ask him, "Are you even trying?" or to tell him, "All game baby!"

Gary Payton is a notorious trash-talker, and opposing players' frustration seems to keep them more concerned about getting back at Payton than winning the game.

Unbeknownst to many, Michael Jordan was a big talker on the court. But unlike most, he backed it up.

I'm not a big fan of taunting in the NBA, especially after dunking on someone. It's two points. Big deal. Run to the other end of the court and play some defense.

Granted, a lot of taunting comes from those "AND 1" tapes and tours with those fancy basketball tricks, where style is of the utmost importance and quality of play is a little less of a priority.

Football is a good sport in which to talk some trash. I love to see Brett Favre get in the face of a big lineman after being knocked down and let him know he can't be hurt.

But I would definitely choose smaller guys to anger if I were him.

There is one sport in which excessive trash-talking doesn't have a place: baseball.

Why would a hitter want to taunt a pitcher? I see these guys flip their bats, undo their batting gloves and/or just stand there when they've hit a home run.

Act like you've hit one before.

If I'm them, I really don't want to get on the bad side of a pitcher who can throw the ball 90-plus mph — potentially ending me with a pitch to the cranium.

Another thing hitters do is get hit with a pitch and stare at the pitcher. As a former pitcher, I can tell hitters something: No matter how much you stare at a pitcher, you aren't going to keep the pitcher from throwing inside.

Also, I can't stand seeing hitters yell at a pitcher and wait for their teammates to get on the field before they charge. Just go, but if you do, don't pull a Robin Ventura — be aware of who you are charging. That man chose the wrong pitcher to mess with, and Nolan Ryan gave him the old-school headlock and noogie move.

But if you are going to talk trash, here are some rules:

1) Don't trash-talk or taunt if the opponent is significantly ahead in the contest.

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■ Outdoor recreation



COURTESY

Oregon student Noah Smith hasn't let his shattered spinal column and bruised spinal cord, the result of a car wreck that left him paralyzed, stop him from getting back to some of his favorite outdoor activities, such as canoeing.

Back TO Nature

More than two and a half years after an automobile accident left him paralyzed, Noah Smith is getting back to doing the things he loves

BY ASHLEY GRIFFIN
OUTDOOR RECREATION REPORTER

On Dec. 1, 2002, an airborne tire hit former University student Noah Smith's car and caused quite a wreck. He sustained extensive injuries so great that afterward he couldn't participate in his favorite outdoor activities, such as hiking, swimming, camping or working at the University's Outdoor Program and the Northwest Youth Corps, based in Eugene.

"My favorite thing to do was work for Northwest Youth Corps in the summer time; building trails, hiking all over the Northwest and working with high school kids and teaching them about the outdoors," Smith said. "With the OP, I enjoyed going on trips with fellow University students and just being around people that appreciated the outdoors."

The accident shattered his spinal column and bruised his spinal cord, causing paralysis. Still, Smith was not ready to give up his love of the outdoors. Ever the determined individual, the 22-year-old soon made plans for the future that didn't include sitting still.

After a recovery period at Sacred Heart Medical Center, Smith moved to a rehabilitation center called Project Walk. The center has an intensive program for people who have suffered spinal cord injuries. At the center, Smith works at his physical therapy two hours per day, three days per week. He also does therapy at home for two hours every day he isn't in therapy to increase his ability to do the activities of days past.

"I felt that as long as I was in a wheelchair, outdoor activities would not be unavailable to me," he said. "In the acute stages I couldn't bear to think about never doing them again, so I just set my sights on walking again."

All his major muscle groups are now

working due to his dedication and what some might call a miracle. He can only go short distances in therapy but continues to work at walking every day.

The real miracle is that Smith didn't stop with his efforts to walk. Always an outdoor enthusiast and someone bitten by the travel bug, Smith traveled to Kenya and South Africa after high school and had plans to visit Chile through the University before he was injured.

Smith continues to pursue his dreams of travel, although the destinations aren't as distant. Smith's therapists directed him to a program affiliated with the Rehab Institute of Chicago called "Moving Mountains" that helps get individuals back into the outdoors.

"The trip in Chicago was a real turning point in my recovery," he said. "It wasn't until I layed down in my tent that first night that I realized how much I'd needed to be outdoors."

He added that the trip provided a needed break from his grueling and monotonous rehab.

Various outdoor enthusiasts helped Smith and his fellow travelers participate in adapted versions of rock climbing, biking and kayaking at the Mississippi Palisades campsite in Illinois. The most rewarding activity for Smith was the rock climbing.

"It is adapted so that I am part of a pulley system. To get up the rock I have to do chin-ups while someone belays me from below ... I finally made it to the top, the sun was setting over the Mississippi but still high enough to beat down on my face," he said. "The first year of my injury, I had someone with me at all times. This was the first and one of only a few times that I was alone. It was the first time

in six months of being injured that I felt like a human being again."

Many of Smith's family and friends see his perseverance and willingness to try new and challenging activities as part of accomplishing his life goals.

"I think he is very passionate about getting his life back on track and accomplishing all the goals in life that he has set for himself," said Joshua Johnson, a friend who shared a therapist with Smith at an ERIC therapy center in Chicago two years ago.

In April, Smith traveled to San Diego to reach another life goal with a nonprofit organization called Team Thor USA: paragliding. His friend and massage therapist, Mistie Jung, witnessed the event and was amazed at Smith's ability to try new things.

"He wasn't nervous at all. In fact he was quite the opposite, as I was the one who was anxious," she said. "I was and am still inspired by his courage and willingness to soar off the edge of a cliff."

Smith has also taken trips that focus on areas other than the outdoors. In March, he flew to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the passage of the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Act that would allocate federal funds for spinal cord research.

"I'm pushing for advancements in science to cure paralysis," he said. "There are currently many promising advances being made towards a cure for paralysis, but politics and funding are holding them back."

In each area of his life, Smith is pressing forward and proving that one individual can beat the odds and accomplish life goals.

"My family and friends were very supportive and always encouraged me to pursue whatever I could dream," Smith said. "I dream of someday walking the trails that I worked on before my injury."

READ MORE ONLINE

For more information about Smith or the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Act, visit Noahsmith.org and unite2fightparalysis.org.

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