

# James Gould: Proving the world wrong

New ASG president overcomes a debilitating injury and years of teasing to take Clackamas to new heights

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Feature Editor

On any given day, a typical student here at Clackamas might see James Gould, our newly appointed ASG president, walking through campus.

At first glance he may not appear to be someone capable of running the affairs of our student government. His left foot turns in slightly, causing him to limp, his left hand is curled and carried by his side. At one time, he was labeled mentally retarded by the school system.

However, beyond all the external factors lies a motivated, determined, intelligent, and compassionate man. He has beaten all the odds and grown from an underestimated, lonely and teased child to hold the highest position available for students at our college today.

"Someone may see me and know that I'm a part of the student government and think right off, I wouldn't be able to do something like that," Gould commented. "But then I'll go and prove them wrong. I've been proving people wrong my whole life."

Gould's venture into proving people wrong started at the age of three and a half.

Up until that point in his life, he had been your average, healthy three year-old. He played in mud-pools (built by his father), loved to eat spaghetti by smearing it everywhere, and he loved to rough-house with animals.

However, in the early eighties James was playing with his brother Jason near a huge Eucalyptus tree when suddenly a branch, weighing approximately 65 pounds, fell from the tree and landed on Gould's head, crushing his skull. He lost the equivalent of two tablespoons of brain matter and the left side of his body became paralyzed.

Gould was rushed to the hospital where he underwent several surgeries to remove pieces of his skull from his wound. And he spent the next four days in a coma. The doctors told Gould's parents that he wouldn't survive, and if he did survive then he wouldn't be able to walk and he would be brain damaged.

"My mom and dad talked to me [while I was in the coma] all the time. They read stories to me and

told me what was going on at home," Gould said. "When I came out of the coma the first person I saw was my mom and the first words I said were, 'I love you, mama.'"

The road to recovery was long and arduous, and they seemed to hit roadblocks at every turn. However, after 59 days at the hospital Gould came home.

"Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to have the use of both arms...I would also like to know what it would be like to play all the sports that you need two hands in," Gould said. However, he doesn't hold any frustration or resentment about the cards that life dealt him.

When asked if there was one thing he would change about his life, Gould answered, "I wouldn't change anything. My accident has made me a more caring person and maybe I wouldn't even be here as the president if it never happened."

Even though Gould's outlook is optimistic, his life hasn't always been easy. Perpetual teasing and name calling followed Gould from elementary school through high school.

However, although the comments stung, he never felt any anger toward the people who teased him.

"The people didn't understand what had happened to me. If they were in my situation they would be going through the same thing. I don't blame them for what they've said,"

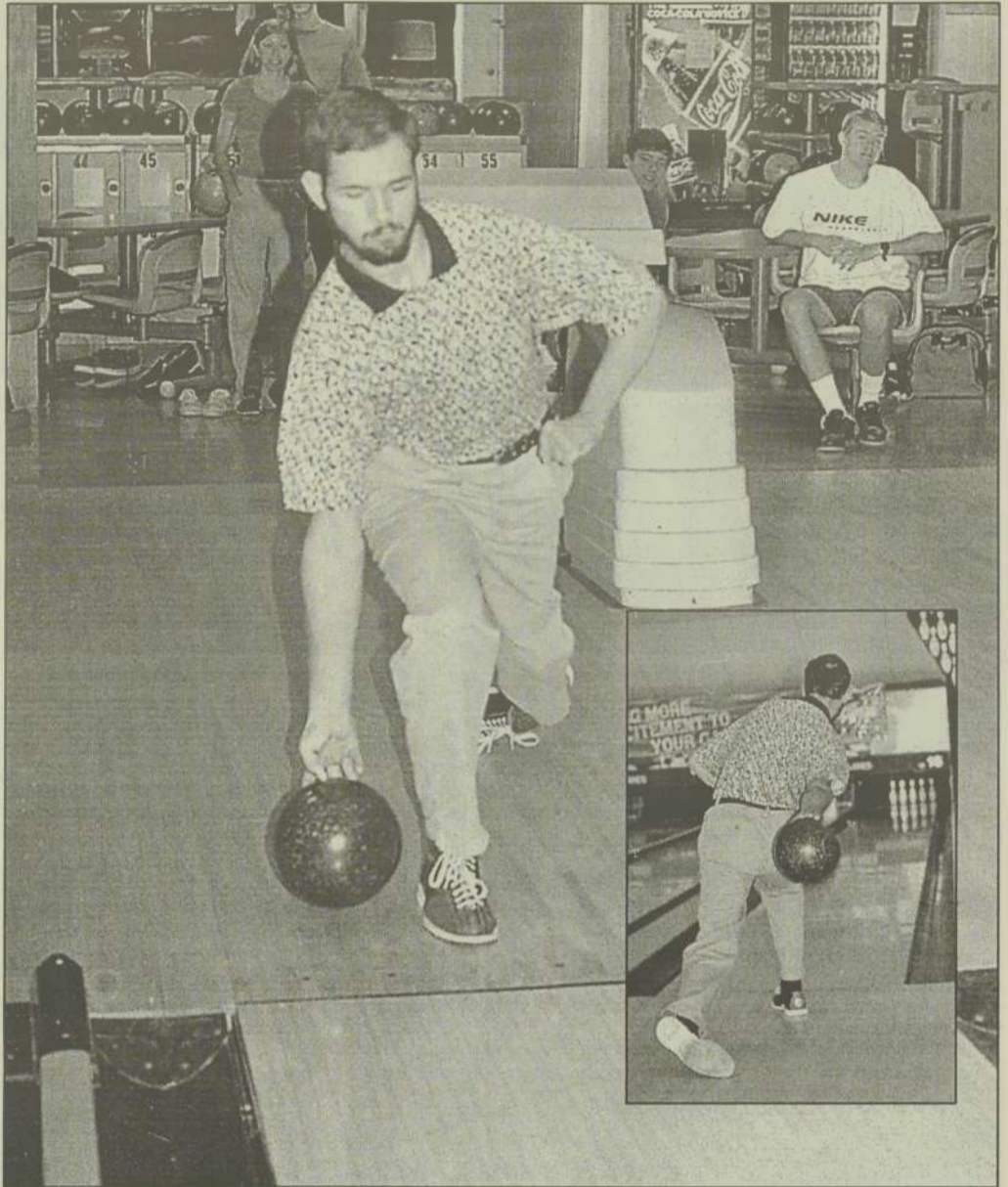


SARAH WELCH / Clackamas Print

**Gould is proud of everything he has accomplished and he is excited about his new job as president**

shared Gould.

In 1995, Gould was faced with another heartache. His father, the man he affectionately calls his hero, died unexpectedly of a heart attack.



SARAH WELCH / Clackamas Print

**Gould loves to go bowling and has a high score of 180. His disability doesn't slow him down, whether he is playing sports, running the student government or working on homework from his classes.**

"He wasn't there to see me graduate from high school and I wish he was here to see me now. But I know he's watching from above," Gould emotionally recounted.

After his high school graduation in 1998, Gould enrolled at Clackamas. Many years prior, counselors and therapists thought that Gould could never graduate from high school, let alone go to college.

Shortly after enrolling in the fall of 1998, Bryan Fuentez, then the vice president, recruited Gould to get involved in the ASG.

And by the end of the year Gould decided to run for vice president.

He didn't know if he even had a chance against his opponents, who were popular and athletic. But Gould's victory, by an overwhelming majority, proved again to Gould and those around him that he could do anything he set his mind to.

Shortly after the decision to remove Jennifer Rankin from her position as ASG president was upheld, and Gould was appointed to assume her position,

he encountered other attacks.

This time people were not attacking him because of his disability, but instead because of his outspokenness at the trial and about the Rankin controversy. While the majority of people were supportive, Gould encountered some animosity from some members of ASG.

"We just need to focus on the changes that need to happen in student government and put all this behind us," Gould replied, when asked about the frustrations within the ASG.

He won't let the negativity of a few people bother him as he works to put back the pieces and begin a fruitful year in student government.

His agenda is full and his workload tough, but Gould isn't one to turn down a challenge.

"I struggled a little bit last term trying to balance everything," Gould recalled, "It was hard, but I'm doing better this term."

While he strives to balance a full load of courses, his posi-

tion as president and a social life (including time spent with his girlfriend Audra), he doesn't take anything he has for granted.

Gould understands the value of a moment and also the value of life.

"I don't mind talking about my accident. I'm a motivational person and I know that there's a reason I'm here right now."

Gould has many goals for the future. He wants to be married and have a family. However, his main focus is becoming an elementary school teacher.

It is his maturity and wisdom that has brought him so far in life. When most people would quit and give up, Gould pressed on toward the goal, never losing sight of who he was or what he was capable of accomplishing.

"I will continue to prove people wrong. It's what I do best."

Comments or questions can be directed to Shelbi Wescott at 657-6958 x 2309 or shelbi5@juno.com

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