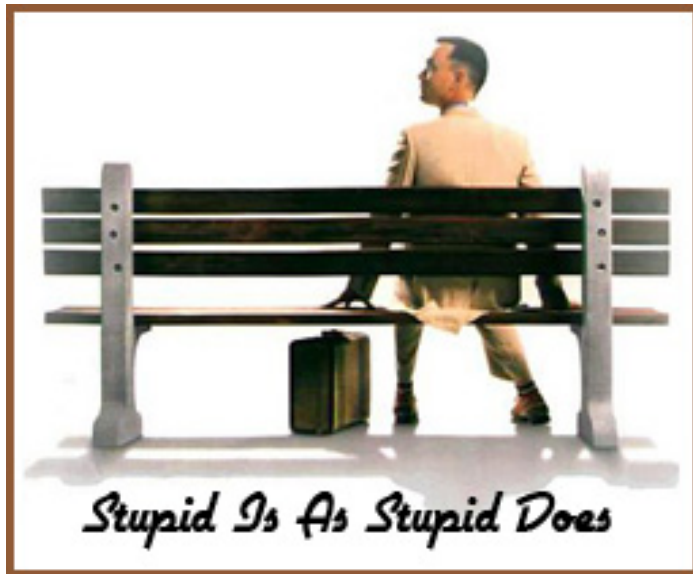


## Lingering Items--Stupid Is As Stupid Does Edition

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

Saturday, July 03 2010 9:15 AM -

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I don't own a gun. Never have and never will. In fact, I've never even shot a gun and have no desire to do so. And the last thing I want to do on the cusp of the Fourth of July and in the face of the U.S. Supreme Court's siding with the NRA on gun control laws is to get into a debate about guns. So I'll leave it at this: Are Robaire Smith and Shaun Rogers that stupid?

I ask that because in the span of one season, both defensive linemen were arrested as the result of trying to bring a loaded firearm on an airplane. Each had the gun in their carry-on luggage as they went through security and at least we know that the Transportation Safety Administration can spot the most obvious offenses.

What we also know is that while Rogers' arrest was months ago now, Smith actually was caught first, at an airport in Flint, Michigan last November. It's just that local police dithered over whether to file local or federal charges. They settled recently on local charges. The sweet irony though is that when Rogers was arrested last April at Hopkins Airport, Smith was traveling with him. It's almost as if Smith was playing Alan Funt setting up Rogers for some sort of Candid Camera moment. (By the way, am I dating myself with the Candid Camera reference? If so, here's the Wikipedia link : [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candid\\_Camera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candid_Camera) ). Except the only hidden camera is the one that documented the arrest.

In each case, of course, the two numbskulls pleaded ignorance and appropriately so. It's

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actually easy to believe that neither realized the gun was in their carry-on bag. Even the 8-year olds in Miss Landers class know that you can't take a gun on an airplane. But exactly why these two are packing that kind of heat in the first place and who exactly they are protecting themselves from is far more difficult to understand.

This is where the gun lobby jumps in, glosses over those questions and shoots (sorry) right over to every American's Constitutional right to bear arms and, of course, arm bears. But this isn't a Civics lesson. This is more practical.

The gun Smith had was a Five-seveN Belgium made semi-automatic handgun. Knowing nothing about guns myself, a little research tells me that this particular beauty with the strange capitalization (in honor of its manufacturer FN Herstal) is manufactured for use by police and SWAT units. The Browns' defensive line is a lot of things, but it isn't a police or a SWAT unit. In fact, it's almost the opposite of that so unskilled has it been at times at stopping any opposition.

I kind of get the notion that people like to keep handguns in the house to supposedly thwart an attack in the middle of the night. (I digress to tell you a true story about my friend, Tim: He is one such person. Because he has young children, he keeps the gun locked in a safe and keeps a lock on the gun. One late night, his wife heard what she thought was some rustling in the house. Tim tiptoed down the steps and into his office, carefully trying to evade the intruder even as the alleged intruder was helping himself to Tim's various riches, which aren't much. For all Tim knew, the intruder could have passed him on the stairs on his way up to see what awaited him upstairs. After quietly unlocking the safe, Tim grabbed the gun. The problem was that he couldn't get the safety lock off the gun because he couldn't find the key, despite trying for several minutes. By Tim's account, at least a half hour had now passed which means if the intruder was still there he's probably as dumb as Smith or Rogers. Rendered useless without his gun, Tim called the police, which was actually the most useful thing he had done. After a careful sweep of the house, which meant, I think, turning on the lights and looking around, there was no intruder. The theory is that the dog, who is blind anyway, walked into a door. The next morning, Tim diligently looked for the key, found it after an hour or so, and unlocked the gun only to discover it was so dirty from non-use that it wouldn't have fired anyway, kind of like the guns Barney Fife used to give Goober and Otis when he would deputize them. Now Tim keeps the gun nice and clean. He also keeps near the lock, which is about as practical as having a gun lock in the first place.)

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What I don't get, though, is the immediate need for guys like Smith and Rogers, and millions of others like them, to pack that kind of firepower. Physically these two are pretty intimidating on their own, or at least they appear to be. But if they need the false confidence that guns give them, what chance, really, do they have in a straight out fight against an opposing offensive lineman every Sunday?

On second thought, maybe that's exactly why the Browns' defensive line has been so bad.

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The post-post-post-post Russell Branyan era has begun in Cleveland and after Friday night's game, the Indians were 5-1. That means they're winning 83% of their games without Branyan and while I could do a little research on this point I'm not sure it's necessary. An 83% winning percentage will be good enough to get in the playoffs.

The one thing that struck me about the Branyan transaction, both going and coming, is how vastly different two teams can see the same thing. When the Indians signed Branyan, it was pretty much confirmation that Indians' general manager Mark Shapiro had simultaneously thrown in the towel and lost his mind.

It was recognition, really, that the Indians are being funded on the cheap. Branyan represented neither a missing piece nor a long term solution. Indeed he represented nothing much in particular except a guy with a bad back who would take at-bats away from Matt LaPorta.

In Seattle, though, Branyan is being sold by general manager Jack Zduriencik as tangible proof that his team is trying to win. Zduriencik's actual words was that the Branyan trade brings the team credibility. It's a fine line between credibility and crap and I suspect that Mariners fans have a pretty good idea which is which.

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Seattle was a better team than Cleveland without Brayan. All his return to Seattle accomplishes for them is to perhaps bring the two teams closer, sort of addition by subtraction for one and subtraction by addition for the other.

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There's a pretty high amusement factor in thinking about grown men who should know better literally dropping to their knees to lick the feet of LeBron James during a series of meetings in Cleveland this week.

New York Knicks head coach Mike D'Antoni sounded positively giddy, like a teenage boy who discovered his father's collection of porn, at the freedom he now has to publicly declare his man-love for James. It's like college recruiting without the pretense that it's about academics.

As wordly as James is and wants to be, he's still just a big kid at heart. Two quick stories: Two weeks ago I was driving home from the grocery store. James lives in my neighborhood, about a mile away. As I turned the corner near, I saw James and one of his buddies riding bicycles like they were any other bicyclists out for a nice Saturday ride. James was wearing a helmet, by the way.

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As I watched James ride, it struck me how innocent it all looked. At the same time various ESPN talking heads and so-called experts were talking all over each other in an epic quest to look smart while knowing nothing, James was just out having a nice, wholesome time in the neighborhood. There was something oddly affirming about it all and made me think "where in New York City will he ride his bike?"

Then, on the night before the official quest for James began, when most of these same talking heads and so-called experts were probably theorizing that James was in deep meetings trying to determine how best to proceed, James instead was at a local high school with his buddies playing a game of softball and signing autographs for the few that happened to notice he was there. It tells you that James is far more relaxed about this process than almost everyone else. It also tells you, once again, that James is happiest when he's around his friends doing the same kinds of things that a lot of us like to do in our off time.

If it were me giving the presentation to James, that's exactly what I'd focus on. James undoubtedly wants to win multiple championships, but for him it's about relationships even more. He wants to be part of the mix and he wants to have a good time. But by all accounts the Nets and the Knicks instead focused on the worldwide branding efforts and all the kinds of things that will come anyway because of James' talent on the court. To me it sounds like a misstep.

When James said Cleveland has the edge to sign him, I believe him, but not because of any obligation he feels toward the city, but because it's home. It's where he rides his bike. It's where he plays softball. It's where he goes to the movies and shops for groceries. And it's where all his friends still are. That's the most powerful tug of all.

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Mike D'Antoni claimed he was cautiously optimistic about the Knicks' presentation. Which begs

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this week's question to ponder: Wouldn't it have been more appropriate for D'Antoni to say he was optimistically cautious?