

Talk about a column I can relate with. In this week's edition of Moot Points, Hiko takes a look at why he hasn't stopped smoking cigarettes, digging deep into his youth, retracing the steps of how and why he became a smoker ... and why he is still a smoker today. Hiko also hits on the departure of Charlie Frye, and the guy that might be the #1 pick of the 2010 NFL Draft.



OR

The Marlboro Man

I've had a sinus infection for about a week. It sucks. I wake up each day, hacking from the drainage that occurred during the sleeping hours. I feel a pressure in my head, as if Ted Washington were sitting on my temple. I sneeze. I blow my nose. I down sinus medication like [Smarties](#), and yet nothing eases my misery.

I finally broke down and went to the doctor today (I hate going to the doctor). "All right, Doc. Hook me up with some antibiotics," I told him.

He examined my ears and throat, then asked me to describe the pain. “It hurts,” I said, stating the obvious. “But it’s especially bad when I’m smoking.”

“Why don’t you quit smoking?” he asked.

“There’s a thought!” I replied sarcastically.

As I’ve explained before to you – my faithful readers (Hi Ma!) – I don’t want to. I could stop smoking. I could also chew on thumbtacks. Or superglue my eyelids shut. Or jump into an abandoned well full of tarantulas with the chicken flu.

But I’d rather not.

Why don’t I want to quit smoking, what with the plethora of health benefits, the improved lung capacity, the enhanced senses of smell and taste, the lack of foul odor, and – let’s not forget – the monetary savings? Do I really want to spend the winter shivering on my deck, huddled against a blizzard, trying to watch Browns games through the window whilst sucking down a heater?

Ignore for a moment that I have a physical addiction to the nicotine (and the 708 other deadly toxins found in the cylinders of death). Ignore my oral fixation to the act of smoking. Ignore my psychological association of smoking to many of my other activities, such as drinking adult beverages, driving long distances, watching sporting events, and, well, being awake. Ignore these things and... actually, that about sums it up.

I love the act of smoking, and I hate being told what to do.

How did this start, you ask?

Summer, 1983, Ashtabula, OH. A 10 year old Hiko is visiting his grandparents for 2 weeks. He spends 2 weeks with them every summer (a desperate attempt by his mother to regain sanity by imposing her stress-inducing son to someone else's care). Several other boys of about his age live in the neighborhood, and he often stays out with them all day playing games and building forts and riding bikes and throwing rocks at babies and what not.

One of his friends has been mowing the yard for some other neighbors whilst they are on vacation in Florida (the boys wonder why anyone would vacation in Florida in the Summer, when it's nice in Ohio and like HELL in the south). He lets the other boys know that he has stolen

some cigarettes from his brother and stashed them on this neighbor's fenced in porch area.

Now, all the boys have matches, because no disciple of *Rambo: First Blood* (as these boys are) would go anywhere without his multi-purpose hunting knife, which, of course, contains all necessary fire-making devices. So it is but natural for the boys to decide to each try these thin, white cigarettes that their parents have spent so much time warning them about. The more parents rail and whine and ban something – the more worthwhile that thing must be.

Hiko smells his cigarette before lighting. The sweet scent of tobacco. It smells almost good enough to eat. However, that doesn't seem to be the wisest course of action, so he instead lights the non-filtered end and sucks in.

Naturally, it feels like he just stabbed the inside of his lungs with a pitchfork. *Hack hack! Cough cough!* Then comes the feeling of being somewhat high – almost as if he were going to pass out or throw up. It is not a pleasant feeling at all. Wow, does that suck!

But, the next day, the boys all decide to try it again, because, hey, they've still got most of a pack left, and no one wants to be wasteful.

So, by the end of the two week sojourn to the lovely villa of Ashtabula, Hiko has learned the art of smoking. He is not a smoker – not yet. But, every future time he has the opportunity to smoke, he will take it, because he has done it before, and he can use the street cred.

August, 1991, New York, NY. 18 year old Hiko is wandering around the streets of Greenwich Village. His parents just left town, and he is free for the first time in his life. So the first thing he does as a responsible adult is to walk into the nearest deli and pick him up a 40 of St. Ides and a pack of smokes.

Hiko has been smoking on a semi-regular basis for several years now, but always on the QT (and very hush-hush), as smoking equaled instant grounding-ment. That, however, was the past. He wouldn't be seeing his parents again for 5 months. Time to become an every day smoker.

February, 2002, Big Bear Lake, CA. Hiko's girlfriend announces that she is pregnant yet again. This time, however, it was somewhat planned, so Hiko is less annoyed than he usually is when his girlfriend says "Oooops. Musta forgot to take my pill."

Since this will be Hiko's 2nd child, the transition period has already occurred from *drunken responsibility-free*

unattached fool to *somewhat drunken but now changing diapers stuck in a mediocre relationship fool*. And, since his girlfriend has to quit smoking due to her pregnancy, he decides what the hell, he'll join her, they can certainly use the money, and it sucks having to stand outside in blizzards in order to get his smoke on (a toddler in the house means no smoking in there).

December, 2002, Tulsa, OK. Hiko is moving back to Ohio from California. His fiancée and his two daughters have already flown back, and he is driving the U-Haul containing all their belongings, towing a trailer with their vehicle on it. It's a long drive, and he's doing it by himself. To make it even more fun, he's got all the Christmas presents for the kids in the back, and it's only 3 days until Christmas. Tack on an ice storm in the Rockies, and Hiko determines that he will have to drive without stopping from the Arizona-New Mexico border to Canton, OH to make it in time.

All day and all night he drove, and it's about 4 am, and the Red Bull ain't doing the trick anymore, and there's nothing on the radio except goddam country music, and no one to talk to but the cat, and he's starting to nod. Hiko has crossed the country by car several times before, and he remembers that smoking whilst driving is always a sure way to keep from falling asleep and crashing a big truck full of everything you own into a ditch.

He stops, buys a pack, and promises to quit again once his journey is done. Little does he know that it will be another entire day and another entire night of driving from Tulsa to Canton, and by that point he will have smoked enough cigarettes to addict a whale.

April, 2004, Canton, OH. Hiko's friend convinces him that he needs to start running races with him, and Hiko realizes that long distance running will be a lot easier if he isn't smoking. So he quits.

He spends a good portion of that summer running 5K's, with the occasional 5 mile or 10 mile thrown in for good measure. He gets in the best shape of his life, and doesn't even think about smoking, despite the fact that his now wife sucks down a pack a day. He tries with all his might to avoid her presence as much as possible, so the chain-smoking lush doesn't bother him at all.

July, 2005, Canton, OH. The divorce is in full gear, and Hiko's chain-smoking lush soon to be ex-wife bothers him a lot now. But this isn't what causes him to smoke again. No, it's that he's starting seeing a new girl, and she smokes, and in her

apartment, where it's nice and comfortable (ah, the benefits of not having children in the house). And since he's started seeing her, they stay up late, drinking, talking, laughing, and, yes, smoking.

January, 2007, Canton, OH. No interesting tale for Hiko here. He just felt it was time to quit smoking again.

April, 2007, Cleveland, OH. No interesting tale for Hiko here. He just felt it was time to start smoking again.

And on and on and on to infinity.

"I thought you were gonna quit" has now become part of my friends' lexicon. Then they laugh when I tell them "Monday, I'm really gonna quit."

They know as well as I do that I have no intention of actually

quitting. I don't want to. You can't quit smoking – or anything – unless you really want to. And despite the numerous reasons why I should – I still don't really want to. I sabotage my efforts before I even make them.

Besides, we have all this history, smoking and I.

And nobody likes a quitter.

***So, Charlie Frye is gone. We hardly knew ye, Chuck.

I must admit that I'm a bit sad about his departure.

No, not that he's gone. I liked the guy fine, but his potential as a QB was low, and his decision making (or lack thereof), often set me to tearing out my eyebrows in frustration. He won the QB "competition", the pitiful little thing that it was, but the lack of quality analysis of his skills versus first team defenses came

into serious focus when the Steelers caused him to completely freak out and break down. And since we apparently get to suck for yet another year (insert angry cynicism here), we might as well fast-track the future.

So, no, I'm not sad that he's gone.

I'm just sad he didn't take Romeo with him.

***When we're picking Number 1 overall in 2010, I'd like to just throw out this name for consideration: [Noel Devine](#).

Yes, he's undersized, but if any of you have seen his high school footage (click the link), or perhaps him running for West Virginia (where it seems like he's averaging 50 yards a carry), this dude is amazing.

That's right Browns fans: Only 3 short years until we have a respectable running game!

WOO-FRICKETTY-HOO!