

Out of Bounds Episode IX: Gotta Have Faith

Written by {ga=larshancock}

Friday, March 02 2012 12:00 AM - Last Updated Friday, March 02 2012 1:33 AM



Before I get to the column, I want to offer my sympathies and prayers to everyone affected by the senseless tragedy in Chardon this week. I hope and pray that everyone will band together to provide strength to those in need, not only now, but well into the future after the immediate shock wears off.

That's really all I can say about the situation. Unfortunately, however, some people aren't as succinct, and feel the need to use the tragedy of others as a sounding board for their political agenda. To you who do such, I say this: fuck you.

Because this isn't about gun control, as some people stumped. This was about a deranged kid with bad DNA, bad parenting, and no moral foundation personally committing a senseless act of violence, and stealing lives and innocence from a community. Okay, he used a gun, a stolen gun which was legally obtained by its owner, and a gun which likely would have been in the possession of the owner even with the most unconstitutional and draconian legislation imaginable. The government could not have prevented this.

It wasn't about bullying. I'm as in favor of anti-bullying as the next guy, having grown up on the left side of the popular line. But to classify this as retaliation from bullying immediately, without knowing the facts, slanders the innocent victims who were chosen at random. Tainting them with the possible stigma of bullies was morally wrong and shameful regardless of how well intentioned your stumping was.

It disgusts me to no end how people hop on their soap box and feel a need to spew their filthy

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public service announcements exploiting the tragedy of others. None are worse than the Westboro Baptist Church, who have said they intend to picket the funerals to get publicity for their bizarre and mistaken political agenda. If you intend to go to the funerals to show your support for the community, I heartily encourage you to bring a shovel, so you can hit these loathsome trolls of humans in the face with it. Let me be perfectly clear about this: I am openly advocating violence against these douchebags. Okay, don't go Tony Soprano on them and keep hitting them until their skulls crack, no, just put the flat metal side of a shovel right into their hillbilly teeth with a well-placed shot to shut their holes and teach them some respect.

And that is all everyone should care about in the wake of a senseless tragedy: respect. Respect for the dead, respect for the families, respect for the communities. Take care of their needs, pray with them, and be there when they need you. And keep your opinions and politics out of it.

So earlier this week I met the pastor of my church for coffee.

What's that you say, that surprises you? What, just because I'm a foul-mouthed human who consumes alcohol to excess and just advocated hitting another human being in the mouth with a shovel, does that mean I'm not a man of faith? Okay, maybe a flawed man of faith, but if you don't judge me, I promise not to judge you. Deal? Good.

I met with him because I'm in a weird spot in my career, and I want to make more of my time open to volunteer services. I've really been trying to put more into my faith, as it has been a struggle throughout my life. But without faith, I feel lost, and it is important for me to have that foundation throughout my life, and the confidence it gives me.

And I came to realize that the NFL draft is a lot like a religion.

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You are putting faith in unknowns, and in things that can't be known until it is too late to change the decisions you made. You can find strong affirmations on either side of an argument as to whether a player or religion is right or wrong, and a logical deconstruction of the argument which is completely reasonable and which will gain loyal followers. So it is up to you to process the information ahead of time, see the evidence you have been given, and make that leap of faith.

The key is picking correctly, because if you don't, a lifetime of punishment awaits you. Picking Gerard Warren (despite his appearance in the most recent Super Bowl) over Ladanian Tomlinson is like choosing a religion that encourages you to put a bomb on your back and kill innocent civilians, or irritate grieving people at a funeral. You've clearly made the wrong choice, and bad things are going to come of it.

The Browns have been led by the Jim Joneses and David Koreshes of the football world for as far back as it was blasphemous to say the earth orbited the sun. Faith in such false prophets as David Veikune, Brian Robiskie, and Brady Quinn has created a complete lack of faith in the whole organization, and an accompanying despair in the congregation. As the old joke goes, the Browns have become a great church because they can make 80,000 people in a stadium shout "Jesus Christ" in unison every Sunday.

It is with this that the faithless are afraid to trade up for Robert Griffin III, feeling they should be safely agnostic and take whatever 4 and 22 offers us. What if we're wrong? We can't give up our guaranteed earthly fruits for the perhaps unfulfilled quest for the promised land!

Look, I get it, and I struggle with that too. But RGIII, by all evidence is a winner capable of excelling in the NFL. He has a quick release, cannon for an arm, is accurate, fast, and a good citizen to boot. Is he unconventional? Sure. So was Bernie Kosar. With a talent like him under center, the Browns could finally have the leader they've been missing for years, and could be headed for the Elysian Fields of playoff football.

So trade away whatever it takes to get the guy. Have some faith, and go for the win. Playing it safe and trading down has got us exactly jack and diddly over the years. And when the Browns do trade #4, #22, and a 2nd rounder to move up two spots, shout "Hallelujah" from the mountaintop, because the Browns may just have found a savior.

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Anyway, off to the questions.

Could you please help clarify what the fuck a P.E.D. is? I had no idea testosterone is one. I always thought it is what made my hair fall out and rocket charged my libido. -pod's uncle

Nearest I can figure, the governing bodies of sport look at any drug that is unconventional or potentially dangerous, and call it “performance enhancing”. For years, they went with “don’t ask, don’t tell” as a policy, and suddenly the hapless Pittsburgh Steelers started winning championships and dipshits like Jose Canseco started becoming stars. This was clearly morally wrong, and upon further review, they discovered that massive amount of steroids made your heart large and genitals small. Clearly, something had to be done to stop this for the sake of fairness – you can’t force a man to trade his balls, literally, for a chance to be a professional athlete.

Steroids were obviously bad, but then the world got smarter. You had HGH, “the clear”, “the cream”, and whatever other horse tranquilizers made Barry Bonds’ head look like a Macy’s parade float. Oil Can Boyd just admitted every game he pitched was under the influence of cocaine, which was performance enhancing to him but clearly not a PED as evident by MLB letting Steve Howe continue to pitch after 23,412 failed drug tests. And is whatever drug Manny Ramirez is on performance enhancing? Who the fuck knows.

So the governing bodies sniff something out, label it as bad, and blackball it. Which is probably the right thing to do. Granted, most of the damage is done well before the kids get to the pros, as PEDs enter weight rooms and locker rooms in junior high these days. But at least taking a stand that “everything is bad” gives you a proper moral argument, and discourages the continued destruction of athletes’ bodies, so they can destroy them on the field for our entertainment.

As for testosterone, my theory is that it made the list because, fuck, I can’t imagine how crazy I’d be with any more of that shit running through my veins. Think back to when you were 18 and you were like a dog humping every leg in the living room. You couldn’t even think straight. An ideal day for you would be get up, screw something, break some shit, get drunk, punch someone, screw someone else, break something else, and lather, rinse, repeat. It is for the good of society we don’t let kids put any more testosterone in their bodies. I’m still scared of my testosterone with 50% of my 18-year old level.

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Watched the Daytona 500 Monday because it was on. I don't get it. –NAPCAR

NASCAR, like snails and sushi, is an acquired taste. First and foremost, you have to get over the shame of watching it. It is a sport for rednecks by rednecks, but does that make it wrong? NASCAR is a lot like masturbation – most people do it, at least occasionally, even if they're ashamed to talk about it, and only the real freaks openly do it in front of others. On that note: true story here. If any of you remember the game where Mike Mussina took a line drive from Sandy Alomar off his face, I was in Baltimore for that game. I sat on the first base side in the lower boxes, and clearly heard the sickening thud of face vs. baseball, and I have the indelible image of Mussina's broken face looking up at me after he got hit. But that wasn't the most horrific sight of the evening. When walking back to my hotel with my girlfriend, I saw an enormous man in the alley just standing there facing the passing crowd while masturbating. Horrifying. The Baltimore Chamber of Commerce, ladies and gentlemen!

Back to topic, so there is a particular art to NASCAR that once you understand it, you find it to be positively addicting. Understand first, like baseball, only about 8 guys have any sort of realistic chance of winning the title on a given year, and those 8 will pretty much dominate it every single year. So you're left with a similar dilemma: front-run and root for a Jimmie Johnson/New York Yankees type, or root for the Cleveland Indians who are a David Reutimann or the sort. Obviously, it is much more fun to root for the latter, and much less douchebaggy.

Ironically, given the roots and clientele, NASCAR is a lot like a chess match. It is a thinking sport, and strategy is constantly at play. Pit stops are a huge part of the strategy, and the inevitable cautions must be predicted and played appropriately. It is pretty heady stuff, and thinking about all the permutations and combinations gives you something interesting to do as you watch cars mindlessly circle a track while a simpleton like Daryl Waltrip yammers incessantly and incoherently like a drunk chipmunk in your ear. That should be their new slogan – NASCAR: Chess for Rednecks.

Besides, the crashes are phenomenal. Where else are you going to see a man slam into a jet engine and have everything blow up, and everyone walks away unharmed? That was completely awesome. Cars routinely explode into millions of pieces, and tumble down the track, and then the driver walks away. That's 1000x cooler than watching Rapistberger get lit up with a blindside blitz from an unblocked linebacker at full speed. Okay, it's equal to that. But still. Chess with wrecks, fire, and EXPLOSIONS. Come on man, what's not to love?

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Please email questions to ! lars.hancock@yahoo.com , or DM them to me in the forae to LarsHancock.