



## **Dodging Death Gives One a New Outlook on Life**

By Kerry Schmidt     June 18, 2006

I'll get to Butt Head Ben Roethlisberger and the World Cup in a bit.

But first, the above headline.

As many of you may have noticed, today's column will be the first original one in eight weeks.

Why?

On the last Saturday night of April I awoke in the early morning with a 104.8 fever. Thus began a six week saga that has forever changed my life.

Turns out I had contracted not one, but two very deadly forms of pneumonia.

For over three weeks, the group of doctors bombarded me with virtually every possible antibiotic available.

Results: Virtually none.

Again on a Saturday night, four weeks after the beginning, my life lay in the hands of the doctors, and God.

My wife was told by one Dr. that "He most likely will not survive." Another said "...less than 10% chance." Both lungs were 95% filled with the deadly infections.

While incubated and heavily sedated, I did manage to wake up a fraction, and I heard their prognostications.

I told myself that I was strong, and would make it. I also asked God for a deal.

I will not discuss religion. I do have a strong belief, but do not attend church, since you are often subjected to other's beliefs and criticized if you do not agree exactly as they do.

But I said, "God, get me out of this, and I will start attending church."

Make what you want of this, but 14 hours later, my lungs went from the 95% occluded to 85% clear.

The doctors had no answer for why or how that happened.

Today I am nearing my second week recovering at home – after 38 days in the hospital.

That experience changed my life not just physically, but my total outlook on same.

Why I was given this second chance in life? I have my own idea, but regardless, I am here, and I am not the same individual I was.

My priorities have dramatically changed – my family is THE foremost reason for living. I am more forgiving, more patient and certainly more understanding of others. The tangible and self-centered things of the past no longer are important.

Well, enough of this, since I start to shake when I re-live that nightmare.

All I will say is that I certainly hope none of you ever have to go through what I did. And I doubt I could do it again, but I am a better person because of it.

Thank you for your patience and emails wondering where I was. Note: most of the time I had no idea where I was.

Now, on to what this column is supposed to be about.

While my near death experience was not of my choosing, Butt Head Ben (BBB), QB of the reigning Super Bowl champions, had a choice.

He most certainly took the wrong one.



## OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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When he crashed his motorcycle last week, he was very fortunate that he “only” suffered multiple fractures of his face – upper and lower jaw, lost two teeth and chipped others. He also suffered a concussion, and the doctors said while they did not believe there was any brain damage, it was too early to be sure.

I doubt he did, since how can you damage something you don't have?

Terry Bradshaw, who a generation ago had the same team too not one, but four SB championships, said that what Roth did was “stupid, irresponsible and self-centered.” Prior to the cycle accident, 3B's coach, Bill Cower, and others had talked to him about riding his bike, and especially doing so sans a helmet. BBB said it gave him the “sense of freedom.”

When asked to at least wear a helmet, he said, “I don't want to.” When pressed on the risk, he sounded like a 12 year old just coming into puberty. He said, “There's a risk in driving a car every day, isn't there.”

He also said he had this desire to “push the envelope.”

Well, the envelope nearly sealed itself with him inside.

Bradshaw, and others, added that BBB had a duty, “an obligation,” to his team, his family, the fans and the owners/management of the Steelers.”

He was correct.

Yes, BBB is just 24 years old, but that is still no excuse.

And it is not like there was no history to remind him of his idiocy.

In May of last season, the Chargers' Kellen Winslow II, San Diego's top draft choice and the 6<sup>th</sup> overall in the 2004 draft, crashed his bike, tearing ligaments in both his knees, causing him to miss the entire season.

Thus, not only did Winslow potentially ruin his career before it started, he let his team down. He most likely would have added a couple of wins to his teammates.

Winslow is outspoken now, saying, “You've got to learn your lesson, you can't take risks.”

Obviously, BBB was not listening.

And the Chicago Bulls' top draft pick in 2003, crashed his bike, breaking his pelvis, tore up both knees and has nerve damage to his legs. It is highly unlikely that he will ever play pro basketball again.

Ben. HELLO! Besides being dumb, are you deaf and unable to read or watch the news?

The QB of every team is supposed to be the leader. He was on the field, but certainly not off of it.

He has said if he ever does ride again, he will wear a helmet.

Someone needs to tell him about E-Bay. Sell it now.

Hopefully, he will be OK, and more hopefully, he will have learned his lesson.

He certainly had “dumb luck.” As in he was a dump as a post.

The old saying, the third time is the charm, may take place. There is already talk of teams putting clauses in player's contracts against such childish and dangerous behavior.

Finally, the World Cup.

Leave the borders of the US, and the rest of the world stops for a full month, as the people, even entire countries run the gamut from fanatical to violent and racist actions.



# OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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Since I have been confined to my home, I have watched a good bit of it, more so than I ever had in all other years combined.

I'm sorry, but I still find it about as exciting as watching grass grow – in the desert.

While writing this, I had the Mexico-Angola game on.

Before the game, ESPN showed some large public square in Mexico City, wherein in over 100,000 fanatics were packed therein to watch their heroes on large TV's.

Quick question. What did all the above people have in common with the many thousands who protested a couple of weeks ago re being allowed to be illegal in America? Answer.

Apparently, none of them work.

In the game itself, you had 22 players running the equivalent of a marathon or two, yet nobody scored a point and nobody won. How's that for excitement?

Proponents of the game proudly stated that the TV ratings were higher than the Stanley Cup Finals. Hell, commercials get higher ratings than hockey.

The two games have a modicum of similarity. Players fly up and down the field/ice and attempt to put a puck or ball into a goal. The only difference and interesting aspect is that in hockey, you can knock the crap out of any player you want. In soccer, you nick an opposing players shin and you get something called a yellow card. And, sports fans, if a player receives two yellow cards he gets a red one. So remember, two yellows equal one red.

Others pointed out that soccer is now the second most participated in sport of American youth. Yea, but the only people that go watch them are the parents.

The really good athletes here gravitate towards football, basketball and baseball, because that is where the fame and fortune is.

As I mentioned above, the fanaticism of the fans ranges from just crazy to severe violence and, worse, a goodly amount of horrible racism.

ESPN had a show on before the Cup started and it showed large factions of skinheads and others waving Nazi flags and armbands chanting, in unison, some of the most degrading slurs possible. The story showed how several black players, after being showered with bananas, taunts and imitations of monkeys, simply walked off the field.

And, some of these perpetrators are aiming their sickening wrath at black players from their own teams!

ESPN asked FIFA officials, the governing body for the World Cup, about stopping such actions. Their response, basically, was that no players would be allowed to participate in such antics, but that there was really no action that could be taken against the "fans."

The "hooligans," mostly from England, have become commonplace with their organized violence. At least the authorities are able to act against "openly violent actions."

So, you have a sport where you can easily fall asleep and not miss anything, only to be rarely awakened by the announcer's bellowing scream of GOOOOOOAAAAAAL!

You then quickly watch the replay and go back to sleep.

In 2002, the USA surprised many by making it into the quarter finals.

Thus, much was expected of them this year. They were even featured on the June 5 cover of "Sports Illustrated." The picture showed four players, two of the pointing at you and the verbiage below said, "U.S. Soccer wants you."



## OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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Well, other teams sure wanted them. They were blown out in game one, 3-zip by the Czech Republic and they are a big underdog to Italy Saturday (this is being written Friday). Should they lose, they will finish dead last.

That ought to pack the fans in.

Thus, you have a sport wherein there is very little scoring, the rules are weird and many of the fans would be quickly arrested if they performed like that here in America.

Yes, the ESPN's and ABC are televising every single game. A whole month to catch up on your zzzzzzz's.

Well, whatever you enjoy or care about in sports right now, remember my opening comments.

Life is truly precious and is a gift, not a guarantee.

So take it from someone who just discovered that fact, of someone who was given an unlikely chance. Thank God, and take advantage of every moment you have, because you will never know how much time you have.

I would finish with my trademark comment of "single malt time," but since I lost 40 pounds and am still on IV antibiotics, no go.

But I sure as heck am glad to be here!!!