



ATHLETES: EGOTISTICAL, OBNOXIOUS A..HOLES. AND THEN YOU HAVE JOE THEISMAN.

By Kerry Schmidt

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To say that spoiled, rich pro athletes are egotistical, et al, is like saying a politician is a crook. A decent number qualify, but some really rise to the top.

Given the numbers in this not-so-exclusive club, I don't have the space to list them all.

I will first concentrate on the ones that I personally have known, mostly through my days as an NFL beat writer and connections due to same.

Rather than working up the ladder, I will start at the top.

No, not Barry Bonds. Someone worse. Much worse.

Joe Theisman, former NFL announcer and player.

JT was dropped by ESPN last year after 19 years as NFL announcer/analyst. My sources said that his pomposity and egotistical blasts finally added up to where ESPN had enough of Mr. Perfect.

Note: He was offered a part as a radio play-by-play announcer, but he insisted that was "beneath him," that he needed, and should be on TV. As of now, he is still on the outside, looking in.

GOOD.

My first meeting with Theisman came way back in the early-mid '80's.

A good friend of mine, Mel Kaufman, a LB with the Redskins introduced me to JT.

Mel won three Super Bowls, and was with them for the infamous "broken leg moment," where the Giants' LB Lawrence Taylor nailed JT and literally shredded his leg, like string cheese. LT later said it was the worst thing he had ever seen in his football career.

I would like to say it could not happen to a nicer guy, but that would be sick.

Ah screw it, I am sick.

When I was covering the NFL for the Saints, I saw JT a few times at games. He looked like he spent half the day priming and preening himself up. He had more hair dyes and face lifts than Zha Zha Gabor.

Even though I had met him several times before, he would hardly recognize me at all. He was ALWAYS looking over my head – or others, just so he could find anyone who was really important, and he would then leave you in mid sentence to go mingle with the really important folks. A real ass.

But let's start with his first days of ego building. While at Notre Dame, he changed the spelling of his name from Thiesman (pronounced Theesman) to Theisman, just so it would rhyme with Heisman, as in the award he felt he so richly deserved. Note: He ended up a distant third that year.

His entire life, it seemed, was to try to be famous. He might as well have had a giant sign on him stating, "Hey, look at me. I'm a huge celebrity."

I could go on forever, but let me give you THE example of what an ass he really was. This information came from my friend, Mel.

JT had filed for divorce with his wife to hook up with some famous model or movie star type person. His common wife was not in his class anymore.

Anyway, one day he called up his wife and said he had changed his mind. He wanted to make the marriage work.

So, he told his wife to meet him that night at their favorite restaurant at 6 PM.

Thus, she went out and bought all new duds, had her hair, nails, et al done up just right. She told all her friends how excited she was.

So, she showed up at 6 PM sharp.



However, JT did NOT show up. Instead, he sent his attorney who served her with the formal divorce papers! Now there is a class guy!

Thus, he is at the top of my list of Pompous, egotistical, obnoxious jerk-offs!

Again, sticking, for the moment, with players with whom I have actually met.

Kyle Turley, former OL with the Saints.

He was furious when he did not make All-Pro his rookie year. He yelled at all press, including me, that it was our fault, we did not vote for him. Didn't matter that we had no vote.

He continued to be obnoxious throughout his relatively short stint with the Saints.

He would tell any sportswriter why he would not give an interview. His reason? He said that as good as he was, they always seemed to write bad stuff about him.

And, boy, did he have a temper. I told the story in an earlier column how he physically came after me due to a column I wrote wherein I called him Surly Turley.

I think he's still in the league, with the Rams, but I'm not sure. And don't care.

Good ole Terrell Owens. I participated in two interviews with him after games.

His team had lost both, and all he could talk about was how many great catches he had made, about how he was always open and the QB would not throw it to him ("that's why we lost," he said), and for good measure, he named a few other players who he felt screwed up. He even took a shot at his coach. Note. My "audience" with him was when he spent a year with the 49'ers and later with Philadelphia.

The Eagles went 13-3 and played in the SB in 2003. To this day, he still says that Philly QB Donovan McNabb played so bad, that he caused the Eagles to lose the SB.

He said McNabb, who had some injuries, "wimped out."

I think he has an identical twin named Randy Moss.

I was in only one mass interview with him, but it was the one wherein he said, "I only play when I feel like it."

He would say he was by far the most important player on the team, and if they lost, it was not his fault. Nice guy.

Barry Bonds. I was in the 49'er locker room after a game, and he was there. I did not talk to him. I did say, "Hi, Barry, how ya doing?" He just looked at me with a smirk and walked off.

All the stories about what a jerk was, well, they are mostly true. My former brother-in-law has been an MLB umpire for 32 years, and he says that while Bonds was usually nice to him (hey, Ed Montague called the strikes), he is a total ass to most everyone else. He treated the media like the plague.

I don't care about the steroid stuff. I figure as many as half the players took some, and I just do not care.

Roger Clemons. He seemed to be, from reporters I spoke with, a nice enough guy. He would give interviews, albeit only sometimes and then short, but he was not really obnoxious.

But the other side of him came out during the steroid business.

Again, screw that. It was discovered that he was not faithful to his wife. Boy, that puts him in a select group!

One reporter, who allegedly had proof, said he was able to dig up 354 different times when Clemons had cheated on his wife. Wow! Good thing he made all that money. His Viagra bill must have been huge!

He would talk about his wife and kids, and how he would play, in his later years, with Houston, so he could be near them.

Once everything came out about him, he turned on the media, big time. "I did nothing wrong," he stated. No one asked his wife if she agreed.

A-Rod of the Yankees. He comes across as Mr. Nice, but he is not.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

When he was asked why many people had a negative image of him, he replied, "I'm always the magnet for criticism." When asked why he thought that, he replied, "Well, I'm good looking, I'm bi-racial, I make the most money and I am the best player on the team (Yankees)."

He also cheated on this wife – with Madonna, of all people, and thus a messy divorce.

MADONNA?! A 50 some year old who has been plugged by at least as many guys as Cher.

He still smiles for the cameras and plays Mr. Nice with the press.

Manny Ramirez. To say he wore out his welcome in Boston is akin to saying Whoopie Goldberg is ugly. Butt ugly.

Ramirez went to the Dodgers, and was all Mr. Nice Guy. He batted around .400 for them and they got into the playoffs.

But now, he is a free agent. Word is that he says he must get what he is worth. He is asking for a multi-year deal, in the neighborhood of \$100 million. He is nearly 39 years old, and still has the same jack ass personality, so we'll see. Given how screwed up MLB is, someone will probably give it to him.

Then you have Pacman Jones, Chad Johnson and many others. Quite a group, that A..Hole club.

And hey, Michael Vick says he wants to play in the NFL again as soon as he gets out of prison.

Maybe he could play for Cleveland. Don't they have that infamous rooting section, the Dog Pound?

Let me throw in a couple of owners.

Jerry Jones and Al Davis.

Jones would be right near the top in an ego contest.

He makes the news nearly as much as Romo's pinky finger. Jones stated before this year started, that, due to his maneuvering, the Cowboys were SB favorites. He may have been right, but as much as he blows his own horn, you would think he was the star player. He still says he expects his team to go deep into the playoffs. We'll see.

I've spoken to a couple of beat writers for Dallas, and they say that when he's on the record, he's all smiles and nice, but otherwise, he can be a real jerk. Hard to believe.

Al Davis. Raiders' owner. I would say he is in the obnoxious group, but in reality, he has just lost his mind. In all his years as owner, he has run the team. Not his coaches, not the players. Ex players say that he will change the overall game plan at the last minute, and call down plays to the coaching staff that they do not really have in the play book.

He has been through 8 coaches in 9 years, and has not had a winning season for 10 years. He probably thinks Alzheimer's is one of his LB's.

But, for as many jerks in sports, luckily, there are a bigger number of really great guys.

I've had the privilege of meeting and speaking with Joe Montana, Jerry Rice, Brett Favre – just last year, and many others.

And Steve Young.

While on the sidelines during a 49'ers/Saints game, Young was running to the sideline and got nailed right in front of me. He knocked me down and I landed right on top of him. I thought, "Oh God, there goes my press pass."

He jumped up, helped me up and asked if I was Ok.

In the locker room after the game, he asked my name and we talked for a couple of minutes.

The following season, I was in SF covering the Saints, and when I went into the Niners' locker room after the game, he immediately remembered my name! Amazing! Super nice guy.

I only spoke with Barry Sanders briefly a couple of times, but he was as nice and polite as could be. And I was a nobody.

Closing on the college level. I mentioned last week how SEC football is not a sport, it's a religion.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Well, a few hours after the OT win by Alabama, Michael Williams shot and killed two fans.

Don't know any details, but the end result tells you all you need to know.

Last week, I wrote how it was all about the money.

Last Tuesday night, a 22-year old kid, from Denmark, won the World Series of Poker. For that, he took home \$9.12 million!

Every player at the final table (9) took home at least one million.

Not bad for a card game.

Finish with a good note.

Florida State's starting safety, Myron Rolle, has permission from the NCAA to take a private plane from Birmingham, AL to the Fla. State/Maryland game, a pivotal ACC contest. Rolle will be in Birmingham the same afternoon of the game. Why? He is a finalist for a Rhodes Scholarship. Likewise with Casey Gerald, a DB with Yale. He will rush back for the arch rivalry between Yale and Harvard.

See, there is plenty of good in sports. But the few a..holes get most of the press, and can ruin it for the rest.

Single malt, however, will cure everything!