

Catching up with Guilford speedster Johnathan Smith

SMITH GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND IN TERMS OF DEDICATION, TEAMWORK, AND SPEED

By CJ Green
STAFF WRITER

Crowds of people watch as a group of men position themselves into a sprinter's stance. They are all perched like statues waiting for their marks, ready to make their own.

As a gunshot rings out, the men launch from the line all headed for the finish where either glory or defeat awaits.

This sounds all too familiar for sophomore Johnathan Smith.

The Guilford speedster has been finding much success with his top class work ethic and undeniable leadership for the Quakers.

"(Johnathan) has taken a group of sprinters under his wing and has embraced the role of leader very well," said first year track coach Marcus Bell. "(Johnathan) is a motivator that leads by example."

Smith finished second in the 200-meter dash and fifth in the 100-meter dash on the national level last season.

He also claimed All-American honors in both events, making him the first sprinter in Guilford College history to do so.

"Well, I try not to get big-headed when

it comes to being one of the top national runners in track in Division III, said Smith. "I'm proud of my achievements thus far and I still wish to aim higher."

Smith also holds the Quaker records for the indoor and outdoor 200-meter dash in with his fastest time being 21.64 seconds.

He also holds the 55 and 60 meter records and is only .05 seconds away from breaking the Guilford record in the outdoor 100-meter dash.

"He is a very hard-working athlete that other athletes can look up to for inspiration," said first-year football player Daniel McFaddin. "He is in a class of his own."

The competitive aspect of the sport is something that can make or break an athlete. For Smith he looks for solace in his teammates and coaches to push him forward.

"When people have a lot of faith in you it makes it easier to progress and get better," said Smith. "Watching all of my teammates hit times like ten second flats (in the 100-meter dash) really motivates me to get better."

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Johnathan Smith, sophomore at Guilford College

Smith's work ethic is considered one of the best by many of his teammates and coaches. With the work he is putting in, many believe Smith to make a name for himself beyond the collegiate level.

"Comet" (Johnathan) is a very hard worker who always gives one hundred percent at every practice to become the sprinter he desires to be," said Coach Bell. "He aspires to compete on the elite/professional level; and if he continues on the pace he is on, 'look out, world'"

With the college track and field outdoor season around the corner, much of the Division III world will be keeping a close eye on Smith and his sophomore season in a Guilford uniform.

"Everyone is going to have their own opinions, but if I were to choose, I would like for them to think of me as someone who has worked hard to get into the position that I am now," said Smith.

Even with all of the hype and expectations this season, Smith stays levelheaded and ready to compete. You can anticipate this spring he will capture more All-American awards and break a few more records.



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Opening up in athletics: homophobia in athletics today

By Thomas Deane
STAFF WRITER

Being part of a sports team forms friendships and bonds that can last a lifetime. With so much time spent together, players are with each other more often than not.

But what if a teammate had a secret about their true sexuality?

Lately the sports community has witnessed several athletes coming out about their sexual orientation. We have seen former NBA player John Amaechi recently come out, and top rugby player Ian Roberts recently revealed his sexual orientation to teammates.

When asked about insinuated "uneasy" locker room issues with teammates, Roberts said to *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, "Every gay sports person should get up and say something if this kind of stupidity is ever raised again. It's offensive."

What kinds of tensions can this put on the bond between teammates?

Sophomore lacrosse player Trey Atkinson does not believe there will be any long-term tensions.

"Of course it would be a little weird at first (to have a teammate come out), but in the end, they are still my teammate and whether they're gay or straight, it doesn't affect how they play on the field," said Atkinson.

One could assume that maybe one of the hardest things for an individual who is struggling with their sexuality is to actually work up the courage to "come out" to their teammates.

Homosexuality in sports is one of the more taboo subjects in modern society. It can be very difficult for players to talk about homosexuality or acknowledge it because it is largely absent in the locker room.

Lately, there has been a new wave of support for homosexual athletes.

New York Rangers forward Sean Avery hopes to break down some of these barriers experienced by "closeted"

athletes. Avery has openly supported gay athletes, and has even gone as far to say he would be in the locker room when an athlete decides to tell their teammates.

"I'll stand beside him in the dressing room while he tells his teammates he is gay," said Avery in an interview with *Outsports.com*. "Maybe if Sean Avery is there, they would have less of a problem with it."

Avery hopes that if more professional athletes recognize and support gay athletes, the stigma that surrounds it in the locker room would disappear.

Although Avery has been one instance of a pro-athlete standing up for the rights of others, NBA All-Star Kobe

"I don't think any of them are truly homophobic; they're just uneducated about the issue."

Ben Chadwick, student of Bowdoin College

Bryant has done the opposite.

In a game during the 2010-11 season, Bryant became upset at a call and mouthed the word "faggot" towards the official. Bryant was fined \$100,000 for the incident.

Many athletes' best friends are on their team, so if an individual were to come out to a best friend on the team, would they out them to the rest of the team?

Quaker swimmer Kendra Medina does not believe so. "I would respect wishes to keep it a secret on her terms," said Medina.

If the person were to come out to the whole team, Medina added that she would ensure that everyone treated her equally.

"I would support her in any ways she needs," said Medina.

A sports team's locker room can also be a home to many homophobic slurs.

Sophomore rugby player Marley Carroll noted the prevalent use of these slurs.

"On any given day, you can hear guys calling each other 'fag', or 'homo'," said Carroll. He added that the use of these words can really deter a person from coming out to teammates.

"When a person who is thinking about coming out to teammates hears these words on a regular basis, it may make them reconsider coming out," said Carroll.

In the Miami University hockey locker room, student team manager Brendan Burke came out to his teammates. Burke, who recently died in a car accident, received nothing but support from his teammates.

Ben Chadwick, an openly gay lacrosse player at Bowdoin College in Maine, does not believe athletes are necessarily all homophobic.

"I don't think any of them are truly homophobic, they're just uneducated about the issue," said Chadwick.

Many athletes have never dealt with a teammate being openly gay. Because of this, many athletes do not know how to react if a teammate were to come out to them.

As the issue gains momentum in the world of sports, communication remains the key. A better understanding in the athletic community about the struggles many gay athletes have had to endure along with the employment of a more endeared support will aid those that cross that barrier to rid themselves of any apprehension.

If you or anyone that you know is struggling with this issue please contact the sports department at the guilfordiansports@hotmail.com and speak in confidence.