

Good Daves, bad Daves

Hatred of decathlete Dave Johnson leads to Dave research



"Dave Johnson Sucks Ass."

Frankly, there was no other way for me to put it. Being any less vague or lewd in the conveyance of my message would have ruined my protest completely. So as Mr. Runonn led me down the long corridor that would eventually collide with the principal's office, I promised myself to stand strong in my miniature T-shirt protest. "What are you trying to do?" asked Mr. Runonn.

"Fightin' the man," I told him.

"Fighting what man?"

"When the man tries to hold you down, you gotta fight for what you believe in," I reiterated.

I had no idea what I was talking about. But as we ended our walk and Mr. Runonn gently nudged me into the principal's office, it didn't take me long to figure out what I was going to say.

Before Mr. Runonn had a chance to explain, my principal motioned for him to leave. I knew better than to try explaining myself. He would let me know when he wanted me to speak.

"Son, I've got a few questions for you," he began. "First of all, who in the hell is Dave Johnson? Secondly, why does he 'suck ass?' And finally, why in God's green earth do you have that nonsensical claptrap written on your T-shirt?"

I was offended that he was so blind to my obviously brilliant protest. I had always considered him to be a smart man. Regardless, I knew that I owed him an explanation and that the first day of school was never a good time to get suspended. So I talked.

To answer his first question, I told him that Dave Johnson was an Olympic decathlete and a burden on America. That summer, he had single-handedly risen from the gutter to fame, captured the hearts of millions of unsuspecting underdog fans and

torn our great nation in two. I told him of how he used Reebok to undermine the great Dan O'Brien as well.

"Dan vs. Dave," "Dave vs. Dan," it had been everywhere that summer. Dave Johnson and Reebok had it set up perfectly. Reebok made money off of shoddy merchandise, and Dave gained notoriety while putting unnecessary pressure on the previous favorite, Dan O'Brien, as they battled to qualify as decathletes at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Therefore, as I attempted to explain to my befuddled principal, it was no surprise when Dan choked at the Olympic Trials. The whole world was against him.

To this day, I'm not really sure what the best way to go about explaining the process of "sucking ass" to your junior high school principal is. With Dave Johnson, though, it wasn't difficult. (Our younger readers may want to take note here.)

Dave Johnson sucked for many reasons. (I would suppose that he still does.) He sucked because of his premeditated poor performance. He raised America's hopes higher than they had ever been and dropped them without ever looking. Secondly, he sucked because he made fools out of all the Dave fanatics that had been created during the summer of 1992.

Worst of all, Dave Johnson sucked because, in a display as blatant as they come, he showed America that the underdog never wins. On his way to the gold medal in the decathlon, Czechoslovakian Robert Zmelik spanked Johnson.

Even though Johnson had been able to make his way past the heavily favored O'Brien, he was still crushed at the actual Olympics in Barcelona that sum-

mer, and I was left with an ugly T-shirt that proved I was on his side.

My final task during my visit with my principal was to explain to him why I wanted the world to know about Dave Johnson's illicit ass sucking. It was simple. For nearly an entire summer, I had Reebok's "Dan vs. Dave" slogan scrawled across my chest. I knew the shame I felt for doing so would never go away. I felt that creating my own slogan and telling the world what I felt of Dave Johnson's monumental letdown would be the one just and true thing left to do.

Somehow, I felt that my principal liked what I had to say during our visit on that day. Not only did it break up the monotony of his usual run-of-the-mill day, but also it showed him that numbers and sentence structure weren't all that filled my mind. And as he traded me a shirt from the lost and

found for my T-shirt manifesto, I think I even saw him smile.

Nevertheless, I knew that I would be faced with some sort of punishment. That punishment, dealt immediately by my principal, was to research other men in America named Dave Johnson and to try and find some good in them. Although I was a bit leery at first, I somehow knew the assignment would be more fulfilling than automatically accusing them of sucking ass. It certainly was.

Minnesota Sen. Dave Johnson is a proud representative from the state's 40th District. He lives in Bloomington with his wife, Tracy, and one child. (The name of the child was not disclosed. We'll call him Cromgart.) His special legislative concerns are crime, taxes, education and transportation.

Writer and radio host Dave

Johnson is a Colorado-based technology writer with numerous books and hundreds of magazine articles to his credit. He regularly writes for computer periodicals, and he's co-host of what he claims to be the world's hippest computer talk-radio show.

The final "good" Dave Johnson I researched was Charles "David" Johnson. He grew up in Ottawa, Ill., and graduated from the University of Illinois. He received a Ph.D. at Boston University and now works in Austin, Texas, in image processing.

As I already stated, my research assignment was quite fulfilling. It helped me to realize the Dave Johnson of the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona did not exemplify the overall character of the Dave Johnsons that this country has to offer. Among these fine men stand a senator, a doctor and a writer.

"Besides these three great men, are there any other Dave Johnsons in this country who will be successful in life?" you may ask. Probably not. But if you happen to stumble across one, I'd be more than happy to hear from you.

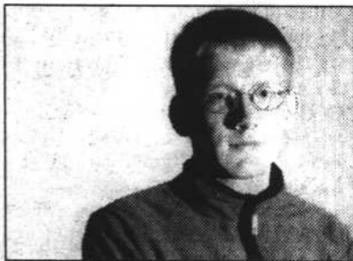


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The Austria dilemma

Democratic election of far-right party calls for diplomatic caution



When Jeorg Haider's Freedom Party came to power in Austria's government recently, just about all of the European Union went berserk.

Understandably so - Haider's far-right party is opposed to immigration and over-involvement in the EU. He also has made comments that compliment certain aspects of Hitler's regime, specifically on the Nazi party's labor policies and on the steadfastness of the Waffen SS.

The Freedom Party's ascension, therefore, is seen as a sign of neo-Nazism, and the EU has responded quickly and without compromise, freezing its diplomatic relations with Austria. Similarly, Israel has recalled its ambassador, and the United States

has called back its own ambassador for consultation.

These moves are unfair to Austria, in a way. Haider's party was given its power by a vote; the people have chosen their leaders, and they should not be punished for choosing contrary to our wishes. Xenophobic or not, a democracy is a democracy, and we really can't punish a people for holding to its ideals.

However, something must be done. Western society has taken a strong stance against Nazism, and we must stand by our ideals as well. We must not sit idly and pretend that the rise of neo-Nazi thought doesn't concern us.

France, for example, has a right-wing constituency it fears would be emboldened by the acceptance of Austria's new government. Most EU member nations likewise fear a continent-wide encouragement of neo-Nazi idealism. So it is appropriate for us to make our concerns known.

The United States has taken a good, cautious stance. It has not cut off diplomatic relations. Calling an ambassador back for consultation

implies, after all, that the ambassador will return eventually.

In contrast, the EU has gone overboard. Belgium has suggested that Austria be expelled for its actions. What actions? The free democratic election of a generally out-of-favor man?

Nadine Stossner, president of the American Civil Liberties Union, said it best:

"To protect democracy and human rights, the Europeans have adopted the very authoritarian methods that they say they are acting to forestall." (The New York Times, Feb 4, 2000)

Further, the EU's actions send a disturbing message to other countries seeking membership in the Union. Turkey recognizes this move as a clear message: The EU endeavors to interfere with the internal actions of its sovereign, member nations. This is hardly an enticing image for Turkey.

And all of this is directed against a man whose main repulsion factor comes from a few less-than-hateful comments he made about the Nazi party, for which Haider has since apologized. Accusations that Haider's

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party is racist and xenophobic are not necessarily unfounded; however, the same accusations can be made of nearly every conservative party without the implication of neo-Nazi sentiment.

Haider may very well be a racist, and his party may very well have malicious aims. Evidence to this end, however, is lacking. It is only fair that the EU give the Freedom Party a chance to prove itself, rather than punish it for hypothetical futures.

But suppose the Freedom Party is neo-Nazi. Is it really in anyone's best interest to isolate it? Isolating Austria and imposing sanctions does for the Freedom Party the same thing it does for Castro supporters and those who support Saddam Hussein: It gives them something to be angry about.

Indeed, this anger is exactly what Hitler used to fuel the most horrific war in recent memory. Hitler would have been nothing if he could not channel the anger of Germans about the Treaty of Versailles against his opponents.

As the adage goes, keep your friends close and your enemies closer. We should remain vigilant in our relations with Austria, but cutting off diplomacy would be the wrong thing to do. Already, the Freedom Party is enjoying a surge in popularity, as citizens object to the treatment of the EU.

Fortunately, the United States has taken this careful stance. The EU needs to follow in its lead and resume diplomatic relations before the far-right faction of Austria's new government becomes too powerful.

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