

# Sultan of smack Harper simply being 18-year-old

A story in Tuesday's newspaper said Las Vegas slugger and Internet-search magnet Bryce Harper was "picking up the finer points" of the game while he continues to knock the cover off the ball with Class-A Hagerstown of the South Atlantic League. It mentioned he was hitting .342 and had belted his 14th homer Monday night.

It did not mention that as he circled the bases, Harper blew a kiss at the Greensboro pitcher.



**Ron Kantowski**

COMMENTARY

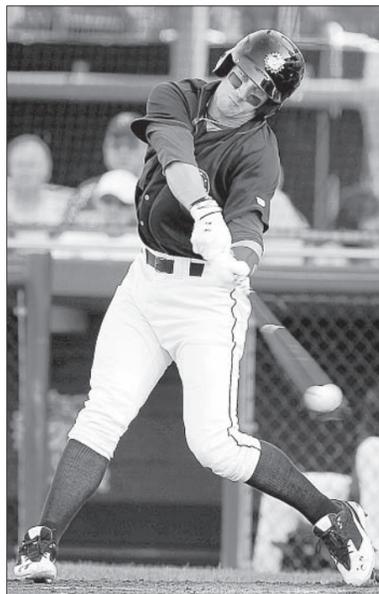
This, I am almost certain, is not considered one of the finer points of the game. You can't cry in baseball, you can't throw kisses in baseball, you can't even wink in baseball. Just ask Moonlight Graham.

Harper's kiss has gone viral on the social media outlets. It's No. 3 with a bullet, trailing only that sailor and the lady in white on V-J Day in Times Square and Madonna and Britney Spears at the 2003 Video Music Awards.

There hasn't been this much furor over a Class-A ballplayer's actions since Nuke LaLoosh pitched a game while wearing Annie Savoy's underwear in "Bull Durham."

It was two years ago this week that Harper appeared on the cover of Sports Illustrated as a 16-year-old sophomore at Las Vegas High and practically one year to the moment since the Washington Nationals made him the No. 1 pick in the 2010 draft. That's when he became a marked man among his peers, or at least those a little older and much more envious.

Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt was speaking for a lot of the nation and probably Canada, too, when he went



TIMOTHY JACOBSEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Former No. 1 overall draft pick Bryce Harper of Las Vegas caused a stir by blowing a kiss at a pitcher after homering off him Monday in a Single-A game.

on "SportsCenter" on Tuesday and encouraged Harper to tone it down a notch.

"I would say 'Bryce, if you're going to hit a lot of them, you'd better learn not to show up the pitcher because it's just going to get tougher and tougher on you if you watch your home runs,'" Schmidt said. "Just hit 'em like you're used to hitting 'em, not like you're surprised when you hit one."

Or he could act as Schmidt did when he hit No. 500 against the Pirates in 1987, jumping up and down as if his pants were on fire.

It was a great milestone and it won a game and it's hard to fault Schmidt or any other ballplayer for showing emotion at a time like that. But one could also argue that it's still a less grievous form of showing up the pitcher.

Schmidt has also said that had he played during the Steroid Era, he would have taken them. Lady Justice might be blind, but if she put Harper's kiss on one side of her scale and Schmidt's views on steroids on the other — and they

balanced out — one might suggest she get a new scale.

Jeff Passan of Yahoo.com had another take, comparing Harper to LeBron James on the arrogance meter and writing that — surprise! — this was good for baseball, because the game will need a new villain once it brings down Scott Cousins from the post and pillory.

While interesting, this view mostly ignores that Harper is still an immature teenager with a grand total of 57 Class-A games under his belt, while James is a mature man (and then some) who can fall back on the wisdom acquired over eight seasons at the highest level.

This isn't the first time Harper has had issues between the lines, and given he is still only 18, it won't be the last. I had issues between the lines when I was 18, too, and that was in American Legion ball. I also used to leave my old man's car on empty when I used it to go on dates and made fun of my little sisters. That wasn't being responsible or mature, either. That was being 18.

I haven't been watching the South Atlantic Game of the Week on Cox On Demand, so I don't really know if Harper has developed any character flaws beyond talking a little trash to opponents after they talk a lot of trash to him.

People want him to be Jackie Robinson and turn the other cheek. He wants to be Lenny Dykstra, at least before Dykstra started writing bad checks and stealing cars, and put a chaw of tobacco in the other cheek.

Somewhere in the middle is a compromise, a happy balance between being tough as Nails and being a jerk that one might expect Harper will achieve, when he gets older. Like when he's 21 or something. If he doesn't, some kid from the Dominican Republic will put a 97 mph heater in his ear and that'll be the end of it.

Baseball, as Mike Schmidt said Tuesday, has a way of disciplining those who won't discipline themselves.

For the record, the name of the Greensboro pitcher who served up the long one to Harper is Zachary Neal. While Harper's fame — or infamy — is growing by the hour, Zachary Neal's 10 minutes might be about up.

Las Vegas Review-Journal columnist Ron Kantowski can be reached at rkantowski@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0352. Follow him on Twitter: @ronkantowski.

## Gretzky's son among notable draft offspring

By DENNIS WASZAK Jr.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**NEW YORK** — The Chicago Cubs hope they've drafted a Great One.

Trevor Gretzky, the baseball-playing son of hockey Hall of Famer Wayne Gretzky, was selected in the seventh round Tuesday during the second day of the amateur draft.

The younger Gretzky knocks in runs — not goals — as a left-handed, power-hitting, California high school first baseman. And the jersey number he wore? Well, No. 99, of course.

He has a commitment to San Diego State, where he could play under baseball Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn if he chooses not to sign with Chicago.

The Cubs also took a name from their past, drafting California high school outfielder Shawon Dunston Jr. in the 11th round. Shawon Sr. was the No. 1 overall pick by Chicago in 1982, and the shortstop played 18 big league seasons.

The sons of Ivan Rodriguez, Steve Garvey and Kevin Seitzer, and the great-nephew of Eddie Gaedel — who is 6 feet 3 inches tall, unlike his 3-7 great-uncle who drew a walk in one of baseball's most famous publicity stunts 60 years ago — were also among some familiar names called Tuesday.

Minnesota drafted Dereck Rodriguez, the son of the 14-time All-Star catcher, in the sixth round. The younger Rodriguez played center field and pitched for Monsignor Edward Pace High School in Miami.

Philadelphia selected Ryan Garvey, a California high school outfielder, in the 15th round.

Cameron Seitzer, a slugging first baseman for Oklahoma, was taken in the 11th round by Tampa Bay.

Valparaiso outfielder Kyle Gaedele — his last name has an extra 'e' at the end — was a sixth-round pick of San Diego. The highest-drafted player in school history, he hit .326 over three years.

In the 30th round, Milwaukee drafted Trent Boras, a California high school third baseman — better known as the son of agent Scott Boras.

Arizona State outfielder Johnny Ruettinger, whose uncle is former Notre Dame football walk-on Dan Ruettinger — better known as "Rudy" — was taken by Baltimore in the eighth round.

In the second round, the Los Angeles Dodgers took Alex Santana, a Florida high school third baseman whose father, Rafael, helped the Mets win the 1986 World Series.

## ► MAYWEATHER: Unbeaten welterweight faces three fights in legal system

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

pound-for-pound king, has said he wants to fight Mayweather, but attempts to make the fight over the past two years have failed.

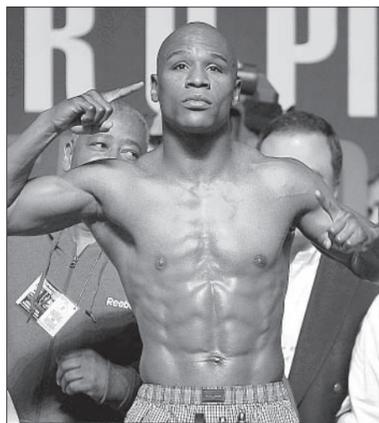
Pacquiao will meet Juan Manuel Marquez for the third time Nov. 12 at the MGM Grand.

Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer said he can't speak to a possible Mayweather-Pacquiao showdown, but Mayweather's return can only help the megafight's prospects.

"I think I speak for everyone when I say I'm excited to see him back," Schaefer said. "Floyd is one of the most skillful fighters of our generation, and to have Floyd back is good for the sport."

Schaefer said negotiations between the Mayweather and Ortiz camps took about a month, and he commended Mayweather for taking on such a high-quality opponent.

"This isn't some tuneup," Schaefer said. "Floyd looks for the most difficult challenges, and Ortiz is big and strong and he'll be a real challenge for Floyd."



JOHN LOCHER/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL  
Floyd Mayweather Jr. hasn't fought since winning a 12-round unanimous decision against Shane Mosley in May 2010.

"Victor Ortiz has bounced back and he has shown he has the heart and the will to be a champion. He's a young guy, just 24,

and he knows this is an opportunity of a lifetime. If he beats Mayweather, his life changes dramatically."

Ortiz (29-2, 22 KOs) has won six fights in a row, most recently defeating Andre Berto in April for the WBC title.

"I respect Mayweather because he has been a champion for many years, and I know he will be ready, but so will I," Ortiz said. "I'm a world champion for a reason, and I am not going to let go of my title anytime soon."

Mayweather's last fight was an impressive 12-round unanimous decision over Shane Mosley in May 2010. He weathered a huge shot to the chin in the second round, then dominated Mosley the rest of the way.

But Mayweather, 34, has fought just three times since defeating Oscar De La Hoya by split decision in May 2007.

Mayweather is also facing three legal fights, all involving assault allegations. One is a felony domestic violence case involving Mayweather and his ex-girlfriend. The two others stem from separate incidents with security at Southern

Highlands, where Mayweather lives.

He is also reportedly having problems with the Internal Revenue Service again. The Detroit News reported in April that Mayweather owes the IRS \$3.4 million from 2009.

Mayweather co-manager Leonard Ellerbe said his fighter will have no problems staying focused during his training for the Ortiz fight.

"Floyd's the best conditioned athlete in sports," Ellerbe said. "The time off has done wonders for him. He's fresh and ready to go."

"The lawyers will continue to do the excellent job they're doing, and Floyd will prepare like he always does and give a great performance inside the ring."

The fight will be televised on pay per view, but a distributor has not been signed. A nationwide media tour is set to begin June 20. Ticket and PPV information are expected to be released in conjunction with the start of the tour.

Contact reporter Steve Carp at scarp@reviewjournal.com or 702-387-2913. Follow him on Twitter: @stevecarpjr.

## ► GRANEY: Ortiz no ordinary walkover opponent for Mayweather

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

Do you believe the final fight of Mayweather's career would be against Ortiz?

I still think the fight the world wants to see — Mayweather-Pacquiao — could be the fight the world falls asleep watching, that one of the greatest defensive fighters in history would not stand and engage Pacquiao much at all. Mayweather would fight in spots but not near enough to warrant the hype that would precede such an evening.

But it still would set pay-per-view records and earn both fighters more money than the Congo ever could hope to be worth. It still would be an incredible spectacle.

People haven't been as hungry for Mayweather-Pacquiao lately, many assuming it never would happen because of Mayweather's perceived lack of interest. Now, it appears that if both can survive tuneups, fans again will be ravenous for it.

Mayweather-Ortiz is a good fight. It's not, as promoters suggested Tuesday, the year's biggest night of

boxing worldwide. That happens when Pacquiao fights. But it will sell. It holds enough intrigue.

Mayweather inside a ring is never a bad thing. Boxing has missed it.

It's good for Mayweather ...

He is 34 and has made news lately not for an undefeated professional record but for his next court date. Out of sight, out of mind, yet seemingly always in some sort of trouble.

But boxing is better with him active, and Ortiz is not your ordinary walkover-opponent-to-prepare-for-the-biggest-fight-in-history. Mayweather is always ready to fight, always in shape to fight, and will have to be both against a southpaw 10 years his younger as Ortiz.

"I am ready to return to the ring and give my fans a fantastic night of boxing by fighting the best out there, and for me, that is Victor Ortiz," Mayweather said in a statement.

To everyone else on the planet with at least one brain cell, the best is Pacquiao. Ortiz, however, has won six straight fights. Mayweather will have to be more than interested to remain unbeaten.

Want irony? Mayweather-Ortiz will

take place on Mexican Independence Day Weekend, probably at the MGM Grand. If this were any other fight for Mayweather, he would have as many or more fans rooting against him than not. But a win by Ortiz could damage those Mayweather-Pacquiao plans.

Thus, the Mexican-American underdog shouldn't count on the type of support he'd otherwise receive in such a fight on such a weekend against such an opponent.

It's good for Pacquiao ...

Extra motivation is never a bad thing, and the world's pound-for-pound king has even more with Mayweather's return.

Pacquiao next fights Juan Manuel Marquez for a third time on Nov. 12, and any slippage could cost the congressman from the Philippines his shot at the dream fight and mega-millions payday.

Pacquiao should win because he's better, and we have seen Marquez at a catch-weight of 144 pounds. It was in 2009, when a much bigger Mayweather made Marquez his own personal punching bag while winning a 12-round

unanimous decision.

That night, Mayweather threw 493 punches and landed 290; Marquez threw 583 and landed 69.

Said one ringside reporter during the fight: "He is Juan Manuel Marquez. You have to kill him."

I can see the same sort of result when Pacquiao is the opponent come November. Not the killing part, mind you. The domination.

Pacquiao will be too quick, too skilled, too strong for Marquez, a guy many thought won the second of the previous matchups. Those resulted in a draw and split decision for Pacquiao.

They also were featherweights.

Yeah, I'm guessing this entire big-picture thing isn't so good for Marquez.

It's good for mall cop security guards everywhere ...

Maybe with a fight to focus on, Mayweather won't be so concerned about where to park his car.

Las Vegas Review-Journal sports columnist Ed Graney can be reached at egraney@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-4618. He can be heard from 3 to 5 p.m. Monday and Thursday on "Monsters of the Midday," Fox Sports Radio 920 AM. Follow him on Twitter: @edgraney.