

Josh hamilton



One of the most important beliefs that Americans share is that personal striving results in upward economic mobility. The foundation of this belief is the essence of what is known as the “ American dream”. For those who follow this dream, the conclusion must be made that one can overcome any obstacle with the necessary talent and determination. One of the most popular means in increasing one’s social status is through sports. Sports are ideal for understanding the pursuit of the American dream because achievement and success is highly emphasized in all sports.

Also, sports figures frequently play lead role in the “ rags to riches” stories Americans hear from the media. No one in sports today can carry the title of rags to riches to rags to riches again as does Texas Rangers outfielder Josh Hamilton. Born on May 20th 1981, Josh was the first overall pick in the 1999 Major League Baseball Draft by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. He was considered a blue chip prospect until injuries and a drug addiction derailed his career in 2001. Many people today use faith as method of strength, drive, and determination to get through anything one sets their mind to.

But faith comes up often in the story of 26-year-old Joshua Holt Hamilton. It's nearly impossible to tell his story without mentioning his Christian faith.

Faith, he regularly testifies, has put him back in baseball after four years of addiction problems so ugly you can't blame his family for not wanting to relive them. But because of faith, Josh and his family attend churches, youth groups and halfway houses. When he was barely 15, Hamilton was already a North Carolina sports legend. He was that rarest of finds, a true five-tool player.

Left-handed, he was so gifted that he occasionally played shortstop and even hoped to be a catcher. But coaches were too protective of his arm because when he pitched, he hit 95-96 mph. When he played the outfield, nobody dared to take the next base on him. When he hit, everybody gasped at the power. As a result, the Tampa Bay Devil Rays made Hamilton the first overall choice in the 1999 draft. He was the first high school player to be a number one draft pick since Alex Rodriguez in 1993. Hamilton signed two days later. After Josh signed his contract, his parents left their home to be his chaperone.

Together, they packed up and headed to Princeton, W. Va. , in the rookie-level Appalachian League. Almost immediately, Hamilton was launching talk-of-the-town homeruns. Within two years, he was named the top prospect in all of the minors. Josh was on top of the world, he had more money than anyone could ask for, his success on the field was paying off but then it all came crashing down. In February 2001, Hamilton and his parents were involved in a car accident in Bradenton, Florida. After one of his spring workouts a dump truck sideswiped their pickup truck.

His parents, Tony and Linda, had to return to North Carolina because of their injuries. For the first time in his life, Josh Hamilton was alone. He eventually ended up on the disabled list that May because of lingering back issues, most likely occurring from the accident. After the accident teammates described Josh as someone that was used to constant activity and who had been somewhat sheltered from teammates. While on the disabled list he had nothing but time and money on his hands. He started hanging out at a tattoo shop, where earlier he had his first tattoo done. One tattoo led to another.

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He has himself inked with flames, tribal signs and blank-eyed demons, 26 tattoos in all. He started hanging out with the guys from the tattoo parlor which led to trouble. He joined them one night at a strip club where he took his first drink and snorted his first line of cocaine. After rehabilitating from the injuries, he returned to baseball in 2002 playing for the Bakersfield Blaze, in which he hit .303 with 9 HR and 44 RBI in the team's first 56 games. But back and shoulder injuries forced him to the disabled list in June, and shortly thereafter, Hamilton was suspended for violating the MLB's substance abuse policy.

Hamilton returned for spring training in 2003, but then he disappeared for six weeks after being reassigned to minor-league camp. When he returned, manager Lou Piniella sent Hamilton home, telling him to get his life straight. He remained away from the team for most of the season due to off-field problems. He then checked himself into a drug rehabilitation facility, but did not complete the program on the first of many failed attempts. Hamilton's drug problems became public knowledge when Major League Baseball suspended him for 30 days on February 18, 2004, for failing a drug test.

The suspension was later extended indefinitely. Josh struggled through addiction and it even got to the point where it included downing a bottle of Crown Royal almost daily and cocaine and crack cravings so strong he burned through a \$3.96 million signing bonus. Tampa Bay Rays officials sent him to see a sports psychologist because it seemed his lingering back problem was affecting his outlook. The psychologist also asked Hamilton if there was more he wanted to discuss. Hamilton mentioned experimenting

with drugs. As a result of Josh's confession, he was sent to Ford Clinic where he only lasted eight days .

It began a cycle in which Josh would fail drug tests which led to suspensions, short rehab trips, stretches of sobriety, reinstatement and, inevitably, relapse. After Hamilton was reinstated in May 2003, his first workout included a homer over the 30-foot batter's eye in center field. Afterwards, some teammates invited him out. He declined. Instead, Hamilton went out alone and got trashed. Over the next two years, there were more tears and more self-destructive behavior.

In September 2003, Hamilton ended an aimless drive at the back door of Raleigh homebuilder Michael Dean Chadwick at 11 p. . Chadwick had battled drug addiction for 15 years before becoming a faith-based motivational speaker. Hamilton briefly dated his daughter, Katie, in 2002. Josh went to Chadwick for advice, help, and motivation to quit his addiction. Others reached out to Hamilton, but he couldn't find the power to take their hands. During a sober stretch in 2004 he married Katie but within six months the marriage was strained. On the day that Katie returned from the hospital following the birth of their daughter, Sierra, she sent Hamilton to pick up prescriptions.

A 10-minute errand stretched into something much longer which led to Katie calling a local bar which they stated Josh was there. The downfall for Josh continued due to his addiction. Chadwick once paid a \$2, 000 debt to stop a drug dealer from harassing Hamilton. On Josh' 24th birthday, he dug ditches and swept model homes for Chadwick's company during his baseball exile.

He showed up at an employees party and quickly grabbed a drink. Before the night was over, he ripped the rearview mirror off his truck, punched out the windshield and was twice stopped by police.

Following the second incident, he was taken to jail. When he was released, Hamilton says he ran eight miles to an acquaintance's home. This incidents continued to grow during the summer of 2005, which may have been his lowest moment. He awoke from a crack blackout in a hot trailer surrounded by twelve strangers who were all crack addicts. During this situation, he was so addicted to crack that he loaned his truck to a dealer to get more crack. When the dealer didn't return, Hamilton took off on foot, found a pay phone and called his wife and she came and picked him up.

After this incident he knocked on his grandmothers door and as a loving grandmother she didn't have the courage to turn her dying grandson away. Josh's grandmother was always there for her grandson even though he was heavily addicted to drugs. Although she never had the courage to confront her grandson, one incident changed her mind. Josh was so caught inside his addiction that she caught him using in her home. This is when everything changed; she was tired of her grandson killing himself and hurting everyone around him that cares about his well being.

Josh took this advice to heart because he felt he lost his family and everyone close to him and he doesn't he needed to cleanup. The road back to professional baseball would appear to be a long and difficult journey considering Hamilton went three years without playing a game. Although three years apart from the game, the MLB lifted the suspension in June 2006

after Hamilton was sober for eight months. He played 15 games at the lowest level on the minor league ladder. After Eight months in the minors he finally made it back into the majors.

Hamilton's original team the Tampa Bay Rays didn't protect Hamilton on its 40-man roster after the 2006 season and the Cincinnati Reds were able to acquire him through the Rule 5 draft with the only restriction that the Reds had to keep him in the majors all season. After the 2006 season the Reds could have returned Hamilton to Tampa Bay but he won a roster spot and received a standing ovation from 42, 000 fans in Cincinnati on Opening Day. He was among the leading contenders for NL Rookie of the Year for a few months, but problems with a wrist and hamstring limited him to 90 games, hitting . 92 with 19 homers.

Hamilton was then traded to the Texas Rangers where today he has become one of the best hitters in baseball. In 2008 Hamilton secured the Texas Rangers starting center fielder job with . He was named American League Player of The Month after hitting . 330 with 32 RBIs during the month. Hamilton then went on to win player of the month for the second straight month in May, becoming the first AL player in baseball history to be awarded Player of the Month for the first two months of the season.

If that wasn't great enough, fans selected Hamilton as one of the starting outfielders for the American League team at the All Star Game at Yankee Stadium. In addition, he was selected to participate in the Homerun Derby the evening before the game. Hamilton had 71-year-old Clay Council to throw to him during the Derby, Clay threw batting practice for him as a child

in Raleigh, North Carolina. In the first round of the derby Hamilton hit 28 home runs, breaking the single-round record of 24 homeruns. This past 2010 season was Hamilton's best season of his professional career.

He won the regular season batting title, his team won the ALCS championship title, and he was named American League MVP. During the celebration of the ALCS title, Hamilton's teammates celebrated by popping open ginger ale rather than the traditional champagne due to Hamilton's history and sobriety. Josh Hamilton is clearly a perfect example of an individual who accomplished the American Dream. He had the dream of every boy as a child to become a professional baseball player and he was able to do so right out of high school. He went from rags to riches at the age of 18 years old but then headed right back to rags due to drugs and alcohol.

Some may say that any person with the enormous talent and opportunity that Josh Hamilton had and all the money, fame and fortune that went with it, who makes the choice to hang with the wrong crowd, becoming an addict in the process, and possibly wastes away an opportunity most will never see, is not deserving of any sympathy or noble status. That there are other individuals who have dealt with very difficult adversity and what looked to be difficult barriers that were not their choice, to become something more through will and determination, all without turning to drugs.

But to me drugs shouldn't be of importance, he is someone we should admire for the courage it takes to face and tackle his own personal demons, something so many others try but fail to do. Hamilton took the proper steps through making tough choices, and pulling oneself out of the gutter that

drug addiction ultimately brings a person to and gained the kind of respect normally reserved for individuals who tackle tough adversity without this type of choice. Josh Hamilton also relates to a few people that we discussed in our class readings.

Hamilton relates to the Hochschild's view of the American Dream because Hamilton was able to reach absolute success. He was able to reach a level of success then he could have ever imagined. According to Hochschild, absolute success is available to everyone but it takes hard work and determination to actually achieve absolute success. Hamilton had the same opportunity that every high school athlete has which is the chance to play professional or college baseball but not everyone is able to achieve this success as Josh Hamilton did as a number one draft pick out of high school.

In addition, Josh Hamilton also fits into the category of competitive success that Hochschild also believes is a part of the American Dream. Hamilton fits into the competitive success category because he played a competitive sport of baseball in which competition is at a high level and everyone on the field is competing against the other team and also against other individuals to stand out and be seen by college recruiters and professional scouts.

Hamilton was able to achieve competitive success because he was considered a top prospect out of high school and was clearly better than anyone on his team or any of his opponents.

Hamilton also relates to Jay Gatsby because Gatsby develops a theme of being a self-made man. Jay Gatsby came from humble roots and his parents were poor as were Josh Hamilton's. Gatsby was a single minded person on

the pursuit to gain the American Dream and desire to marry Daisy just as Hamilton was on the pursuit to fulfill his American Dream of becoming a professional baseball player and becoming wealthy. Daisy to Gatsby was his sole reason for being and he sets himself on his path to gaining his dream of social standing and wealth in order to win Daisy over.

In similarity, Hamilton uses baseball as his path to the American dream in order to gain social standing and wealth as Gatsby did. After Gatsby gains wealth and fame, this leads Jay to be involved in a drug ring which helped gain wealth and buy a house for Daisy and be able to throw parties in hopes of Daisy attending. In Hamilton's case, he had wealth and social notice but due to being placed on the disabled list due to a injury, it led Hamilton to drinking and doing drugs.

Hamilton is also similar to Benjamin Franklin in terms of working hard and gaining “ rags to riches. Benjamin Franklin was driven to achieve success in business, politics, and human relations, and he mastered the techniques of success. He was a creative genius who in business, worked longer hours than his fellow printers. He kept ahead of his competition in new printing techniques and introduced better products, such as the annual farmer's almanac, which he improved upon. Throughout Franklin's life and writings, he did more than anyone else and used hard work and determination to succeed just as Josh Hamilton did in baseball.

Josh Hamilton has clearly fought off all of his demons and has now been clean for several years. He was not afraid to go to family in order to get help from his addiction. Although he reached rock bottom he is living proof that

when life can't be any worse, there is always a way to fight through anything and have a second chance at life. Today with his loving family and supportive teammates by his side, Josh Hamilton has used his Christian faith and the support of friends and family to become clean and healthy individual with a great career ahead of him.

Even though the tattoos all over his body will be a last impression of his past demons, he has baseball and his faith rather than drugs and alcohol. For the past two seasons, he has been giving urine samples to major league officials every two days in order stick with his agreement that allowed him to be reinstated into baseball. The high school superstar turned professional athlete turned drug addict, to now a MVP is astonishing and inspirational in itself and he clearly will never look back because he is now finally living the American Dream.

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