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Guys are Waffles, Girls Are Spaghetti

How Guys are Wired for Risk- Chad Eastham's View

While I'm not saying that all guys fantasize about base-jumping from a dangerous 2,000-foot-high cliff, soaring over volcanic lava with a homemade parachute, landing on the back of a wild elk while blindfolded and in camouflage body paint, and then wrestling the elk to death with their bare hands . . . while a pretty girl is watching . . . there are a lot of guys who might. Or maybe that's just

me. I love anything with lava.

Wimpy Chad

One thing we guys need in our drive to succeed is confidence. As Christopher McCandless, a young man who died in the Alaskan wilderness, once said, "I read somewhere . . . how important it is in life not necessarily to be strong . . . but to feel strong."¹ As a member of the male community, I know first-hand the strange and important transition that takes place in our feelings of confidence that come as we develop physically. Why you might ask? Because I, like many guys, have often felt pretty wimpy. High school football isn't a big deal to me anymore. I had fun, I'm glad I played sports—and I got to put on a lot of gear and hit people. What could be better? At one time, however, it was the epicenter of life. It was also how I learned about physical confidence. I was really nervous about playing my freshman year. I signed up, got the mesh clothes bag and workout shorts, which are apparently a very important mark of the football club, and made my way to the workout room. This could also be called the "super uncomfortable and horribly awkward room" by people who aren't used to it. If you want to observe guys' nervous behavior you can watch it here. Squat like that guy, right? Sure no problem. Then someone told me the squat bar goes behind the neck, and I should take off the weights the girls' soccer team was just using and put on some guy weights. Awesome, this is a lot of fun, I thought to myself quite often that first year. I love humiliation. And when your arm gives out on the weight bench and you drop the bar and weight on your forehead and everyone laughs as blood drips into your eye, well, that's even better.

My sophomore year wasn't much better. Why? Because then I got to be the human dummy bag for the seniors during practice. This hurts by the way. Our 300-pound lineman and scary freak linebackers would hit me so hard, it was all I could do to just get up off the ground and make it back to the huddle without throwing up all over myself. One time, after one of the seniors punched me in the stomach on the bottom of a pile, I got mad. The next play I ran right at the fullback, who was supposed to block me, and dove at him head first and hit him

with every ounce of my 165-pound body. After that I woke up on the ground with the coach standing over me asking, “You all right? Chad, you awake?” It didn’t turn out so well . . . and even worse, I literally gave everything I physically had and all I got in return was a concussion as the fullback laughed and called me a couple of choice names. The next year something changed. Within about six months I grew about four inches, and I gained about thirty-five pounds of muscle. I suddenly felt different. When I lifted, I got nods of approval for benching, squatting, or doing something dumb with big plates of weight . . . but doing more of it than another guy. My coach said “good job”, and guys didn’t make fun of me anymore. I walked with a little more confidence, stood a little more upright, and talked a little more instead of just staying quiet. And occasionally, girls would notice I actually had some muscle, so that in itself was motivating. One day, as we started our annual torture treatment of 99-degree practices, something happened. A lot of football drills feel like public humiliation trials, especially drills that are one-on-one in front of the whole team. One of these is a tackling drill where two guys run at each other like mountain rams in a head butting contest to see which of them has the thicker skull and doesn’t get brain damage first. I really always hated that drill because I consistently got broken in two. So I ran through the obstacle pads, side-stepped over the red bags like a dumb ballerina running in place, and sprinted down the alley of death into the other human being who was running right at me. I lowered my shoulder, closed my eyes, and said goodbye. Then I looked down. I was still alive and for some strange reason nothing on my body was pulsing with pain. This was unfamiliar to me. For the first time, I wasn’t the guy lying there looking dumb with stars in his eyes and a little snot coming out of his nose. I collided with another large human being, and I was the one left standing.

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[comments from girl editor: MacKenzie]: Okay, I know I’m being totally girly here, but can we rephrase so that there’s no head-first collisions? (Your coach needs to watch the See What You Hit video!) Again, I’m all for pummeling people into the ground; I was actually a really good tackler for a girl. I just don’t want to encourage helmet-to-helmet combat.

Chad: Why? I totally do.

I don’t want to take hitting out of football. Why? Because it’s football Mac, and football means hitting, which is awesome. Let’s not momify it. Lol. Thank you for your support. And yes, you are being totally girly here.

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At that very singular moment, I loved football. I no longer hated physical collisions; I craved them. I started to love lifting, running, and hurling my body at other people. It was a vital confidence-building exercise that made me realize I wasn’t a total wimp. I didn’t really carry that attitude off the field or anything, and in fact, I was a little nicer to people outside of football because I felt more confident. I felt like I could prove that I was strong when I needed to, and so I

established a feeling of strength and confidence that guys look for in a number of ways. Also . . . the cheerleaders made banners and cookies for guys in jerseys

Excerpt from Guys Are Waffles, Girls Are Spaghetti, by Bill & Pam Farrel and Chad Eastham

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