

Tommie Smith: He's matured with feelings

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Tommie Smith.

The image is of a black athlete, a clenched fist in a black glove.

Not an image of boyish exuberance after he won the 200-meter dash in the world record time of 19.8 seconds at the 1968 Olympics. Not of the 10 other times he set world records in running events. Just the black glove.

Tommie Smith is 32 now, married and the father of a 10-year-old son. For six years he has coached track and football at Oberlin College in Ohio, leading a quiet, relatively obscure life.

But that single moment in Mexico City more than nine years ago, when he and John Carlos stood, heads bowed and fists raised in a black power salute during the playing of the Star Spangled Banner, won't let go of him.

He's still the target of criticism.

"I'm a little more grown up now, and it doesn't really bother me," he said. "I just listen. People have their opinions, and I realize they have a right to talk."

Like, he implies, he had the right to call attention to his grievances. At the time of the Olympics, he felt he and other blacks were being wronged, both as athletes and human beings. He thought he could help get the point across, and he was hurt that people got angry instead of understanding.

Now, years later, does he feel conditions have changed? Did he accomplish anything?

"I'd really rather not talk about it. I'm planning something new before the public, dealing with that, and I've been turning down interviews for six months. I don't want to say anything until I get a hold on it, until I know how it's going to work out."

He won't say what his plans are, only that he's leaving Oberlin at the end of the school year.



And he would like for people to know that he is a person who has feelings, who changes with the years. Not just a raised fist in a black glove.

So, under the circumstances, would he do it again?

"I don't like to answer 'if' questions. It would be great if we could recreate the past, to go back. But it's not possible. You can't live with 'if.' It would just be a platform for propagandizing. I can't win the Olympics again, so it would serve no purpose talking about it."

K.C. game bus rides into sunset

TV can notch another victim in its rearrangement of American society.

Scratch the after-church bus to the football game in Kansas City.

About 10 years ago the Country

Club Christian Church in Kansas City decided it would be a good idea to run a bus from church to Municipal Stadium. It would give the churchgoers a little more time for good fellowship and insure they got their Sunday sermon, even when Chiefs were at home.

Besides, attendance was falling off by about 200 on game days.

The members were told it would be OK to wear sports clothes to the morning service, and the nursery stayed open all afternoon to watch the children.

The plan worked great for a few years, but along came TV to rewrite the schedule.

"They started scheduling so many of the games at 3:30 that it just wasn't practical anymore," explained Vic Criswell, the church's business administrator. "So we abandoned the

project."

A different kind of comeback

In 1973, at 13, Doug Bass was a starter on his high school football team.

He moved to linebacker his sophomore year and, according to his coach at Curley High School in Miami, Fla., had already attracted the attention of college coaches.

In his junior year he made a head-on tackle and felt something snap in his neck. A broken neck. His doctors said if he had broken it a fraction of an inch higher he would have been paralyzed for life.

Instead, he spent a little time in the hospital, wore a neck brace for several months and was only slightly bothered by numbness in his right

*The fist, yes,
but do you
remember this?*

Update

hand. Then, against the advice of his doctors, he played football again his senior year, starting 12 games and going to state final.

He was given an athletic scholarship to Southwest Louisiana, and had made the team this year, but the school's doctor would not agree to let him play because of his high school injury.

Now Bass is back home in Miami, attending Biscayne College and waiting to see what next year will bring. He still has four years of college eligibility, and he's received inquiries from several schools. The University of Miami has already certified him as healthy enough to play if he decides to attend, but there's no promise of a scholarship.

So he's waiting to hear from other schools. After that he wants to play in the pros.