



The Jock's Guide to Getting Arrested

Most players take years to master the art of getting busted. For the benefit of the uninitiated, here's a cheat sheet.



FOR MOST AMERICAN MEN, THIS TIME OF YEAR means the kickoff of NFL training camp — the start of the New Year on the couch-potato sports calendar. But for me it's a sad time. It's the end of Arrest Season.

In terms of jock crime sprees, no other stretch rivals late June and July. Why? For one thing both the NHL and NBA seasons have come to an end, unleashing on places like Vegas, Atlanta, and Miami a torrent of millionaire Slavic and Scandinavian power drinkers and seven-foot NBA jism-spewing machines, all with eight months of rigorous dieting and physical training to undo.

Plus, there's this: Every year the NFL welcomes about 300 rookies into the league, and it's during the midsummer months that most of them are introduced to gobs of money and near-total freedom for the first time in their lives. No more agents, coaches, and parents following them around all day, no more classes — just a brand-new apartment in an alien city, unlimited sexual opportunities, and 24 long hours in each and every day. At least until camp begins.

Thus, this is the only time of the year when rookies and veterans from three of America's four major professional sports leagues are

free to really relax and enjoy life — the last chance they're going to have to get double-Tasered in fights with nightclub security guards or buy alcohol for pairs of under-17 girls in the sleazy hotels of Covington, Kentucky, or ride around on a three-wheeled motorcycle with a pistol in a pant leg and a shotgun in a guitar case.

And just like fighting through a high screen or defending the slant and go, there is a right way to get arrested and a wrong way.

1 MAKE SURE YOU DON'T SUCK

Before you go out and start committing crimes, it's important to first make sure you're at least slightly better than the 30 or 40 guys the team's assistant GM could instantly pull off some practice squad to replace you. Otherwise you will become fodder for the team's zero-tolerance discipline policy. Conversely, if you're awesome, the line will be, "There've been some bumps in the road, but hopefully he's learned from that." Take defensive back Willie Andrews, a seventh-round Patriots pick who barely played and sucked when he did. Two days after the disastrous 2008 Super Bowl loss to the Giants that he did absolutely nothing to prevent, he was caught driving around in

an unregistered Crown Vic with a half-pound of weed. Four months after that, right smack in the middle of Arrest Season, he got pinched for allegedly waving a gun at his girlfriend's head. Unamused, Bill Belichick sent a strong zero-tolerance message by cutting Andrews the very next day. Meanwhile, ultra-awesome Pats cornerback Ty Law was arrested twice — once for muling some E across the Canadian border (he skated on that) and once for a bizarre 2004 traffic incident in Miami that culminated in the ultimate arrest-related shame for an NFL skill-position player: getting caught in a foot chase by a policeman. Despite all this, Law was kept on the roster for another year — perhaps because he was the only guy on the team who could cover Marvin Harrison. In sum: If you're on the "bubble," smoke your weed at home, and when your girlfriend starts tripping about all those chicks on your Facebook page, don't give in to instinct and hit her in the mouth with a brick; let it slide. Once you've got a lock on at least the second-string job, you can let your hair down. But remember:

2 DON'T COMMIT WEIRD CRIMES

You know what the difference is between current NFL player Ronnie Brown and current Desoto Correctional Institution inmate Cecil "The Diesel" Collins? Both were star running backs in the SEC (Brown for Auburn, Collins for LSU), both got drafted by the Dolphins, and both got arrested. The difference is that Brown got arrested for DUI — practically a rite of passage for young NFL players — while Collins was arrested three times for breaking into women's homes to watch them sleep, the third time resulting in a 15-year prison sentence. Collins failed to understand that while driving under the influence is dangerous and irresponsible, breaking into women's houses to watch them sleep, especially if their husbands are home, is weird. Grasp the fine line: Normal, hyperlibidinal violence and irresponsibility are okay; crimes that reveal you to be both irresponsible and a psychosexual dissident are not. Chiefs tackle Victor Riley climbing into his SUV and ramming a car containing his wife and infant daughter: okay. T-Wolves center Eddie Griffin driving while jacking off to porn: not okay. Likewise, Kobe Bryant kicking a Colorado hotel employee out of his room when she refused to let him spooze on her face (that's "my thing," Kobe explained to investigators): okay. Fucking your 15-year-old sister: not okay. As Abilene Christian tackle and registered sex offender Tony Washington found out, you'll go from top prospect to undrafted for that. But even for "normal" crimes, if you do get busted:

3 DENY EVERYTHING

No matter what you are arrested for, you absolutely must refuse to take any responsibility for anything, right up until the moment the jury comes in with a guilty verdict (at which point you must instantly move on to item number six on this list). Your team-recommended lawyer will take care of the legal denials and may also, depending on how expensive he is, take on the necessary job of publicly smearing/threatening your accuser. Your job, and it's an important one, is to believe you're innocent and go out in public draped in real anger and looking struck to the bone with self-pity, like a Jewish mother whose sons went to a Knicks game the day she was having her spleen removed. The first time he was accused of sexual assault (charges were never filed), Ben Roethlisberger did it just right. Hyperventilating and dressed in a maudlin brown pinstripe undertaker's suit at an ad hoc press conference, Big Ben appeared near tears as he railed against the "false and vicious" allegations that he had surprise-Nazi-humped a Harrah's hotel employee in Reno after calling her to his room on the pretense of a broken TV set. The public will completely buy this "I was unfairly targeted because I'm a rich sports star" act exactly one time, so don't waste the opportunity. As Roethlisberger demonstrated the second time around, once you play the persecuted-Christ-figure card and get accused of the same crime again, your teammates (and, more important, ESPN) will turn against you. An essential corollary to rule three is:

4 THOSE DRUGS BELONGED TO MY COUSIN

If you get caught in any kind of drug/illegal-substance scandal, even if the drugs are on you, it doesn't matter: They belonged to your cousin. Even if you don't have a cousin. A-Rod, outed last year for steroids, produced a cousin sporting the name of a Soviet cosmonaut: Yuri Sucart. The aforementioned Ty Law blamed his cousin, who wasn't even in the area code of the ecstasy incident, for leaving a suitcase at Law's house that just happened to contain seven E tabs and that Law just happened to grab instead of his own suitcase before heading out on a middle-of-the-night run to a strip club in Canada. Vikings running back Anterrio Smith, caught trying to hustle a rubber-dong-and-dried-urine kit called the Whizzinator through airport security, insisted that he was only shepherding the device "to my cousin" — curious, since between Smith and his cousin, Smith was probably the only one who needed a way to beat regular supervised drug tests. Variations on the cousin ploy include letting your friend take the rap for the shit found in your bag (see Anthony, Carmelo, busted on a weed-in-backpack rap in a Denver airport) and saying the drug pipe in your car belonged to a friend from rehab you're trying to help get over an addiction (Michael Irvin, in an inspired performance). And the all-time greatest fall-guy move: supernuts ex-Jaguars receiver Jimmy Smith claiming that the crack and weed that cops found in his car belonged to a mystery guy named "Jahad." If those moves don't work, though, the next tactic is:

5 YOU CAN'T ARREST ME; I'M A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE

This is the athlete's version of the *Fargo* scene where Steve Buscemi flashes a fifty with his license and registration and offers to settle a traffic ticket "right here in Brainerd." It's not enough just to hint to the friendly officer that he might not want to arrest a famous guy like you; you have to explicitly tell him that he can't arrest you because you're a pro athlete, even using those very words. Ty Law in the Miami incident ("Don't touch me; I'm a professional athlete!") and Gilbert Arenas ("You can't arrest me; I'm a basketball player!") are two of the very few athletes who've managed to pull off this maneuver correctly. You might think that merely threatening the police would be enough — then-Chicago Bear Tank Johnson is probably the textbook example ("You ain't the only one with a Glock") — but it actually works less often than you would imagine. In any case, if you do wind up convicted or suspended, or the evidence is so overwhelming that there's no hope to wiggle out, it's U-turn time:

6 WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, HAVE YOUR AGENT WRITE AN APOLOGY FOR YOU

There are several critical elements to this tactic. The first, once again, is to invoke your family whenever possible, and even better to have them present, sitting by in mute contrition, when you read your script. The 1993 Arrest Season all-star Vince Coleman famously nailed the public apology by bringing his wife and children to a presser to deny that his throwing a lit M-80 at a group of fans (including a two-and-a-half-year-old girl) meant he was an uncaring, insensitive person. "Nothing more could be further from the truth," he said. The next key step is to use the opportunity of your current temporary disgrace as a way of pointing out how awesome a person you otherwise are. Employ such phrases as "My comments were out of character" (see gay-slurring Hawaii football coach Greg McMackin), or "I have not been true to my values" (Tiger Woods), or "I regret that I have fallen short of the values instilled in me by my family" (Roethlisberger, after rape allegation number two; no charges were filed then either). In a pinch just go with citizen-loudmouth linebacker Joey Porter's memorable public apology, which works in any circumstance: "I have reached out to the owners of the horse and will do whatever I can to help them get through this very unfortunate situation." This is America, after all: If you don't suck, we'll forgive you! ■