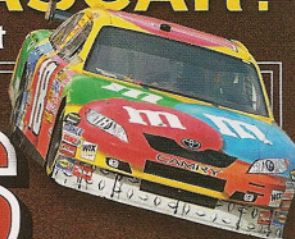


**HOW SAFE IS NASCAR?**

SPRINT CUP: Why Kyle Busch Is the Driver to Beat



# Sports Illustrated

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## The Freak

A 170-pound Manchild  
With a 98-mph Fastball,  
**TIM LINCECUM**  
Will Blow You Away

BY TOM VERDUCCI



**AARON RODGERS**  
Filling  
Brett's Shoes  
BY CHRIS BALLARD



**OLYMPIC TRIALS**  
Fast, Faster,  
Phenomenal  
BY TIM LAYDEN AND  
KELLI ANDERSON



The Giants' young  
ace at midseason:  
9-1 with 114 K's

# Jocks Against Bullies

by Selena Roberts

*"All the jocks stand up."*

—Words allegedly uttered by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold as they began a shooting rampage at Columbine (Colo.) High, leaving 15 dead, on April 20, 1999

*"Those motherf----- jocks."*

—Passage in the online diary of Kimveer Gill, discovered after he opened fire at Dawson College in Montreal, killing one and injuring 19 before killing himself on Sept. 13, 2006

**J**ESUS SALAVAR can spot the outcasts. They walk carefully enough not to bump anyone—not to draw any stares—as they try to slip through the low-slung hallways of Del Mar High in San Jose. There is a look the vulnerable possess: haunted. "You see the faces, and you see the expressions," says Salavar. "It makes you wonder, Is it happening to them?" Did they receive the text message about the hot girl who likes them only to find out it was a hoax? Did someone create a phony social networking profile of them that lists their turn-ons as *Star Wars* and animal porn?

The subjects of high-tech bullying are everywhere: In a Harris Interactive survey from March 2007, 43% of teens reported being targeted by online attacks. Salavar recognizes some of the victims. He looks for them, but not as a teacher, counselor or administrator. He is a 17-year-old student interested in political science. He is also an athlete—a jock, if you must—who played wide receiver and cornerback at Del Mar High last year, proof a helmet doesn't necessarily obstruct a teenager's ability to look beyond himself. "I don't see [much bullying] at Del Mar, but in other places kids gets angry at [athletes] because they may say, 'Oh, you're a football player, you think you're better,'" Salavar says.

Michele Livingstone is a swimmer who is not self-immersed. She notices the nervous tics of the lonely during lunch at Branham High, located in the same Silicon Valley region as Del Mar. "You see them wandering around, going to their lockers six times at lunch," she says. "And they don't have to go to their lockers six times, but it's something to do. I feel for them."

Empathy isn't always a staple of the popular crowd, but the likable Livingstone, bubbly to the point of being carbonated, is turning 17 this week with the kind of perspective some adults don't possess. "Something simple—like saying hello—can change so much for someone who feels isolated," Livingstone says. "It's like they can say to



**Athletes in a California program are trying to put a stop to bullying. A football helmet doesn't have to stop a teen from looking beyond himself.**

themselves, O.K., not everyone hates me."

Along with Salavar and other athletes, Livingstone recently attended a three-hour antibullying workshop called Expect Respect, organized by Project Cornerstone, a Bay Area alliance developed after the Columbine massacre. Members of different school-age status groups are enlisted—from club leaders and prom queens to quarterbacks and wrestlers. The goal of the six-year-old program, which has extended to more than 300 San Jose-area schools, is to engage students in solutions. Be aware, be inclusive, be willing to alert someone if you sense that bullying has reached a crisis point.

Digital harassment can lead to tragedy. Last October, after a cruel Internet ruse, 13-year-old Megan Meier of Dardenne Prairie, Mo., hanged herself in her bedroom with a belt. "It's devastating for a lot of people," says Salavar, a Mexican immigrant who can remember being on the receiving end of racist slurs before he joined a football team at age 12. "The workshop made me even more aware. I watch for signs [in ways] I never did before."

The workshop dialogues aren't so much about squares and geeks but about kids who have no one, who can't find any label to fit but loner. They are often the targeted. "If it's a physical confrontation, you have a chance to fight back," Livingstone says. "It's the emotional stuff—the online stuff—that leaves the scars."

We've moved beyond stolen milk money to the Mean Girls who post slut lists on MySpace. And yet, the go-to bully of blame is still seen as the jock of movie lore—see *Heathers* or *Revenge of the Nerds*. Did cat-calls of *faggot* and *lipstick twins* hurled by jocks at Columbine really push Klebold and Harris too far, or were the killers simply narcissists in trench coats? Did Gill, at Dawson, feel alienated by the glamorization of the jock culture, or did he seek an easy target for his rage? He posted this on Vampirefreaks.com: "Why does society applaud jocks. I don't understand. They are the worst kind of people on earth."

Though the hyperbole is agony being banged out on a keyboard, it is true that some tormentors do wear jerseys. At least in the hallways of Del Mar and Branham High, some athletes try to wear capes. □

ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH WITMER