

Show Camp Student Text – Draft

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Cutting Through the Air

By Jason

Guinness world record-holder, Dave “The Bullet” Smith, performed at the EKKKA every night as the human cannonball, reaching speeds of up to 100 kilometres per hour in half a second.

David Smith Jr is a second-generation cannonballer who “followed the flight path” of his father at 19. He is one of seven children in the Smith family, five of whom who became professional cannon ballers.

He started cannon balling when he came home and saw a large cannon mounted in the backyard. His father urged him into the cannon, and that day he was shot from the cannon twice.

Around two years later, his father sent him a message saying that he had injured his back and needed him to take his place in a performance. From then on, David became known as “The Bullet”.

According to him, training physically and mentally, staying healthy and keeping his body clean gives him the best chance of success, stay away from injury and make the necessary calculations to stay safe.

“Being shot out of a cannon is all about physics. It truly is. So, my job is 100 per cent to understand the maths and the science behind what it is that I’m about to do each and every show. The power of the cannon changes from one show to the next based on quite a few factors — not only the distance that I choose to shoot and the firing angle that I choose to shoot at that day, but the weather. The temperature has quite a great effect on how far the cannon will shoot me, as

do the humidity, the altitude that we’re at and also my body weight, including the weight of a new helmet or a new suit or things like that,” David said.

The helmet is a key thing for David, as you never know when something will happen.

“If I were to be impacted by something in the flight or inside of the cannon — which has actually happened a couple of times, believe it or not — it would help. I got hit by fireworks while I was in flight before. The pyrotechnicians are supposed to shoot them up as I pass by. They nailed me right in the hands. I almost hit a bird once. Yeah, I almost hit a bird once, and that would have been good to have a helmet on,” he said.

David says that before the flight is when he’s most nervous, but he can’t let the fear completely dominate him as it truly could. But when he gets on top of the cannon, the fear becomes adrenaline with the support of the whole crowd. During his time inside the cannon, he is in communication with his son operating it. Although it is one of the nerve - racking places to be, he pushes out the “scary thoughts”.

“I’ve already prepared my body and mind as best as I can. At that point, it becomes fun,” he said.

David has now been a human cannonball for 30 years with only two breaks.

The Brisbane Show Camp is a joint program of The Department of Education Queensland and The Royal National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland.

The camp is conducted by the Brisbane Urban Environmental Education Centre.

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“A typical touring season for me lasts about 40 weeks, and most of those are in a different city every week. Some of those years, I’ll do two or three cities in between the weekends,” he said.

David currently holds six world records for the highest cannonball shot and the farthest cannonball shot, breaking his own record three times. With more than 8000 successful cannon shots, his greatest height is 195 feet (59.4m) and his greatest distance is 89 feet (27.1m).

With only around 12 cannonballers today, his performance is always breathtaking and entertaining.

“It’s just been a non-stop tour that’s really been my ticket to the world. It’s been a very, very challenging, scary - definitely scary - career,” David said.



David Smith Junior, "The Bullet"

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