

WHEN THE NAME AND THE GAME ARE THE SAME

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At the 2012 London Olympics, Usain Bolt, the jet-propelled Jamaican dash man, retained his title as the fastest man ever to sprint upon our planet. The surname BOLT is wonderfully spot on and target perfect for a human flash, the electrifying holder of world records in the 100- and 200-meter dashes.

Shortly after the recent Olympic Games, long-distance swimmer Diana Nyad made a gallant attempt to swim from Cuba to Key West without the protection of a shark cage. Echoing her last name, we learn from classical mythology that a naiad is a water nymph. NAIAD is also an anagram of DIANA.

Margaret Smith COURT martially acquired the perfect surname for one who has won more grand slam singles titles in tennis (24) than anyone else who has ever played the game. In fact, at the Australian Open in Melbourne, I have watched matches played on the Margaret Court court.

Names such as BOLT, NAIAD, and COURT that are especially suited to the profession or a characteristic of their owners are called aptronyms. Believe it or not, Daniel Druff is a barber, C. Sharpe Minor a church organist, and James Bugg an exterminator.

It is the famous aptronymic personages that onomastic logologists most enjoy identifying:

- football star Jim Kiick;
- baseball stars Early Wynn, Herb Score, Johnny Bench, and Cecil and Prince Fielder;
- golf stars Gary Player and Tiger Woods (woods are golf clubs);
- Louis Jean and Auguste Marie Lumiere, who created the first movies that told stories (in French, LUMIERE means "light");
- astronaut Sally Ride;
- presidential spokesperson Larry Speakes;
- Romantic poet William Wordsworth;
- World Series of Poker champions Jamie Gold and Chris Moneymaker;

- American judge Learned Hand;
- manufacturer of toilets Thomas Crapper;
- and spouse snipper Lorena Bobbitt (Get it? "Bob it").

While we're on the topic of strikingly appropriate surnames, it wasn't that long ago that Steve Jobs, Johnny Cash and Bob Hope were alive. But now we have no Jobs, no Cash, and no Hope.

Here's a cute game that employs aptronymic first names: These days, we often attend conferences, parties, and other gatherings where we are asked to wear name tags that say, "Hello, I'm ____."

The object of our game is to match a real first name with a real profession to spark a punny connection, as in "My name is Homer, and I'm a baseball player" and "My name is Jimmy, and I'm a safecracker." Even more spectacular are serial puns on names and professions. *Hello, our names are:*

- Alexis, Carmen, Chevy, Jack, Mercedes, Otto, Phillip, and Rusty, and we work on cars.
- Annette, Bob, Brooke, Eddie, Gil, Rod, and Tad, and we're fishermen.
- Beech, Sandy, Shelly, and Wade, and we're lifeguards.
- Bill, Buck, and Penny, and we work at the mint.
- Bud, Daisy, Holly, Iris, Lily, Pansy, Petunia, Rose, and Violet, and we sell flowers.
- Case, Courtney, Sue, and Will, and we're lawyers.
- Charity, Chastity, Faith, Grace, Hope, Mary, Mercy, and Neal, and we're ministers.