

Welcome to the final day of Hip Hop Month here in the GMAT Tip of the Week space, where like any good radio station we're letting our listeners have a say through the request line. Sean in Wayne, Michigan requested an old-school cut that should have a tremendous impact on your GMAT study regimen and test-day strategy. So we're going to take you back to 1999 with a study message from Sporty Thievz.

Like you as a GMAT test-taker, Sporty Thievz found themselves chasing a big career jump (they weren't getting much airplay; you want to get an elite MBA) and being held down by a powerful, acronymed entity (GMAC for you, TLC for them) that seemingly wrote all the rules. TLC had taken a shot at Sporty Thievz types with their hit single "No Scrubs," decrying the low-on-cash, high-on-themselves types of wannabes. The overarching message – "don't have a car so you're walking"; "if you live at home with your mama"; "wanna get with me with no money" – was "impress me, then we'll talk". Which, if you think about it, is exactly the GMAT's message to you:

- If you think that 1's a prime number, oh yes son, I'm talking to you
- If you forget to consider nonintegers, oh yes son, I'm talking to you
- Misread the conclusion so you answer it wrong, oh yes son, I'm talking to you
- Go to GSB with 530? Oh, no – we don't want no scrubs...

So enter Sporty Thievz, in many ways to that point to epitome of TLC's ire. How do they respond? By essentially noting that "two can play at this game" and using TLC's entire mantra right back at them. "No Pigeons" attacks the same qualities in women that TLC had attacked in men. "Uh, oh – y'all chicks ain't getting nada..." In doing so, Sporty Thievz transformed themselves from scrubs to, well, the kind of musical act that 13 years later is still remembered in math-themed blog posts. And what's more, they showed you a blueprint for going from GMAT scrub to GMAT guru. How?

Use the GMAT's tricks right back at it.

We've all made these mistakes before – you forget to consider nonintegers, negatives, or 0 on DS problems and you get them wrong. You work too quickly through algebra on a word problem and solve for "the amount used" when the question asks for "the amount remaining." You misread the conclusion ever-so-slightly on a CR problem and fall into the welcoming arms of the trap answer. Or you see the presence of idioms you know and love in 2-3 answer choices so you eliminate the other, lesser-known idioms first...only to find out later that those are correct, too, and you just eliminated the correct answer. Sound familiar?

One huge theme in both hip-hop and GMAT is taking something bad and using it to your advantage. For Kanye West, it was "I'm a champion, so I turned tragedy to triumph..." using his car accident and wired-shut jaw as the impetus to launch his career as a rapper. For Biggie, it was "damn right I like the life I live, cause I went from negative to positive" (really just multiplying by -1, and because his situation was likely the result of inequality you know he flipped the sign!). And for Sporty Thievz it was Weird-Al-Yankovicing TLC's "No Scrubs" into "No Pigeons" to turn an attack track right around.

There are two ways you can look at common traps on the GMAT:

- 1) As traps, threats to your success that stand to ruin all of your hard work and aspirations

or

- 2) As clues and opportunities – you know how the GMAT wants to attack you, so you laugh knowingly because you're a step ahead of the game

Too many students choose the former. They worry about traps and they get angry and frustrated when they make them. But those who choose the latter are much more successful. They play the game, knowing that "the answer to this DS problem looks a lot like D, but I know that the GMAT likes to bait me into forgetting about negatives." Which is why the

latter group tends to do better on a Data Sufficiency question like:

Is  $a/b > 3$ ?

(1)  $a > 3b$

(2)  $b > 7$

Sporty Thievz would crush this question, because while statement 2 is not at all obvious in its intent it's a perfect opportunity for you to play "No Pigeons." Why is it important that  $b$  is greater than 7? Because 7 is greater than 0. Statement 2 is telling you that  $b$  is positive, just in slightly shrouded terms. Which also means that you can't – no matter how much you want to – simply divide both sides in statement 1 by  $b$  to get:

$a > 3b$

$a/b > 3$

Because you don't know whether  $b$  is positive! Statement 1 looks sufficient, but it isn't, until you know the information from statement 2 (so the answer is C). And you may not ever know that until the GMAT has exposed you, at one point or another in your homework, as a scrub because you forgot to consider negative values. Your job on these questions is to take the GMAT's traps and use them as your own. Yes, the GMAT likes to use your own tendencies against you, but you can do exactly the same.

Most of the hardest GMAT problems out there are difficult not because the math skills (or grammar knowledge) required are diabolical, but because they do enough misdirection to get you forgetting about the common traps that we all fall into. Every mistake you make more than once is a great opportunity to add that knowledge – the GMAT likes to make me \_\_\_\_\_ – to your arsenal, using it as a weapon and not a threat. To prove that you're not a GMAT scrub, expose the testmakers as the pigeons they are. Oh yes, son, I'm talking to you...