

It is often said that confidence breeds success. For Rhodes Scholar Zach Morris '02 nothing could be more true.

Morris, the third Rhodes Scholar in Ripon College history, follows in the footsteps of Latimer Johns '11, who fought and was killed in World War I; and Tom Reinecke '68, now the head of the electronic and optical properties section at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, D.C.

In December, Morris competed against students from universities like Harvard, Princeton and Yale, for the coveted two-year honor to study at Oxford University in England.

Self-confidence, according to Morris, is what gave him the edge over some 900 applicants, whom he says, "were equally, or more qualified to win." All told, 32 students were selected from the United States. Morris, who will complete master's degrees in medical anthropology and the history of medicine while at Oxford, will ultimately focus on cancer research.

A standout Red Hawk baseball player who batted .397 last season, Morris says interviewing for the Rhodes was "like stepping up to the plate to hit." After three years playing baseball under Head Coach Gordie Gillespie, "a consummate optimist," Morris says his ability to perform under pressure was at an



Zach Morris says he brought out his lucky boxers for his Rhodes interviews. *Jim Koepnick photo*

all time high. "Gordie makes you believe in yourself," he maintains.

Still, Morris admits the Rhodes interviews presented the perfect opportunity to pull on his lucky boxer shorts. Morris' decrepit plaid boxers, which made their debut in high school during big game days and dates, are now only

brought out for "extremely desperate situations" — like the Rhodes interviews. "Of course they helped. They're golden for me," says Morris, who hopes to pull luck from them again this spring when the Red Hawks aim to compete in the Division III College World Series of Baseball.

Morris, a double major in chemistry and biology and a Latin minor, believes his liberal arts experience also gave him a leg up when interviewing for the Rhodes. Morris



Zach Morris, a native of Rockford, Ill., is Ripon's third Rhodes Scholar. *Rockford Register Star photo*

THE RHODES SCHOLARSHIP

The Rhodes Scholarship is the oldest and most prestigious of the international study awards available to American students. Thirty-two American Rhodes Scholars are selected each year to receive full tuition to study for two to three years at Oxford University in England.

Since the first selection in 1903, 2,950 Americans representing 304 colleges and universities have been named Rhodes Scholars. This year, awards went to students at Ripon, Grinnell College and Harvard, Duke, Princeton and Yale universities, among others.

The scholarship, created in 1902 by the will of Cecil Rhodes, British philanthropist and colonial pioneer, pays all college and university fees and provides a stipend to cover necessary expenses. The total value averages around \$28,000 per year.

Rhodes Scholars are chosen in a three-stage process. First, candidates must be endorsed by their college or university. In each state, a selection committee is authorized to consider applications and nominate applicants to appear before one of eight district committees. Each district — Wisconsin is in district five which also includes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio — then designates four students as Rhodes Scholars.

Applicants are chosen based on academic achievement, integrity of character, a spirit of unselfishness, respect for others, potential for leadership and physical vigor.

The 32 Rhodes Scholars chosen from the United States will join an international group of scholars chosen from 18 other jurisdictions around the world. Approximately 95 scholars are selected worldwide each year.

IN GOOD COMPANY

The Rhodes class of 2002 comes from 21 institutions around the country.

Exactly what kind of company does having a Rhodes Scholar put Zach Morris, a winner, and Ripon College, his school, into?

This year's class includes five Harvard University students, three each from Duke University and the U.S. Military Academy plus two each from Princeton, Stanford and Yale universities.

Two new schools — the University of Central Arkansas and the University of Rhode Island — were added this year to the list of 302 schools that have had Rhodes Scholars since its inception in the early 1900s.

Ivy League institutions have historically

dominated the scholarship competition but in recent years many more schools have surfaced with winners.

In Wisconsin, only four institutions — Ripon, Beloit College, Lawrence University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison — have claimed Rhodes Scholars among their students and alumni.

Beloit has had two Rhodes winners, the latest in 1918, while Lawrence has had seven, the last in 1992. UW-Madison has had 29 starting in 1904 and their last winner in 2000.

Beloit, Ripon and Lawrence were all early winners in the Rhodes competition as well claiming their first recipients in 1913, 1916 and 1905, respectively.

In the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), Carleton leads with 18 Rhodes Scholars followed by Grinnell with 14, including the ACM's only other Scholar in 2002; Colorado College, 12; Macalaster, 9; Lawrence, 7; and Cornell College, 4. Following Ripon's three are Knox, Beloit and Coe colleges with two each and Monmouth with one.

Nationally, Harvard leads all schools with 300 Rhodes Scholars followed by Yale with 202 and Princeton with 184.

Ripon ranks in the upper half nationally among the 304 schools with Rhodes Scholars: 99 institutions have had one Rhodes Scholar while 49 have had two. Ripon is among a group of 16 colleges and universities that have had three.



How's this for good company? When Tom Reinecke '68 attended Oxford, his classmates included, among others, front row, first from left, Robert Reich, former secretary of labor and, fifth from right, "Strobe" Talbot, deputy secretary of defense and now president of the Brookings Foundation. In the second row, fourth from left, is Dennis Blair, a four-star admiral

and commander of the Pacific fleet. To his left is former President Bill Clinton. In the fourth row, seventh from left, is Alan Bersin, head of the San Diego school system. In the back row, fifth from left, is Reinecke. To his left is "Bo" Jones, president of the *Washington Post*.

old brother, Brett. "It helps me to stay in touch with what is going on with him," he explains.

Last year, Morris spearheaded his "Have a Catch" program by involving his baseball teammates in the lives of fourth- and fifth-grade students. The after-school program, which was featured in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* last spring, has Ripon players mentoring and tutoring students from Murray Park

Elementary in Ripon, in both baseball and academics.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg, because Morris' civic duty extends to nearly anyone in need. He works with the elderly at a local nursing home and as a volunteer with Ripon Medical Center, Ripon Food Pantry and Special Olympics, among others. "At home I have a great-grandmother who I love visiting with. When

I come to school, I either have to give that up or keep it going," he says. That's why Morris frequents Parkview Nursing Home in Ripon, where he leads a men's discussion group, or plays Scrabble or cards.

Courted by several institutions as a high-school senior, Morris says Ripon's personal environment set it

drew from a Darwin class he had taken last semester, after judges asked him about issues surrounding evolution. He also referenced his politics and government, history, language and science courses.

As a Rhodes Scholar selected for his high academic achievement, integrity, unselfish spirit, potential for leadership and physical vigor, Morris is considered a person who will ultimately make significant contributions to society and the world.

But, Morris maintains that he is simply not that special. "Everyone makes a difference" in his mind. "We all influence each other," he says. "To have others recognize me for making a difference will be dependent upon how things go with my research. Sure, I'd like to cure cancer — but a lot of people say that."

Like most of the professors on campus who have had Morris in class, Professor of Latin Eddie Lowry feels confident Morris will find many successes in life. "Zach will make his mark on the world through his own merits and without pushing others out of the way," says Lowry, "because he is modest and unassuming and doesn't force his way physically or intellectually."



Jim Beatty, professor of chemistry, confers with Zach about class work.

Jim Koepnick photo



The Morris family, Zach says, continues to be important to his success. Clockwise from back left are dad Jeffrey, brother Brett, 13, with Kraut, mom Jan and Zach.

Rockford Register Star photo

With a perfect 4.0 transcript, numerous scholarships and awards and an uncanny modesty, Ripon College has known Morris was Rhodes material for some time. Since coming to campus, most realized he was special, including President Paul Ranslow. "... There was something else that left me, and his professors, with the impression that this was a young man who would make a real difference in the world," Ranslow writes of Morris. "This is a very special person who has taken a liberal arts college and exercised it as we wish all students would," he says.

Morris' professors are simply awed by this student's capacity for learning. "Zach is probably the

most extraordinary student I have taught in a quarter of a century of teaching in higher education," says Lowry. "Simply put, he has a mind that absorbs like a sponge and a remarkable ability to focus with enormous intensity on whatever task engages him, whether it's athletics, studies or volunteerism."

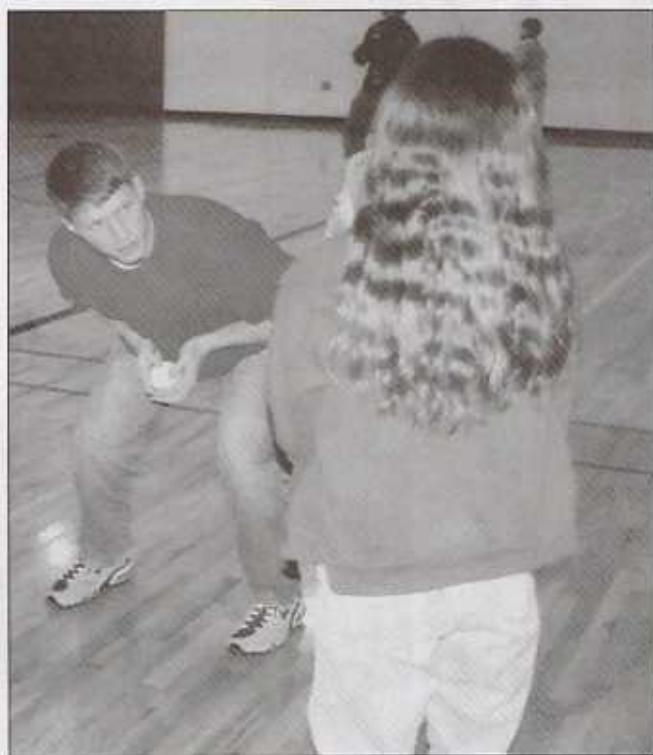
But, Morris says he has a lot of people to thank for being the person he is, including his loving family. "There aren't too many people I've known who haven't touched my life in some way, some directly, some indirectly, all profound in defining my experience and my persona," he says.

Known on campus for his giving spirit, Morris' reasons for helping people are clear — he enjoys them. As a big brother in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program of Fond du Lac County, Wis., Morris hangs out with kids who are around the same age as his 13-year-

apart. "People hold doors for you here," he says — as if that explains it all. But, athletics and academics also played into his decision to attend the college on the hill.

"I'm not a Division I or Division II athlete," concedes Morris, whose best sport was football as a first-year Ripon student. Nonetheless, this stellar student wanted to play, and Ripon offered him that chance. Morris' focus changed from football to baseball after he suffered a knee injury as a sophomore, but he has since been named to both the Division III Academic All-American Baseball and the American Football Coaches Association Good Works teams. Most recently, Morris was named a 2001 Verizon Academic All-American, after leading the Red Hawks to within one victory of advancing to the Division III College World Series.

A desire for scientific research flows in Morris' blood, and has since his grandmother died of cancer when he



Morris spearheaded the "Have a Catch" program which has baseball players mentoring and tutoring students at Murray Park Elementary in Ripon.

was 10. Loaded with Advanced Placement (AP) science credits from high school, Morris was looking to get into active research as a first-year student — another reason Ripon appealed to him. He got that chance working under Professor of Biology Peggy Stevens on research focused on quantifying cell division rates in sea urchin coelomocytes, cells located in the central cavity of a sea urchin. Later, Morris captured two summer research fellowships at Argonne National Laboratory in Chicago, where he examined structure-function relationships in various membrane proteins. He says he's impressed with the way professors have worked with him to tailor his education to fit his needs and his long-term goal of becoming a doctor and oncologist.

Stevens says Morris, as a first-year student, "was able to understand and to discuss the implications of research at a level that would have been impressive in a senior." She adds, "Zach is wonderful to work with because, not only does he have boundless energy and great intelligence, but he is never ruled by his ego and always is down to earth, open to the ideas and concerns of others, respectful of everyone around him."

After Morris' Oxford experience — where he will explore medicine from different cultural perspectives and delve



Mark Torinus of the Wisconsin Foundation of Independent Colleges and Universities, left, congratulates Zach last spring on earning a Rath Scholarship. Ric Clamm photo.

into the field's history — Morris will work toward his master's/doctorate — a seven-year commitment. "It's a lot of school, but I'll be paid for my research. It will be more like a job than anything else," he says. Later, Morris will focus mostly on "lab-type" research, perhaps with the National Institute of Health (NIH). During his career, he says, he hopes to also explore the political and ethical issues surrounding the medical field.

There's no doubt that Morris has high aspirations, and through this Rhodes experience, he says, he looks forward to bringing the international community closer to his doorstep. He looks at Oxford as yet another step in a learning process, which someday, will bring him full circle. R

Haley Jorgensen

Jorgensen owns Public Image, a public relations firm, in Ripon, Wis., and is a frequent contributor to Ripon Magazine.