

# 5. Hearing with Your Eyes

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Being deaf in a predominantly hearing world presents unique challenges, but it also offers advantages that are often overlooked. For instance, ambient noise that distracts hearing individuals—like in a loud bar or a sports stadium—does not affect deaf signers. This allowed deaf scuba divers to converse effortlessly underwater and deaf football players to neutralize the crowd's noise, previously a formidable 'twelfth man' on the field.

Trevin Adams, the Cubs' quarterback, viewed his deafness as an asset. With no auditory distractions from trash talk, player communication became streamlined, enabling better concentration. His experience echoed the thoughts of other deaf individuals who reject the notion of deafness equating to disability. For them, adversity enhances resilience, leading to a mentality focused on overcoming challenges rather than lamenting their circumstances.

The Cubs developed unique solutions around the football game's demands like adapting the snap count typically signaled verbally. Historical adaptations like using a bass drum were tested but later replaced by a system where the quarterback clapped his hands for rhythm, allowing players to respond visually rather than relying on sound. This required precise visual coordination, something deaf players had honed due to the reliance on visual cues in their daily lives.

Moreover, studies suggest individuals who are profoundly deaf may possess enhanced peripheral vision and biological movement perception. This heightened visual acuity created strategic advantages on the football field, allowing the Cubs to react more swiftly to plays.

Sign language further enriched the team's communication, granting them the ability to convey complex strategies unnoticed by opponents. This came in handy when the Cubs integrated a coded sign system to keep plays confidential from teams bringing interpreters. With fast-paced ASL conversations, they could execute plays quickly, eliminating the need for traditional huddles, which often slow down the game.

One memorable strategy showcased their ingenuity: during a critical play, the quarterback deceived opponents with coordinated signing that diverted attention before executing a successful touchdown pass. Coach Keith Adams emerged proud of this tactic, marking a notable success of the Cubs on the field, highlighting how they turned potential challenges into celebrated victories.