

# Paul Natsch: Tackling disability head-on with Dragon Dictate.

In 1985, Paul Natsch suffered every high school football player's worst fear: a crippling injury on the field of play. Natsch was hurt while making a tackle from his linebacker position. After leaving the hospital, he was taken to a rehabilitation center in Chicago, where Bears coach Mike Ditka and several players from the team visited him. (That was the season the Bears posted a 15-1 record and won the Super Bowl.)

Natsch ended up a quadriplegic with limited use of his arms and no use of his hands and fingers. He received his first Mac after leaving rehab, but in those early days of personal computers, he had to type with a mouth stick and move and click his mouse with a head-operated apparatus, both of which were unwieldy. The appearance of onscreen keyboard software such as KeyStrokes helped, "but it was still cumbersome compared to typing on a physical keyboard with two working hands," he says.

Then along came Dragon Dictate, and Natsch's whole world changed. Now he can do everything on his Mac with his voice. "It was literally like I had been wearing handcuffs and they had been removed," he says. (He still uses his head-operated mouse, but it only performs left-clicks, so he relies on Dragon Dictate's mouse control commands for right- and middle-clicks, as well as clicks that combine the Command or Control keys, whenever KeyStrokes isn't available for that purpose.)

Natsch continues: "Now I can type as fast as or faster than any able-bodied person. This has resulted in me responding to emails more, instant-messaging with friends more, playing online games more, and just writing in general more."

### A major transformation

A long-time avid gamer, Natsch was now motivated to talk about the activity at AssistiveGaming.com, where he writes and edits articles about games. He focuses on not only gameplay but also each title's accessibility, with tips and tricks aimed at fellow disabled gamers. He has also contributed to ATMac.org, which has a broader disability focus.

"As far as the Internet goes, I literally went from being the 'quiet kid in the corner' to somebody that just won't shut up," Natsch quips. He also uses the Dragon Dictation app for iOS, which he says "has extended that independence even further because now I can put my thoughts on paper no matter where I am as easily as anybody else." In addition, he uses the Dragon Remote Mic app on his iPhone when he moves to his living room and switches to the Mac connected to the TV there.

Natsch typically does his writing in TextEdit, after which he pastes his articles into AssistiveGaming's content management system, and he uses Apple Mail for email and Google Chrome for web browsing. He even plays around with Dragon Dictate's AppleScript support: he created an AppleScript for Skype that lets him use Dragon's Command mode to tell it to call a certain person; his Mac switches to Skype and places the call.

He sums up his feelings: "Dragon Dictate has not only been liberating for me but also something that has dramatically increased my productivity and involvement. And it's getting better and better with each update. It makes me feel like I can do anything now. I look forward to what the future holds with this great piece of software and I'm very thankful it exists."

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