



BENCH WARMERS TAKE ACTION

From the Middle East to Middle America, there's one thing that unites people of any color or creed. No, not Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt. Friendly competition.

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o this month, in lieu of the Spring Training Issue, *ENVY* sent Jeremiah to scour the globe in search of the weirdest competitive "sports" imaginable. Some weeks later he returned to us bruised, bleeding and with a brightly-colored rash that we're told as previously known only to apes in Borneo. However, the National Institute of Health has graciously allowed Jeremiah the use of a laptop while inside their plastic quarantine bubble, and he has emailed us the following:

1 BUZKASHI

Location: Afghanistan

Required: Horses; decapitated goat; John Rambo

Played By: People who think P.E.T.A. is something you wrap around

nb and beef
Buzkashi is a game played entirely on horseback, and it entails hurling a decapitated carcass into a ring called "The Circle of Justice." And since those would be only rules we could find, one would assume that everything else (including hitting, stabbing and/or shooting the opposing team members), is well within the bounds of "buzkashi fair play." We thought hockey was a pretty rough game, but this sport that's centralized around a headless, disemboweled livestock carcass has our vote for "Manliest Sport of All Time."

2 CHEESE CHASING

Location: England

Required: Hill; cheese wheel; about 45 seconds of free time

Played By: The lactose tolerant

Once a year, the world turns its eye on Cooper's Hill, England for the annual "Cooper's Hill Cheese-Rolling" event. After which, the world furrows its brow, asks why the hell it's watching this ridiculous stuff and wonders if it wouldn't be nice to go outside and read a book instead? The Cheese-Roll event involves hundreds of people (read as: morons) who simply chase a cylinder of cheese down a hill. Yes, that's it. And it's a huge hit with the British nancy-boys who are obviously afraid of being chased by the bulls in Pamplona. Although, in their defense, serious injury is much less likely to occur when racing with cheese. In the entire history of the world, no single person has ever been gored by an angry wheel of Gouda.

3 CHESS BOXING

Location: Germany

Required: Chessboard; boxing gloves; IQ optional

Played By: People with an innate desire to beat the piss out of anyone smarter than they are (How this hasn't caught on in the US, we have no idea.)

Leave it to the Germans to come up with a combination of sport that combines the strategic complexity of chess with unbridled, face-bashing violence. Chess Boxing is played by two people who split their time between throwing right hooks and castling their rooks. Play begins with four minutes of speed chess, followed by a two-minute boxing round, and it continues until one perspicacious pugilist is knocked out, checkmated, or realizes how ridiculous the whole process is and goes home.

4 SPORT STACKING

Location: USA

Required: Dixie cups; table; timer

Played By: Pre-teens with superhuman agility who are denied video games

Sport Stacking is the act of creating and collapsing plastic cup pyramids, of varying sizes, as fast as possible. And while this, as a concept, seems to be a ludicrous waste of time, we do have to admit that the YouTube videos of kids performing these feats was pretty impressive. The world record holder, 11-year-old Steven Purugganan of Massachusetts, created three pyramids of three cups each and collapsed them in just under two seconds. We firmly believe that little Stevie has a bright future ahead of him in the grocery store "bag boy" industry.

5 WIFE CARRYING

Location: Finland

Required: A very understanding wife

Played By: Easily amused couples

In ancient times, Joey Australopithecus had no qualms about clobbering cute Lil' Lucy on her melon and dragging her back to his cave. But these days, we've evolved from such barbarism, and "aggressive courting" has been replaced by purchasing numerous drinks for females in a, er, club and speeding back to your apartment in a Mustang GT before she vomits. (It should be noted that the male does not necessarily have to have achieved a greater intellectual prowess than his Paleolithic forebears to accomplish this.) And every year, the Finns celebrate our woman-toting history by holding the "World Wife-Carrying Competition." Competitors throw their female counterparts on their backs and traverse an obstacle course comprised of sand, gravel and water. The best part? The winner receives their wife's weight in beer. We're so in.

6 ZORBING

Location: New Zealand

Required: Steep incline; Zorb

Played By: Me first! Me first!

The Zorb is a giant inflatable hamster ball (think Wayne Coyne—but with an extra internal sphere for cushioning), and it could very well be the greatest invention since the Hot Pocket sleeve. Participants—or "Zorbonauts"—climb inside the ball and after being securely fastened, the whole contraption is pushed down a hill. Sometimes with a bucket of tepid water thrown in—sometimes not—depending on your level of aquaphobia. This, people, is the very definition of a day spent in "Awesome." And while Zorbing isn't exactly a sport just yet, there is undoubtedly a professional event looming on the horizon very soon.

7 MADBALL

Location: Katy, Texas

Required: Madballs; big plastic bat; insanity

Played By: Suburbanites of all ages with very little to do

Back in 1988, when life was simple, fluorescent shorts were compulsory and "Never Gonna Give You Up!" was at the top of the Billboard Charts, a sport was born in the small suburb of Katy, Texas. The idea was simple: Attempt to hit your buddy in the face with a Madball (those foam balls with the disgusting faces on them) while he tries to fend off each pitch with a giant red bat. Every pitch is a strike, and if the ball hits you—it's an out. The goal was to stay a batter as long as possible. Obviously, it didn't take long for the game to catch on; and at its peak in popularity, people from as far away as Avenue D came out to play the ridiculousness that was Madball. Alas, these glory days wouldn't last. American Greetings decided to discontinue the production of Madballs in 1990. And as the storm drain steadily devoured each of our remaining balls, the game eventually died out. But there is hope! It was recently announced that Madballs are making a triumphant return to toy shelves this spring. So ... wanna play? You're up first.