

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 670: A Test of Character



The difference between a call girl and a ball girl is that one handles flies, and the other mostly grounders.

The difference between Murtha and Martha is that one wants a war-end timetable and the other wants a wartime end table.

It's hard to believe we've never done this contest before, but if we did, we can't find the thing: **Change a word or phrase by only one letter** — substitute one letter for another, add a letter or transpose two letters — and explain how they are different or similar.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives the cool rubber skull pictured below, complete with a bubble inside containing eyeballs and tongues and stuff.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called this week) get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to foers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, July 17. Put "Week 670" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Aug. 6. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Tom Witte of Montgomery Village. The Honorable Mentions name is by Mark Eckenwiler of Washington, who also donated the skull.



BY JULIA EWAN — THE WASHINGTON POST

REPORT FROM WEEK 666,

Which we celebrated by asking you to see the work of the Devil in everyday items and events, and to sermonize against them:

4 Beware of Satan's little black box! I speak, brothers and sisters, of PlayStation. Forsake it! And turn instead to the PlayStation — for the End of Game Time nears, and on the Ninth Level of Hell, you can't hit the Reset button. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

3 Look no further than today's headline: "Students Find Ring Tone Adults Can't Hear." The evil is obvious: Cellphones are Lucifer's loudspeakers. . . . Can you hear him now? (Mark McGovern, Washington)

2 The winner of the *Atone Mints* plus some *Mensa pencils* with the 666 phone number: New Jersey hockey team is Devils. Is obvious. — *Miroslav Satan, New York Islanders* (Dan Seidman, Watertown, Mass.)

THE OUTER CIRCLES OF HELL

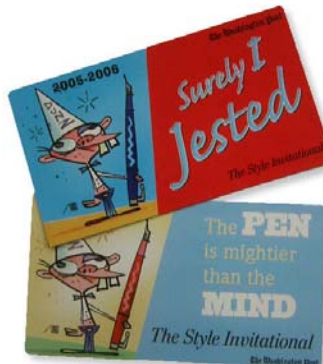
Behold the eyebrows of Andy Rooney! They growth and moveth, bobbing as if they were the tentacles of the Beast itself. Pray lest Lesley Stahl be rendereth uncoiffed! Pray lest Morley Safer be rendereth unavuncular! Pray lest the madness that droveth away Dan Rather descend upon us! The Face of Time warneth us all! Tick! Tick! Tick! (Bruce Alter, Fairfax Station)

Lo, each grid is numbered unto nine, and the grids are nine in number; this pleaseth the Lord, nine being a trinity of trinities. But be not fooled by the Tempter's snare: for every trinity of grids, they that run from the east unto the west and they that run from the north unto the south, conceals a 6, and a 6, and a 6, and thus is the Sudoku a puzzle wrought by Satan! (Brendan Beary)

Without warning, the sun goes black. A hellish howling pervades my being. The very air becomes a sulfurous fume. The earth trembles, and all life that can move flees, slaving with fear. Now that the End has come, the living will envy the dead. . . . Never mind, it's just my neighbor idling his Hummer in the driveway. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

How devious is the Trickster! He beckons to our gluttony with lures of Extra Value! He coddles our avarice with specials and prizes! Is not his masked servant Ronald garbed in the very colors of blood and brimstone? Does he not brazenly display the giant golden "M" of Mephistopheles? Beware, brethren: Wide is the service counter to Hades, and easy the way through the drive-thru! (Douglas Frank, Crosby, Tex.)

Male Members of the congregation, you who partake of the Blue Pill



The lusted-after Style Invitational magnet.

beware! Heart attacks abound for those who are weak, as vital blood is stolen from the heart to feed thy Devil's Tool. The warning is clear: VI (Roman 6) + AG (1st letter - 7th letter = -6) + RA (18th letter x 1st letter = 18), which adds up to 18, which is 6 + 6 + 6. The lesson, my friends, is simple: Do not rob Paul to pay Peter. (Ed Stolar, Rockville)

iPod: the 9th, 15th, 14th and 4th letters of the alphabet. 9 + 15 + 14 + 4 = 42 4 + 2 = 6

iPod Video. iPod Nano. iPod Shuffle. 6. 6. 6.

The sound of the Beast worms its way into our brains, preparing us for Satan's arrival. (Beth Baniszewski, Somerville, Mass.)

Evil will not reveal itself all at once; it will sneak up on us, winning us over gradually. It starts simply with the designated hitter, grows with the balk rule, and extends its pernicious tentacles with interleague play. Yes, evil is a product of Major League Baseball, which is solely responsible for its contents. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Shun the abomination that is soccer and the wickedness that is the World Cup! Know that the Lord despises all the world's revelment in pastimes where

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Amen, brethren, we all fall short of the glory of God, by our words and thoughts and deeds, and yea, by our very maws and entrails! See how we take God's gift — the creatures and bounty of the earth which the Lord hath provided — and by our digestion turn it to the most sordid filth, to be excreted out; thus do we dishonor the Lord. Brothers! Sisters! We must not lay ourselves to waste! (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

players use not their hands, for what are idle hands but the Devil's playthings? And is it not our holy duty, as God's favored country, to declaim against that at which we fail, and to abhor those who would excel? (Brendan Beary)

The president need only look out the Oval Office window to know that Armageddon is here. For just past the South Lawn, what can he see? A park ellipse. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Lo, by the side of the road I beheld a shining Red Hand that commanded: "Don't walk!" Yet rebellious people obeyed it not: They strayed outside the lines into the paths of horseless chariots. And they were cursed. After a time, the hand became the brilliant white image of a Being. But few on the corner could behold this wonder. Most had already crossed over to the other side. (Michael G. Peck, Alexandria)

Be warned of the "Devil's Handiwork"! For it is Lucifer who makes bridesmaid dresses — those purplish abominations that the condemned must pay hundreds for, wear only once, and keep for an eternity. Why do you think they call it SATIN? (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

And Last: For it was foretold that the great Bringer of Tidings to the masses shall also devise a source of mocking laughter, wherein a crowned woman should be called a whore, and which should employ the greatest number of idle hands to do the Devil's work. And it wouldst do so for six hundred and sixth-six weeks. And all that the Book didst say has come to pass. (Ken Gallant, Little Rock)

Next Week: Questionable Journalism, or Jest Ask

Two, Four, Six, Eight, Who We Gonna Denigrate?

SONGS, From D1

(When they're feeling particularly caustic, says the University of Amsterdam's Daan Scheepers, who has written about the psychology of soccer supporters, they also sing "I want my grandmother back" — a sardonic reminder of the Dutch Jews and non-Jews lost to the Holocaust.)

Naturally, the majority of the songs are meant to rally the team or salute a favorite player who's just scored. Soccer songs can be as innocuous and innocent as "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," penned in 1919 by Jean Kenbrovin and John William Kellethe, which London's West Ham United adopted decades ago, probably in honor of a popular player of the era, Billy "Bubbles" Murray. Some sound sweet, but aren't. A favorite in British grounds (set to "Guantanamera") is, "Sing when you're winning / You only sing when you're winning."

More often, the songs are crude and insulting (and unprintable here). Others are just low blows: Manchester United lost eight team members in a plane crash on a snowy Munich runway in 1958, which provided fodder for generations of rival fans. One recent taunt — to the Monty Python tune "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life" — goes: "Always look on the runway for ice."

In Glasgow, the Rangers team is supported mostly by Protestants, while Celtic, the other Glasgow club, has a considerable Catholic following. Which is why Celtic fans sing (in favor of the Provisional Irish Republican Army) "Say Hello to the provos / Say hello to the brave / Say hello to the provos / And Ireland shall be saved."

In some cases, singing has been a form of political expression. When Spain's Gen. Francisco Franco banned the use of the Basque and Catalan languages in the 1930s, such clubs as Barcelona — which considered its team a symbol for its beloved Catalonia — and Atletico Bilbao (in the heart of Basque country) defiantly sang songs in their own tongue. And Brazilian soccer club Vasco da Gama which, in the 1920s was the only Rio club that allowed black players, sings songs with African themes and chants — often in contention with the richer Rio teams of Flamengo and Fluminense.

But regardless of what they're singing, there remains the question: *Why* do soccer fans around the world sing?

Visit any American ballpark, arena or dome and you barely hear a warble — aside from dutiful intoning of the national anthem and "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," some shouty "Sweet Caroline" and the collective barking to "Who Let the Dogs Out?" It's mostly officially sanctioned sounds, led by the stadium's chosen soundtrack. "I'm unlikely to break out in song," says sports sociologist Merrill J. Melnick, co-author of "Sports Fans: The Psychology and Social Impact of Spectators," "if I'm not familiar with the people around me."

That idea, a fan's social identity — "I" vs. "we" — is key, according to Scheepers, a so-



BY FABRIZIO BENSCH — REUTERS



Soccer fans were overflowing with national pride at the World Cup games in Germany this year. Above, Britons celebrate a win against Paraguay; left, a Dutch supporter roots against Netherlands opponent Argentina; below, fans sing Italy's national anthem during a game against Ghana.

BY EUGENE HOSHIO — ASSOCIATED PRESS



BY TOBIAS SCHWARZ — REUTERS

cial and organizational psychologist at the University of Amsterdam.

In the United States, he says, "there is more of a balance between keeping one's distinctiveness as a person and, on the other hand, identifying with a team. But in Eu-

rope, it's more like an all-or-nothing phenomenon: People completely lose their personal identification and switch to their social identity in the stadium."

But hasn't America by now exported this idea of individuality by way of Hollywood,

globally televised Lakers games and McDonald's?

Scheepers clarifies that "although the social structure in many European countries is less fixed than it was ages ago — resulting in more options for 'individual mobility,' i.e., the 'American dream' — thinking in group terms is still more prevalent when it comes to self-definition. The different classes are replaced by different soccer teams one can identify with."

That group identity gets a boost from the nature of soccer clubs abroad, which often hail from neighborhoods with distinctive socioeconomic, class or ethnic makeups, points out Franklin Foer, editor of the New Republic and author of "How Soccer Explains the World." But most American teams represent entire cities, states or regions. When a franchise "tries to represent everybody," Foer says, "they end up representing nobody."

"The English, the French, the Italians and the Brazilians have homogenous cultures, with a predominant religion and a cultural existence that has been there thousands of years," says Mark Spaone, co-founder of Sam's Army, the official fan club of soccer's Team America. "But the culture of America is individual freedom. So you have 80,000 individuals doing their own thing."

A significant element in the emotional algebra of singing is game atmosphere, according to Foer, who says most American sporting rituals "feel kitschy to me. When I go to English soccer games — even though I can't understand half the songs — I'm not ashamed to join in, because it feels more authentic."

"I think the parking lot tells it all," says Melnick, who spent half a year in the late 1980s with London soccer fans while researching the "Sports Fan" book. "[Americans] come to the game individually in our cars, thousands of cars in the lot, suggesting our approach is more individualistic and idiosyncratic."

Many soccer fans in other countries, he says, "gather collectively for lunch, then march by the hundreds from their watering holes to the field. . . . The whole existential experience is so radically different."

Soccer fans sing, in large part, to influence the play on the field, says Foer. But in the United States, where "American sports has always been so professional, there's a sense of detachment from what's happening on the field." Foer likens professional American sports to "a Disney spectacle," where it takes mascots, cheerleaders and interactive scoreboard games "to elicit any coherent emotional response."

And although Americans are in the stands to see their team win, they're also conditioned — for the most part — to accentuate the positive and not taunt the losers; they partake less of schadenfreude, according to Scheepers. In other words, America's stadiums will resonate with song only when its sports fans learn how to sing in the key of human misery.

BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

East dealer
E-W vulnerable

NORTH

♠ Q J 10 7 6 3
♥ A 5
♦ K 4
♣ 10 5 3

WEST

♠ 9 8 4
♥ 9 6 4 3
♦ Q 2
♣ 9 8 7 2

EAST

♠ A K 2
♥ K Q J 10 8 7 2
♦ None
♣ A K Q

SOUTH

♠ 5
♥ None
♦ A J 10 9 8 7 6 5 3
♣ J 6 4

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
6♥	7♦	Pass	Pass
Dbl All Pass			

Opening lead: Choose it

As the hour grew late at the Mad Hatter's bridge party, the Hatter and the Dormouse begged for a respite, and the Red Queens, who had been kibitzing, took the East-West seats.

In today's deal, the Queen of Diamonds, East, opened with a full-blooded six hearts. The March Hare, South, hated to let his opponents play a vulnerable slam: He saved at seven diamonds.

Alice, North, hoped her partner's bid would cost only a few hundred points, but the Hare did rather better. When the Queen of Hearts led a heart, the Hare threw his losing spade on dummy's ace and led the queen of spades. East's king covered, and the Hare ruffed with the nine of trumps and next led the three. The Queen of Hearts followed with the deuce, and the Hare finessed with the four (!), sure that East wouldn't have bid six hearts if she had a diamond loser.

When the four held, the Hare led the jack of spades and ruffed East's ace. He returned a trump to the king and cashed the ten of spades. East-West followed, and the good spades took care of the Hare's losing clubs. Making seven!

"You opened six hearts when we couldn't beat seven diamonds?" roared the Queen of Hearts at her partner. "I'd make six hearts if the Hare let me play it," was the reply. "As for seven diamonds, we beat it if you appreciate the power of my namesake card. When the Hare leads the three of trumps at Trick Three, play the queen. He can't use the four of trumps as a dummy entry and goes down three."

And so it was.