

HOPSCOTCH CHAMPIONS
Xth Annual International Hopscotch Grand Championship

PG rated.

Parental Guidance Recommended

Contains adult themes. TWO swear words. Clean version also available.

* = speaking parts

COMMENTATORS: *Mike Rowfone (Constantly enthusiastic. Misses Rhee's occasional lampoons) (If he laughs it's not because he genuinely feels it but to cover up his embarrassment.)
*Mister Rhee Voice (a little laid back but really enthusiastic when something happens. Very interested in women.)
*Betty Pantsbulge in the change rooms (trill, sexy, panting voice)
*Guy Onthespot (casual speech, not as perky or as well spoken as the main commentators)

UMPIRES: *Rattles Reinhart
Jose Manuel Iglesias Scratch
*Official
Linesmen (ten of) including Josephine Wildcalves.

CONTESTANTS: *Basher O'Brien (Slow witted).
Susie Squat and Spring (spring and cow bell sounds accompany her movements)
Husky Hugo (a 250 kilo giant)
Steps Stevensen (has his own music)
Fiona Flick

OTHERS *Graeme (groundsman.)

Commercials

10 Mock Commercials. Two between each act.

*Various announcers and voices

ACT ONE

ANNOUNCER (Male)

Now it's time for the Tenth Annual International Hopscotch Championship!

Intro music (exciting sports music)

MIKE

This is Mike Rowfone welcoming you to the Tenth Annual International Hopscotch Grand Championship, here in the heart of the sunny neighbourhood of Sunnyhood. My co-host for today's big match is Mister Rhee Voice. I'm sure our regular viewers all know Rhee Voice's voice. He's too ugly for us to show you his face on television so in the interest of public safety the studio staff will kindly be placing stats, graphics and replays in front of him to cover his ugly mug and shield you viewers.

RHEE

Thanks, Mike. Yes, that's right viewers, when we cut to a shot of the commentary box remember that that gorgeous body beneath those pictures will be mine. And you don't have to worry about Mike, everyone, he's used to it. Why, take his sister. If you---

MIKE

Big crowd here today, looks like a full house. I bet the staff in the ticket booths are working very hard.

RHEE

Yes, Mike, just perusing the sales figures on my personal screen here. It says the ticket office has sold 90,000 seats for this event and watching those faces coming in, I would have to say we have a really excited crowd today—about as excited as a fox who's just found the keys to the hen house.

MIKE

You can say that again.

RHEE

No, I'm sure the people listening heard me and if they were out getting snacks or a beer they probably weren't that interested and if they were, I'm sure they're probably recording this so they can listen to it again on the replay.

MIKE

Good point, Rhee. And for those who haven't started it yet, now is a good time to hit that record button. You will want to replay this presentation time and time again. Rhee, you're better at looking at people than being seen by them, especially with that court ordered paper bag you have to wear in public nowadays, so what would you say the ratio of people out there currently is?

RHEE

At a guess I would say 75,000 people to 100,000 seats. A 75 to 100 or 7 point 5 to 10 ratio. In other words, 75% of the---

MIKE

Ha ha ha. I should have been clearer. What I should have asked was: What do you think the breakdown of ages in our crowd is?

RHEE

The breakdown, Mike? Well at this stage it looks like there's about 50/50 kids to adults, with 50/50 males to females, 50/50 locals to visitors and 50/50 standing compared to seated, or as the kids---

MIKE

That's great, Rhee---

RHEE

across the track would say fiddy fiddy. But I expect that will change as more and more of the people coming into the stadium find their seats---

MIKE

That's great, Rhee---

RHEE

---Although, during the match we may see a great number of people standing when they cheer. In fact it might get as high as 100 percent standing--

MIKE

Thanks for that, Rhee--

RHEE

Yeah but if they get a Mexican wave going its going to be some people up and some down and then some different ones standing and the others sitting. I would hate to have to estimate the ratio then.

MIKE

Thanks for that, Rhee. Soon we are going to cross to the gorgeous Betty Pantsbulge who will be interviewing the players right there in their dressing rooms. She will be giving us an "up close and personal, get down and boogie" with some of the biggest names in hopscotch. Right now, though, Guy Onthespot is going to tell us little about our referee and the conditions down there on the pitch. Welcome, Guy.

GUY

And a big hello to the viewers at home today, sorry you couldn't make it here to the game. There's nothing like a good feel and being here, with a live feeling, is like having the best feeling of all. Let me introduce you to our referee for the day, Rattles Reinhart. Hello, Rattles.

RATTLES

Hi, Guy.

GUY

Do you have any tips for today's big match? Any idea who might win?

RATTLES

Well, personally I like Husky Hugo. He's got a very good chance. He's 250 kilos—or 551 pounds in the old, old, old measure—of skeleton and muscle coated in a thick wobbly coat of white fatty flesh. And ha, ha, he sure can eat that boy as he and his manager showed me at a fancy all-you-can-scoff-down restaurant last night; the owners even had to bring in extra food to keep the other diners happy. If I were one of the smaller, plumper contestants, officials or even spectators, I'd watch my back... and legs and arms and any other easy to reach---part of the human body

GUY

What about Susie Squat and Spring, how do you rate her chances?

RATTLES

Although I've seen them all play, I've never met any of the other players. But I doubt any of them could out eat Husky. He's such a great person, too. He has invited me and my family to spend a couple of weeks in his summer house; all expenses paid. How nice is that? I don't know if the other players have summer houses.

GUY

Now Rattles, as a referee you have to keep an unbiased opinion of the players. By the sound of it---

RATTLES

Don't you worry about that, Guy. I'm as fair as they come. There will be no favouritism in the match. The best man will---

GUY

Or woman

RATTLES

--or woman will win. Just because Husky is to be the best man at my wedding has absolutely no bearing on the situation. You should see the car he's thinking about buying me.

Right, thanks, Rattles. Well there you have it, folks, (cont)

RATTLES

[in background] Husky, Husky, Husky.

GUY (cont)

a promise of a fair game straight from the ref's mouth. Who is going to win today.
(cont).

RATTLES

[in background] Husky, Husky, Husky.

GUY (cont)

My guess is as good as yours. Back to you, Mike.

MIKE

Thanks, Guy but I don't really think your guess will be as good as mine.

RHEE

I agree there. I don't think his guess will be as good as yours, Mike. He's decided who will win based on experience and personal opinion and judgement. He's made a decision as to who is the better player while as far as you go, you're having to make up your mind on who will win by actually guessing; like trying to predict the number on a roll of dice, therefore your guess will be better as far as guesses go. A much more guessey type guess. Thus making a guess which is better than his.

MIKE

Righteo, Rhee. Looking over the player's records and statistics I would say they are pretty evenly matched. We've got Basher O'Brien, Ireland's national champion for two years running and he's certainly proven himself in this country during the matches leading up to this one. There's Susie Squat 'n' Spring, the former gymnastics champion who won an Olympic medal in one of the floor exercises, I believe.

RHEE

Yeah, I think it was the ribbon one. She messed up on the others but came good on the ribbon. She has powerful thighs that girl. I sure wouldn't want to get my hand caught in one of her famous scissor squeezes.

MIKE

No sirree, Bob.

RHEE

My ears maybe. That wouldn't be so bad.

MIKE

There's Steps Stevenson, the legendary tap dancer. He has as good a chance as anyone. His recovering from a broken ankle last winter was nothing short of miraculous.

RHEE

Yeah, a real inspiration to sports people all over the world. No wheelchair for him, he spent several weeks learning to walk on his hands. But that came to an abrupt end after an unfortunate accident while visiting the men's room. After that he went straight onto crutches and hobbled around on them until the ankle healed naturally in the same time it usually takes. If you want to call that a miracle---

MIKE

There's also Husky Hugo as our referee mentioned, he's in with a good chance by the sound of things.

RHEE

There was some controversy concerning some of his play last year...hang on, I'm just getting a message here from the producers...

RHEE (CON'T)

(in background) Yes. Okay. Ah ha, Sure, okay.

MIKE

We're now going take you to Guy Onthespot who's accosted the groundskeeper down on the pitch. What are the conditions like down there, Guy?

GUY

I've just been talking to Graeme about the conditions on the pitch here.

GRAEME

(In background) It's just a flat piece of concrete.

GUY

He's the gentleman in charge of ensuring the grounds down here are kept in top shape throughout the year.

GRAEME

(In background) Just like any other normal slab of concrete.

GUY

Graeme, can you give us a few words on what sort of condition the pitch is in and how it might effect today's game?

GRAEME

It's just a...oh is this thing on?

GUY

Yes, go ahead.

GRAEME

Everyone's listening...to me?

GUY

Ha ha ha, No need to be shy.

GRAEME

Well...um...er...(cough)...it's...er like this you see. The, um, pitch is flat like a concrete slab. Sort of like a driveway or road of the same material except, of course, there's no cars. It's...er flat...oh, I've already said that. There's a few hairline cracks---

GUY

Cracks did you say?!! How much of a bearing do you think they will have on the player's performance? Any chance of accidents greater than normal?

GRAEME

Um...er could be, I guess.

GUY

Wow!

GRAEME

But they are really small, I don't think you would notice them unless you were really looking for them. It's not as if anyone is going to fall down---

GUY

Wow! Did you hear that, Mike? Falls and cracks. Sounds like the players are in for a rough time today.

GRAEME

(In background) I didn't say that... it shouldn't make any difference

GUY

I sure hope we don't lose any of our players down an unexpected chasm in the footpath.

GRAEME

(In background) It's just a slab of concrete

GUY

An earthquake in the middle of the game would cut right through where the players are. Putting life and limb at risk.

GRAEME

(In background) They're just hairline--

GUY

Have you made sure your professional indemnity insurance policy is up-to-date, Graeme?

GRAEME

I... er... don't think it---

GUY

Okay, well Graeme's going off to check his insurance policy. If any accidents happen through negligence on behalf of the groundskeeper, Graeme's going to be looking for a new job after apologising to the players, the player's families, and the viewers for a very long time.

GRAEME

(In background) Should never have taken this job. I should have stayed as the cleaner.

GUY

So the pitch conditions are such that we are in for the most exciting match. And although I can see a bit of a breeze fluttering the flags at the top of the arena, the conditions are calm down here on the ground. Back to you, Mike.

MIKE

Thanks, Guy. So viewers, it looks like perfect conditions for the players here at the moment. The weather bureau is, however, predicting medium strength winds later on in the day but as to how they affect play, we won't know until they arrive. Rhee, I believe you have some last minute news for us.

RHEE

I certainly, have, Mike.

MIKE

Well, what is it Rhee?

RHEE

Huh?

MIKE

(As an aside) What's the news? What were you on the phone about?

RHEE

(As an aside) Oh, we're not having the Oysters Rockefeller for lunch, budget restrictions they said---

MIKE

Ha ha, well viewers, looks like we will have to bring that news to you later because right now I am getting word that Betty Pantsbulge is in the change room with a couple of players. Betty, how do things look down there?

BETTY

Oh, so nice to hear your voice again, Mike.

RHEE

Rhee here, too, Betty.

BETTY

Long time no hear Rhee... Voice. Maybe I should have tattooed my phone number to your---

MIKE

Betty, our viewers are eager to hear from you right now and I believe you're with some of our great players right now in the ladies dressing room.

BETTY

I certainly am with a few of our great players here in the men's dressing room. And yes some of them do look good down there, Mike. Basher, how has your training for today's big match been shaping up?

BASHER

Really good, Betty. Been throwing stones at night.

BETTY

Practising your accuracy?

BASHER

Huh?

BETTY

Getting your aim right?

BASHER

Glass makes pretty sounds. I like the sirens.

BETTY

Mmm What about strategies. I hear you and your coach have been hitting the books pretty hard.

BASHER

No hit books, naughty Basher. Read books. Do counting. One drum, two shoes, three bees, four---

BETTY

Has that been heavy going, Basher? Is it keeping you away from your bed at night?

BASHER

Basher like bedtime story.

BETTY

I see you're rather well built, possibly I could help you with some of your training. I could hold your muscles for you while you---

MIKE

That was Betty Pantsbulge down on the floor with...I mean, getting down with...Oh, it's time for a commercial break folks, we'll be right back after these words from our sponsors.

GM PET FISH SUPPLIES

ANNOUNCER (very excited)

You like pet fish. We like pet fish. And we supply the best pet fish in town.

Finnegan's GM Pet Fish Supply. We know what makes a good pet fish. We make them to suit your personality.

We have Siamese Fighting Fish but not everyone likes to fight so we also have:

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Steady Dutch discussers

Lithuanian litigating eels

Hawaiian slow head shaking bass

Slightly agitated French blue

Angry but bluffing Armenian red fin

Brazilian back stabbing bottom feeders

Lecturing Latvians

Spanish stirrers

Croatian contentious and complaining cod

Annoying Austrian anchovy

Finnish fence sitting blue fins

Slimy snide remark striped American pikes

Chinese shouting fish

German gossiping guppies

Dominican Republic disputers

Persistent Norwegian niggers

Keeps-on-going-on-about-it Kenyan crawlers

Nigerian nag nag nags (females only)

Taiwanese tutterers

And many many more.

There's one to suit everyone. So come on down to Finnegan's GM Pet Fish Supply.

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SECOND ANNOUNCER (Quickly)

A sample of your DNA and a personality profile will be required for all specially made GM fish.

MAX-O-GRAIN

FEMALE ANNOUNCER (sexy and slow)

Hmmm you know you want it, don't you big boy? That mmm crunch of three different grains washed down with fresh icy cold milk. Packed full of carbohydrates, fibre and just a hint of vitamins and protein so we can say they are there. Maxo-grain will help you blast through your day and keep you going and going and going. The power of corn, oats and barley is going to keep you powering, time after time, again and again, all day long. First thing in the morning drag yourself into the kitchen and ask mummy for yummy Maxo-grain. Tell her you need it for sport, tell her you need it for study, tell her anything but our little secret, mmm. Maxo-grain--you'll be let down without it.

ACT TWO

MIKE

Welcome back viewers. You're just in time to see our competitors running out of the change rooms for the tenth Annual International Hopscotch Grand Championship.

RHEE

Yes, welcome back viewers. First out is Steps Stevenson. He's making his way rapidly towards the playing squares with a classical routine from Dancing with the Rain.

MIKE

Right behind him is Huskie. He looks like he's using a roll and plod method to move across the tarmac.

RHEE

It sort looks like jello in a Hawaiian shirt. Which for those who like the combination, goes very well with the loaf of fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches that he ordered for lunch.

MIKE

Next out is Basher O'Brien, the Irish champion.

RHEE

His hair is a bit of mess and he's still trying to straighten his clothes. I wonder what he was doing in the change rooms. Oh, there I can see our reporter Betty Pantsbulge in the background smiling and waving to him. Good for you Betty for giving support to the players like that.

MIKE

Ho, ho, look at Susie Squat and Spring.

RHEE

Yes, she's flipping the crowd. And they are loving it. She's showing off her athletic ability by doing body flips all the way to the playing squares. Or would you call them flip flops, Mike.

MIKE

I don't quite know, Rhee. Maybe more like a human slinky and those moves certainly show off her well toned body and belly ring. And here comes our last player, Fiona Flick.

RHEE

It doesn't look like the crowd quite know how to react to Fiona. There was a lot of controversy over her win last year, with plenty of rumours about her using a loaded stone.

MIKE

Yes, the international regulations have now made it quite clear as to what weight the stone can be. But that still leaves the shape and size open to the player's choice.

RHEE

I should mention at this stage that free throwing stones are being supplied by Pebble Creek Hopscotch Supplies but I need to point out to viewers that their generous contribution does not bring about a monopoly or communist state to the sport. Some of the players have elected to use stones supplied or manufactured by other companies of their own choosing. Even so, as official sponsors and suppliers Pebble Creek has the task of certifying each stone.

MIKE

And I can bet some pretty close inspections will be made before and after to ensure no hollow ones are used.

RHEE

Hollow stones have of course been banned since the late sixties after the great years of rattle and roll of the fifties, right after the assassination of the president of the United Hopscotch Federation, the great J. Edgar Kennedy.

MIKE

One of the founding fathers of this great sport. Who tragically died from an explosive filled stone that police traced back to a disgruntled player.

RHEE

I bet the police helped change his tone from disgruntled to grunted. [chuckle]

[Sounds of Rhee having a mock fight, punches to stomach, knocking wind out etc. making grunts.]

Take that you scum bag. And that...

MIKE

I see all the players are out there now. But w..?

RHEE

Wha...well it's certainly something I haven't seen very often, viewers. Right now we have two referees down there.

MIKE

Yes, this is quite unexpected; more unexpected than the lightning storm that interrupted play in the Pan Pacific games six years ago. I'll never forget the sight of Roger Bolt's younger brother, Dodger lit up like a Christmas tree. Yes, I still think of little Dodger Bolt every time I smell bacon cooking in the morning. Mmm good stuff. Er... I mean, tragic stuff. Anyway, let's see if Guy Onthespot who is closer to the action right now can fill us in. Guy, can you tell us what's going on down there?

GUY

Well, Mike, I think I heard you say unexpected and indeed that's the word for it all right. It seems like Rattles Reinhart has been replaced. For some unexplained reason the officials have removed the man who was hoping Husky Hugo would take out the winning position in this match. Our new referee is the Canadian born Jose Manuel Iglesias Scratch. There seems to be a bit of heated debate over this decision but the officials are shaking their heads and refusing to heed any arguments from Rattles Reinhart... (cont)

[Discussion in background]

OFFICIAL

Yes we damn well do have the right.

RATTLES

I'm not going. I'm staying.

GUY (cont)

If I just point the microphone in their direction....

OFFICIAL

No no, you must leave the grounds now.

RATTLES

But what about my new car?

OFFICIAL

You just get the hell off the grounds.

MIKE

He seems to be refusing to go. This is like the time Mushy Achk Bagone got dragged off the field while protesting his right to stonewall the female players for getting ahead of him instead of, as he shouted, staying in their rightful place behind him.

GUY

No, that's it. Rattles has come to his senses and given up on arguing. He is walking peacefully between six guards, all holding highly charged electric cattle prods.

OFFICIAL

Clear the grounds. Get off the field we're trying to start a game here. This is not some free for all party....

GUY

I'll have to turn back over to you now, Mike. I'm being told to clear the field.

MIKE

Thanks, Guy. Let's hope there're no more delays to the start, we're two minutes overdue already and that's two minutes of scotch unhelped. And I know our viewers are just as excited as I am about seeing this game take off.

RHEE

Yeah, excited for sure. Such a list of close matched hopscotch super names like this hasn't been seen since the South American Invitation earlier this year.

MIKE

The thirteen line umpires are moving into position. They are led by Eagle Magee who will of course be presiding over the turnaround arch at the top of the game and his deputy is Squinty Smith who will be keeping a watchful eye over foot placement at the throwing line.

RHEE

It looks like this exciting match is nearly underway. The referee has his back turned to the players as he prepares the straws to see who is going to lead off the play and he's getting them checked by three officials. Ain't nothing fairer than hopscotch, even the straw's got to be by the book!

MIKE

It's not like the good old days when paper, rock, scissors was used to decide the order of players. Seems everything is going digital in the 21st century.

RHEE

Yeah, it can't be used in official matches ever since paper, rock, scissors became recognised as a sport in its own right with its own governing body, national membership and registered player list. Using one sport to start another sport is a big no-no and already illegal in a number of countries.

MIKE

They say that the straw pick is the one place where a referee can cheat and no one wants a repeat of the European Open so I would say by the look of it they are being very careful. Well that's three green lights from the officials and Jose Scratch does a magnificent turn with the straws held out in front of him and his spare hand firmly behind his back so he can't change anything.

RHEE

You can see by his execution of that turn that he is one of all time judging greats. If he was available at the start of the match I wonder why he wasn't selected over Rattles, Mike.

MIKE

Yes, that's probably going to be one of those mysteries that lives on in the legend of this great sport. Oh, look at that, how sportsman like can you get? Instead of making the players come forward randomly to select a straw, he's stepped into the semi circle of players and is offering the straws to them from left to right.

RHEE

Not only is he saving them from taking a step forward, which might waste valuable scotch hopping energy, he will prevent a lot of arguments, too. The bloodbath at Tokyo stadium five years ago was something that's been very hard for this sport to live down and even I am tired of reminding people of it and showing all that old footage...

[aside, as if watching it. TV noises in background] ooohh that might have hurt.

MIKE

First it's Steps Stevenson. The first straw drawn gives a good yardstick as to length of straws but we don't seem to have the right camera angle to see what he's got. Oh. There, there it is. What would you say, Rhee?

RHEE

I would say, "thank you." It's one of those things my mama taught me from a young age and has helped carry my life along successfully ever since.

MIKE

Ha ha and what length would you say that the straw was?

RHEE

It looks like it goes all the way from one end to the other so I'm inclined to say it's full length, but on the other hand half a length straw also goes from one end to other and therefore it could just as easily be that or---

MIKE

Well there we go, all the player's have their straws and they're holding them up for the spectators to view. You can hear how much the crowd love that gesture.

RHEE

I believe it was started by the great Margaret Mudfling who was the great grandmother of our very own Susie Squat and Spring. Margaret was flipping off the crowd before little Susie was even born.

MIKE

And here comes the order of players today. Starting from first position we have: Basher O'Brien, Ireland's National Champion. Susie Squat and Spring – who brought silver home to her country in gymnastics. Husky Hugo- the big man with a big appetite who makes you want to cuddle a loved one or even a complete stranger if it will enable you to stay out of his path. Steps Stevensen – or Mister Bowed Ankles as they call him on the dance floor since his tap dancing accident. And Miss Fiona Flick – if there's a dark horse in this race you can certainly say that she's the one.

RHEE

Except she's rather fair skinned so maybe "light" would be better and she doesn't look like a horse either. I'd say more like a fair mountain goat, all nimble and all. Or maybe even some kind of peroxidized ferret...but much prettier than either one.

MIKE

The referee is raising his hand and... there goes the siren for the start of this great game. As the players make their way to the grid I'll just give a bit of a rundown for those not familiar with the new international standard thirty square grid.

It's laid out starting with your traditional starting layout which hasn't changed since Egyptian kids first scratched the pattern in sand. When we get past the sixth square we have the first of the Chinese diagonal four-steps. The seven and eight are opposed diagonally to the nine and ten. Then again we have a standard pattern. After the twelve and thirteen sitting side by side we get the first of two Spanish back hops. So it's hop onto fourteen over the sixteen onto the fifteen back one to the sixteenth and then back over the fifteen to the dual 17 and eighteen squares. There's another Chinese diagonal for twenty to twenty three followed immediately by the second Spanish back hop with twenty four, then twenty six, onto twenty five and then twenty seven. With twenty eight and nine side by side and 30 at the turnaround or "home" in old schoolyard terms.

RHEE

Yes, but it's turn around and make it all the way back to the start in international rules. And it's going to require a hell of lot of concentration and skill for anyone to even make it all the way to the turnaround arch.

MIKE

It certainly is, Rhee. And here we go ladies and gentlemen. Basher O'Brien steps up to the throwing line. This should be pretty easy for him. He only has to throw a one which is a pretty simple number.

RHEE

Yeah, they don't get much more simple than one, that's for sure.

MIKE

The referee is handing Basher his stone and it looks like he's elected to go with a smooth but knobbly shaped stone. What does that look like to you, Rhee?

RHEE

A knob

MIKE

You said it, Rhee. A knob.

RHEE

You also said it Mike.

MIKE

Basher is being careful where he places his feet, three orange warning flags and it's instant disqualification. He's judging the weight of his stone by tossing it up and catching it a few times.

RHEE

He looks confident and happy with a sort of wistful smile. Anyone would think while he was in the change rooms with Betty Pantsbulge he must have had se---

MIKE

Wow! He certainly looks determined. Let's listen in to the first throw of the match. The referee checks that no arms have been raised by Squinty Smith the line umpire but that's just a formality as it's a beauty of a throw, well away from the lines. No one can challenge that throw. The ref gives the nod to Basher. And we need to go to a commercial break but we'll be right back after that.

RHEE

Of course, we'll be back after. We can't be back before...

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ANNOUNCER (rap, street style)

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Possible side effects may include suicidal tendencies, depression, internal organ failure, homicide, hysteria, paranoia, and a whole bunch of other things you don't want to know about anyway.

HUG A PORCUPINE

ANNOUNCER (young girl)

Let's appreciate the adorable creatures of the world.

Help celebrate life by showing your love during animal awareness week.

Show your friendship to all animals by hugging a special animal today.

I'm not just talking about any animal. I'm talking about something really special.

These cute and fuzzy animals are better than pussy cats. Better than puppy dogs. Better than bunny rabbits. And even better than teddy bears.

Yes, you know it. I'm talking about the most cuddly [pronounce cuddely] of all animals—the cute and adorable wild porcupine.

We need everyone, especially you, to go out into the wild and quietly track one down. And when the moment is right, when the little critter least expects it, jump out from hiding and hug one as hard as you can.

Hmm it feels so good.

Show your love. Hug a porcupine today.

If you can't find a porcupine--a hedgehog or echidna or spiny anteater will do. Cacti and cactus's are not permitted.

It's heart tickling love all the way. Ahhh.

ACT THREE

MIKE

And we're back viewers.

RHEE

Actually we never left. The station just changed what they were telecasting to the viewers. Of course those at home might have left---

MIKE

Basher O'Brien has just managed to successfully hop and jump to the turnaround arch and things are a little tense now as he prepares to make his one hundred and eighty degree turn before his run back to the throw line. I can see his coach over on the side and he doesn't look concerned in the slightest. Their training sessions must have been intense to gain such a level of confidence.

RHEE

He looks a little unsteady but... here he goes... Oh, and it's a magnificent turn from two feet to two feet and he's facing the exact opposite direction. A true one eighty degree turn. A small cheer from the crowd and off he goes. Hop, hop, jump! (cont)

RHEE (as an aside) (Cont)

What in the hell am I saying true for? You can't have a false one eighty. It either is or it isn't one. I've been hanging around you way too long, Mike.

MIKE

Basher, by the way, favours his right leg for his hops and both legs for his jumps.

RHEE

Hop, hop and now he's stopped, balancing on one leg as he prepares to bend down and pick up his stone.

MIKE

His coach is looking worried now as he rises from the bench. His fingers are crossed and sweat is beading on his brow. Basher leans over and...he's...no...yes, he's got it. Look at the grin on the great man's face. He's only one hop from successfully completing his first run. ... And... there you have it. Basher is the first to score and so it's one point to Basher and zero to all the other players.

RHEE

But, Mike, I have a feeling that score will change once the other players take their turns.

MIKE

Here comes Susie. The referee hands her, her stone. It looks like she has opted to go with a dark coloured pyramid shaped one.

RHEE

Actually, I think you'll find that technically it's called a tetrahedron which is a triangular pyramid.

MIKE

That's great, Rhee.

RHEE

And the dark colouring is characteristic of basalt, a volcanic rock much favoured by the people of Iceland and New Zealand.

MIKE

She's stepping up to the line and bending over for the toss.

RHEE

It's a nice view from here.

MIKE

Ooh, that was close, with the way her stone tipped to one side there, I wasn't sure if it was going to touch the line.

RHEE

Just for those viewers new to the sport, the player's stone may touch the line or even be partially over the line but if it falls outside they have to miss-a-turn.

MIKE

Not something any of the players can afford to do at this early stage in the match.

RHEE

But the rule is slightly different for foot placement. An athlete's foot is allowed to touch the line but is not allowed to protrude beyond the outer edge of the line.

MIKE

The ref gives her the nod and she's off, Susie is not wasting any time getting into this game.

RHEE

Great foot work on the first Chinese diagonal. Nice little twist of the hips there.

MIKE

She's through that nicely. Now her turn around. And back again. She has the balance and the poise that makes her one of the greatest female players in hopscotch. And she's over the throw line without a problem.

RHEE

Yes, she certainly knows how to entertain the fans with the way she bent over and picked up that stone while balancing on one foot. I tell you, Mike, that's a real crowd pleaser.

MIKE

Next up is the big, real big man, Husky Hugo and he looks keen to get on with the match. He's putting his feet slightly further apart than the other players. What do you think he's doing there, Rhee?

RHEE

Aww probably taking a little pressure off his jock rot.

MIKE

I guess you're right there, Rhee. That particular fungal infection can be problematic and one heck of a heartbreaker; therefore, big stretches for a big man. His stone is simply a basic cube with six sides.

RHEE

Yeah, that's how many sides most cubes have.

MIKE

He throws...and it's a good shot. The ref nods, and let's see how Husky goes on his first hop to square number two. He looks tense.

RHEE

Now, that's what I call wobbly.

MIKE

He's crouching down into position ready to fire his weight up into the air and over square number one. With the size of those feet he's at a certain disadvantage.

RHEE

That's why you can see wide belts around his ankles, viewers, they're holding in the extra flesh at the bottom of his legs to keep it from spilling over onto the ground and possibly disqualifying him. Here he goes.

MIKE

Holy donuts with extra sugar and cream, Husky's landing has widened those cracks on the pitch. The crowd's jumping up and down, no, they're being thrown up and down by the movement of the stadium and the other players are falling like ten pins. Viewers, we are experiencing the tremors right here in the commentary box.

RHEE

The ref has fallen to the ground and is trying to bring some calm to the situation. Oh my god this is terrib---

ANNOUNCER

We are currently experiencing some technical difficulties please enjoy this music and a pretty picture of buffaloes munching on wildflowers while we sort this damn mess out.

JOIN A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

ANNOUNCER (Californian girl / Valley Girl accent)

Can you like whinge and moan about anything?

Can you totally make complaints about simple minor things that aren't really hurting anyone?

Can you make your own ohmagawd problems into other people's problems?

Do you like to mislead people?

Do you like to give people the run around?

Do you like to get other people into trouble for like who-cares types of things?

And would you like to do it all like totally legally with the full protection of the ohmagawd law while staying like totally anonymous and totally untouchable as a totally rad individual?

If you said "yes" to all of those things we need you to "work" for us. Like yeah.

Government Departments across the country want to like hire you now. Yeah. (Hee hee.) We need you. Your ability to whine and complain every time some small pathetic business tries to get ahead or whenever some like nobody does something you can't has kept us totally employed for like years. It is really like so time for you to totally join us. People like you have made us like what we are today—a totally magnificent machine of unquestioned actions. (Hee.)

If you know you are like totally important, like far more important than anyone in the private sector—[aside] (eerk,) gag me with a spoon—then be like so in and join us now.

We will show you all the like opportunities available to keep those other gross people in their places by bringing in new laws to restrict their actions and heavily enforcing the tiniest clauses in our existing ones. It is so rad.

We'll also show you how to totally mess with them by covertly increasing rates, taxes, penalties, licenses, administration and running costs while like totally pretending it's for their own good. Hee hee.

Join a government department like today. Email us now.
Stompon anyone@whoisuseful.com

[slightly quicker]

Artists are like gross and not eligible and need not apply.

PASSION WITH PIGEONS

ANNOUNCER

From the people who brought you Ice Skating with Penguins, Breaking Bread with Ducks and Laughing with Mynah Birds we at Life Time bring you a whole new instruction video on Finding Passion with Pigeons. We'll show you how to interact one on one with Nature's most delightful flighted gift to man.

ANNOUNCER

We'll help bring these gentle loving creatures right into your home.

SATISFIED CUSTOMER (talking to pigeons)

Come here little fellow. Who's a beautiful boy? Hey. Come and see what special treat I have for you. You tell 'em, who loves you. Yes, who loves you, boy?

ANNOUNCER

Never before has man been able to commune with nature in such a close and personal way.

SATISFIED CUSTOMER

Oops, looks like daddy's little boy has done another little whoopsie. Just like his brothers and sisters and cousins and second cousins and...Never mind. Daddy will just ignore it like the man said. No talking about things which bother me. It's all about your freedom.

ANNOUNCER

Compiled from advice of some of the world's greatest experts on the mind. We don't waste your time with silly advice from wildlife freaks or useless information from animal trainers, only experts trained in the obscurities of the brain.

SATISFIED CUSTOMER

Daddy will just walk through it all as if it doesn't exist. Now how about a kiss for Who-loves-you.

ANNOUNCER

Just like a rat travelling through a maze, you'll unravel the mysteries and explore the hidden beauties of the passion these incredible creatures hold.

SATISFIED CUSTOMER

Just a little kissy. Yeah, that's it, nice hey?

ANNOUNCER

So if you're sick of your love being rejected, this instructional video will have you cuddling and canoodling with the coopers in no time at all. All for the low low price of nine dollars ninety five.

SECOND ANNOUNCER (talking quickly)

Plus postage and handling of 346.85 plus six monthly instalments of 59.95 plus insurance and other charges.

ANNOUNCER

And that's not all. We also give you absolutely free a set of six steak knives for the simple reason that we want you to feel like you're not being ripped off and so you can enjoy your beautiful pigeons even more.

SATISFIED CUSTOMER

Mmm who loves you? Yes, daddy thinks you're beautiful, delicious, tasty, scrumptious. Yes, he does. Hmmm. Belch.

ANNOUNCER

We guarantee your satisfaction.

ACT FOUR

MIKE

Welcome back viewers and please accept our apologies for that fifty minutes of interruption to the game. Apparently the seismic shock from Husky's first hop dislodged a piece of concrete from the stadium which landed on our transmission van in the car park. While we were busy trying to get another van on site Husky was lifted out by crane and taken to hospital on the tray of a semi-trailer ambulance. Surprisingly, despite the damage to the stadium, no one was injured, apart from Husky, of course, who has what looked like a compressed leg injury by the way his shoe came up to his knee. Mister Rhee Voice, my partner in the box, will now fill you in on the details of the match so far.

RHEE

Thanks Mike. That's partner in the *commentator's box*, viewers. It was quite an event when big Husky Hugo made his first big hop, all right. Thanks to the efficient work of the hopscotch officials and stadium personnel they managed to get the game resumed while we were off the air. After some consultation another suitable area of concrete paving here in the stadium was selected and referee Jose Scratch, a man who never seems to be without a piece of chalk, drew up a new pitch and play resumed.

So far the score is Susie Squat and Spring with 5 points, Steps Stevenson with 6 points, Fiona Flick with 7, Basher Obrien wayyy behind on only two points and Husky Hugo retired at zero.

MIKE

Yes, Basher, who is throwing now, ran into quite some trouble after the earthquake and aftershocks. He just didn't seem to be able to throw his stone into the right square. I'm almost inclined to say he has a lapse in recalling the sequence of numbers.

RHEE

Or he, "forgot how to count," as they would say in technical medical manuals...or in the school yard. Some other strains of thought might classify it as a case of Decimal Units Malfunction of the Brain, or D. U. M. B.

MIKE

Yes, despite the crowd chanting out the correct numbers to help remind him, he was still throwing all over the place. It just didn't seem to make that much difference.

RHEE

Oh no, what a pity. Basher O'Brien has just missed again.

MIKE

I'm almost surprised his coach hasn't thrown in the towel. I suppose there's nothing like dogged determination.

RHEE

Now it's Susie Squat and Spring up to the line. She fell behind when she double jumped on one of her landings and last time missed her throw on the six square. Let's see how she goes. She has a clear field with no players or stones blocking any of the squares. It's a good throw.... She gets the nod...and away she goes. I like the way her cute little---

MIKE

Yes, she's hopping and jumping in good form. Her turn is good. She stops with both feet planted firmly on the ground for her pick-up from the six square. She bends down....

RHEE

What fantastic shape her...er... form she is showing.

MIKE

She's successful. She's got it. She's off hopping again... and she's home. Susie is now on six points. After a sociable smile to acknowledge Susie, Steps Stevenson steps up to the throw line. He's not wasting any time. It's a good toss, clearly landing in the seven square. The ref gives him the nod and he's off.

RHEE

Excellent foot work by Stevenson. I believe early in his career he trained in the London School of Dance. Is that right Mike?

MIKE

It sure is. Steps makes those Chinese diagonals and the Spanish back hops almost into an art form. His turn around goes smoothly. Coming through with perfect accuracy and timing he jumps to the ninth and tenth planting both feet diagonally then hops to the eighth. He makes a side bend to collect his stone...but no, the flag goes up. He's overbalanced and touched the ground outside the square with his hand. What a disaster for Stevenson. He'll have to stay there on the eighth square balancing on one leg in the middle of the pitch and wait until his next turn and try again. Of course, this rule only applies to the two Chinese diagonals on the pitch which is seven, eight, nine and ten plus twenty, twenty one, twenty two and twenty three. I bet he's grateful there's one less player in the line up with Husky Hugo out of action.

RHEE

I bet all the players are grateful.

MIKE

It's a precarious position for Steps to be in, having to balance in the middle in the pitch until it's his turn again.

RHEE

Yes he's in the way of the other players, adding an extra obstacle for them but at the same time exposing himself to the dangers of thrown stones and misplaced feet landing on his own foot. Plus there's the risk of physical body collisions and all the risks and controversy that goes with accidental and, I hate to say it, deliberate touching by other players.

MIKE

Steps did suffer when he twisted his ankle slightly on the run home from the five, and even though it's strapped up now I can imagine it's causing him quite some pain by the amount of tears streaming down his face as he stands there.

RHEE

I would think so, Mike, and it's the same ankle he made his famous normal recovery from so I would say the way he's battling on is probably going to earn him a standing ovation from the crowd at the end of this game.

MIKE

Okay, let's get back to the action in this enthralling match. Fiona Flick, the dark...er light horse...or light player is about to throw. This is an internationally standard thirty square game so Fiona is still quite a few throws away from taking out the championship even if nothing goes wrong. She's taking her time. Fiona Flick is not only leading the game in points but also she is the last to throw in the line up and therefore has an extra run up her sleeve.

RHEE

Even though she doesn't haven't any sleeves? I don't think that's possible. And besides she couldn't really run up one of her own sleeves if she did have them.

MIKE

Huh?...As she progresses to the higher numbers her throwing has to get more and more accurate to get her stone to land inside the square.

RHEE

Although she has to be accurate on all squares otherwise the stone will fall outside and she would be out, so her accuracy has to stay good all the time. So I would say it's the same degree of accuracy. What I mean is it's either accurate and lands somewhere in the square or not, in which case it isn't accurate unlike when it falls inside a square and is accurate.

MIKE

What a stone she's using, too. It's more like a boulder.

RHEE

Using something with that much weight means she's taking no chances with the crosswind. By the depth of the cringe on Step's face I'd say he's worried about where her stone will land, too.

MIKE

She's lining up for the eight. She throws. It bounces once, twice, just missing Step's foot but it comes to a beautiful stop, clearly inside the chalk lines of the eighth square. There is an obvious look of relief on Step's face. I wouldn't like that stone landing on my foot even if it wasn't injured. Fiona gets the nod from the referee and she's off.

RHEE

Beautiful form from this girl. She's really putting her upper torso into it. Up and down like happy puppies...hop hop, jump, hop.

MIKE

Oh No! It looks like she's botched the Chinese diagonal. There's the yellow flag. But what's this, Rhee?

RHEE

That's your microphone. Looks like her coach is not happy with that call at all.

MIKE

Yes, her coach has stormed onto the pitch and fallen into an argument with Jose Scratch. And now he's been given a yellow flag, too. Woah, look at the look on his face. You should see that. Look at the way he's slumping off back to the benches. And now he's having a go at Step's coach.

RHEE

People are watching, Mike, so I would say they are seeing what is happening. There's no need to tell them to look while they are watching. But the situation down on the pitch does elicit thoughts as to why this great sport doesn't allow instant replays for the referee.

MIKE

You're right, Rhee and that makes it one heck of a complicated decision for the referee. Ho, ho look at the other coaches down on the benches. They've all risen up from their seats and are arguing like a gang of cats chasing a mouse in a microwave oven. What particular points they are squabbling about, we just can't tell.

RHEE

Fiona has been taken aside by the ref and placed away from the game in the timeout circle while the ref consults with his linesmen. That doesn't mean she's out of the game or that any penalty has been awarded against her. I would say it's just a precautionary measure.

MIKE

This has been one really exciting match, viewers, and now there's one extremely complicated decision that referee Jose Scratch is going to have to make. Was it a mess up on the Chinese diagonal or not? I would have thought, yes from this angle but let's take a look at our own camera replay.

RHEE

Now here you can see Flick taking off, hopping the first three squares and she lands with both feet planted separately on the four and five squares with a big smile. Boy, she looks even better in slow motion. Got just the right bounce there.

MIKE

Looking over at Steps it appears like he's making another miraculous recovery if we compare it to the pain he was expressing just before. Even his tear filled eyes are wide open with delight.

RHEE

And then Flick hops to the number six square using her right foot. I think that's so she can put most of her weight on the seven in her next jump. And there...right there, can you see it, Mike?

MIKE

I certainly can, I wonder if the referee did.

RHEE

As you can see viewers Flick did mess up the seven, eight, nine, ten by landing on the nine and ten first and then doing the twist to take in the seven and eight. Perfect for her return but no good for her forward run.

MIKE

Now it's up to the referee and he's certainly taking his time on his decision. It's situations like this which have caused a lot of debate in the Hopscotch Federation over whether the referee should be allowed to use an instant replay to help make their decisions. The coaches and the players' managers can lodge protests all they like but if the referee is given the position to make a decision his decision is going to have to stand as he calls it no matter who disagrees.

RHEE

Of course if the referee didn't make decisions he wouldn't be a referee. Decision making is part and parcel of being a referee. Sort of like a Judge. If a Judge couldn't judge....

MIKE

...That's right, Rhee and now let's see if our man on the ground, Guy Onthespot, can enlighten us any further on what's happening down there. Guy, can you comment on the action down there?

GUY

It's bedlam down here, Mike. The coaches and the players' managers are face to face in confrontation. If I look over to my right, where the time-out circle is, I can definitely see distress on Fiona Flick's face. The lines men are in conference with our referee so it's possible a footing move is in question but I can't tell you why a decision has not been reached. And the emotion emanating from the crowd is not a happy one. There's movement in the stands which I think is caused more from dissatisfaction than from sore tooshes sitting on hard seats.

MIKE

Well, Viewers, while that's being sorted out I think we will go to a commercial break.

ACTION GI CARE HOME

ANNOUNCER

Don't delay! Time is running out! This is your chance to take advantage of the latest and greatest in nursing home care.

Don't like the prospect of sitting around in a wheel chair like an old fart? Being left in a corner and ignored by others or being ear bashed with boring old tales of someone's confused and exaggerated past?

OLD MAN (quaky voice)

In my days, when I was a boy, why I remember having to fight ten wild Bengal tigers. And all I had with me was a tooth brush and a teaspoon...

ADULT SON

Oh, God, please kill me now.

ANNOUNCER

Hate the idea of being forgotten, living in cold rooms with the smell of stale urine and nose numbing disinfectant? Does the thought of relatives dropping in on you just to make sure you haven't wasted their inheritance make you shiver? Well that can all be a thing of the past if you sign up with Action GI Care-home for Aged Thrill Seekers. We help you reverse your life.

OLD MAN

Hi kids, sorry about the roof. Just thought I would drop in on you.

ADULT SON

Jesus, Dad, a parachute.

WOMAN (nagging)

He can pay to fix that. And what about replacing the flower bed him and his biker friends tore up last weekend?

ANNOUNCER

Ha ha, yes, you, too, can drop in unexpectedly on your relatives any time *you* feel like it. At Action GI Care-home for Aged Thrill Seekers we treat you with all the respect you deserve as a life-loving retiree. You'll feel right at home on top of a mountain, deep under sea, at the end of a bungie cord, behind a speed boat travelling at 200 miles an hour and anywhere you know you should be but never had the chance to do it. Don't worry if you've never done these things before here at Action GI Care-home for Aged Thrill Seekers we have the very best trainers and consultants who will carefully guide and coach you.

DRILL SERGEANT

Hup one, two, three, four. Drop and give me twenty Mrs Entwistle come on let's build those brittle bones into bars of steel.

OLD LADY (wobbly voice)

But I have a flat tyre on my wheel chair.

DRILL SARGEANT

You filthy scum. I'm Sir to you, you got that, senior citizen? Sir.

OLD LADY

Sir, y...yes, sir.

ANNOUNCER

You'll enjoy team work and camaraderie with likeminded individuals and enjoy the relaxing facilities of your new home when you're not out having extreme fun.

DRILL SARGEANT

You're getting up in four hours to go surfing on the rapids at Sharp Rock River. Lights out and no coughing or wheezing.

ANNOUNCER

Yes, training, discipline and fun. It goes all day everyday just like you know it should.

SECOND ANNOUNCER

To enrol simply phone Action GI Care-home for Aged Thrill Seekers and ask to speak to Commandant Jane. Mention this ad for a ten percent discount.

(talking fast)

In case of unexpected accident or death all enrolees are required to sign an acknowledgement of liability statement granting full power of attorney and willing all property and money to the proprietors of Action GI Care-home for Aged Thrill Seekers.

ANNOUNCER

So what are you waiting for? Stop waiting for time to stop and make a new start for the rest of your life. Call Action GI Care-home for Aged Thrill Seekers NOW.

SPINOZA TURKEY GIZZARDS

Well...turkey gizzards are so cheap to buy
 Spinoza innards for your home-made pie
 Boil them up from dawn to dusk
 Mix flour and water for a two inch crust
 Bake in the oven till it's stiff and brown
 Dinner is served so gather round
 Your guests will not run out the door
 The kids will say, "Aww shit not more!"
 It's Spinoza Turkey gizzards for all of us
 For busy, busy mums it's quick no fuss
 Spinoza Turkey Gizzards are the best
 They're simply better than all the rest
 Spinoza Turkey Gizzards are the best
 They're simply better than all the rest
 Spinoza Turkey Gizzards are the best
 Simply better than the rest.

ACT FIVE

MIKE

Welcome back, Viewers. You'll be pleased to know the terrible turmoil, the baffling bewilderment, the perplexing puzzle of play has been resolved.

RHEE

And also that the crowd didn't do any rioting except for throwing a few homemade bombs and Molotov cocktails at the cops. Although the police seemed to enjoy something to do while it lasted. Tazzering anyone always seems to bring a few laughs from the people doing the tazzing and the people watching. But it was that clever offer of free hot dogs by the stadium manager that averted anything further.

MIKE

In a rarely before seen judgement the referee has given Fiona the benefit of the doubt. And although she has to restart she hasn't been penalised. Now, Jose Scratch gives the nod to Fiona Flick to restart her run from the throw line.

RHEE

Referee Jose Scratch has solved everything by calling for a rerun which, under the conditions, is possibly one of the best judged umpiring decisions since the American Grand Hop seven years ago when the pretty Siamese Salamander twins became entangled in each others limbs and the medical staff had to start up a chain saw to get them separated from each other.

MIKE

Fiona Flick is off.

RHEE

Just looking at the replay again from another angle I can see Jose Scratch's eyes were focused a lot higher up than Fiona Flick's feet and he can't seem to get a smile off his face. No wonder he couldn't tell where she stepped.

MIKE

Oh, nice side step by Fiona and she's on the turnaround arch or half circle as it used to be called. A delicate one eighty and you can see her mentally preparing herself for the run back where she not only has to get around Steps Stevenson and the reverse factor of the Chinese diagonal but has the added problem of picking up her stone. She moves and hops well through the course with nice form. Here's the pick-up....

RHEE

Oh no!

MIKE

Oh no!

RHEE

She has lost her balance and touched the ground. Steps is smiling. I bet he can smell her fabric softener from there.

MIKE

Fiona is going to have to stay with one foot on the nine until her turn comes around.

But before we get too concerned, let's see if Basher can make his throw this time. The crowd are taking up the chant. I wonder if Basher remembers what a three is.

RHEE

That could be tricky, Mike.

MIKE

From here it looks like he's aiming for the right square. Possibly his coach had a few words with him during the time-out.

RHEE

Maybe just three...rhymes with key.

MIKE

Oo! He's only just missed. At least we can put that down to inaccurate throwing rather than target selection. Oh no, what's he doing? He's picked up his stone. He's shouting at the spectators and now the officials. Looks like he's threatening them with his stone. That's a definite no-no.

RHEE

He looks pretty angry. Redder than a white monkey's---He's pointing up here at the superboxes. Look out!

MIKE

That's a red flag, no question about it. And the ref agrees. Basher has been disqualified for throwing his stone at the spectators. No matter how happy he looks with himself now, I bet he'll be regretting that when he's looking at the empty place in his trophy cabinet.

RHEE

Basher O'Brien, ladies and gentlemen, after a most disgraceful display of unsportsmanlike like behaviour, is being chased off the pitch by six guardss.

MIKE

It's a shame to see him clasping his hands together above his head and waving them around like that. It's certainly no victory in this game and a bad example for the little kiddies. There's sure to be some financial penalty imposed as well as a lengthy time-out from other official matches until his attitude improves.

RHEE

Fortunately the game continues and it's Susie Squat and Spring in her nice fitting Lycra top and shorts who's up next. Let's hope for her sake she can keep her cool and not get entangled with the difficult sections and other players. If she passes all smoothly it will put her back in contention for the lead.

MIKE

Yeah well don't forget that eight and nine are blocked by Flick and Stevenson. I haven't seen this situation since the Tokyo Midget Classic four years ago. Well, they say hopscotch is the most exciting game in the world and it's pretty hard to disagree with that based on today's game. Susie's going for a seven.

RHEE

Superb leaning by Susie in preparation for her throw. Certainly highlights her ..umm... athletic features. And she makes it easily. Good for you, Susie.

MIKE

Now for the rest of the challenge. Of course if she makes it she will be in equal first place but if she doesn't make it she going to be crossing more than her fingers hoping more than one of the other players botches their run.

RHEE

By the look of the creases on his forehead, Steps Stevenson seems more than a little concerned. There's enough wrinkles there to employ his own Chinese laundry service. But Fiona Flick is pretty calm.

MIKE

There's a good chance of Squat and Spring making a successful run as long as there isn't any physical interference so it doesn't make sense that Flick can afford to be cool about it. After a quick look to her opponents, Susie's off. She's slowing for the four and five and oh my gosh. After a quick hop to six she's leapt high into the air and landed on the seven and eight squares planting her right leg under Steps Stevenson raised leg and used her momentum to spring into a half somersault to land on her hands inside the nine and ten just missing Fiona Flick. The crowd has gone wild.

RHEE

Flick's looking daggers at her now. Fiona is not a happy lady.

MIKE

That sort of grandstanding is the sort of behaviour which can really rub a competitor the wrong way.

RHEE

I wouldn't rub either of them the wrong way.

MIKE

She's carried right through to the end while her competitors are still recovering from the surprise. She's not even resting at the semicircle, Rhee, she's turned around and has repeated her somersault between the squares on the second Chinese diagonal and dropped into a one legged squat on eight right next to Steps. She's snapped up her stone and making a beautiful run...yes, all the way back to the throw line without a mistake.

RHEE

Boy, can this girl perform when she's under pressure? No need to answer that for me, Mike.

MIKE

I can tell you, viewers, you don't see plays like that very often. That's got to be a play-of-the-year.

RHEE

No doubt about it, Mike.

MIKE

Phew! What a relief to her and her coach, I'll bet. And a relief all around Suzie's team as she moves to seven points and is tied for first place with Fiona Flick.

RHEE

Steps is next up and if he can make it this time, it will be a three way tie for first place.

MIKE

It's Steps chance now. He gets the nod from the referee. He shakes himself and bends down to collect his stone which is still sitting on seven.

RHEE

He's successful. And... makes a steady return to the start line. That's Steps Stevenson now on seven points.

MIKE

And with the all clear from the referee Flick collects her stone from the eight square and is off hopping with...a...clean run home.

RHEE

That puts her in the lead with eight, and Steps Stevenson and Susie Squat and Spring on seven.

MIKE

What a game. Susie's up now. Let's see if she can get eight.

RHEE

It's eaten, not ate. Eaten is the correct word but I don't know why that would interest you in a girl getting eaten ...oh you mean eaten like ah la la...oh no, you mean eight, the number. Oh.

MIKE

And we better go to a commercial break. We'll right back after this...

RHEE

Where are we going? I don't...

CHANNEL EIGHT PROMO

ANNOUNCER

Tune in to Channel Eight tonight where you'll see the greatest television shows on television. Tonight at six thirty watch Life at The Mall and see what happens when one department store Santa takes a lunch break and meets another Santa from a rival department store. What does little Timmy see when he accidentally stumbles into the staff only cafeteria? Will it make him change his Christmas wish list? What does little Timmy say? Will he utter his famous catch phrase that makes everyone laugh?

LITTLE TIMMY

"What the f---" [bleep]

ANNOUNCER

And then at seven o'clock the clown you hate to love, Happy. Hang onto your armchairs as Happy mixes up his appointments and accidentally arrives, ready to make animal balloons, at a bachelorette party. His antics will make you laugh as he clowns around, lost and out of place in grown-ups land. When he says, "Baby" he's not talking about prams and rattles. It's a laugh a minute on the greatest television station: Channel eight, Eight, EIGHT.

C.S.A UNDERWATER CRICKET RACING - SAFETY

ANNOUNCER (deep voice)

This is community service announcement.

KING KILLER KAISER (high pitched jockey voice)

Hi, you probably don't recognise me without my costume and mask but I'm King Killer Kaiser the world heavy weight wrestler. Winner of three national gold buckle bouts and four concrete head slamming grand slams.

I want to talk to you about something serious, something many people are afraid to talk about, something that affects us all.

It's something we all have to do our part in stopping.

Yep! I'm talking about the cruel and evil sport of underwater cricket racing.

What might be fun to watch and fun to bet on is not always the best thing for those involved.

We have suffered too long from people having serious accidents from watching this sport too close. There have been eye injuries, ear injuries and a number of occasions when fair

ladies have received chest tickles from vicious wild crickets trying to escape to a warm and safe place.

LADY

Hee hee

KING KILLER KAISER

It is something we all can do something about. Don't let these evil and cruel crickets get away with it any longer. Stop the injuries these so called harmless creatures are inflicting on people. Stop the horrible injuries and ruined lives which these creatures have inflicted upon people.

Next time you're having fun remember to wear protective eye wear, protective ear guards and any other protective gear as recommended by your underwater cricket racing officials.

And make sure those pretty women cover up *before* they get too close to the action and someone gets hurt.

LADY

Hee hee hee hee

ACT SIX

MIKE

Welcome back viewers.

RHEE

Even if you didn't leave your armchair.

MIKE

Susie completed her last run without a hitch and is now on eight with Flick. Steps Stevenson's turn is next. He steps up to the line for his throw to the eighth square. He's looking a lot better. I think he's relieved his injury hasn't been aggravated any further. There goes the throw. Ooh no! No, it's okay. It first landed a little far from the square and I thought it wasn't going to make it but with enough grunt and force behind it, his stone has tumbled just inside the eight square line. It's clearly okay and the ref gives him the nod. He's clapping his hands in a beat and trying to get the crowd to join him.

RHEE

And the crowd *is* getting behind him. They're taking up the chant to urge him along. The music is quite fitting. I'll just...

...There, viewers you should be able to hear that more clearly now. Feel free to join in at home. Steps won't hear you but you'll feel like you're part of this show of audience

participation, then you can feel embarrassed, in front of no one, about getting carried away with something that you're not really part of. Steps is behind in this match at the moment but with a successful run here he can get tied for first place with both Squat and Spring and Flick.

MIKE

How exciting as Stevenson makes his way down the grid. We're in for a real treat here, Steps has broken into one of his famous tapping hop jumps. There's no rule against double stepping with the same foot inside a square unless it moves outside the square.

RHEE

Or as in this case quadruple or oct-ruple stepping.

MIKE

His feet make quite a nice sound. And he's building up momentum as he goes through first of the Spanish Backhops. It sounds better the further he goes and from the look of peace on his face he knows he's going to make it, too. Twenty nine and thirty and into the... Oh no, oh no, I can't believe it. He's tapped right through and past and outside the turnaround arch. He's kept on tapping past the turnaround arch as if it wasn't even there. The line umpires are signalling the ref who's now blown his whistle but Steps is still going. He's really being carried away with the clapping and the music.

RHEE

Oh ho, boy, he sure has. His eyes are closed and...oh, no ladies and gentlemen, Steps Stevenson has just kept going, tripped over a camera cable and gone down. That smile has completely disappeared and has now been replaced by a painful grimace and a face full of tears.

MIKE

That ankle is twisted all right. It looks like the last dance for Steps Stevenson. The medical staff are being waved over by one of the linesmen. This has been quite a match. There's a lot of shaking heads down there. It goes to show that Hopscotch is one of the more dangerous sports in our society and that goes to show what can happen when someone is willing to give away the safety of the couch and lounge room at home in the pursuit of sporting excellence and to provide entertainment for his fellow man; a worthy ideal and well rewarded when one succeeds but fraught with many great dangers along the way.

RHEE

But not to completely discourage any of the youngsters watching, Steps will be okay and if he makes another miraculous recovery by getting better in the usual amount of time it takes for a twisted ankle to repair, we'll be seeing him again soon--proudly and cheerfully entertaining the crowds.

MIKE

And speaking of youngsters, all you kiddies out there, make sure you keep up a healthy fitness regime with good food and lots of exercise as your sports heroes always recommend. And always start your learning with ten square hopscotch and become proficient at that before advancing onto the semi pros with the twenty square and finally onto the professional thirty square game. Ten or twenty more squares can make an awful big difference.

RHEE

Well twenty is twice as much as ten and thirty is three times as much so mathematically it's a big difference.

MIKE

Righteo, Rhee

RHEE

Ten's a gem, twenty's plenty and thirty is plain stupid.

MIKE

That's great, Rhee.

RHEE

And there he goes. Steps as he's carried out on a stretcher. He's not waving but I can see his feet are still moving in some jerking, out of the beat way as a sort of bizarre farewell salute to his fans.

MIKE

The audience is standing and clapping him off as a tribute to this great sportsman. He's a real performer. Certainly not the type of man to complain about irritable bowel syndrome from drinking water.

RHEE

The referee has called time out is now having a word with the two remaining players. Susie Squat and Spring, and Fiona Flick.

MIKE

We'll just cross to our man on the spot, Guy Onthespot and see what the word from down on the playing field is. Are you there, Guy?

GUY

Yes, Mike. It's been one thing after another here today.

RHEE

Which is actually how things are supposed to happen. Events do tend to flow sequentially. If they all happened at the same time well....

GUY

I've just made my way over and I'm trying to listen into what the referee is saying to the remaining two players. It would seem Jose Scratch is asking the players how they feel about continuing. I guess given the circumstances and the extraordinary events which have taken place here, today, that it's a valid question. The players are nodding, they don't seem to be at all phased by what has happened. They're both keen to carry on. He looks satisfied with their replies. So they're going to continue this game. But hang on, hang on, yes, if I understand it right the big news is this championship has been cut back to a half match or game, Mike.

MIKE

Amazing change. But totally understandable under the circumstances. The interruptions to this game have added so much time that an abbreviated version is justified.

GUY

And the players and their coaches have agreed so that's a definite, Mike.

MIKE

Thanks, Guy. Well there you go although Steps Stevenson will not win a place in today's game he will still be awarded a plaque for his part in this championship match, something he can be proud of regardless of the time spent in physiotherapy and under the tender loving care of pretty nurses. He's a popular player so there should be plenty of ..er...comfort there. [Cough] Squat and Spring and Flick are both tied at eight. It's Flick up to the line. She aims and, yes, lands it on nine. She gets the nod and she's off. There's no fancy foot work here just pure determination to get through to the end. She spins on the turn around arch and...and she makes her run home.

RHEE

Through the Spanish back hop, the Chinese diagonal, the next Spanish backhop and the second, or first depending on which way you're moving, and in this case on her home run it's her second Chinese diagonal and... she's home. Flick is in the lead on nine.

MIKE

Now it's Squat and Spring's turn to even the score.

RHEE

I can just see Susie's face and she's certainly not distracted by Fiona's form like the other players have been.

MIKE

At this stage of the game there's not much hope for Susie though, unless Flick makes an error. Susie Squat and Spring is still a throw behind which means she can't win unless Flick makes a mistake.

RHEE

Which, by definition, is what makes it a game. You can't win without a challenge of some sort.

MIKE

Righteo, Rhee.

RHEE

It wouldn't be a game then you see. It would be like walking into a trophy shop and getting your name put on plaque for no good reason at all.

MIKE

Righteo, Rhee

RHEE

Well now, Susie's had a few set backs earlier in the competition but has come good now. So long as she keeps her form she's still in with a chance.

MIKE

That's a good throw by Susie. Not right in the middle of the ninth square but good enough.

RHEE

Her form is terrific as she makes her run. No mistakes even though the eyes of thirteen linesmen are there to carefully track the position of her feet. Oh, look at that a one eighty turn on the Turnaround arch which is almost a pirouette. The crowd appreciates it by the look. A nice bend from the nine square, a really nice bend to collect her stone. And she's off and...with a little bit of style and a handstand flip, which stirs the crowd, she's home.

MIKE

What a match it's been and looks like it will continue to be. Fiona Flick takes her place on the throw line there's tension in the stadium as she lines up for the shot.

RHEE

Ooo, she's doing that signature movement of hers again.

MIKE

Her jiggling on the throw line is starting to become the patent style of this well built girl. A lot of smiles from the linesmen as Fiona smiles back at them and coyly tips her head from one line umpire to the next. She's off, hop, hop, hop, jump...Mmm she's using her slower-than-usual method and adding an extra jiggle at each square by bouncing on her toes after each landing. Still legal so long as she doesn't reposition her foot.

RHEE

It's a rather tasty style. I wonder if the tension of the match has gotten to her or if it really does help her.

MIKE

She has gone through nicely, turned around, collected her stone and is headed for the throw line. The male portion of the spectators here are right behind her.

RHEE

Or, like me, wish they were. Wow. Will you look at that? A line umpire has thrown up a flag. Fiona Flick has apparently stepped out of a square. There seems to be some confusion. Only one of the line umpires saw it. And interestingly, that line umpire is a woman. I don't wish to cast any doubt on the competence of the other line umpires but....

MIKE

But what, Rhee?

RHEE

That's Josephine Wildcalves. I know her. I'm sure she's still suffering from rejection stress syndrome brought about because others don't see her as being as lovely and gorgeous as she thinks she is. Not even this commentator when she came to me wearing nothing more than a pink feather boa and a smile.

MIKE

Well, here's the replay. Yes, Rhee, I think you're right. The only line umpire who was actually watching the ground is the one with her flag raised and it's clear that Flick's foot is outside the line. There.

RHEE

She even wanted us to get matching tattoos. And when I say matching she wanted mine and hers to both say, "I love Josephine."

MIKE

What a turn of events, viewers, Fiona Flick has been shown an orange card by the referee, Jose Scratch, and needs to start again. Her throw will still count, she won't have to do that again but she'll have to do her run again after Susie and that places Susie in the leading position. This is exciting and the audience is loving it.

RHEE

They certainly are having a better time here, watching it live, compared to some people who couldn't be bothered getting off their couches and coming down here to watch it and support our sponsors and who will probably be complaining about repetitive strain injury from flicking a foot rest out on their reclining chair.

MIKE

Yes, the spectators are getting into the play in their own way as the huge Mexican wave they've formed rushes around the stadium. That's what I'm talking about.

RHEE

Yes, we could tell that you were talking about them because of the words you were saying were about that. Susie is on the line, carefully placing her feet as to leave no doubt. She throws and oh, no, her basalt tetrahedron shaped stone has broken. Poor Susie.

MIKE

Last time I saw that happen was in the Dutch Grand Hop Tournament in Denmark. Chuck Throwup lost his favourite stone and his place on the leader's board. But check that out, Rhee, one piece has made it into the ten square.

RHEE

Jose Scratch is moving in for a very careful umpire type look. Let's hope it's the biggest piece viewers...fingers crossed, arms crossed, elbows crossed.

MIKE

If it is, she can stay in the game but with no time to practise with the new weight and shape, it will make her next throw very difficult indeed. The ref is calling over the officials; probably getting a second and third opinion.

RHEE

I can't see Susie opting for a replacement stone because that will set her back one throw and she can't afford that at this stage. She's only hanging onto her lead by a slim margin.

MIKE

The heads-down between the referee and the officials has broken up and...Jose Scratch turns, looks at the players...and...gives Susie the all clear.

RHEE

That's a big sigh of relief from Susie. Her coach on the sidelines, who has been pacing back and forth, is still on his feet, shouting encouragements and directions to his player.

MIKE

Susie's off, smoothly progressing towards the turnaround arch and if she makes it there she will begin her return run to what is generally considered one of the easiest pick-ups in the game.

RHEE

Lovely turn at the arch by Susie. She's stopped and is crouching down, taking a look at her stone on the tenth square using some of her allowed ten seconds in the turnaround arch.

MIKE

I don't think it's the best time management at this stage. It's an important run and the tension here is thick.

RHEE

Not as thick as if we were standing in syrup or maybe even a heavy fog which would certainly be thicker than tension.

MIKE

With a satisfied expression and with three seconds to go Susie is on her home run. She must have been quite concerned over the condition of that stone. Possibly worried about hairline cracks. With the disaster of the hairline cracks after Husky Hugo's first hop it's probably something on the mind of every player.

RHEE

Unless they are looking at Susie's form. And there goes another massive Mexican wave through the crowd around the stadium. The crowd certainly seems to be putting their effort in all those waves. And that's a fantastic final return run from Susie Squat and Spring.

MIKE

Susie can take the lead in this match and take the championship now.

RHEE

That is, so long as she can get that broken-off piece of stone to land on the eleven square she can. She's still under a lot of pressure, Mike.

MIKE

She sure is. Although Fiona Flick is now back in second place she doesn't look defeated, yet. There's a look of proud determination as she proudly thrusts her chest out in defiance of whatever might set her back. Or she's just stretching her shoulders maybe.

RHEE

Either way it's nice. And the spectators are making their own special salute to Fiona by taking up another Mexican wave.

MIKE

Now that's something you don't see very often, a Mexican wave running in a counter clockwise direction. And it's a fast one, too; circling the stadium at a brisk pace. What a surprise.

RHEE

Yeah. Not the sort of "boo!" sudden jump out of the closet type surprise, or the...ohhh, I'm having a heart attack surprise. It's just the mildly amusing but unexpected kind of surprise.

MIKE

Right again, Rhee

RHEE

Flick doesn't have to throw for the ten as her stone was left there from the last run and was nicely missed by Squat and Spring on her last turn. The ref nods and she's off. A line umpire has thrown up a flag? Oh no, that probably means Fiona has over-stepped the throw line before starting her run even though she got the nod from the referee.

MIKE

This is not good for Fiona.

RHEE

But she hasn't stopped and Jose Scratch has forgotten to blow his whistle.

MIKE

Not what she was after at all.

RHEE

Yeah, it's pretty unlikely she actually planned that move.

MIKE

It does however leave Susie in an ideal position to take another step forwards in the championship.

RHEE

If she can throw her untested stone chip into the eleven that is. It doesn't look like the crowd have even noticed Fiona's foot error or the linesman's flag and are continuing to Mexican wave their support. The crowd's restlessness and tension has found an outlet by the looks.

MIKE

Oh, look at the disappointment on Flick's face as she turns around and sees the flag. She walks off the grid shaking her head.

RHEE

Susie Squat and Spring is standing at the throw line. She checks her footing and just for safe measure moves back a little. The stone she has to throw is only a piece of her original stone. Its performance characteristics have not been tested. You can tell by the way she is tossing that odd shaped piece up and catching it, that she is weighing it up in her mind. But as for the shape, that's a different matter. The aerodynamic qualities are something she can only guess at based on experience.

MIKE

The spectators look like they now have another counter clockwise Mexican wave going as a tribute to her.

RHEE

She's ready now, nice bend, Susie, real nice. And there goes the throw...

MIKE

Woah! What's this? Oh no!

RHEE

It looks...yes! It's a good throw. But oh no, oh no!

MIKE

No! Oh, no, I almost don't want to look.

RHEE

Oh no, this is unbelievable! A national disaster.

MIKE

We are so sorry listeners. So sorry to leave you out of this. What we're talking about is not down on the playing field but up in the stadium. The impossible has finally happened. Right before our very eyes.

RHEE

Not impossible because it has happened. Two Mexican waves, one clockwise for Susie and one counter-clockwise for Fiona Flick have collided right in the centre of the President's stand.

MIKE

The unimaginable has happened with the two waves colliding in a dense section of crowd. There's innocent women and children in there. Oh my, I can only hope that everyone or most...at least some of the people are going to be okay. The death count on this is going to be awful.

RHEE

Nothing this bad should ever happen to anyone and just at the vital moment when Susie Squat and Spring and Fiona Flick were in heated battle as to who was about to take out the Championship. Good for you Susie and Fiona and how sad for this to spoil your day.

MIKE

This is horrible there's beautiful naked people running...(aside) what, what? yes, I'm listening.

RHEE

That looks like Betty Pantsbulge...

MIKE (As an aside)

Ahha, yes I see. Yes of course straight away.

MIKE (CONT'D) (Back to audience)

Well, we're terribly sorry folks but I've just been informed we're going to have to end this broadcast. Yes, viewers we're logging out and returning you to your normal broadcast. There's no time to say good bye but we hope to be with you again soon.

RHEE

But you just said good bye so I don't see how we don't have time to say good bye, see I just said it then. But if we can't say it I better not say it either.

MIKE

The collateral damage is enormous....both to buildings and lives.

MIKE

I've just heard from control that a fleet of ambulances is being despatched and all nearby hospitals have been put on alert to handle the casualties from this unbelievable and horrendous collision of two opposing Mexican waves. The National Guard is being called in and the fire department and, oh my, this is bad.

RHEE

This reminds me of the comet that crashed during the quarter finals of two thousand and....

END of Hopscotch Champions