

Strange and Unique Sports

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Entertainment

Midnight Facts for Insomniacs

Podcast Transcript

(Note: transcript consists of episode outline)

This episode is way outside your comfort zone. But I think you're going to enjoy it, because there's a twist. But first off, you're not really a sports guy, Duncan. Maybe if there was competitive snarking. The misanthrope Olympics. Skeet shooting but the skeet are the most annoying people that you've ever met launched into the air. Esports maybe? I feel like you're not into MMA but if we brought back like gladiatorial games with actual medieval weaponry, you'd be on board. We know you're a fan of the morning star and the mace.

You have obviously figured out that this episode is sports related, the topic today is "strange and unique sports." And I had so much fun researching this one, I was ambivalent about it at first but it ended up being probably my favorite topic of the year. This is proof that humans are creative and ridiculous and sometimes terrible.

Let's get into it.

We'll start in Italy. Florence, to be exact.

Calcio (cal-cho) storico or calcio Fiorentino,

Aka "historical football"

Is a sport that can trace its origins back to the middle ages in Florence Italy.

The original name translated basically to "the Florentine kick game," which doesn't really make sense as we'll see.

It may also have harkened back to a Roman sport known as Harpastum.

Calcio Storico was initially a privileged pastime specifically for aristocrats.

There have even been popes who played this game, such as Clement the seventh, Leo the 11th, Urban VIII, and pope bruised mtoothless the 9th. And I'm realizing now how that very stupid joke doesn't make sense until you actually know about the sport they were discussing, but hey, in my defense I'm not good at this.

But all of the real popes on that list played this sport in Vatican City, which is going to seem increasingly bonkers the more I describe this game. I just cannot imagine a saintly old man with his shirt stripped off rolling in the middle of a blood-soaked field; Calcio Storico is brutal, I would describe it kind of like rugby except with punching. It's like hockey if the fights were mandatory. It's basically a brawl with a ball. Here's a quote directly from Wikipedia, "...at the first whistle as the ball first rests on the field, 15 forwards—or Corridori—begin fighting

in a wild mixed martial arts match, punching, kicking tripping, hacking, tackling and wrestling with each other in an effort designed to tire opponent's defenses..."

Which actually makes it sound even more orderly and strategic than it looks. It looks like a prison riot.

The specifics of this game are pretty simple, it's played on a giant rectangle and is a bit like soccer or rugby as I mentioned, the goal is to get the ball across the field into the opponent's net. But the net is super long, and also not exactly a net, it's a 4 foot high wooden wall with some netting attached that runs the entire length of each of the short sides of the field.

Players can use their hands, they can throw or kick the ball, but they have to be accurate, because if they miss and overshoot the net the other team gets half a point. After every goal scored, the teams switch sides. Also, unlike soccer, aka European football, the game is not played on a giant field of pristine green grass but rather on a dirt triangle kind of like a large litterbox. It's not scenic. You know how soccer and baseball are aesthetically pleasing to look at even if you're not into the sport, the field is geometrically perfect and the grass is pristine and lush. This is not that. I feel like this entire sport looks like a fight broke out in the parking lot at a Renaissance fair.

Each side has *27 players*...so definitely more riot than brawl, and it's also a little bit like freeze tag, because if a player gets taken to the ground, they

can't stand back up until somebody scores. So you end up with this chaotic scene that consists of almost 50 combatants pounding the crap out of each other on a dirt field that is littered with bodies, it's like the first 15 minutes of saving private Ryan. How many similes can I come up with for one sport? It's like if the crips and bloods tried to have a BBQ. And were 90% white. There are like two black players.

So the team is broken down thusly: there are four goalkeepers who chill in the back and are the last line of defense, three full backs who are good at running with the ball, four half backs who presumably are only half as good at running with the ball as a fullback because math, and then 15 forwards. Those are the guys who stand in a line and just pummel each other, basically the meanest or best fighters or maybe least skilled at running. They're cannon fodder. So the game starts similarly to an American basketball game, a guy stands in the middle of the field and throws the ball up in the air and then jets the hell out of there. Whoever grabs the ball begins looking for an opening, but mostly is just prowling around the back court waiting for an opportunity while everyone else is beating the crap out of each other in the middle of the field. After a while guys start dropping to the ground, usually as a pair— it honestly seems pretty pointless to tackle someone since you're going to be stuck on the ground too, but whatever, it seems like

at this point they're just rolling around on top of each other for the joy of it. But the strategy for the team with the ball is to wait until the field has cleared out a bit, a bunch of players are on the ground, and hopefully more of your team is standing and more of their team is down; you can then make a mad dash for the other side of the field and huck the ball at the goal.

I was watching a documentary that llama trauma sent me about crazy sports and it included a chunk of a recent Calcio Storico match, and when one team scored a goal the announcer yelled Mamma Mia! I am not making that up. It made my week. I can die happy.

So here's a quote from one of the players describing the feeling he gets immediately before a match: "right before the match starts, all of the other people leave the pitch. And I have this moment alone when I ask myself... What am I doing here?" Yeah. That's a reasonable question.

Sometimes the voice in your head is a lot smarter than your actual brain. I don't even know what that means or how that works but it feels true. It's like a Zen Koan.

So continuing with the structure of the game, there are eight referees or officials who I can only assume spend the 50 minutes of gameplay pretending that they matter. One of them does carry a ceremonial sword, so maybe that guy gets a little bit of

respect. He is appropriately called the field master, and yeah. If you're caring a sword people will call you whatever you want to be called. He can be the gate keeper, the key master, whatever turns him on. He also sports a plumed hat and uses the feather to indicate which team gets the ball. Again, I guess you can get away with wearing any silly Puss in boots shit you want when you're brandishing a sword. That outfit is also surprisingly whimsical considering the context. "Try not to get blood on my feather, guys." One interesting thing about this game is that there are no timeouts and the clock never stops, it's 50 minutes no matter what happens. That's pretty rare for a modern sport and also a very short duration for a sporting event. I guess they don't have to worry about commercials; no one is sponsoring this nightmare.

Now I should clarify that what might appear to an uninitiated bystander to be an all-out riotous brawl does have rules: fights have to be one on one and head kicks are banned...and that's it. Those are the rules. You can still headbutt your opponent, which... OK. A skull bashing into your skull is probably more dangerous than a tennis shoe but whatever. You can choke the other players as well...this is amazing, why do we need referees? Why do we even have this lever? I love that there's a rule-enforcer with a feather plumed hat and a sword standing there watching two shirtless guys choking the crap out of each

other on the dirt and going, "Yes, carry on. Well played, True sportsmanship gentlemen."

The best technique for victory is to simply injure as many of the opposing team's players as you can, leading to a numbers advantage...so you can't kick anyone in the head but you sure as hell are hoping to snap some bones and gouge some balls. As mentioned, injuries don't stop the clock, medics have to rush onto the field with stretchers and be real slick about gathering incapacitated bodies without ending up as one of them. Now Players CAN tap out, and are expected to be let up when they do, so I guess that's what the sword is for. "OK, you've choked him enough, one more head butt for good measure and then you have to let him stand up before you can start punching him again."

One of the most unique elements of the sport is how intensely regional it is. It's really not played outside of Florence. There are four teams that compete in the annual tournament, representing four regions of Florence, and designated by color: red, blue, white, green, and each is named for a historical church in their area. "From the northwest quadrant is Rossi — or the "Red" team — of Santa Maria Novella. The northeast has Verdi — or "Green" team — of San Giovanni. The southwest part is Bianchi — "White" team — of Santo Spirito. And then there is the wildcard team, represented by the red and white

checkerboard tablecloth pattern of spaghetti minestrone. No, representing the southeast quadrant is Azzurri — “Blue” team — of Santa Croce, and the blue team essentially has a home field advantage since the games take place in front of their home church. Judging from recent history the advantage is significant, since the blues have been kicking ass for quite a while. They have triumphed 21 times out of 33 tournaments in the modern era, although they did lose to the Reds last year. However there is *another* reason why the same team might tend to win over and over again: Unlike American sports with very little loyalty and constant trading and shuffling of players, there has historically been no switching teams in calcio storico. Players represent the area in which they were born for the duration of their careers. It seems there was a recent rule change that will potentially allow players to switch teams if they’ve lived more than 10 years in one of the other regions, which is probably a good thing. It’s a little awkward to live for a decade around a bunch of dudes and then have to beat the shit out of them once a year because you were born in another part of town. BTW I referred to this as a career, but the term “career” isn’t used here in the occupational sense, because you can’t make a viable career out of this game. No one gets paid for playing calcio storico. You do it for the love of beating the crap out of your fellow countrymen. “the winning team used to receive a

Chianina, a type of pure-bred cow. However, this has been reduced to a free dinner for the winning team; the players earn no other compensation."

The game has been a popular hit since its revival in the 20th century, though there were a couple of hiccups along the way. The 2006 season was shut down due to a massive brawl among fans. Can't have that. Decorum, people. Show a little respect, we can't have mobs of unprofessional, unpaid hoodlums beating each other to a pulp in the stands...that's going to distract from the exact same thing happening on the field. It's all about context here: 20 feet in this direction you're a disciplined, professional group of athletes, 20 feet in that direction mob of hooligans. "The sport returned in 2008 with some stricter guidelines and more rigid rules like banning convicted criminals from playing on a team." I'm honestly shocked you can find 27 guys who want to play this game who are not convicted criminals. I'm pretty sure they're all criminals whether they've been convicted or not; it sounds to me like calcio storico is made up of four teams full of guys who got away with some shit.

Next wacky sport! That sounds like a terrible tv show from the 90s. Wacky sports, with Bob Saget.

Kok Boru

So to picture the competition known as Kok Boru, native to Kyrgyzstan, start by imagining a spirited polo

match. We are all familiar with polo, the refined sport of the nobility, and Kok Boru is very similar, played on horseback, a civilized and storied pastime combining the elegance and grace of equestrian steeds, the coiled power of finely-toned human athletes, and a dead goat.

That's right, there's no *ball* in Kok Boru, but there is a ball substitute. Instead of a round inanimate object, the "ball" is a furry limp animal carcass. It wasn't always a dead goat, back in the day whenever a wolf tried to attack a Kyrgyzstani shepherd's herd the wolf would be killed and then the hunters would play catch with its body, presumably for some kind of twisted fun and also I imagine to send a message. this sport was basically the athletic equivalent of a middle finger to predators. Eventually the original message behind the game was lost, and in fact the entire point of the enterprise seems to have been turned on its head. Now we're slaughtering our own herd and desecrating their bodies for some unknown reason, I can only imagine that wolves find this new version very amusing and entertaining., I don't know what message we're trying to send... keep the rest of rest of the goats on their toes. Do you see what happens? Don't be a naughty goat. This is what headbutters get.

Now the sheer ridiculousness of this concept made it sound funny to me; when I first heard about this game I

honestly laughed and then felt kind of bad. But seeing it played is just an absolutely surreal and truly disturbing experience.

There's a reason that most sports utilize standardized and very similarly shaped objects, generally something we would think of as, again, ball shaped. Or oblong, somehow circular-ish. As opposed to say a flopping, bleeding, four legged, furry, decapitated carcass.

This game is fucking horrid. I guess that's culturally insensitive, I should respect foreign traditions or whatever, and I'm not condemning all Kyrgyzstani culture, but this is just like a caricature of human cruelty. The game starts off with basically a scrimmage, the goat is tossed on the ground, and the horses swarm around it, trampling its corpse as the riders try to snag the cadaver by its furry skin and yank it onto their steed. Other riders are simultaneously grabbing the legs and coat and there's often a wishbone situation that can occur, it's just fucking awful. After they get it off the ground Kok Boru really does look like a game of polo except for that one very noticeable difference, and also instead of nets the riders are trying to toss the goat into the opposing teams goal, which looks like a giant rubber tire adorned with smaller rubber tires. And a lot of times they miss and the body just flops and ricochets and tumbles unceremoniously and awkwardly and frankly disrespectfully to the ground, it's just fucking terrible

and I pretty much hate humans. Have I ever mentioned that before?

So both of these first sports were included in the documentary I mentioned, and my favorite quote from this particular part of the documentary, here's a popular player complaining that people don't understand how difficult this sport actually is to play.: "from the outside it looks easy... he could've grabbed the goat. He could've scored. It look so easy to do..."

I can assure you, it does not. These guys are galloping full tilt, slamming into each other, horses are flipping over, blood is flying, it looks like fucking mad max on horseback. it looks like five years into nuclear winter, when humans have devolved into pack animals mobbing and scrambling and ripping each other apart for the last chunk of goatmeat on earth. It looks like the fucking apocalypse. Thanks, I hate it. The player continues "Once on the pitch, you forget about everything else. You stop thinking about the future. You forget about your health, your family. During the game while carrying the goat to the tai Kazan, nothing else matters. The only goal is to throw in the goat and win." Watching someone say this with a straight face is just surreal.

I particularly love the subtitles on this documentary, I'm not sure how accurate they are but I really hope that they're perfect because at the end of

the game that I watched, the winning team rides off and according to the subtitles they are yelling "we are the coolest ones! You are a real man! We are the coolest ones! You're a tough guy, bro!" I can almost forgive them for the goat situation because this is so bizarrely adorable.

And by the way there are thousands of people in the stands watching this dead goat game. It's a crazy world.

Wife carrying

This next sport is mildly problematic but I'm going to have fun with it and we're not going to try to justify any of this because hey, none of this is our fault. And at least it doesn't involve an animal carcass.

I'm not gonna lie, this one seems like fun. We are talking about the storied athletic contest known as wife carrying. It's exactly what you would think it would be, the goal is for a husband to carry his wife through an obstacle course, navigating the challenging terrain as quickly as possible. He can use a traditional Firemans carry, with the wife slung over his shoulders, or the standard piggyback technique, or even so-called Estonian style, upside down with her legs over his shoulders and her nose slamming into his buttocks...I don't know, that one doesn't seem like a great strategy but I saw some pictures so I know that it's an option that people use.

Wife carrying originated in Finland

where it is known as eukonkanto but has now spread worldwide, or at least the parts of the world that aren't particularly worried about getting canceled for toxic masculinity and problematic gender roles. The idea of wife carrying may actually harken back to something we talked about in a previous episode, in fact a host swap episode, when you taught me about the practice of wife stealing. This was again exactly what it sounds like, when they were too few women to go around men would abduct wives from other villages, I had assumed they used some type of wheelbarrow contraption but I guess over your shoulder works just as well. We know how the Estonians did it. Lots of wives with broken noses in Estonia. The sport also has some vague connection with a Robinhood like legendary Finnish thief who lived in the forest named Rosvo-Ronkainen (aka Ronkainen the Robber) who did not confine his robbery to inanimate objects.

So as you can imagine the medieval Finnish version involved classic Nordic terrain like streams and rocky fields and fences...it wasn't particularly standardized, you just worked with what you had. but now the length of the race has been set to a very specific 235.5 meters and the terrain is required to include a few mandatory obstacles: a water feature such as a shallow pool, at least a meter deep, and also two dry sandy areas, and usually some fences. Obviously the gender roles here are pretty rigid, but

based on the official modern rules the relationship between the two people can be a little fuzzy. For instance the Finn fest in Frederick South Dakota lists the standard international rules thusly:

- The wife to be carried may be your own, the neighbor's, or you may have found her further afield; she must, however, be over 17 years of age.

So you may only abduct adult women for this event, that seems reasonable. Sure, we endorse human trafficking but just make sure she is at least 18. We're not monsters.

- The minimum weight of the wife to be carried is 49 kilograms (108 pounds). If she is less than 49 kg, the wife will be burdened with a rucksack containing additional weight such that the total load to be carried is no less than 49 kg.

Get your skinny ass wife out of here. Or we're going to weigh her down with ballast. This seems to be unfairly penalizing petite wives, so if I'm married to a little person she has to strap basically another entire wife to HER back. Now what if it's a polygamous situation...does a Mormon have to carry all his wives? Maybe if the Mormon had two tiny wives he could stack them and qualify.

- All participants must have fun. Not entirely sure how they enforce that. How great would it be to win this competition and then be disqualified because you look like you didn't

sufficiently enjoy carrying your wife through streams and over fences, or maybe the wife looks a little disgruntled after smacking her nose against your butt for the length of a couple football fields or whatever. What if you have RBF? They just yank the trophy back. We're going to give them to someone who is at least pretending like this was a good time.

- The only equipment allowed is a belt worn by the carrier and a helmet worn by the carried.

That's not gonna save her nose.

- The contestants run the race two pairs at a time, so each heat is a contest in itself.
- Each contestant takes care of his/her safety and, if deemed necessary, insurance.

Just a little ass covering liability legalese here

- The contestants have to pay attention to the instructions given by the organizers of the competition.
- There is only one category in the World Championships, and the winner is the couple who completes the course in the shortest time.
- Also, the most entertaining couple, the best costume, and the strongest carrier will be awarded a special prize.

So there is only one category and one winner except for the other three categories and the other three winners.

Now this is my favorite part, the prize

if you win is that you receive your wife's weight in beer. So this introduces a brilliant strategy element, because obviously the simplest go-to gameplan would be to recruit or abduct the smallest possible wife. In which case there's a better chance you'll win, but your prize will be meager. I mean is 90 pounds of beer even worth it?

The international world championship has taken place in Sonkajarvi, Finland ever since 1992, and since it is the premier wife carrying event in the world it is no joke. People take this seriously. Especially one particular guy, **Taisto Miettinen**, who is the **reigning champion and has won 13 medals in the sport, including seven total championships.** I probably should know the name of his wife, but look, she didn't do much.

Someone's going to be mad at me but come on. I don't know how much skill it takes to be carried. You have to make yourself super sticky or something, so you won't get dropped?

Other countries like the United States and Australia and the UK have their own versions and their own championships, my favorite version is in the UK, because the Brits use this as an opportunity to take some historical shots at their Nordic neighbors. from Wikipedia: "The United Kingdom Wife Carrying Race was established in 2008, though the "sport" is claimed to have taken place "with help from our Scandinavian cousins" for around 1200 years from

793AD when Viking raiders raided villages and abducted wives."

Just a little good natured shade reminding the Fins of their uncivilized barbaric heritage and the tendency of their ancestors to rape and pillage.

Chilli-Eating Contest

So there is an entire category of weird and unique sports that I find appalling and occasionally fascinating, but mostly just appalling. The world of competitive eating is an inexplicable mystery to me. If eating qualifies as a sport it's an endurance sport, there may be a little bit of strategy and a small amount of skill involved in these competitions but for the most part, success is based on either freakish genetic gastrointestinal adaptations or the ability to tolerate extreme discomfort. or masochism. Maybe some people are into that shit. It always comes down to who can out-pain the other competitors, and nowhere is that more obvious than in the sport of competitive hot-pepper-eating.

Have you watched Hot Ones, Duncan? For anyone who doesn't know, this is a YouTube show in which celebrities answer interview questions while consuming a succession of increasing spicy hot wings. There is something grotesquely fascinating about watching famous people try to maintain their composure while they suffer through eye-wateringly intense burning sensations, I mean... specifically as the result of peppers. I probably wouldn't watch a YouTube

series about celebrities with urinary tract infections. But what I love about this show is how relatable it is, watching celebrities endure the pain of excessive spiciness makes them seem more human because we've all had that experience, we've all grabbed a piece of sushi that was sitting directly on the wasabi...you don't notice the rice on the bottom is totally green and now you have to try to keep your cool and not dash to the bathroom, knocking patrons out of the way like a fullback. I have this morbid desire to be on Hot Ones, I delusionally believe deep down that I would sail through like a champ, but there is no chance. I once took a nibble of one of those chips you used to be able to buy that are called "the one-chip challenge." It has actually been temporarily discontinued...I tried to buy one for this episode, for us to split, but you lucked out. There is a great video of a TV host from the popular "Today" program trying it. "In 2017, TODAY co-host Sheinelle Jones, who says she puts "hot sauce on everything" and loves spicy foods "to the point where it's a problem," took the challenge." Except she didn't btw. I watched the video, she ate one corner of the chip. And she did not handle it well.

"That's not spicy, that's ridiculous," Sheinelle said at the time, adding that her mouth felt like it was on fire. "It feels like my tongue has a heartbeat." I tried it, but like her I was careful. Or I guess you could say a pussy. I started off with just like the tiniest little

mouse-crumb. And I got very close to a panic attack. I LIKE spicy food, to be clear, but there's a limit. And it has to enhance the flavor. That's the problem with the notorious sauce called the Bomb on Hot Ones...not only is it brutally hot, it also apparently tastes god awful, which creates an insult-to-injury scenario. The celebrities look betrayed and emotionally devastated... like why would you do this to me? If you're going to feed me lava, at least make it not taste like spicy butthole. Which is exactly what you'll have after completing hot ones.

As we've discussed in the past, the active ingredient in peppers is capsaicin, the same ingredient used in pepper spray, and it is measured in Scoville units. Tabasco is about 2,500 Scoville units. The world's hottest pepper, the infamous Carolina Reaper, can reach 2,200,000 Scoville units.

Here's a description of how these competitions work, this is a quote from a competition champion who we will hear from later "The way these competitions work is you have around 10 to 15 contestants. You go through a dozen or so rounds starting from the milder chillies and building up to the hottest in the world. You have to chew each one fully all the way to the stalk before being allowed through to the next round. No fluid or food is allowed during the competition. If you have a sip of the milk they place in front of you, you are out. If you throw up, you are out. If you don't finish your chilli at the end of the countdown for that

round, you are out. take part in only the professional and official chilli-eating challenges where the hosts take these rules very seriously and there is always someone checking up on each contestant making sure that there is no rule-breaking going on. The rounds slowly and surely whittle down the number of contestants as we near the end. The last person standing wins. If you get to the final rounds and they have exhausted all the possible chillies they can test you with, they sometimes give you spoonfuls of pure capsaicin extract or some other crazy hot sauce but they are so clever, they might put dried Carolina Reapers on top so you can't just swallow the liquid quickly, you actually have to chew the chilli and hence get the extract swirling all inside your mouth – ouch! If there is a tie after this, then the finalists go through what is called a 'death race' – basically identical bowls of around 10 chillies of varying sizes and heat levels or some such; first to finish is declared the winner!"

So I read a great article that helps flesh out the experience of competing in a hot pepper eating contest. This quote is from a linked article titled "It smelled like pain and regret," which includes an interview with a different chili-eating-champion Dustin "Atomik Menace" Johnson.

"Some chilli eaters experience face spasms, thunderclap headaches, excessive sweating, tears and a gushing, runny nose, but just about everyone's struggle peaks when the peppers proceed from the mouth to

the digestive tract.

"You can effectively map your GI tract by feeling how it moves," Johnson explains. It begins with a warm sensation at the base of the sternum, which quickly turns tight, like a sustained, never-ending ab crunch. As it continues down to the right side, Johnson says that's where it stings the most. The peppers have to wind through the intestines, and with every twist and turn comes a sharp, stabbing sensation.

Eventually, the stomach revolts, tightening even more into a stubborn cramp, seemingly begging for it all to stop."

Johnson racked up millions of YouTube views with a video in which he ate 122 Carolina Reaper peppers consecutively. That's...not human. Remember when I mentioned freakish genetics? You can't build up a tolerance that allows you to eat triple-digit Reapers. That's like building up a tolerance to being stabbed in the gut. You have to have been born with a chrome digestive tract, And a metal plated rectum. Just called me old Ironsides...old iron insides. Johnson says ""It'll be later that night or even as late as the next morning – that's when it hurts me the most." We know.

Now This is amazing, what kind of prize money would you imagine is on the line here? What would it take for you to eat ONE Carolina Reaper? Prizes average around \$1,000 dollars. So about a tenth of what you're going to spend on Tums and hospital bills.

Why would anyone take part in these competitions? I guess clout, a desperate need for attention, stupidity, all of the above. Which is why it is no surprise to me that the average competitor is a white male between 20 and 45. But there are exceptions...meet Shahina (Shaheena) Waseem, an undefeated Londoner who recently took down The Atomic Menace himself, Dustin Johnson. This is the mystery champion I referred to previously, because she is truly unexpected and taking the sport by storm. Shahina has won a staggering 81 hot-pepper-eating contests so far. She is ethnically Pakistani and her parents emigrated to the UK just before having her; she grew up on Pakistani food including spicy curries, which makes a little more sense because I've eaten English cuisine and spicy is not how I would describe it. More like offensively inoffensive. Like this doesn't taste like anything and yet I still hate it. The only thing worse than eating food that tastes bad is eating food that doesn't taste. It's like chewing on a wet towel. The average Brit could easily win a paste-eating contest, they can stomach more bland brownish-grey substances than anyone else on earth. But Shahina definitely stands out in these contests, she is a small Pakistani woman who kind of looks like one of the girls from Jersey Shore, it's wild that she is dominating these competitions that have almost exclusively been the domain of neck beards, she's busting stereotypes and

her o-ring worldwide. According to Shahina, "There's no money in the contests – I do it for the glory – but in 2016 I took part in 13 chilli-eating competitions and my tastebuds paid the price! For days, everything tasted weird and I had heartburn, though that thankfully passed. Over the years, I've developed techniques to help, like having a peanut-butter-and-banana sandwich to line my stomach before competing and a Babybel and chocolate milk for the pain afterwards. In May 2018, aged 35 and with 26 wins under my belt, I raised my goal to 50 wins. At a competition the next day, I got to the eighth round and my hands seized up with what's called 'Naga Claw' – a reaction to certain chillies. It was scary, but I somehow kept going and won. Luckily, Naga Claw disappears as soon as you drink some milk and doesn't have any lasting impact." Wow. I looked up this condition and couldn't find it anywhere, I feel like medical science does not understand what these people are doing to themselves; I predict that their children's children will be suffering from Naga Claw and burning bung disease. You're changing your genetics with these chillis, these things are toxic.

Shahina continues, "... In 2019, I was approached by The League of Fire, the only world-ranking website for chilli eaters, asking me to compete against Johnny Scoville, an American chilli champion. They flew him over to Guildford, and I won our battle. I was then invited to compete against chilli

champ Atomik Menace in California. To raise money for the trip I did a live sponsored challenge on my YouTube channel to my 20k subscribers, and became the only woman in the world to eat 105 Carolina Reapers – the world's hottest chillies – in one sitting. That September, I flew to the States and beat Atomik Menace, though it was the toughest challenge of my life."

I watched that competition, it's about 30 minutes long. These two are stone cold chili assassins, I have more respect for this silly bullshit now, although I have no interest in engaging in any way with this deviant subculture. Callback. I'll quickly describe what it's like. In the beginning they just suck these chillis down like it's nothing, stonefaced, there's gamesmanship involved. I guess you have to psych out the other person to break their will and convince them that you're unfazed so that they'll give up and quit. The dude is one cool cucumber, he's a really big husky guy who even casually plays with a rubik's cube while chewing. Which I guess works to make him seem chill but also probably is his way of dealing with nervous energy and taking his mind off the pain. There have been accusations that his Rubiks cube gives him an advantage but apparently it's not against the rules so whatever. If you don't like it, bring your own Rubiks cube. So they initially eat chili's one at a time, and then there are random wildcards, like they had to take shots of some aggressive hot

sauce in between chilis, presumably from sponsors of the contest since they mention the name. Each of the peppers is introduced with fanfare, like "up next we have a beautiful mustard colored trinidad scorpion gut-busting widowmaker, rated at 1.2 million Scovilles each. This is a 2022 vintage, that was a good year for peppers." It's interesting because Shahina seems to be suffering after the fourth round, she's rocking in place and looking... distressed. This is definitely her MO, she always looks like she's about to give up but then she just keeps robotically shoveling these things into her mouth. Meanwhile the Atomic Menace is just playing it cool through the heat, no expression except occasional smug smiles. Not a tear or even red eye, his nose isn't running. Meanwhile Shahina has a roll of toilet paper and is compulsively blowing her nose, taking deep breaths sticking out her tongue to air it out. She looks miserable. The atomic menace doesn't start to crack until around 23 minutes in, that's the point when you can see the panic in his eyes a little bit but he does a good job hiding it until the competition moves to a race. At that point they have a pile of peppers that they have to eat as quickly as possible, it becomes like a hot dog contest if the hot dogs were on fire. This is how Shahina usually wins, I mentioned she chews robotically, she's a chili wood chipper. So Shahina starts just shoveling these things down while Atomic is eating slowly and deliberately, he can't match her pace,

and then he starts to choke and breathe heavily, closes his eyes, he's definitely hurting. At 26 minutes he's shaking his head like a wet dog and begins stealing glances at Shahina's rapidly shrinking pile of chilis. And at that point it seems like he knows he's done. She scarfs down the last of them, shows the referee her empty mouth, and it's over. I was sucked in, I was riveted at this point. I still don't think it's a sport, but it's an entertaining trainwreck inside of a dumpster fire and I'm glad we did this episode so that I got to watch people suffer for my amusement, this was a fun one for me.

Btw, add us on threads! I strongly advise you to delete your Twitter account, if you haven't already, and head over to a better, less horrifying experience. Elon musk is trash. Zuckerberg isn't my favorite human but he's less awful, he's a robot as opposed to a troll. I have always welcomed our robot overlords, but I will never feed the trolls. So if you're on Threads, add us, so far I'm really enjoying it.

We have a new menace! Tommy Nace! For some reason that name sounds like a side mission from Grandtheft auto. You have to deliver these crack rocks for Tommy Nace.

New \$5.00 patron! 🎉 Meet Tommi Nace

PATREON



Tommi Nace just became a \$5.00 patron!

Email: dragonmaiden.dragonclaw@comcast.net

We also have a new minion, and I'm not going to make fun of this name at all. Checkmate. Welcome

New €3.00 patron! 🎉 Meet Teemu Mahlamäki

PATREON



Teemu Mahlamäki just became a €3.00 patron!

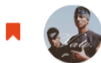
Email: mahlamaki.teemu@gmail.com

Not today, cancel culture!

We have one more minion and I'm not gonna make fun of this one either just because now I'm kind of gun shy.

New \$3.00 patron! 🎉 Meet Alexis Nolasco

PATREON



Alexis Nolasco just became a \$3.00 patron!

Email: alexis2nolasco@gmail.com

<https://amp.theguardian.com/food/2021/apr/01/competitive-hot-chilli-eaters-super-spicy-food-challenges>

<https://fightgamemedia.com/2020/07/the-fight-game-within-calcio-storico-historical-football/>

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calcio_Fiorentino

<https://www.netflix.com/title/80227160>

[I'm the world's number one chilli eater - I go head-to-head with huge blokes & suffer agony, I just have to win | The US Sun \(the-sun.com\)](#)

<https://www.fredericksd.com/wife-carrying>