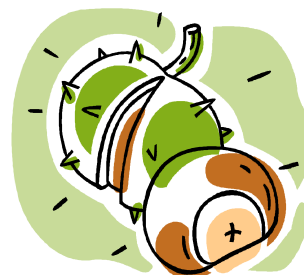


Bonkers about conkers

With the arrival of autumn, it will be conker time soon. For 36 years, the Northamptonshire village of Ashton has played host to the World Conker Championships. The Championships started by accident when a group of pub regulars, thwarted in their attempts to go fishing, decided to play conkers instead. Today, the event attracts visitors from around the world – and competition is fierce.



A Conker Quiz

Q When was the first ever recorded game of conkers played using horse chestnuts?

A In 1848 in the Isle of Wight. Before then, hazelnuts were used.

Q What other names are there for the game of conkers?

A Conquerors, cheggies, hongkongs, obbly-onkers and cobs.

Q What was the most victorious conker ever?

A A 'five-thousander' which won the BBC Conker Conquest of 1954. Although it has been suggested that this might have been a 'ringer' - probably an ivory or tagua nut.

Q How do some people cheat at conkers?

A By covering their conkers with varnish, superglue, or injecting them with resin.

Q What do you call out in order to ensure first strike in a game?

A Competitors call out one of the following: 'my firsy', 'firsy jabs', 'first donks', 'first hitsy', 'bagsie first cracks', 'iddley, iddley ack, my first smack', or 'hobbily, hobbily honker, my first conker.'

Puns (with thanks to Derek Forbes)

These are the 10 First Place winners in the International Pun Contest.

1. A vulture boards an airplane, carrying two dead raccoons. The stewardess looks at him and says, "I'm sorry, sir, only one carrion allowed per passenger."

2. Two fish swim into a concrete wall. The one turns to the other and says: "Dam!".

3. Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.

4. Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says "I've lost my electron." The other says "Are you sure?" The first replies "Yes, I'm positive."

5. Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocain during a root canal? His goal: transcendental medication.

6. A group of chess enthusiasts checked into a hotel and were standing in the lobby discussing their recent tournament victories. After about an hour, the manager came out of the office and asked them to disperse. "But why?" they asked, as they moved off. "Because", he said, "I can't stand chess-nuts boasting in an open foyer."