

BRIEFLY

'Muppet,' 'Eeyorish' to join dictionary

BY JACK GARLAND
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON — Are you feeling like a "muppet" because you cannot remember the meaning of a word? Or are you a bit "Eeyorish" and confused at our rapidly changing language?

Those are among 3,000 new words and expressions, many of them slang or foreign, that have entered English usage and are included in the new edition of the Oxford Dictionary of English, which is being released Thursday.

"Muppet," taken from the children's TV show, "Sesame Street," means a foolish person, while "Eeyorish" refers to the character in Winnie the Pooh known for his gloomy outlook on life.

Unsurprisingly, many new entries come from the world of science and high-tech, particularly genetics and the Internet. Thus "blog" (short for Web log), and "egsurfing" (searching the Internet for references to oneself) are joined in the dictionary by more unusual phrases such as "shot-gun cloning" (the insertion of random fragments of DNA).

New words included in the dictionary often reflect trends and the changing cultural makeup of the United Kingdom.

Britain's multiethnic population has had a great influence on the new edition, with many words included from Chinese,

Yiddish and Indian languages. "Chacha" is a Hindi word for uncle, "doudou" is a West Indian term of endearment, "sic bo" is a Chinese game of dice, and "bashert" is a yiddish word for fate.

The U.S. influence is evident in "bada bing," the name of Tony Soprano's strip-joint in the hit HBO show "The Sopranos." The phrase is defined as "an effortless act."

The term "24/7" has officially entered common usage in the United Kingdom, as have "nerd," "geek," and "bad-hair day."

The more unpleasant side of modern life pops up with "counterterrorism," "dirty bomb," and "mission creep" all included in the dictionary.

On a lighter note, words from office life often crop up. "Prairie-dogging" is a term describing workers in cubicles who raise their heads above the partitions surrounding their desks to see what is going on.

These changes are gleaned from a range of sources such as comics, newspapers, TV scripts, novels, the Internet, and scholarly journals, as well as the British National Corpus database, which contains over 100 million words.

The Oxford University Press also publishes the 20-volume Oxford English Dictionary, which sells for \$2,862 and is considered the benchmark for the language.

BY LUKAS I. ALPERT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — It was the type of play that makes jaws drop.

As the point guard brought the ball up the court, he did a mean crossover, then whipped it behind his back to the small forward out on the flat, who gunned it to the off guard on the edge of the key, who touch-passed it to a wide-open power forward under the basket.

The finale: an earth-rattling two-handed dunk.

This isn't the NBA or even the NCAA. It's Harlem's Rucker Park, legendary home to New York's great streetball tournament.

"When you get off that A train at Rucker Park, you better bring your A game," game announcer EJ the Mayor said during a break in play last week.

Street basketball players have traditionally been the stuff of urban legend — amazing small crowds at asphalt courts in cities across the country, but unseen and unknown by most. That's changing now, as the exploits of these raw talents with colorful nicknames catch the attention of TV and music executives, writers and entrepreneurs.

The summer league at Rucker — started in 1956 by Parks Department worker Holcombe Rucker — is the center of it all.

After almost dying away in the early 1980s, the Rucker league has experienced a resurgence, drawing the interest of rappers like Jay-Z and Fat Joe, who sponsor teams, as well as the National Basketball Association, which broadcasts games on its cable channel.

The annual tournament, now called the Entertainer's Basketball Classic, is the subject of an MTV reality show called "Harlem Hoops." Its history is detailed in the new book, "Asphalt Gods: An Oral History of the Rucker Tournament," by Vincent Mallozzi, a New York

Times sports editor. And Universal Pictures is developing a film — titled "The Rucker" — due out next year.

Residents say summer doesn't truly start at the park — located in the middle of the Polo Grounds Housing Project and across the Harlem River from Yankee Stadium — without the ping of a bouncing basketball, the squeak of sneakers and the tales of some of the sport's greats strutting their stuff on the court.

"There's nothing like basketball in the summer," said the league's CEO, Greg Marius. "It makes me feel good to know that I'm giving kids around here something to feel real good about, to feel part of."

The competition is so fierce that the end-of-season tournament in August draws pro stars to compete against the city's best streetballers. In past years, greats such as Wilt Chamberlain, Julius Erving, Connie Hawkins and Allen Iverson graced the court.

Many current pros, including Mark Jackson, Ron Artest and Stephon Marbury, are Rucker Park alums. Even some of the sport's greatest nicknames, from Earl "The Pearl" Monroe to Nate "Tiny" Archibald and streetballer Joe "The Destroyer" Hammond, were earned on that court.

With such talent, the quality of the game is top-notch. That cuts down on some of the truly outrageous schoolyard tricks one might see at other streetball exhibitions.

But Pee Wee Kirkland, one of the greats from the league's heyday in the early 1970s, says the game has suffered because of the premium put on embarrassing your opponent with high-wire acrobatics.

"Young players today are very much out of focus," said Kirkland, whose professional aspirations were cut short by an 11-year stint in prison on a drug trafficking conviction. "It's all about the trick, and not the win.

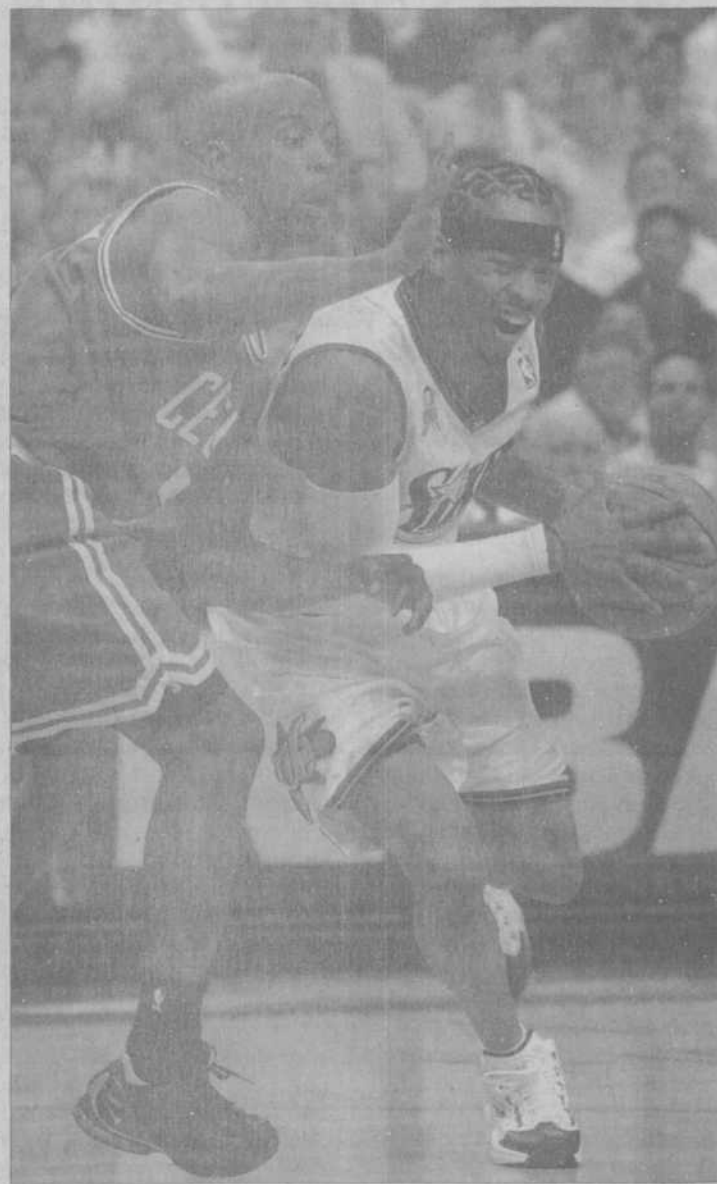


PHOTO BY JERRY LODRIGUSS/KRT CAMPUS

Allen Iverson, right, is a former alum of Rucker Park street ball.

When we played, we learned from the neck up, we knew our fundamentals."

Another league legend from the 1950s, former New York Knick Cal Ramsey, agreed.

"All this through the leg and behind the back stuff — we didn't do that," he said. "We played a much more fundamental game."

The new players say fundamentals are important — but so is fun. After one recent tour-

namment game this summer, 17-year-old point guard Sebastian "Too Fast, Too Furious" Telfair, widely considered one of the top high school players in the nation, said he looked at the league as a place to be a little more free.

"It's supposed to be a little more fun here, but when you put me on a court I want to win, first and foremost," he said.

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ABC executive jumps to CBS' 'The Early Show'

NEW YORK (AP) — Veteran ABC News executive Victor Neufeld has jumped to CBS to become the No. 2 executive on "The Early Show," CBS announced on Wednesday.

Neufeld will be the broadcast's executive producer, working for senior executive producer Michael Bass.

Neufeld, 56, spent the last 30 years at ABC News and was the chief executive behind "20/20" from 1987 to 2000. He has recently been an executive overseeing all of ABC's newsmagazines, although he no longer had a direct role in running them day-to-day.

"I was thrilled he was inter-

ested and we hit it off very well," Bass said. "It was a great opportunity to bring someone in who can help us continue our growth."

"The Early Show" is perennially third in the ratings behind NBC's "Today" and ABC's "Good Morning America," but has recently shown improvement after adding Dave Price as a regular weatherman.

Former president provides a place to stay in Plains

PLAINS, GA. (AP) — Jimmy Carter has been giving people a reason to come to this small south Georgia farming community for nearly 30 years. Now he's given them a place to stay.

In the tiny downtown where

Carter centered his successful campaign for the presidency, the Plains Historic Inn is like taking a trip through the past 10 years at a time. The seven rooms each represent a decade of Carter's life, from the 1920s room through the 1980s.

Carter oversaw construction of the inn and a 25-booth antique mall below it. Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter picked out the antiques and furnishings to match the decades and stayed astonishingly true to the each era.

"We think that staying here overnight is like a history lesson," said President Carter, who stopped by the inn after his weekly Sunday school lesson — an event that draws hundreds of tourists to his church.

"Rosalynn undertook an enormous task of getting fur-

niture that was absolutely authentic, so far as we can tell, representing those separate decades," Carter said.

The inn is owned by the city. The building was purchased from the estate of Carter's cousin and renovated under a community improvement program. A town meeting was held to discuss the plans and one of the residents suggested the theme for the project, which cost about \$1.1 million.

The staff beam with pride when talking about the inn and their favorite rooms. Guests meeting in the common areas or swaying in a rocking chair on the second floor balcony cheerfully talk about their rooms.

"A lot of them will tell people what their room looks like and say 'Why not come in and take a look at my room,'" said inn manager Sandra Walters. "They find it fascinating. You don't usually find that in a motel or a hotel."

Each room has polished hardwood floors, exposed brick walls, high ceilings and sitting areas. After that, the decor ranges widely, from fringed lampshades in the 1920 room, a leather sofa in the 1960 and whirlpool baths in the 1970 and 1980 rooms. Each room has art and magazines from their decade. Even the phones are rotary dial in most of the rooms and represent their decades.

There are modern conveniences — each of the rooms has a remote control wall-mounted air conditioner/heater and bathrooms are equipped with hair dryers. But the inn takes care to blend them into the rooms representing older decades. For instance, a flat-screen television is tucked inside a small armoire in the 1920 room.

The most popular room is the 1980, mostly because it's large and airy, has a pullout coach and a large television, Walters said. The president said his favorite is the 1920.

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