



Odyssey of the Mind[®]

Newsletter

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Number 1

Welcome to Another Year of Creative Problem Solving!

Welcome to another Odyssey of the Mind season. By now, many teams have selected their problem and have begun developing a solution, but there's still plenty of time left before the first round of tournaments. We look forward to seeing the wonderfully creative solutions these imaginative teams come up with. When we write the problems, we naturally conjure up images of possible solutions. When we attend tournaments, we are in awe of the many *different* solutions – and usually none are what we imagined! We look forward to visiting several state and country tournaments this year and, surely, we'll be amazed once again. You'd think we'd be used to the surprises by now, but when you're dealing with some of the most cre-




Why are these kids smiling? Because Odyssey of the Mind is so much fun!

ative minds in the universe, you come to expect the unexpected.

The Odyssey of the Mind keeps growing stronger. We're proud to welcome our newly formed associations in the countries of **Argentina** and **Egypt**,

and look forward to more countries coming on board.

NASA has pledged a three-year sponsorship. This year's NASA-sponsored problem, *A Scene From Above*, is sure to be popular. It combines earth science with technology and humor — quite a combination. In addition to sponsoring a long-term problem, NASA provides a special Web site for Odyssey teams and curriculum activities for use in the classroom.

We hear often from team members, coaches and volunteers about how kids benefit from Odyssey of the Mind. They use their minds in ways that they never imagined. It's a good feeling to know that, every year, more and more kids are learning to solve problems using creativity. Our future is in good hands. 



Also In This Issue . . .

- 2 A New IPC for Problem 2
- 2 Great Minds
- 3-4 Long-Term Problem Procedures
- 4 Spontaneous Problem Procedures
- 5 Membership Application
- 6 Problem Clarifications
- 6 Family Album

A VERY SPECIAL TEAM

For the past three years, Junction School in Palo Cedro, California, has competed in Odyssey of the Mind with a team made up primarily of students enrolled in special education classes. Not only have they competed, they've also been the recipients of several awards.

These kids don't have to think outside the box because they are already "outside the box." From the time they were born their brains functioned in a different way from most of the rest of us. For some, not being able to write long-winded explanations or sentences led to writing terse, concise statements that get right to the point. For others, not being able to read well led to a greater understanding and appreciation of what was

said, read or lectured. A poor understanding of math concepts was compensated for by a greater appreciation of numeration or practical math. Above all, every one of them has a "SENSE OF HUMOR." What is a sense of humor but a way to put a different spin on things? It doesn't matter that they originally developed this sense of humor as a way to deflect teasing or criticism. It now allows them to see the absurd and the illogical in most situations and to exploit that to solve problems.

They function well as a team because, with a little work, they have learned to compensate for each other's weaknesses. The students who don't speak clearly have more of an "action" part in a performance. The stronger members of

more on page 2

THANKS A BUNCH, ALICE – GOOD LUCK, CAROL!

International Problem Captain for Problem 2, Alice McRae (NY), has passed the baton to Carol Biros (PA) as her replacement. Alice served in the position for 18 years and was influential in the development of many current problem procedures.

Carol had to relinquish her seat as PA Association Director to take on the larger role of IPC. Carol's kids got her involved in Odyssey of the Mind in the early '80's and she's never left. Before serving for seven years as PA AD, she was a regional director. Her Problem 2 experience is extensive: She's served as state problem captain and as a World Finals problem judge, scorechecker and, since 1992, Assistant IPC.

We'll miss Alice dearly but we're glad to have someone as qualified as Carol to fill her shoes.



Carol Biros (l.) with Alice McRae

continued from page 1

the team direct the students with less of a sense of organization. The quick thinkers are the ones who solve the spontaneous problems. Does all this sound familiar? Isn't this what any well-rounded team does? Sure, some weaknesses are more profound than in an ordinary team, but good teams learn to use their strengths, not their weaknesses.

When I sat down to write this article, the original idea was to write a guideline on how to include special education students on Odyssey of the Mind teams, but I realized that no guideline is needed. Special education students are a "natural" for Odyssey of the Mind.

Deborah Stokes
Special Day Class Teacher
Junction Elementary School
Palo Cedro, CA



How many steps does it take to wipe your mouth with a napkin? Three is probably the average answer: (1) pick up the napkin with your hands; (2) holding the napkin in your hands, wipe your mouth; and (3) finally, put the napkin down with your hands. Seems like a pretty simple task, right? Well, Rube Goldberg (1883-1970) designed a system to automatically wipe your mouth as you eat in 13 steps using a parrot, crackers, cigar lighter, skyrocket, clock, etc.

How can something as basic as wiping your mouth get so complicated? If we really need to have our mouths wiped automatically isn't there a simpler way? Not if you are trying to satirize technology. A far-fetched and complicated system provides humor and makes us stop to consider the merits of technological possibilities. This type of sarcasm founded an evaluation process that continues to serve a vital role in optimizing resources.

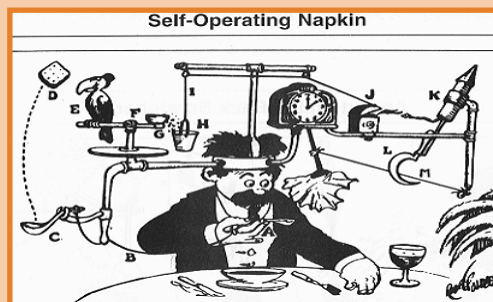
Goldberg, who was an author, sculptor, Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist, and an icon of ingenuity and creativity in and of itself, had a "challenging" approach to completing simple tasks. He believed in "man's capacity for exerting maximum effort to accomplish minimal results," or the idea of making a lot out of a little. His inventions and cartoons, which consisted of cause and effect steps that led to the completion of particular tasks, exemplified his theory. Rube's skepticism about technology and its advances inspired him to create and use these complex multi-step solutions and cartoons with everyday things. Plants,

animals, household objects and even humans themselves were all components that had a particular role in each invention.

The background that led to Rube's success was a combination of many talents. He always wanted to be an artist, but his father thought it would be a more practical idea for Rube to go to college. He began his diverse professional career for the city of San Francisco after receiving his engineering degree from the University of California at Berkley. After giving six months to the city's Water and Sewer Department, Rube landed a low-ranking job at a San Francisco newspaper. Eventually, Rube convinced the editor to publish his cartoons and drawings.

Rube's engineering background and vast imagination gave way to his complex and sometimes off-the-wall contraptions. His popularity spanned throughout major media outlets, including television and radio.

Rube's uncommon way of thinking continues to earn him the respect and admiration of creative thinkers. Still today, "Rube Goldberg" stands for any multi-step, intricate construction of performing a what-should-be-simple task.



RUBE GOLDBERG is™ and © 2001 Rube Goldberg Inc.

Information for this article was found at www.rube-goldberg.com.

LONG-TERM PROBLEM PROCEDURES

Reporting to the Competition Site

A Pre-Staging Area may be used at some tournaments. This will be located outside of the performance area. Approximately 15 minutes before the scheduled competition time, the Staging Area Judge will call the team members and coach(es) into the Staging Area. They will then have 3 minutes to clear the Pre-Staging Area. Others may assist the team in moving items from the Pre-Staging Area to the Staging Area. If only a Staging Area is used, the team must remove all its materials within the first 3 minutes of its 8-minute presentation time or the judges will remove any remaining materials.

Before the Team Competes

A Staging Area Judge will meet the team in the Pre-Staging Area, if used, otherwise, in the Staging Area.

Teams should have the required number of completed copies of their Style Form, Materials Value Form, Outside Assistance Form, clarifications specific to the team's solution, and their list, if desig-

nated in the long-term problem. They must also have all items needed for their problem solution. The Staging Area Judge will check for clarity and completion of all paperwork, then pass it to the Timekeeper, who will distribute it to the Problem and Style Judges. The Staging Area Judge will then check all props for safety, the team members' foot coverings, and the membership sign. The team will then have an opportunity to ask questions.

The Staging Area Judge will explain the procedure for picking up the long-term raw score to the coach, who is then directed to sit in a designated area, if provided. After that no one may assist the team in any way until the presentation is completed.

The Timekeeper is introduced to the team and then introduces the team to the audience. He or she will ask the audience to turn off all pagers, cellular phones and other electronic devices, and announce if the team will allow flash photography and/or videotaping of their presentation. No one, including the Timekeeper, may read the team's problem synopsis aloud.

If the team wants this done, it must do so during its competition time.

When the Timekeeper says, "Begin," time begins and the team has 8 minutes for setup, Style and the problem solution.

After the Team Competes

When competition ends, the judges will meet with all team members to ask questions or request demonstrations. The team may point out any special aspects of its solution. The team will then quickly remove its solution. It is the team's responsibility to bring materials to clean up any mess, and leave the competition area clean and dry for the next competing team. Others may help with cleanup.

Unless otherwise indicated, the Head Judge reviews with the coach the team's long-term raw score, including penalties but NOT Style, after it is compiled. There may be a sign on-site indicating when the scores are ready for each team. If a sign is not available, the coach should inquire when and where this review will take place. The coach has 30 minutes to return if additional questions or concerns arise.

Problem 1: A Scene From Above



In the Staging Area, the team is asked to place the vehicles, one at a time, in the 12" x 24" taped area. The judge will check the size, the planned operation, the floor contact points for potential floor damage, and safety hazards.

The team will attempt three deliveries with each of the three vehicles. The three-dimensional scene will be transformed with items that were transported successfully. The theme will include humor.

The Timekeeper will call time at the end of the 8 minutes and the team must stop. If the team's solution is completed before the 8 minutes, it must signal the judges that it is finished.

-- Wayne Kehrli
International Problem Captain

Problem 2: The Know - It - All



The Timekeeper will call time at the end of the 8 minutes and the team must stop. If the team's solution is completed before the 8 minutes, it must signal the judges that it is finished.

-- Carol Biros
International Problem Captain

Problem 3: Classics...Put a Spin On It



The Timekeeper will not call time but an overtime penalty will be assessed if the team takes more than 8 minutes.

When the team is finished, it must signal the judges.

-- Rita Sleeman
International Problem Captain

Problem 4: Odd Pod Structure



Before its scheduled competition time, the team or a team member must report to the weigh-in site, where the structure will be measured, weighed and checked for rule infractions. The pods will be checked and measured as well. If time permits the team may make corrections of any infractions. After filling out the weigh-in checklist, a Weigh-in Judge will seal, mark and store the structure in a team-supplied container or paper bag. Approximately 25 minutes before their scheduled competition time, a team member will pick up the structure and take it to the competition site.

The coach and other team members will report to the competition site 20 minutes before the team's scheduled time with the props, the membership sign and anything else needed for the long-term problem solution.

At the Staging Area, the Staging Area Judge will remove the weigh-in checklist. The team will inform him/her whether Style will continue after the structure breaks.

If an adult assistant is used in Division I or II, he or she must be identified in the Staging Area and will remain with the team throughout the long-term solution. It must be apparent to judges

that when the adult is assisting in weight placement a team member is involved in supporting the weight and is not just touching it.

The only people allowed inside the testing area during the long-term solution are the team members, judges and adult assistant, if used. Style may take place at any time during the 8-minute competition. When the long-term solution is completed, all wood from the crushed structure, or the whole structure if it does not break, may be placed in a paper bag and returned to the weigh-in site by a designated judge. After the competition, a judge may request to inspect the structure again at the weigh-in site.

The Timekeeper will call time at the end of the 8 minutes and the team must stop. If the team's solution is completed before the 8 minutes, it must signal the judges that it is finished.

-- Dan Semenza
International Problem Captain

Problem 5: Fooled Ya!



The Timekeeper will not call time but an overtime penalty will be assessed if the team takes more than 8 minutes. When the team is finished, it must signal the judges.

-- Marietta Kehler
International Problem Captain

SPONTANEOUS PROBLEM PROCEDURES

Every tournament site should have a spontaneous holding room where teams may report 10 minutes before their scheduled competition time. (If there is no holding room, teams should report to the competition site 10 minutes before the scheduled time and wait quietly for further instruction.) Only one coach should accompany the team into the holding room. One team member should register the team, giving the team's long-term problem and division, the team membership number and name, and its demographic information. The team will wait in the holding room until it is called to compete. Only the seven team members will be accompanied to the spontaneous problem room by the Problem Judge. The coach will remain in the designated area and wait for the team to return. Where possible, this should be a different area so the holding room does not get congested.

All seven team members are allowed (and encouraged) to enter the spontaneous room. The judges will identify the type of problem: verbal, combination verbal/hands-on, or hands-on. The team

members will then have 1 minute to decide among themselves which five will compete. The other two team members may remain and watch, but they must not talk, signal, or intervene in any way. If they wish, the two non-competing team members may leave the room; however, watching the team compete allows all team members to feel valued and allows them to know the problem their teammates have solved without having to discuss it outside the competition site. Remember, spontaneous problems must be kept secret until after the competition, because all teams in the same long-term problem and division have the same spontaneous problem.

Once the team has chosen the five competing team members, the judge will read the problem aloud. A copy of the problem is placed in front of the team to refer to as needed. Coaches should train team members to listen carefully and look at the judges, who often point and use gestures to help clarify the intent of the problem. In a verbal and/or verbal hands-on problem, the judges will use the following language:

- If a team member speaks too fast or mumbles and the judges cannot understand, they will say, "UNCLEAR. Please say it again."
- If a response does not make sense to the judges or is not acceptable, they will say, "INAPPROPRIATE. Please clarify or give another response."
- If a response is a repeat of what another team member said, the judges will say, "DUPLICATE. Please give another response."

Once the team has competed it should leave the room quietly and meet the coach at the designated area. Team members should be reminded not to discuss the problem. Spontaneous problems are generally not subject to the grievance procedure; however, if a team has a concern, one team member should ask to speak to the Spontaneous Problem Captain, who will then speak with the judges and the entire team, if necessary.

-- Joy Kurtz, International
Spontaneous Problem Captain

2002-2003 ODYSSEY OF THE MIND MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

For new memberships or renewals, complete this form and return it with a check, purchase order, or credit card information (see below).

Check one:

Divisions I, II and III:

- Individual school:** Must register in the school name. May enter one team per problem per division in competition.
- Two or more schools:** Must share the same principal. Use school district name on application. May enter one team per problem per division in competition.
- Home-schooled students:** All students on the team must be home-schooled. May enter one team per problem.
- Community Group:** May not be an organization established solely for the purpose of participating in Odyssey of the Mind. May enter one team per problem in competition. Please submit by-laws if this is a new membership.

Division IV: All team members must be high school graduates and registered for at least one class at a college or university. May enter one team per problem. Proceeds directly to World Finals, but may compete at the Association level.

Membership name _____ Membership number (if renewal) _____

Grades covered by membership _____ School district _____

Contact person (may be a coach) _____

Mailing address (for newsletter delivery and correspondence) _____

City _____ State/Province _____ Zip _____

County _____ Country _____

Daytime phone _____ FAX _____ Email _____

Each individual membership costs \$135, but you will receive discounts if you purchase more than one membership. For each membership purchased, you get five competitive long-term problems, one primary problem, one copy of the Program Guide, one copy of Spontaneous Problem Competitions, one scholarship application, one newsletter subscription and more.

- Individual 2002-2003 Odyssey of the Mind Membership @ \$135.....
- Additional membership(s) for the same school or community group @ \$100.....
- 6-10 memberships for the same school district (registered at the same time) @ \$120.....
- 11 or more memberships from the same school district (registered at the same time) @ \$100.....

ODYSSEY OF THE MIND SUPPORT MATERIALS

- **Applying Your Creativity @ \$18** Discusses different types of human creativity.....
- **Creativity + Teamwork = Solutions! @ \$18** Includes tips on building effective teams.
- **Odysseymania! @ \$17** Includes a chapter on humor and creativity
- **Make Learning Fun @ \$17** Provides a history of the program
- additional copies of **Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide @ \$5** (one is included with membership).....
- additional copies of **Spontaneous Problem Competitions @ \$7.50** (one included with membership)

Shipping & handling is \$3.50 for the first item, \$1 for each additional book.
***There are no shipping & handling charges for membership packets and these items.**
 **These books are a collection of long-term and spontaneous problems from past competition years.

- World Finals 2002 Video Montage @ \$10** Shown at Opening and Closing Ceremonies VHS ___ CD _____
- *Coaches Training Video @ \$20** Tips and techniques for coaches (S & H included)
- *packs of **Balsa Wood** (premium grade AAA 36" x 1/8" x 1/8") @ \$20 per 100 pieces (S & H included)

Contact CCI with any questions

856.456.7776 • info@odysseyofthemind.com • fax 856.456.7008

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To submit payment:

- Complete this form and mail it to CCI, 1325 Rte 130 S, Suite F, Gloucester City, NJ 08030, along with a check, money order or p.o., payable to CCI, or with your credit card information.
 - If paying by p.o., you may FAX your order to 856.456.7008.
 - If paying by credit card, you may FAX your order, order by phone: 856.456.7776, or e-mail info@odysseyofthemind.com.
- VISA MasterCard American Express Discover
- Acct. no. _____ Exp. _____
- Signature of cardholder _____

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Is this a residence? yes no

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Address _____

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Hey Everyone,

Don't forget to visit NASA's Web site for "A Scene From Above." It provides helpful links highlighting educational programs in Earth system science. Log on to <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/odysseyofthemind>.

Your friend,
OMER

Problem Clarifications

Odd Pod Structure

Problem No. 4 Division I, II, III & IV

Clarifications are current as of November 5, 2002.

1. The size of the pods should be no less than 1" wide x 1" long x 1/2" high and no more than 2" wide x 2" long x 3/4" high.
2. In B. 7 the second sentence should read, "Pieces will be measured from the tester surface to their highest point to determine their height."
3. Each pod that is to be scored must touch both the tester base and the structure.
4. When the pod is resting on the tester base, only one surface may face the crusher board and it must be flat.

* CORRECTION *

Poquoson HS (VA) tied for 3rd place for *It's a Snap!*, Division III at World Finals. The team was mistakenly listed as coming in 4th place in the Summer issue of this newsletter. Sorry for the error!

Odyssey of the Mind *Family Album*

- Congratulations and good luck to the newest Odyssey of the Mind Association Directors: **Poppy Patterson** (CT), **Patsy Fort** (KS), **Theresa Ledoux** (MA), **Liz Gabel** (MI), **Dick Raley** (NC), **Kathy Ackley** (OH), **Linda Winegar** (PA), **Angela Richard** and **Susan Riggs** (TX).
- We're pleased to announce that **Adam Rusilowski** (Poland) is now the International Liaison for Creative Competitions, Inc. Adam will be conducting workshops and presenting at conferences throughout Europe.
- **Amanda Martin** is interning at Odyssey of the Mind International for the Fall semester. Amanda is a senior in the Public Relations program at Rowan University, NJ, and expects to graduate in December.
- **Carola Gnadt** (Germany) is now a member of the Board of Directors of Creative Opportunities Unlimited.

We'd love to hear news about teams, coaches, officials, or anyone else in the Odyssey of the Mind family. Send items to 1325 Route 130 South, Suite F, Gloucester City, NJ 08030, or e-mail carolann@odysseyofthemind.com