



## Dear Deirdre...

Although I'm fine with people I know, as soon as I go to a party or something and have to go into a room full of mainly strangers, I totally seize up. I'm so scared I can hardly speak. And if I do actually manage to say something to someone, my voice squeaks and it comes out all wrong. I end up saying really stupid things so that people think I'm a complete idiot and move away fast to find someone more interesting to talk to. Please help.

Sharon, overcome with shyness.

Dear Sharon,

It may make you feel better to know that a lot of people are really shy with strangers in that kind of situation. The reason many of them don't show it is because they are better at hiding it better than you are. Don't despair - there are things you can do to make yourself appear and feel more confident. And like everything else, it's very much a question of practice.

The most important thing is to prepare yourself beforehand, and there are a couple of things you could try. One is to breathe slowly and deeply a few times - in through your nose, right down to your stomach, and out through your mouth - before you go into the room. (You could do this in the car, in the lift, waiting at the door, maybe even in the loo as a last resort, wherever you can!) This will help you relax and feel more positive. And if you keep it going a bit once you're in the room, it will also slow down the speed of your voice and stop it from squeaking. (But be a bit careful not to overdo it and get dizzy from too much unaccustomed oxygen.) Another thing you could do beforehand is to imagine yourself walking into that room full of poise and confidence. Really see yourself moving gracefully across the room, looking people in the eye and smiling, with great self-possession. Then do it. (Once you've rehearsed something in your mind, it's always easier to do in reality.) And if by any chance you find it difficult to imagine yourself full of poise and confidence, then think of someone else (someone you know or an actor or well-known person that you admire) and imagine what it's like to be them.

You could do either deep breathing or mental rehearsal every time you have to face a 'strangers in a room' situation or, in extreme cases, you could do both! Find out what helps you most and do it often. Because you know what people find? That by doing these sorts of things frequently, they become second nature. If you pretend something enough, you end up being it.

Good luck! Let me know how you get on.

*Deirdre*

The Dear Deirdre column is written by Jane Revell, therapist and stress management specialist. If you have a problem you think I can help you with, please write to Dear Deirdre at *THE ARCHER*. All replies will be treated with the strictest confidence.



Victorious - Paul Grey meets his welcome party

## He Did It!

Congratulations to Paul Grey of High Road, East Finchley who ran in the London Marathon to raise money for the Prader-Willi Syndrome Appeal (see last month's *ARCHER*).

Not only did Paul finish the course in a creditable time of just under 5½ hours, but he also reached his target figure of £2,000. Doubly well done Paul!

## MALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

## It is cricket

Ah, cricket, the gentle sound of willow against leather, the cool breeze, the sun block and the sound of the captain taking a call on his mobile phone about fixing the match for a couple of grand. Yes, that sport of honesty and integrity, of long hot summers and long cool drinks has been exposed as corrupt and dishonest.

You could say it was inevitable: every other sport has had its brushes with cheating, gambling and match fixing. Take football: back in the 1960s there was a serious match fixing scandal that ended up with prison sentences and life bans. In the early 80s Nottingham Forest lost a European match after the referee accepted a big bribe from the opposition and accusations and court cases still fly wildly around. Not, of course, that many of today's millionaire ball kickers are interested in the odd ten grand to blow a match.

The sport of 'kings' that is horse racing has always been more about gambling than horses and that has always meant fixes and fiddles and attempts to keep it 'honest'. In motor racing they don't call it cheating, they call it 'engineering' as every designer tries to get an unfair advantage over the rest of the field and win lots of races before the rules catch up with them. Sports like athletics and cycling have been as much about drug companies racing each other as about athletes. Corruption has been everywhere, but not, until now, in cricket.

### Straight bat

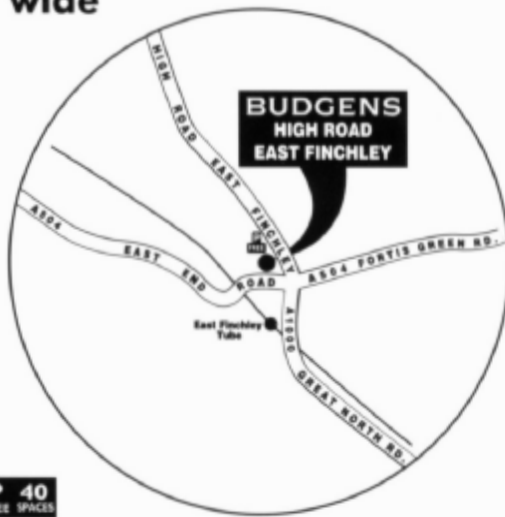
Actually, that's not true: the idea that cricket was even slightly clean until Hansie Cronje got caught taking kickbacks is rubbish. A couple of Aussies, in a fine demonstration of 'sportsmanship', owned up to getting money for providing the bookies with inside information. There has been a two-year investigation into corruption in Pakistani cricket that has implicated several players. Even English cricket has been involved with claims of money and deals and fixes crawling out of the woodwork. In fact, it could be completely wrong to joke that no one has offered to pay England to lose matches because they do it anyway and England's failures might have been bought, at great expense, by a Bombay betting syndicate. So, remember, the next time your team loses you have two reasons to blame them; firstly incompetence and secondly the kickbacks they got for creating that classic middle order batting collapse that handed the match to Holland. See cheating is cricket!

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