

The McGill Quidditch Seeker Manual: A Handbook For Training

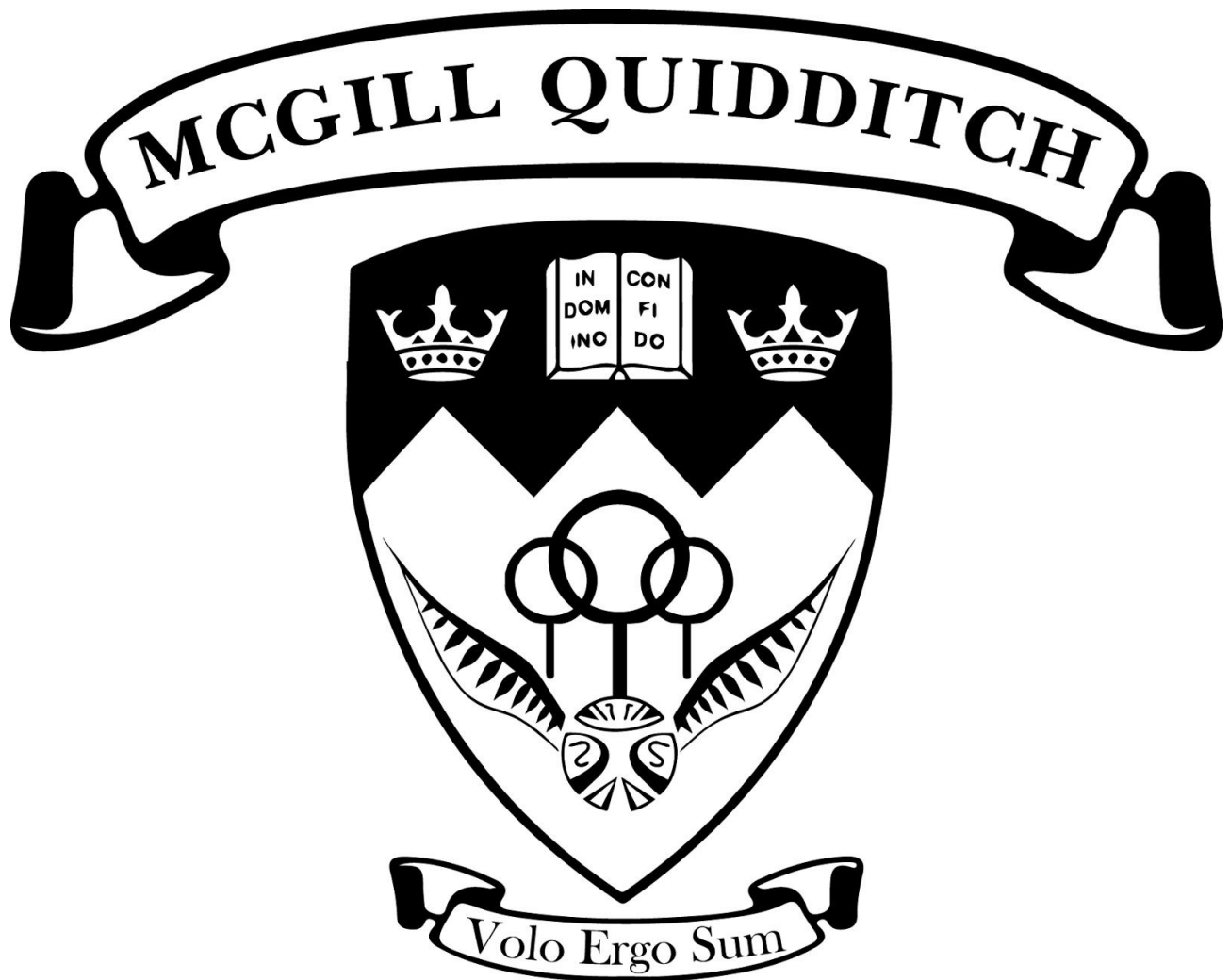


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Seeker Training

Being a good seeker takes training, and anybody can improve their seeking by running the right drills. The mistaken notion that seeking is a natural talent comes from the reality that snitches tend to be fast and violent, so many people expect the same qualities of a seeker. This is false: good seeking is about playing off of the other person, with speed and aggression coming later. Therefore, seekers can be taught: you just need the right training.

Seeker drills come in four flavours: one-on-one with the snitch, two-on-one with the snitch and opposing seeker, beater drills, and snitch-herding. This covers much of the seeker-game: catching the snitch, dealing with the other seeker, interacting with beaters, and controlling the snitch's flight path.

Training for other crucial aspects of the seeker-game, such as off-field seeking, field-awareness, and adapting to the style of opposing seekers and snitches, usually requires a full-game: these topics will be treated theoretically at the end of this manual. Conditioning is also important, and we will also discuss this later on. First however we'll look at some drills for the four flavours of seeking.

Section One: Drills

In this section we discuss four types of drills: one-on-one time with the snitch, two-on-one with the snitch and other seeker, interacting with the beater game, and snitch-herding. These drills do not train the perfect seeker (that takes reflection and game-time in addition to training) but they can be run without a full game (and with fewer people), which is why they are presented first. Other important skills, such as off-field snitching, field-awareness, and adapting to your enemy's playing style, will be discussed later, not because they are less important (quite the contrary) but because they are more difficult to simulate outside of a game, and so require a more theoretical treatment. Before that though, let's look at some drills that can be run at any practice and with relatively few people.

One-on-One Drills: Learning How to Catch

Ultimately every seeker needs to end up with the sock in their hands, and the drills in this section are designed to train you in getting past the snitch's defences and at the sock. This class of drills is the most purely physical: training into your body the good habits that make it hard for a snitch to repel you. Each drill should be practiced with both hands: ambidexterity is very important, because it's far easier for a snitch to block you when they can predict which arm you grab with. An unpredictable seeker is an effective seeker.

Drill: Sparring (aka fencing, en garde)

Two people face each other. Each puts the right hand behind their back, on the small of their back/lombard, open and with the palm facing away from their bodies. Each person must use their free hand to tap the hand behind the other person's back, without having their own hand-behind-the-back tapped. After three minutes both people switch hands. After several iterations, try keeping the opposite hands behind your backs: left-right, so that your free hands are on the same side when you face each other.

Drill: Shoulders

One person tucks a sock in the back of their pants and snitches. The other person mounts a broom and seeks. The snitch tries to prevent the seeker from catching the sock by pushing on the seeker's shoulders with both arms, maintaining arm's length between themselves and the seeker. The seeker must try to slip past the shoulder-block by constantly moving and shrugging their shoulders, so that the snitch loses their grip. Always keep the shoulders moving: front-back, front-back, left-right, left-right.

Drill: Squat Seeking

One person tucks a sock in the back of their pants and snitches. The other person mounts a broom and seeks. The snitch and seeker start off at a 10-20 foot distance from each other. On "go", the seeker runs towards the snitch, and has 10-30 seconds to catch the sock. When either the snitch is caught, or the 10-30 seconds are up, the two sides reposition, and start again.

When engaging the snitch, THE SEEKER MUST ALWAYS BE IN A SQUAT. The upper legs should make at least a 45 degree angle to the ground, if not be parallel to the ground. The purpose of this drill is to teach the seeker to ground themselves, and to always stay low. This is important because:

- 1) Being low makes it easier to slip past the snitch's defences, since it's harder to defending against sock-grabs coming from beneath than those coming from above. A useful trick is to drop low then lunge or dive in for a grab, coming up from below the snitch, throwing them off-guard.
- 2) Snitches themselves tend to get low by bending their back to throw their butt (and sock) as far back and far away from the seeker as possible. This means that most of the time the seeker themselves has to get to the snitch's level, because over-the-head grabs are very easy for the snitch to defend and almost never work. This squat drill conditions the legs to stay low for long periods of time.
- 3) Maintaining a low stance as a seeker makes it much harder for the snitch to throw, pull, or otherwise manipulate the seeker's body. Often seekers bend their bodies from the hips/back, and seek hunched-over, which shifts your center of gravity into your back. Now all a snitch has to do is push down on the seeker's wide-open back and you fall. But if the back is straight, the legs are squatted low, and the center of gravity as close to the ground as possible, even the best wrestler-snitch will have difficulties moving the seeker around

Drill: Changing the Catching Hand

One person tucks a sock in the back of their pants and snitches. The other person mounts a broom and seeks. The seeker and snitch set up 10-20 feet apart: on "Go!" the seeker runs to engage the snitch, attempting to grab the sock. A time limit of 30 seconds to 1 minute is set for the sock to be snatched. After either the snitch has been caught or the time limit has expired, (whichever occurs first) both sides restart the drill.

When engaging the snitch the seeker **MUST** switch their dominant hand, i.e. the hand that is grasping the broom, every 2-3 snatch attempts (an attempt is any motion to grasp the sock that is either dodged or deflected by the snitch). A switch to no hands on the broom is considered valid, and may be transitioned into from either one-handed position (left or right). This is important because:

1) Snitches get used to blocking on a particular side if a seeker is preferentially attempting to snatch the sock on it. By utilizing both hands as the dominant broom hand, the seeker is able to engage the snitch with ambidexterity, helping prevent the snitch from predicting and preparing for the seeker's actions.

2) A seeker needs to be comfortable using both hands as their dominant broom hand, as situations arise where a snitch may be inaccessible from one side, requiring the seeker to pursue them on the opposite side (for example, after a quick shuffle to one side). Additionally, a seeker may see an opportunity to catch the snitch off guard either through an unpredicted avenue of attack, or a two-armed snatch attempt. By building confidence and skill in their ambidexterity a seeker can stay one step ahead of the snitch and capitalize on surprise approaches.

Drill: Faking out the Snitch

One person tucks a sock in the back of their pants and snitches. The other person mounts a broom and seeks. The snitch and seeker stand 10-15 feet apart, facing each other. On "Go!" the seeker rushes at the snitch, plants the foot opposite their broom hand in front of the snitch, and grabs the sock while rotating away from the snitch, toward their non-broom hand. If grasping the broom right-handed, turn clockwise; if grasping left-handed, turn counter-clockwise. The rotation is done so that the non-broom hand moves in close proximity of the sock, and facilitates a quick catch.

The purpose is to engage the snitch in one fluid motion confusing the snitch by making them unsure which side they need to protect: we fake committing our body-weight and inertia by placing our leg as if to step in one direction, only to turn in the opposite sense. During the first engagements the seeker **MUST** utilize the above procedure, but once confident may add variance in their approach or final grabbing technique. Seekers should build confidence in rushing the snitch for a clean engagement and grab.

Drill: Quick recovery

This is a single-person drill. While mounted on a broom, practice rolls (forwards, sideways, and

backwards) while trying to get back on your feet as quickly as possible. Many snitches don't expect you to swiftly get back up after they knock you over, and this drill improves recovery-time.

Two-On-One Drills: Dealing With the Other Seeker

Seekers often forget that their true enemy is not the snitch, but the opposing seeker. The snitch can never make you lose a game: only the other seeker can do that. It is for that reason that *blocking the other seeker is the most important aspect of being a good seeker*. Your chasers may be able to ramp up the score and make a snitch-catch unnecessary for your team, but only so long as the other seeker doesn't cut the game short by catching the snitch. You can win in two ways, but you can only lose in one.

The other seeker can also be used to tangle up the snitch and give yourself openings. While this should only be done with good snitches (the poor ones will be caught too quickly), learning how to tangle up the snitch with the other seeker and cutting in at the right time to grab the snitch is crucial, and can lead to a quick and elegant snitch catch.

Drill: Blocking the Other Seeker

This is a three-person drill. One person puts a sock in the back of their pants and snitches, two people mount brooms and seek. The snitch must maintain a distance of 4 feet or more from the seekers. The seekers must try and get as physically close to the snitch as possible WITHOUT trying to catch the snitch, WHILE preventing the other seeker from being closer to the snitch than yourself.

The purpose of this drill is to teach seekers to deny their opponent direct access to the snitch. You must constantly place yourself in front of the opposing seeker, such that your body lies between the snitch and the other seeker: block the other seeker with you outstretched arms, stiff-arm them away, and judiciously hip-check your opponent. Try facing the snitch, with your back to the other seeker and an arm outstretched: that way you always know where the snitch is going, you can't be stiff-armed from behind (illegal) and should you want to make a quick grab (if your chasers have ramped up the score) you can.

If the other seeker is in front of you, insinuate yourself past their defences by pretending to go for the snitch-grab. That way you can slip your arm past theirs, giving you an in, avoid stiff-arming them (which can get unintentionally violent in the heat of the moment), and you may actually catch the snitch. Once inside, show the other seeker your back and use your hips and butt to shove them out, while grounding your feet: this is less dangerous than the stiff-arm and more effective because you're using all of your body weight to shove the other seeker via your hips, as opposed to merely your arm strength.

Seekers are allowed to stiff arm other seekers and snitches, however the severity of this stiff arm is less than other positions. If you are full-out pushing people with your stiff arm then you'll be carded. SHOULDER CHECKS ARE ILLEGAL, DANGEROUS, AND DOUCHEY: DON'T DO

THEM.

Variation: Allow only one of the two seekers to try and actually grab the sock, while the other must block them. This simulates your team being down 40 points or more, when you must prevent the opposite side from catching the snitch.

Variation: Allow both seekers to grab the sock. This simulates the very urgent, and often physically violent, situation where the game depends on the snitch grab and both seekers are motivated by fear and glory. You must block the other seeker to ensure that they do not access the snitch WHILE positioning yourself to execute your own grabs.

Beater Drills: Bringing in the Bludgers

As a seeker, the only other position you'll likely interact with is the beater. These people are your best friend on-pitch: they can take out enemy seekers and relieve the pressure on you from opposing bludgers. They are also the second-biggest danger (the first is the opposing seeker): many snitches are caught while a seeker is running back to their hoops, and a snitch guarded by a clever beater is nearly impossible to engage. For those reasons, seeker-training with beaters, while more time- and person-consuming, is crucial.

As a seeker, you are also important to the beaters. These people are obsessed with controlling all of the bludgers, and because seekers are constantly being aimed at by beaters, there is high turnover of bludgers around the snitch. Seeker-beater coordination can give your team bludger control in a matter of seconds.

Drill: Beware the Beaters

This is a 6 person drill. One person tucks a sock in the back of their pants and snitches. One person blows a whistle, consults a stopwatch, and holds a broom in their hand: they are the referee. The other four people mount brooms. Two people seek, two people beat. The four people are split up in two teams, each containing a seeker and a beater. Each team walks ten feet away from each other, in opposite directions, so that the teams end up 20 feet away from each other. In the middle, the referee sets down a bludger and the snitch. Then the ref walks 10 feet away from the balls.

When the referee blows the whistle, the snitch and the seekers (but NOT the beaters) are set loose. The seekers must try to catch the snitch, and the snitch must avoid being caught. The snitch should stay within a 30 foot radius of their initial location between the two teams. After 10-20 seconds, the referee blows the whistle again, and the beaters go in the game. The beaters must prevent the other opposite seeker from catching the snitch; whether this involves throwing the bludger at the opposite seeker or beater, or both, is up to the beater and seeker to coordinate. When anyone is beat, they must run back to the ref, and touch the broom that the ref will be holding: this is the hoop for both teams. After the snitch is caught, the positions are reset, the snitch and bludger go back to the center, and the drill is run again.

The purpose of this drill is to accustom the seekers to beware of enemy beaters. This means

keeping an eye out for the other beater, dodging bludgers, and above all communicating with their own beaters to run plays. For example, the seeker can intentionally draw the bludgers so that their own beater can get a hold of it, and have bludger control. Or the beater can tangle up the opposite-side beater to give the seeker the chance to go for the snitch without fearing bludgers. Communication between the seeker and the beater is crucial. An important thing to keep in mind is that the seeker and beater should always be running together: otherwise they can be picked off very easily and one at a time by the opposing beater.

This drill is also meant to accustom the beaters to keeping an eye on the seekers. Sometimes beaters have a habit of getting so caught up in a fight with the other beaters over the bludger that they forget about the opposite team seeker, and let them have one-on-one time with the snitch. Other times, they stick so close to the snitch that they get in the way of their own seeker. This drill is meant to sensitize beaters to the seeker game, and above all to encourage the beaters and seekers to communicate.

As a variant, you can introduce another bludger (to simulate when both teams send a beater with a bludger into the seeker game), as well as more beaters and more bludgers. The fundamentals remain the same, but the bludger game becomes more intense, which can be good for seekers: sometimes the opposing beaters are so focused on their bludger wars that they ignore you.

Drill: Beater Communication

Same set-up as above, only here the purpose is to practice seeker-beater communication. Three useful codewords are “RIP” and “BAT”, and “GUT”. If your beater yells “RIP” then the beater will aim for the opposite-team beater, and the same-team seeker can go in for the snitch (or tussle with the opposite-team seeker) knowing that they are safe from enemy bludgers, for now. If the same-team beater yells “BAT” that means they have no bludger, and the same-team seeker should try and draw the bludger away from the opposite-team beater, to force a bludger turnover. If your beater yells “GUT” then they will try to bludge the opposite-team seeker, and the same-team seeker has a one-on-one window with the snitch.

Drills: Snitch-Defence

Applying concepts from the above drills, Beaters and Seekers can practice “snitch-defense”. The object of the drill is for one team, the “losing” team, to prevent the “winning” team from catching the snitch for as long as possible: this simulates a real quidditch match in which there is a 40-point discrepancy between the two teams. The drill can be run in a couple of ways:

Scenario 1:

Referee, Snitch, and one bludger
&
1 Beater + 1 Seeker (winning)
vs.

1 Beater + 1 Seeker (losing)

Scenario 2 (assuming that the winning team is winning by a lot):

Referee, Snitch, and two bludgers

&

2 Beaters + 1 Seeker (winning)

vs.

1 Beater + 1 Seeker (losing)

Snitch-Herding: Controlling the Snitch's Field Presence

It happens tragically often: an eager seeker is sprinting to the snitch to use their cleverest fakes and longest dives. The snitch, to avoid the oncoming threat, backs up straight into the opposing seeker, who makes a quick and easy grab. Or the snitch backs up into the opposing side's zone, making it easy for an enemy beater to quickly take out our eager seeker. The point is the same: unaware of their own field-position, the seeker drove the snitch into the enemy's area, helping the enemy and hurting the team.

Knowing how you yourself guide the snitch's flight path, then taking control of your power to do so, can bring great benefits to your team. You can isolate the snitch in your side of field, behind your beaters, isolating the snitch from the opposing seeker, and giving your beaters the chance to help out the chaser game. Or you can make sure that your attacks on the snitch never drives them into the enemy's camp and out of your reach. Finally, you can tire out the snitch, and make them an easier target. But all of this takes split-second decisions based on the whole game: the following drills can train into you such instincts.

Drill: Basic Zoning

This is a three-person drill. One person tucks a sock in the back of their pants and snitches. The other two mount brooms and seek. Choose a playing area approximating a circle with a 10-foot radius: the snitch starts in the middle with each seeker on opposite edges of the area. A hoop marks out each seeker's starting position: this will be their home zone. Then the seekers try to catch the snitch. The purpose of this drill is for each seeker to guide the snitch closer to their own end, effectively zoning them.

In particular, seekers can guide the snitch by cutting off their path of approach. As a snitch attempts to run into the opposing team's side, a seeker can successfully keep the snitch at the midline or even their own side by running toward them at a 45 degree angle to their path of approach. A seeker rushing this point will force the snitch to either move backward or sideways, preventing them from moving further toward the opposing side. This approach may be utilized to move a snitch away from the opposing team's side, as a seeker can attempt to run to behind the snitch's position and attempt to force them out of the end.

In any case, the most important point here is to keep the snitch as far away from a position

where it may be caught by the other team's seeker as possible. It helps a lot to appear a threat to the snitch, but not move close enough to secure the sock. When in snatching range the snitch is more distracted, and may allow an enemy seeker to capitalize with a grab rather than the main purpose of situating the snitch in an easier position to catch it from.

Variation: Once comfortable with the drill, add beaters. One targeting all seekers, or one on each team, with as many bludgers as you deem fit.

Drill: Advanced Zoning

Designate a hoop, lamp-post, etc. A referee walks 30 feet away from it, making a line between themselves and the hoop. Then the ref holds out one broom in each hand, with arms outstretched. The snitch starts at the hoop, and the seekers start at the referee. Each seeker has a zone, one to the outside of the broom that the ref is holding in the right hand, the other to the outside of the broom that the ref is holding in the left hand. The space between the two brooms (with the ref's body in the middle) is the neutral zone. When the ref blows the whistle, the snitch begins running between the ref and the hoop, trying to avoid being caught.

The seekers must try and catch the snitch, BUT the catch ONLY counts if the snitch is caught IN THE SEEKER'S OWN ZONE. That is, if the seeker catches the snitch in the other seeker's zone, or in the neutral zone, the catch is no good. The only thing that they can do in the opposing or neutral zone is block the other seeker and try to herd the snitch into their own zone, to be able to go for the catch. The drill is over when the snitch is caught, then it is reset. The purpose of this exercise is to push the snitch into one's own zone, and secondarily to block the enemy seeker from getting the snitch when it is in their zone.

Diving

Diving is an important skill for seekers; it allows them to gain an extra few feet of reach which often comes as a surprise to snitches, especially as they turn to make a run for it. Although many seekers figure out a way to dive on their own, some need a little more practice before they feel comfortable throwing their bodies to the ground, and most aren't able to maximize their dive distance without specific work on technique. These drills work a seeker up towards laying out for a snitch, and also work at improving the hand-eye coordination required to catch a snitch. These drills are adapted from soccer goalie drill used to teach goalies proper diving technique.

Knee Diving

Requires: seeker + 2 snitch socks

The seeker is on their knees, with a snitch sock on both the left and right, at the seeker's head level, 3 or so feet away. The seeker alternates falling to the side and catching the sock. The seeker should be rolling into the "dive," landing on their side (NOT on arm; the goal of this drill is to break the tendency to catch oneself with an arm, a leading cause for shoulder or collar bone injury). The roll into the dive is also important, as it lessens the impact. A seeker doing this drill correctly should be able roll back up immediately, using abdominal muscles, not hands. As the

seeker gets used to this, have the sock holders waggle the socks to make it more difficult.

Controlled Dives

Requires: seeker + 2 snitch socks

Find a particularly soft patch of grass. The seeker is now on their feet, with the socks at the same height as before, but 5 feet away instead of 3. The seeker should start with legs shoulder width apart and the knees bent (athletic stance). The seeker should step with the foot closest to the snitch to that side to start of their momentum, again rolling along their side to make the catch. If it hurts, the seeker is not rolling enough. As the seeker gets more and more comfortable, add in the sock wagging, and move the sock further and further away. The seeker should begin pushing off of that initial step harder, and should be able to dive further, and get slightly airborne. It is extremely important that the seeker continue the rolling technique to prevent injury, especially as the impacts get harder.

“Broom Clenching”

Requires: seeker + broom

As the previous drill, with a broom added. In order to keep the broom between the legs, have the seeker clench. Like tackling, the broom seems to get itself out of the way. Pay special attention to make sure seekers aren't landing on their shoulders.

Some tips and explanation of diving technique: - The top hand has further reach; don't make it your broom hand. - The rolling should start with the thigh and travel through the arm, sort of like a rocking chair. The difference in impact you feel when you roll forwards on a rocking chair versus when the front feet land on a regular chair is the reason behind the roll. - Be aware of your head, and make sure it isn't hitting the ground.

Section Two: Full-Game Seeking

While the previous section gives useful and necessary advice on how to improve one's seeking game, the fact that it was presented first in no way implies that the contents of the current section are less important. Rather, what we discuss presently tends to be harder to simulate without a full game running, so must be treated in a more abstract fashion, without specific instructions for training. This, however, may simply be the authors' failing: if someone should design drills to train these aspects, they will be greatly welcomed.

With that in mind, we will now discuss some of the most important aspects of the seeker-game: off-field seeking, field-awareness, using seeker subs wisely, and critically thinking about the game and your own role in it.

Off-Field Seeking: The Neglected Art

Seeking off-field is an art, requiring pre-game preparation, craftiness, and a good nose for

evaluating risk. Unfortunately, it is also a highly neglected aspect of seeking: it lacks the publicity of on-field seeking and is often deemed a nuisance, suitable for beginner seekers and otherwise unusable subs. This is not only insulting to the people finding themselves in this position, it is a snub to the complexity and beauty of our game. The whole point of off-field seeking is that the snitch may be caught off-field, leading to stunning upsets and bracket-changing unpredictability. While this possibility is frustrated by the seeker-floor (an unfortunate innovation), it is nevertheless crucial to the game of Quidditch, as practiced both in the books and in real life.

With that in mind, this section will treat certain aspects of off-field seeking, in the hope of showing seekers not only the elegance and fun of this role, but, more importantly, how to catch snitches off-field.

Pre-Game Preparation: Learning and Evaluating the Area

The first thing any seeker should do is familiarize themselves with the area in which the snitch can fly. Ask these questions: how big is the area? how many hiding spots? The answers to these will determine your job off-field: if it's a big area you need to cover a lot of ground, so run long-distance. A small field means that you can slow down to a jog. A field with many hiding places means that you should give relatively little time investigating each spot. A field with few hiding spots means that you have to be extra sneaky and spend goodly amounts of time on each spot: odds are you'll be able to flush out the snitch.

Spend at least half an hour WALKING the area where the snitch can run (so you don't miss anything) thinking like a snitch: where would you hide, where would you avoid? Note the big intersections and clear lines of sight. A good trick is to follow around snitches from other games. Maintain a respectable distance (you don't want to signal the snitch to their seekers), but try to follow the snitch everywhere they run, everywhere they hide, everywhere they wait. Nothing will give you a better idea of a real snitch's logic, especially useful since you might get the very same snitch later on.

Pre-Game Preparation: Learning the Snitch

Following the snitch also gives you an idea of their style. A seeker should learn all the snitches at the tournament, by watching them play both on- and off-field. Note whether or not the snitch is a fast runner: if you flush them out you may be able to chase them down. Note if they are the type to move around a lot, or pick one spot in which they camp out. Also note whether or not they're wearing cleats: if they are, they'll need to slow down on stairs or concrete, which gives you a chance to catch up, and that you should consider not wearing cleats off-field.

Finally, gauge whether a snitch has low or high endurance. Those with low endurance can be sprinted back to the field, at which point keeping the pressure on them will tire them out and make them easier targets.

Evaluating Risk: Dealing With the Other Seeker

Never forget that your greatest enemy is the opposing seeker, and that you must never give the

enemy seeker one-on-one time with the snitch. That being said, some seekers have such lower speed and/or skill level than the snitch that you realistically need not worry about them. This involves judging the seeker, and here take no chances: eyeing up another person only goes so far.

The best thing is to pay attention to the seeking in other games, especially of teams that you will play later on. Note the seeker's attentiveness: when the seeker-floor is on do they walk around the perimeter of the field, trying to spot the snitch, or do they sit down in front of the commentator's box and watch the game? Once the seeker-floor is up, do they start jogging and never stop, actively trying to find the golden one, or do they lethargically walk around?

Most importantly, when you run off, note whether they try and follow you, or whether they let you get out of sight. If they follow you, that means you can set the pace: tire them out, take them to dead ends, use them to flush the snitch, whatever is necessary. If they let you lose them, you have to make a decision: leave them behind or stick to them? If you think the snitch is so much more skilled than the seeker that there is no chance for a catch, shake the opposing seeker off. But if you don't know the other seeker's proficiency, or if you have any doubts about their skill level, err on the side of caution and never let the opposing seeker out of your sight. Remember, this isn't about your superiority relative to the opposing seeker: it's about the chances of the seeker catching the snitch when you're not around.

It's important to remember that there are tricks you can pull on opposing seekers if they are sticking to you too much, or at the very least not letting you out of sight. One of these is The Wronski Feint: the seeking move discussed in JKR's *Quidditch Through the Ages*. If a seeker wishes to tire out their opponent, they can sprint off in a direction, ideally when the other seeker is some distance away, and out of sight. The opponent sprints to catch up, at which point, the seeker has slowed to a jog and feigns exhaustion. A little low, but effective, especially when the other seeker fails to realize that they had been played. (Thanks to Andy Luetgen for this!)

Flushing Out the Snitch

Spotting the snitch off-field is a thrill. However, most snitches pick hiding spots with at least two exits, and it is unlikely that you can sneak right behind them unnoticed. That means that if you try and attack them from one entrance, they will likely run out the other. Here it is crucial to know where the other seeker is: even the slowest seeker can catch a snitch as they turn a corner with a well-placed hand.

There are several ways to avoid this. First, by knowing that the other seeker is nowhere close, ideally far away and in your sight. Second, if you are moving together, you need to cooperate: each will be afraid of the other guarding the exits while they themselves flush the snitch out. To force cooperation, try taking the other person by the arm, and go in the entry together: that way both of you know the other will not double-cross.

Third, give away your position and warn the snitch about the other seeker. This is the best of the worst: you deny your advantage, but at least you deny the other seeker's as well. Never forget:

the worst thing is not a snitch getting away, but a snitch getting caught by another seeker.

Field Awareness: Knowing and Playing Off the Full Game

Seekers are notorious for tunnel vision: once they see the snitch, they ignore all else. Even seekers that have spent the whole game playing a different position detach from all earthly matters once they focus their attention on The Golden One. This is a mistake.

Most urgently, every seeker must pay attention to the beaters: this position is the most important in Quidditch and good beaters can win or lose matches for their teams by deciding the flow of the seeker-game. As important as beaters are, however, a good seeker must not lose sight of quaffle-play either, if only to avoid an unintentional suicide-snitch. Finally, the good seeker must be cognizant of, and control, the reactions of others unto them, in particular the reactions of snitches and other seekers. All these are treated below.

Seekers and Beaters: Love and Marriage

Beaters decide Quidditch games; it's as simple as that. They manipulate the flow of the game, and good beaters can utterly shut down an opposing team. This extends to seekers as well: a beater ably defending a snitch will make it nigh impossible to catch Our Golden Gambino. This Manual has already provided a number of drills to practice beater-seeker coordination. Now we turn to larger considerations.

First we must understand the beater. Even more than the seeker, the beater must always keep an eye on the whole game as they are the only position to interact with all the others. This means that their attention and resources are constantly taxed: beaters are constantly screamed at by frustrated chasers, keepers, seekers, and fellow beaters for support. This means that another voice, the seeker's, yelling for this or that will either go unheeded by the friendly beater, or will in fact confuse and distract them.

This can be avoided by simply talking to your beaters during the game. Quick-fire communication words were discussed in the drill section, and these are important. However, your beaters also need clear, midterm instructions: can you handle the snitch and other seeker alone? Can they focus on the chaser game? This is done by talking on the side-lines and during the time games are reset, or when the game is stopped; there's also no shame in calling a timeout to consult the coach.

If partnering up with a beater while the snitch is on-field, make sure you always run up to engage the enemy team together, so you can't be picked off one at a time. Also make sure to find a beater who knows your style: if you're a fast runner, you need faster beater, if you like to cut in from wide angles, make sure the beater doesn't get in your way.

Lastly, keep an eye on the ebb and flow of the beater-game on both sides. The vicissitudes and autonomy of The Flying Nugget means that you often have little control of when you can engage the snitch. However, in longer games with a high-quality snitch, they are often aloof enough from both seekers to give you time for a set-up. In this case, note when the beaters are hovering

out, posing a threat to you, or otherwise engaged: with enemy beaters, chasing after a stray bludger, or with the chaser game. Now may be the time to go in for the kill.

Similarly, note the engagement of your own beaters: if their whole front is advancing with the quaffle, expect less support than normal. On the other hand, expect some of their beaters to be tangled up. A sweeping eye and sense of the game's flow can provide you many windows of opportunity.

The Chaser Game: Why Should We Care?

Why should seekers care about quaffle-play? Most obviously, because they control the score: your team is up or down by 30 or 40 points, you need to know, because that will affect your role, from go-getter to wall. The more subtle reasons for noting the chaser game are: a) they influence the beaters, and b) snitches can get tangled in crowds, which makes them easy targets.

With regards to the beater-chaser game, we've already noted that beaters often react to quaffle-play, which can give the sharp-eyed seeker respite from bludgers. On the other hand, the seeker can also influence the chaser game via beaters. For instance, if you're comfortable with the skill of the snitch, need a quick point to break a tie, or know that the other seeker is not yet on pitch, you can do the following play. When the chasers and beaters move up together, and if the snitch is in the opposite end or in the middle (you can use your snitch-herding skills for this) arc around the cluster of friendly players in an effort to draw enemy bludgers unto you, ideally long shots. This increases the chances of a misfire from enemy beaters and gives a window of opportunity for your chasers and beaters to press the advantage into enemy territory.

The more daring may even act as a bludger-shield for chasers and friendly bludgers, essentially becoming a beater pick. Again, the times where you can lose sight of the snitch are few and far between, but giving your team that extra little advantage may pay off, especially in drawn-out games between well-matched teams.

More importantly for the seeker game, however, is the very real possibility of tangling up the snitch in other players, especially the crowds that tend to form around the quaffle. The annals of snitching are littered with snitches running backwards and retreating from oncoming seekers into other players, which inhibits them from turning and escaping as they normally would (perhaps also tripping), which gives the seeker an easy catch, and the snitch a lifetime of regret for having been caught in such an unglamorous fashion. This advantage can be systematized with judicious snitch-herding: use your power of pushing the snitch around to push them straight into other players: especially target the quaffle play, where there are bound to be more human obstacles for the snitch.

While intentionally providing a trip, in the form of a friendly beater placing themselves behind the snitch, is of dubious legality as it intentionally simulates running the snitch into corners or trees: recall that in such instances the snitch has the right to stop play and run away. However, making it more difficult for the snitch to turn and run, that is, littering their terrain with obstacles,

is neither immoral nor especially dangerous (it happens already), and is entirely desirable. This is where knowledge of one's own effect on other players kicks in, and to this we dedicated the following section.

Adapting to the Styles of Others: Controlling Reactions

Reactions by definition require an initial act, the form of which determines the reaction. In this lies a huge, if often unnoticed, advantage for the seeker, because they can structure the behaviour of others by changing the way they themselves behave. This tactic (more of a general awareness) falls into two categories: controlling the reactions of others, and controlling your own reactions to them.

A useful way to think about others' reaction to you is through the heuristic of threat-control. The following situation crops up with some frequency: one seeker (the peacock) looks fast, long-limbed, and aggressive, or their reputation precedes them, while the other (the tenrec) looks inspires sloth, stubbornness, and lethargy, and is unknown. The snitch (and one or both seekers) evaluate the peacock as a greater threat than the tenrec, and pay more attention to bright plumage than to results; the beaters often do the same. The result is predictable: the snitch, paying more attention to the peacock, ignores the tenrec as they cut in on an angle or creep from behind, catches The Golden One while they are otherwise occupied. The problem is one of threat-control: had the snitch not thought that peacock so dangerous, they would've paid more attention to the tenrec.

The able seeker should generally avoid peacocking: it draws beaters, blinds the snitch to the opposing seeker, and makes your own job harder, since all resources become committed to keeping you away. Two habits can sensitize one to the threat they pose: a) don't blindly rush in for the kill. Being catch-oriented is good; signalling your intention to the enemy is bad. b) attack the snitch via cuts, arcs, and loops. This gives you time to look around and see what's happening.

At the end of the day, some of Quidditch's finest seekers are those that master the subtle science of timing: keeping the snitch in a state of indecision, letting the seeker get just close enough to force the snitch's attention away from oneself, these top seekers go for the kill when the snitch is least prepared for them. The reason these catches look so easy is because they are: nothing fancy is required when striking at the weakest link. Knowing how to find the weakest link, however, required reflection and playing plenty of full games with different seekers and snitches, so you play against a variety of styles. Another useful tip is to find a seeker that practices the art of timing, and follow their games: watch their movements, and learn from your betters.

Of course, social interaction is a two-way street, and seeking is no different: you too will react to the movements of others, and it is important not to become an unconscious reactant. You don't want to be the seeker that tangled up the snitch while the other went in for the kill. The best way to avoid this is to always keep an eye on the other seeker: if they're hovering around you, waiting to strike, you know from which direction they will come and can repel them. If you can't

see them, try to keep your back to where you think they are (which makes it easier to push them off), and to avoid spinning the snitch toward your blind spots, where the enemy might lie in wait.

Finally, on the question of seeking and snitching style, everyone knows this comes in many flavours: wrestler vs. runner, aggressive, sneaky, fast, slow, lightning-quick or doggedly perseverant, the above hardly describe extent of variation in seeking or snitching style. At the end of the day, learning to play with and against these styles comes down to game-time: the more people you play in more games, the better. It is for this reason that ultimately a good seeker is one who attends many tournaments, exposing themselves to as many other seekers as possible.

Using Seeker Subs Wisely: Playing As A Team, Sharing the Glory

The seeker often comes across as the lone-wolf of Quidditch, in whose hands alone lies the ultimate glory or defeat of the team. This is of course false: beaters, and especially other seekers, constantly intrude, and even chasers can make an appearance. But seeking still has a lone-gun charm, which would be fine were it not for the fact that it poses serious problems. It is to avoid these problems that a team should have more than one dedicated seeker.

Many teams lack the numbers to commit one, let alone two or three, people to full-time seeking. But they should aspire to do so, for two reasons:

a) Seekers (like beater, chasers, and keepers) should constantly run on all pistons: this is why subs exist. A tired seeker is a sloppy seeker, which means a higher chance of losing the game, and exhaustion feels the same whether one has been seeking, beating, or chasing the entire time before confronting the snitch.

b) Sometimes a particular seeking style, often linked to a seeker's body-type, evidently fails against a particular snitch, because the snitch is generally used to defending against exactly this type of seeking, because the snitch grows accustomed to the seeker's style over the course of the game, or because one body-type is at a particular disadvantage against another. In these cases, you want extra seekers of different builds and style. It's no use stacking your seeker roster only with lanky types: sometimes it's exactly the shorter ones that can slide underneath the snitch's arms and make the catch. Cycling through different seeking styles in one game further prevents the snitch from become accustomed to any particular style, and thus countering it effectively. As far as snitch-encounters go, unpredictability is good.

Once a team has two or more seekers, there often arises the rather thorny issue of sharing glory. Catching the snitch, and being raised on the shoulders of one's teammates, is an unparalleled experience, generally reserved for those seeking on-field. It is an important motivator, and this is fine. But the thirst for glory can lead to poor tactical decision-making, chief among which is staying on the field when you should call for a sub. This becomes especially complicated when, as often happens, one seeker is the senior, with a longer track-record of snitch catches: they start thinking that all they need is another go at the snitch, blinded to the fact that their attempts are becoming less and less effective. Four habits can counter this:

a) Seekers should imbibe a spirit of humility, respect, and equality for each other. Sometimes the best seeker for the job is the one who can play off the snitch, regardless of speed, strength, or record, or the one who is fully rested. The truly effective seeker must recognise this, come to terms with one's own ineffectiveness, and gracefully bow out when the time comes.

b) The captain (or another authority figure in the sidelines) should pay attention to the seeker game, and, if necessary, instruct the lingering seeker to sub out, in no uncertain terms. While intrusive, telling a player to sub off regularly happens with chasers and beaters (who are used to trusting their captain's judgement), and can be especially important for the seeker-game, because the stakes are so much higher.

c) Impartially administering who seeks on- or off-field. As previously mentioned, off-field seeking is often, and unwisely, relegated to the tenrec seeker, with the peacock reserved for the field. This is not only wasteful of both the seeker's talents, it can lead to ill-feeling, and further hobbles the underappreciated seeker: they will never learn if they do not have ample time on-field. To avoid this, decide on an impartial seeking algorithm: seeker one starts off-field for game one, seeker two starts off-field for game two, seeker one starts off-field for game three, etc.

d) Having a flexible rule for transitioning from the off-field to the on-field seeker game. That is, if the seeker chases the snitch back on-field, they can engage the snitch two to five times, for thirty seconds, until they feel they are no longer in peak shape, whichever comes first, or variations on this. The point is that the rule of transition, while flexible enough to allow for trusting the seeker's judgement that they just need another go, has a hard limit that everyone knows must be respected, after which one risks being forcibly called back, as well as incurring the ire of one's teammates. Nothing motivates like the fear of being judged a stubborn impertinent by one's teammates.

in the final instance Quidditch is always about the team, and this is amply reflected in the seeker-game: ask any seeker forced to play the wall when their team is down 40 points or more, or any seeker trying to avoid a sharp-shooter beater guarding a snitch. This team-sport principle applies to the seekers of the team as well: you train together, you play together, and regardless of whose hand ends up on the sock, you win and share the glory together. This is playing as a team; this is seeking.

Section Three: Conditioning

While this Manual has so far concentrated on tactics, strategy, and good habits, learning these will only take a seeker so far if they start wheezing after two minutes in play. While it is plausible for an out-of-shape seeker to be effective, it is also highly unlikely, and in any case foolish: conditioning your body is possibly the simplest thing you can do to improve your seeker game. That said, this section contains drills meant to strengthen your body, structured around the

seeker's main physical activities: sprinting, running long-distance, taking hits, training nimbleness, and building general endurance.

Sprinting: The Snitch-Hoop Racetrack

Any on-field game involves a lot of sprinting, and beaters love to impose a rigorous running cycle between the snitch and the hoops. Therefore, a good seeker is one with high-sprint speed, and also one with high endurance in situations of fast, explosive movements followed by a slight lull (which is on-field seeking). Note that every running drill should be practiced both mounted and dismounted from a broom. If you only have time for one, practice the drill on the broom: speed is good, but you have to be able to handle running at full speed with equipment.

Drill: Suicides

Suicides should only be run at the end of practice, because they turn your legs to jelly if properly executed. **EVERY PRACTICE SHOULD END WITH SUICIDES.**

Choose a straight running ground of some 30-60 feet in length. If you have a 30-foot-long ground, at zero feet you have the runners line up parallel to each other, and at feet 10, 20, and 30 feet you have some markers (backpacks, a tree, etc) to the side of the running-ground to mark the distance. A timekeeper will use a stopwatch to record times. When the timekeeper blows the whistle, the runners break out in a sprint to the line defined by the first mark (10 feet), stop and turn on the spot, sprint back across their path to the starting line, then stop and turn on the spot, sprint to the line defined by the second mark (20 feet), stop and turn on the spot, run back to the starting line, stop and turn on the spot, sprint to the line defined by the third mark (30 feet), stop and on the spot, then sprint back to the starting line. The drill ends here.

Take a 1-2 minute break, then reset the drill. All in all, run the drill no less than three (3) times.

The suicide is a sprinting drill, and it is ESSENTIAL for seekers, because:

- 1) it conditions you to keep a high sprint-level even if you have to make a full stop, and run in a different/opposite direction. This is crucial when chasing snitches (known for unpredictable flight paths) and after being bludged, when getting to and from the hoop in minimal time is paramount.
- 2) it increases your sprinting speed
- 3) it's such a draining, demanding exercise, and it teaches you to keep running as fast as you can even when you think can't handle it anymore. Pushing yourself beyond your supposed limits is important because it means you'll be on-field when snitches get tired, which is when they make their biggest mistakes. If you're not there when The Golden One loses their edge, the other seeker will be.

Tabata Running

This drill should be done at the end of or separately from general practice: when done properly, athletes won't be able to handle much else afterwards. This drill isolates the repeated high speed efforts of seeking, requires a stopwatch, and is run as follows:

Sprint for twenty second at your maximum speed and intensity followed by ten (and only ten) seconds of recovery. Repeat this set until performance notably suffers (typically four to eight repetitions) times. Stop the set once the athlete can no longer maintain top effort for the entire exercise.

Physiologically, the recovery time between sprints is so brief that athletes are put into oxygen debt and their heart rate stays at maximum throughout the entire exercise. This simulates the lack of rest that a seeker experiences when running to and from the hoops.

More Drills

Long-Distance Running: Tiring Out the Snitch, Exhausting the Other Seeker

Long-distance running requires weekly attention for growth and improvement. Regardless of the number of available subs, a seeker should have the base endurance to play an entire game if necessary. Even with substitutes, a seeker will be more rested coming back to the field if they are a strong distance runner. As a general habit, all seekers should include at least one endurance run of at least 30-60 minutes in length per week. Longer runs are encouraged but not necessary due to the typical length of matches (20-40 minutes). If the running time becomes too easy, then increase the pace over the same period.

Tiring out the other seeker:

While tiring out a seeker requires that seekers follow each other, the best way to prepare is to go on a partner run with the goal of gradually pushing the tempo to the partner's limit and maintaining your speed just outside of their comfort zone. Try going on ten to fifteen minute runs with a partner, gradually increasing tempo, typically up to mile tempo. Mile tempo is defined as your "race" mile speed - the speed with which you would run a mile in a race.

Editor's Note:

Long-distance running is more than just something you can do off and on and expect to see great results. Most great long-distance runners treat their running as a lifestyle, and not just as perpetual conditioning. However, in the context of quidditch, it really is just conditioning, as nothing in the game itself truly simulates long-distance running conditions. This means that the running itself can only ever be considered a conditioning tool - and not a substitute for real practice itself. That being said, running is one of the best ways to make up for a lack of practices by your particular team, and its usefulness diminishes as the number of practices per week increases. Of course, the conditioning from the running will always be a benefit. It's important just to tailor your running schedule, as running three tempo runs per week on top of a five a week practice, for example, might be a schedule where you are asking too much of your body.

All this being said, remember that it's quality, not just quantity, that matters insofar as conditioning goes.

Nimbleness: The Importance of Agility

Foot Fire with Sprawl

This drill will train your quickness as well as your reflexes. Spread your feet to about shoulder width and position yourself so you're slightly hunched over. Raise your hands so they are in front of your chest. When the drill begins, rapidly step in place. The next part is best done with at least one other person so it can be unpredictable. When your partner yells, down, sprawl, or any trigger word you've agreed upon, kick your feet out from under you and use your hands to cushion your fall. Then immediately push back up and into position and resume the quick step.

Hand-broom agility

Simply take a broom handle or any similar object and practice swapping as quickly as you can. You can add in a snatch grab before swapping hands as well.

Stairs

Running stairs is something many athletes have had to do in their lifetime. Just find the biggest set of stairs you can, and run UP and walk DOWN. This is to preserve knee cartilage more than anything. This is an exercise where you should be doing multiple repetitions e.g "I'm going to do 10 stairs team, who's with me?". Stairs are a solid exercise as they work on aerobic conditioning as well as working somewhat on leg strength, which typical running doesn't address all too much.

Training for General Endurance: The Core

Drill: The Sabretooth

This drill is a combination of the burpee and pike jack.

- 1) Start in a squat position. When ready, jump straight up and land back in the squat position.
- 2) Once you're back in the squat position roll backwards onto your back (avoid rolling on your spine) and do one pike jack. To do a pike jack, lay yourself straight out and flat on the ground. Your arms should be above your head and flat on the ground. Simultaneously raise your upper and lower bodies so your body looks like a "v:" try touching your hands to your toes. Then lower your upper and lower body without either touching the ground.
- 3) Once you finish the pike jack, use your arms to turn yourself over into push-up position, then

do one push-up. When finished return to a squat position and repeat steps 1 through 3. If possible push-up into squat position.

Drill: Jumping Rope

Jumping rope is a great way to boost your endurance and coordination. A ten minute session of rope jumping is equivalent to approximately 30 minutes of running. While you shouldn't replace distance running with a jump rope, if you're short on time and space it can be useful.

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A Editorial Note To Contributors

While each contributor should bring their own personal touch to this Manual, from the reader's perspective it is distracting to jump from one writing style to another and it detracts from the Manual's instructional effectiveness. This is why we ask contributors to either rewrite the whole manual according to their tastes or to mould their contributions to the existing style. While you will get a feel for the Manual's style by reading it, editing followed certain ideals:

1) clarity: if it can't be understood the first time you read it, rewrite it. Repetition is reserved for strengthening existing points

2) brevity: short and sweet is good. If you can say something with six words instead of ten, do so. We have a lot of ground to cover and don't want to lose readers along the way.

3) crispness: this is a manual, not a chat-box. "Ambidexterity" instead of "two-handedness,"

“mount” a broom instead of “get on”

4) playfulness: we’re doing Quidditch, so tenrecs, Our Friends In Gold, and love should make frequent appearances

5) gender neutrality: avoid “his/her” and “she/him,” using “they” instead. Quidditch embraces all gender identities (including those that reject gender) and a Quidditch manual should do the same

6) openness to new content: there is no final word on how to best train, and people should be encouraged to contribute. That being said, openness is reserved for sections such as this, addressed to contributors. In the actual drill instructions, the audience consists of those want to train, and mention of adding to the manual should be kept to a minimum.

And finally, remember: this is Quidditch, we’re all in it together, we don’t want to take ourselves too seriously, and we’re the only people that you can turn your back to, since we’ll politely disengage instead of back-tackling.

Love,

The Editors