

BB Doubleplusgood

Tristan Walker-Buckton muses on what we can all learn from this summer's television.

THE CONVERSATION IN MY OFFICE HAS suddenly become rather limited, a phenomenon repeated across the country. Two events are dominating people's thoughts and the TV schedules. Not to mention a vast number of column inches. You may have thought that the pages of *The Actuary* would be a welcome respite from the World Cup or *Big Brother*. You'd be wrong. It's going to be a long summer.

I too have been caught up in the World-Brother zeitgeist. Chained to my desk I daydream about being an England striker with great hair and an orange wife. Or I'm a beloved reality TV star, with my own *Heat* cover. And I've decided that I'd be great in either of these career moves. You see, I've had a lot of practice.

In the hothouse

Studying for the exams is like being a *Big Brother* housemate. The experience lasts about three months. You are trapped in the house the whole time and lose all contact with your friends and family. You become increasingly frustrated by the meaningless tasks you have to complete and by the others in your situation. Nobody has sex. At the end there's a brief period of frenetic excitement, then blissful release followed by an anticlimax as you face up to a life spent making fitness videos. I rest my case.

Whereas the exams themselves are rather more like the World Cup (although Faculty members are rather more adept at qualifying than their footballer counterparts!). A

painfully slow, nail-biting plod through progressively tougher rounds, culminating in the quick-fire Practice Module paper, the equivalent of the penalty shoot-out. And when you lose, you cry. There's even punditry from Acted, the exam counsellors, and especially the examiners in their reports. 'This was a difficult question and was poorly answered by many candidates' gives about the same level of insight as Kevin 'that would have been a goal if the goalkeeper hadn't saved it' Keegan.

Bring it on!

So having come to the conclusion that an actuarial student shares many of the qualities of a successful international footballer or housemate, I fully intend to lobby Channel 4 and FIFA in protest against our shameful under-representation in both competitions. An actuarially trained footballer would be a much better role-model than the current crop. I can't remember the last time I indulged in a 'roasting', the exams keep me far too busy. Small children could collect stickers of their favourite consultants. And the progress of England through the World Cup is distinctly Markovian in nature—no matter how good our recent form has been we are still just as likely to crash out in the next game in a humiliating defeat.

And think how gripping *Big Brother* could be. 'Day four in the *Big Brother* house – Actuarial-Science has come to the diary room to discover that the housemates have

failed the Morris Review and have had their shopping budget halved. Not wanting to mix things up too much, the housemates are separated into homogeneous groups for rating purposes. Everyone argues about where to put Nadia, the chain-smoking transsexual.' And the winner would combine qualities from all of our favourite housemates. Just imagine, the intellect of Jon Tickle with the charisma of Eugene and in the body of Pete Burns. Probably with Kemal's hair. Now there's a combination to fill a Sunday newspaper!

It ain't over till it's over

Whichever programme you'll be tuned into, I hope you all find something to enjoy this summer and hopefully learn from too. For myself, I'm going to be picturing my line manager as Davina during my annual appraisal. To those of you who hate both football and reality television, please don't wish it all away too soon. The September exams are just on the other side – I'll see you all there!



Dear Diary

Normally I detest blogging. A blog is a space to vent poorly argued opinions and irrelevant observations on a tiny, uncaring audience with the aim of trying to feel valued within your own community. And who would want to do a thing like that?

But lately I have become absorbed by blogs kept by actuaries all over the world. While the content is generally more dull than usual, there is a fascinating collection of other interests mixed in with the actuarial content. When a single profession can have shared interests in 'Babylon 5', 'artistic nudes', and – perhaps most worryingly – 'falsifying statistics', you know you're part of something special. I suggest you check them out.

I'm always keen to receive submissions for this page so feel free to send any ideas in. Without other people's input this page will slowly turn into my commentary on low-brow popular culture. Which I guess makes me the working man's Alan Frost!

Tristan

Please send contributions to the student page to
TRISTAN WALKER-BUCKTON
Watson Wyatt Ltd, Watson House, London Road, Reigate RH2 9PQ
T 01737-274556
F 01737-241496
e tristan.walker-buckton@watsonwyatt.com