

2014 year-end link clearance

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Another round of the semi-annual link clearance.

- Do you hear any Christmas music right now? Good. Christmas songs can be played only 1/12 of the year, and people who write algorithms for computer-generated playlists need to identify Christmas songs so that they don't select them during the other 11/12 of the year. Also, so that when Christmas standards suddenly become popular, they don't decide that Bing Crosby is an up-and-coming artist. (The article also talks about the arms race among stations which switch to playing only Christmas songs during the holiday season.)
- Your Bank of America debit or credit card gets you free admission to a variety of museums around the country on the first weekend of the month.
- A statistical analysis of 30 years of David Letterman's Top Ten Lists. What takes this beyond your basic "I generated a lot of graphs" article is the involvement of Joe Toplyn, one of Letterman's writers, to help explain the results.
- The TSA's controversial millimeter-wave Advanced Imaging Technology scanners (aka "nudie scanners") were taken out of service last year, but what happened to them? They went to prisons. If they had been available for sale to the general public, I'm pretty sure all of them would have been bought by fraternities. For security purposes, I assure you. (Actually, the occasional unit appears to be put up for sale on eBay. Earlier this year, one went up for \$8000 from a government-surplus reseller. Today, there is a \$3,995 or best offer.)
- The SpaceX project's Falcon 9 landed successfully, but the video captured from the lander was badly corrupted. The folks at the NASA Space Flight Forums accepted the challenge to recover as much as possible and the results are amazing. Don't watch the reconstructed video until you've seen the original.
- The air traffic control service NATS runs the Shanwick Oceanic Control Area, a large chunk of the north Atlantic west of Great Britain. They produced this mesmerizing video of air traffic over the north Atlantic in a single day. They have also produced 24 hours over Europe and 24 hours over the Middle East.

- The mellifluous tones of Stephen Fry elucidate the laws of cricket. The problem I have with a lot of this introductory material is that they tend to get all bogged down in details that are not relevant to an appreciation of the game. For example, the precise composition of the bat and ball are not important. You can assume for the most part that the bats and balls conform to applicable regulations. Here's something never before asked in the history of cricket: "I didn't understand what just happened. Can you tell me the number of pieces of leather which comprise the ball covering?" (Someday, I will try to write "The rules of <sport> for the casual viewer.")
- Judgmental map of Seattle.
- AHL (hockey) referee David Banfield wears a GoPro helmet cam on the job. I'm impressed by how much effort is expended trying to defuse situations before they turn into fights. Or at least before they turn into bigger fights than they already are. "Good job boys, good job." It's like he's managing a group of toddlers. (NHL referee Wes McCauley did the same thing a month later, but the result of the editing was less insightful.)
- The first World Summit on Ethics in Sport was hosted by FIFA. (Motto: "We will not give up until we are more corrupt than the IOC!") I am not making this up.
- The IOC responds by making absurd demands from the City of Oslo for hosting the Winter Games. I like how they backpedal and say, "Oh no, those weren't demands. They were merely suggestions!" Let's look at one of those suggestions: "All IOC members shall receive a new mobile phone with Norwegian service. The phone must be Samsung brand." That sure is an oddly-phrased suggestion.
- FIFA strikes back: FIFA Investigator Blasts Report Based On His Own Investigation. Or, the headline as FIFA would have written it: "FIFA cleared of all wrongdoing in FIFA-sponsored investigation of FIFA, says FIFA." Garcia later resigned in protest.
- The IAAF says, "Hey don't forget us! We're corrupt too!" IAAF insists Dohas £23.5m last-minute incentive was totally fair.

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