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## Offbeat

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Posted 10/27/2003 2:43 PM

## Rock Paper Scissors contest being held

TORONTO (AP) — Rock crushes scissors, which cuts paper, which wraps rock, but schtick overshadowed all at the second International World Rock Paper Scissors Championship.

There were referees and card girls and a baritone-voiced announcer booming results, even competitors dressed as sailors holding wads of fake cash to simulate street gambling in the cavernous club on Toronto's lakefront where the event took place Saturday night into Sunday morning.

Hundreds vied for the US\$3,750 first prize, many dressed in wild costumes such as Peter Watson's billowing suit cut from Britain's Union Jack flag, with beer the obvious beverage of choice.

"Paper is the new scissors," shouted Watson, 27, a former London stockbroker, in a cryptic slogan on the timeless method to solve everyday disputes such as who gets the last slice of pizza.

The schoolyard game involves two players making one of three possible simultaneous moves, called "throws," with their hand — rock (closed fist), paper (hand flat) and scissors (index and middle fingers extended). Rock defeats scissors, which beats paper, which wins over rock.

In a contest that would appear to have little strategy, competitors went hand-to-hand over tables covered with white cloths, as stripe-shirted referees kept order.

"Let the opponent make mistakes," stressed Benjamin Stein, 25, of New York City's East Village, wearing a Stars and Stripes bandanna. When he eventually fell, he blamed a failure to follow his own advice.

"I tried hot-dogging it to get the crowd behind me. I lost to a chump," Stein said, using the culture's lingo for a slow thrower.

Other terms include "cloaking," the trick of holding back a throw until the last possible moment, and "paper clipping," a similar attempt to dupe an opponent into a false move.

In the end, 31-year-old Rob Krueger of Toronto, sporting an Afro wig and wraparound shades, triumphed by throwing paper to wrap finalist Marc Rigaux's rock.

"It's a big joke for 364 days of the year," said Rigaux, a 26-year-old software salesman in Toronto. "When you get here it's totally serious."

There is no definitive answer to the question of how the game originated, according to World RPS Society co-founders Graham and Doug Walker, also of Toronto.

Scissors were invented 500 years ago in Italy, but some say the throw evolved from "blade," which means the game could be much older. The championships showed a newfound media interest, with dozens of reporters shooting video footage and interviewing participants.

"I brought it onto the web (www.worldrps.com) in 1995 and it's been going everywhere in the world," said Graham Walker, 36, a video editor who runs his own company.

Competitions also take place in Sonoma, California, and at the Burning Man cultural event in Nevada's Black Rock Desert, he said.

The society claims RPS is known as Jenken or Jen Ken Pon in Japan, Shnik Shnak

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Shnuk in Germany, Ching Chong Chow in South Africa and Farggling or Roshambo in different parts of the United States.

"If I can play for the last seat on the bus with someone who is Japanese, that is great," Walker said.

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