

Triskaidekaphobia

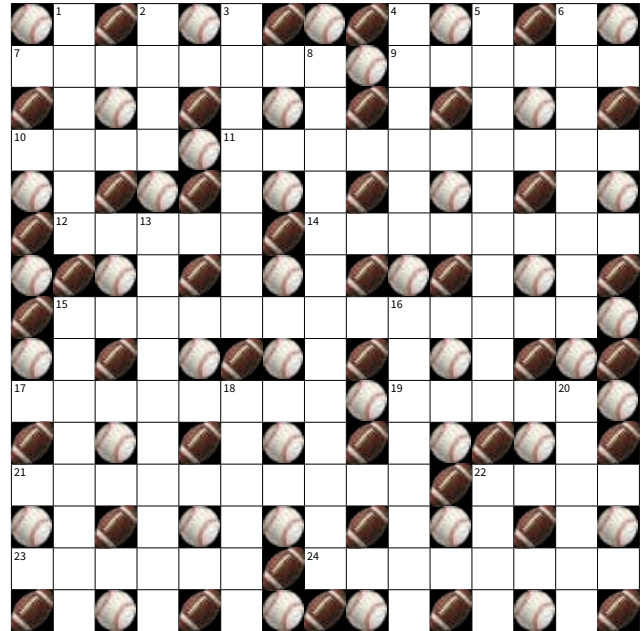
I WANTED TO CONTRIBUTE something to this month's column. I'm presenting another puzzle by Bob Fink and Jerry Miccolis. We worked together a tiny bit on the diagram layout, and of course as editor I offered a few suggestions on clues. But the concept of their creation calls for cluing of a somewhat different type than is usually found in cryptic puzzles. I didn't offer much on the clues.

So I wondered, how can I add to their ingenious work? And then I thought maybe I could come up with a title. The title of their puzzle is Play Ball! But the title of the column is Triskaidekaphobia. I usually like to throw in some unfamiliar words, because I want to reward the solvers' hard work with a little new knowledge. I'm betting that very few of you will know the word triskaidekaphobia. It means the fear or avoidance of the number 13. Bob and Jerry's puzzle involves thirteen pairs of clues and a final 13-letter phrase, and if you can overcome your triskaidekaphobia, I'm sure you'll have a delightful time. So here is Play Ball!

From Bob and Jerry: The first part of this puzzle is a traditional cryptic crossword. The grid entries feature two proper nouns, and two nouns that can be common but are clued as proper. All other words but one, including those appearing in multi-word phrases, are playable in Scrabble—the one exception is nevertheless in common usage. As always, beware of punctuation, which has been known to deceive.

The second part of the puzzle requires finding a three-word phrase hidden in the completed grid—a truism of 1980s vintage that remains true and is quite apropos of this puzzle's theme. The locations of the 13 letters making up this phrase can be divined from the clues. Each of the 13 Across clues has a Down clue that it can be uniquely paired with. The component of each clue that signals this pairing is hidden within the clue (more deviously in some clues than in others). The corresponding answer pairs in the completed grid identify the 13 letters that, when read in grid order (left to right, top to bottom), spell out the truism. A key to unlocking the solving mechanism can be found in two symmetrically placed 8-letter entries in the grid.

An explicit hint is provided upside-down in the box below. Please let us know if you used the hint in deriving your solution.



Thanks to Tom Toce and Eric Klis for test-solving this puzzle and offering valuable editorial advice.

Across

- 7 Ray's comedic partner of 43 years, sporting sparkly spangles, is juggling (8)
- 9 Former commander-in-chief's kin circle, dancing samba (6)
- 10 Frontiersman Carson met Sioux leader and sat on the right offering satire (4)
- 11 Discontinuing a brave start, Andy cut short topless boning (10)
- 12 At last, eelers infiltrating well-known Princess company, supplying music of summer (5)
- 14 Ultimately, each embryo from oriole sent to grow in place where one was born (8)
- 15 Dance classes allowed in gala while Fossey's four central characters spin Dian's last single (6,7)
- 17 Hawk's harassers lose weight and warble in opposition (8)
- 19 He wrote "The Dog and His Reflection" as concession following "A Beagle's Tail" (5)
- 21 Trumpet hot cub's foot stew (eschewing Weight Watchers) as item of dental hygiene (10)
- 22 Provoke unruly rebellions after banishing nobles (4)
- 23 Be inclined to develop safest isle after Lochmaben gal splits (3,3)
- 24 Superlatively bright *Gulliver's Travels* craftsman gels with Ernest after coastal scavenger flies away (8)

HINT
 Hint: Contained within each Across clue is the name of an MLB (or NFL) team. Its paired Down clue contains the name of the NFL (or MLB) team that shares the same 14-Across. The 13 letters of the truism can be found in the grid at the 17-Across of the corresponding answers to the paired clues.

Down

- 1 Foolishly do coke baked over a gas jet stove (6)
- 2 Help a buccaneer's leader with English on Tuesday (4)
- 3 Pirate, slashing speed, heads north ahead of Gilbert & Sullivan's ship (8)
- 4 Inside, Warhol demonstrated card game with royal straight (6)
- 5 Falcon sedan runs over peoples' flowers (10)
- 6 Casserole filled with a gutted raven served initially to nocturnal birds (4,4)

- 8 Handwriting experts hog grits (a disorder) then cram slop haphazardly in (13)
- 13 Mariner's movements reported by wiretapper's bug to pitching crew (5,5)
- 15 Scanning targets, frisky bear scarfs up some fish close to us (8)
- 16 Brown starter, with fury, knocks back pork serving (8)
- 18 Tortuous pun shreds IT's data submissions (6)
- 20 Crooked Phil lies about distributed operating system from Warsaw (6)
- 22 Observance of feral tiger spurning gravity (4)

Previous Issue's Puzzle—Eight Is Enough

Across

5. CHICAGO—CHIC (“Fashionable”) + AGO (“once upon a time”)
8. VISTA—VITA (“Resume”) around S (“Socialist”)
9. REMOVALS—Anagram of “over slam”
12. SUGAR—RAG (“Criticize”) + US (“me and my friends”) reversed
14. IDEAL—Pun/double definition
15. TASK—T (“Tuesday”) + ASK (“Inquire”)
20. AREA—Hidden in “bare-assed”
23. MEANS—Double definition
29. STAR WARS—Anagram of “Starr saw”
30. CIVIL—CI + VI + L (Roman numerals for “101” and “6:50”)

Down

1. MOVE—Hidden in reverse in “people vomit”
2. DISPOSE—Anagram of “Does sip”
3. ROADKILL—ROAD (anagram of “Dora”) + K (“A thousand”) + ILL (“sick”)
4. AIRPORT—Anagram of “pair rot”
5. CEMENTS—Last part of “inducements”
6. INVEST - Pun/double definition
7. ALLEGRO—Anagram of “role Gal” with a nod to Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman
10. PROMISE—Anagram of “semipro,” for those who approve of “misery” as an anagram indicator; or hidden in “semipro misery” for those who don't
13. RIMMING—(T)RIMMING (“decorating after the first”)



17. IMPLICIT—IMP (“Little rascal”) + LICIT (“permitted to be”)
19. SCRATCH—Double definition
21. REFRAIN—Double definition
22. ALLISON—ALL IS ON (“Everything's a go”) and Allison Williams, who played Marnie on Girls
24. ARRIVAL—ARCHRIVAL (“our biggest enemy”)—CH (“chemistry”)
25. BEARDS—Anagram of “Bader's”
28. FLEX—FL (“fluid”) + EX (“First flame”)

Quarantine clues

- JOHNSON—Pun on Johnson & Johnson (“Single vaccine maker?”)
- FOLKLORE—Double definition, with a nod to Taylor Swift's Grammy-Award winning album

- LOCKDOWN—LOCK (“Some hair”) + DOWN (“some more hair”)
- NURSE—Anagram of “Unser”
- MODERNA—Pun on grade inflation, which turns “An old-fashioned C+” into a “modern A”
- ZOOM—ZOO (“madhouse”) + M (“medium”)
- NETFLIX—Anagram of “fix lent”
- MASK—Hidden in “dogma skips”

Solvers

Steve Alpert, Anthony Amodeo, Dean Apps, Jack Brauner, Bob Campbell, Lois Cappellano, Laura Crremerius, Jared Dashoff, Todd Dashoff, Mick Diede, Dave Dougherty, Deb Edwards, Phil Gollance, Jason Helbraun, Pete Hepokoski, Catharine Hornby and Bruce Harvey, Paul Ivanovskis, Max Jackson, Ruth Johnson, Eric Klis, Paul Kolell, Ken Kudrak, Steve LaPlant, Ben Lynch, Michael Manos, Dave McGarry, Jon Michelson, Jim Muza, David and Corinne Promislow, Daniel Rhodes, Jay Ripps, Bill Scott, Andrew Shewan, Karen Skoglund, Russell Spinner, Zig Swistunowicz, T. O. C. E. (Josh DenHartog and Sean Donohoe), Betsy and James Uzzell

TOM TOCE is a retired FCAS living in New York City and is a member of the Jeopardy Hall of Fame. Solutions may be mailed to him at ttoce@nyc.rr.com. In order to make the solver list, you should send him your solutions by August 2, 2021.