

State of the arts

Silly sports day highlights funding cuts



LISA PAVNE



The ring thing *The athletes prepare for a gruelling snack*

The sun was shining and an excited crowd looked on as the capital's artists displayed a spectacular show of sporting spirit last weekend at south London's Burgess Park. Around 20 artists participated in the Artists' Sports Day held by Grunts for the Arts, a group aiming to focus attention on the diversion of £90 million in arts lottery funding (part of the Arts Council's Grants for the Arts) towards the Olympic Games. Grunts for the Arts said the event was part of an effort to retrain artists as sportspeople in the hope that they will have better access to the Olympic funding pot. Questions about the Cultural Olympiad – the cultural festival that is planned to run alongside the Games – were met with blank stares. 'No one here has heard anything about it,' said event organiser Cecilia Wee.

And what a day it was, with some spectacular highs and heart-wrenching lows. The result: a haul of gold (okay, gold-paper) medals

handed out by the special guest, Not-So-Jewelly-Tess. Here, we replay the highlights.

Gymnastics Corner

Judges looked for several criteria: costume, pointed toes and lipstick colour. Competitors didn't disappoint, delivering some beautiful solo performances, including handstands, standing on tiptoe and cartwheels.

Borat and Maggie were neck and neck

Cocktail Race

Contestants had to run the course balancing bucks fizz-filled glasses on a tray and then sell them to spectators. A close call for the teams who not only demonstrated impressive hand-to-tray coordination but competent business skills, too.

Handbag Hurling

Sadly the defending champion

could not be here owing to injury, but the other competitors were on cracking form as they displayed a number of techniques, ranging from satchel-chucking to evening bag-twirling. The gold-medal winner, Russell Martin, had this to say: 'I was pleased with my performance, but I think the international handbag hurling guidelines were interpreted loosely. I'll be having a word with the umpires about that.'

Celebrity Sack Race

A race in which competitors wore celebrity masks. Andrew Lloyd Webber pulled away early on to take the lead but Ann Widdecombe was just going through the



motions. Meanwhile, Borat and Margaret Thatcher remained neck and neck, fighting it out for second place. A stunning finish for Webber, with Thatcher taking silver. Seb Coe put in a lacklustre performance – he was last.

Olympic Ring Doughnut-Eating Competition

A chance for competitors to display their full doughnut-eating potential, as each scoffed four (non-jam) doughnuts as fast as possible with only a glass of water to aid digestion. Despite many competitors struggling at the third doughnut, this was a great show of Olympic spirit. The winner, Mark, showed no slack. He finished all four rings at 2 minutes 9 seconds, breaking his personal best.

This was surely a day the south London crowd would always remember. *Rebecca Taylor*
gruntsforthearts.wordpress.com