

News and Views: 2021–21 Season – 25 January 2022

Cup Round 2: Results

Poachers	109	99	Waters Green Weavers
Queens	102	102	Dolphin
Queens won on the tie-break			
Nags Head	88	76	Sutton Mutton
Dolphin Dragons	97	91	Queen Bs
Sutton Club	95	88	Harrington Diamonds
Park Taverners	91	84	Park Timers
Harrington Academicals	83	109	Nags Head 'B'
Plough Horntails	94	77	Waters Green Lemmings

Cup Quarter-Finals: Draw

Park Taverners	Poachers
Queens	Nags Head 'B'
Nags Head	Dolphin Dragons
Plough Horntails	Sutton Club

Results

The outstanding result this week has to be the **Sutton Club's** victory over **Harrington Diamonds** – C League beating A League. Congratulations to the Sutton team – anyone care to give us a report on the Forum?

Another upset, going by League status at least, was the **Queen Bs** losing to the **Dolphin Dragons**. This was always a tough draw for the former British Flag though – we all know that the Dragons are a formidable team in the knockout format.

The Tie-Break!

But I hope no eyebrows will be raised if I mention the drawn game at the Queens. The tie-break question (probably never to be forgotten by anyone who took part in this round) was:

"The longest word in English, formulated in America, has 189,819 letters, but how long in minutes would it take to pronounce it?"

The **Dolphin** made an 'educated' guess and came up with 17 minutes. The **Queens** tried to work it out, based on an estimate of five letters per syllable and six syllables spoken per second. They then divided 38,000 by 360, and this resulted in two different figures: just over 10 minutes, and just over 100. After some debate, during which the Dolphin team and the question master (Bill Moores from the Chester Road Tavern) waited with generous forbearance, they agreed to plump for 105 minutes.

The 'correct' answer being 210 minutes, the Queens were out by a factor of exactly 2. It was probably no consolation to the Dolphin that the home team were a lot closer than them this time – unlike the last time a similar situation occurred (at the semi-final stage in 2016–17) when both teams were miles out, but the Ox-fford 'C' (as they then were) were just marginally fewer miles out.

Letters and Syllables

Clearly the Queens' guesstimates were in the right ball-park, but still some way out. So what were the correct figures? How many letters are there in a syllable, and how many syllables can you say in a minute?

Consideration of words like *antidisestablishmentarianism*, *flauccinaucinihilipilification*, and let's not forget *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, give results of 28 letters and 11 syllables (average 2.5 letters per syllable), 30 letters and 12 syllables (also 2.5) and 34 letters, 14 or 15 syllables (2.3) – remarkably close really. (Is 'docious' two syllables, or three?) So the Queens' guesstimate of 5 letters per syllable was out by a factor of about 2 – the same as their final answer to the question – which suggests that the other guesstimate, of six syllables spoken per second, was spot on.

I know you're wondering how many letters, and how many syllables, there are in *Llanfairpwll-gwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch*. Well, sources seem to agree that it's 58 letters; Wikipedia says 18 syllables, which is one fewer than the way my mother taught me to say it (I make it 19). This gives an average of either 3.05 or 3.22 letters per syllable – either way, significantly more than the three English words cited above (one of which is not really English). Which may go to show that there is some truth in what they say about the Welsh language!

It may not have been to everyone's taste, but this tie-break question was at least different.

So What Is the Word?

[Wikipedia](#) lists eight words that (I would suggest) can only be thought of as examples of the longest English words. The longest of them all, by a huge margin, is "The chemical composition of **titin**, the largest known protein". It has 189,819 letters and is the "longest known word overall by magnitudes. Attempts to say the entire word have taken two to three and a half hours ... whether this is a word is disputed".

Titin is also known as connectin; 'titin' itself is short for 'Titan protein'. Wikipedia abbreviates the word in question – the longest English word, which denotes titin's chemical composition – to "Methionylthreonylthreonylglutaminyal-anyl ... isoleucine". It gives the complete word in an [Appendix](#), where it lists 21 chemicals that make up the protein. All but one of their names appear hundreds of times in the word, some of them over 2,000 times. The one exception is 'isoleucine', which appears only once as the final component (see abbreviation quoted earlier in this paragraph).

And How Do They Know How Long It Takes to Say It?

This is quite another story. But the fact is that more than one person definitely has read the word out loud, so we do know how long it took them. And one of them did take (approximately) 210 minutes.

If you want to read more, please refer to the online version of this *News & Views*.