

"HUMAN OF THE YEAR"

by Team J-M

CAST

Mavis Stubbs - Wise but still has youthful competitive streak

Dirk Walkinshaw - Fighting the shame of giving up years ago

Sam Bunctious - A lively host, hiding self-consciousness

(A gameshow set: The stage is mostly empty, but a table near the front has a bowl filled with slips of paper, and some random props including the knives. A medal hangs down the front.)

The lights come up and there's a snippet of cheesy music. MAVIS and DIRK stand on either side of the stage with a chair each in front of them as a podium. They face the audience but steal glances at each other. SAM enters in front of the contestants, waving at the audience.)

SAM

Welcome back to the final episode of "Human of the Year"! I'm Sam Bunctious, your host for tonight. And folks, it's getting too exciting now. We've had the nail-biting first round, we've had the spine-tingling second round, we've had thirty-something other rounds of semi-finals and quarter-finals and octo-finals, but all that's just a Sunday morning cruise compared to this. Seven point five billion contestants entered, two remain. This! Is!

ALL

THE HUMAN OF THE YEAR FINAL!

(If possible, someone holds up an applause sign here, to get the audience to cheer [otherwise, SAM gestures and asks the audience to applaud]. The cheesy music plays again.)

SAM

If you're just tuning in, our two incredible finalists are:

MAVIS

Mavis Stubbs!

DIRK

Dirk Walkinshaw!

SAM

After the tiger-wrasslin' round, the topiary-cutting round and the art-appreciation round last week, these two fighters are neck-and-neck! There's still everything to play for, so who'll take home the prize, and who'll be drying their eyes? Hey, I'm

a poet and I don't even know it! Well, probably every drawer in my house is filled with poems that'll never see the light of day, so I guess I do know it. (Giggly laugh) So, Dirk, tell us a...

DIRK

Look, Sam, we both know this isn't my first time on this stage, so why don't we cut the cr...

(SAM wags a finger to warn him not to swear.)

DIRK

... the small talk, and get down to it. All your viewers will remember what happened ten years ago. Not to brag, but I was probably the best swimmer Human of the Year has ever seen. As a strength player, pulling a muscle in the semi-finals is the absolute worst-case nightmare scenario.

(SAM winces sympathetically)

DIRK

But after a long ten years, I'm back in the game. As you've seen, my strategy has totally changed. I'm going for a well-rounded style this time. You saw me ace the flower-arranging in the semis. Give me anything you've got, I'll smash it. I'll take home that medal.

SAM

Best of luck! And equal luck to the lovely Mavis! (turns to MAVIS) You're a first-timer on Human of the Year, and you're doing amazingly. Tell us your story!

MAVIS

Oh, well, golly, where do I start?

SAM

Most people like the beginning.

MAVIS

Well, you know, when I was a kid, oh by golly, you'd better believe I dreamed of being Human of the Year. I trained and I trained, but then I looked at the people I was competing with, and I realised they were all awful! Wanting to win made them awful, sort of twisted them all up inside. And I realised 'Hey, maybe winning isn't worth it.' And so I never entered. But I'm not getting any younger, as you can see... So one day I just thought, 'Hey! What the heck? Let's give it a go, just to say I did it.'

SAM

Good for you! (To the audience) So, what lions will we be throwing our gladiators to next? Drumroll please, as we select the topic of the next round.

(A drum roll. SAM picks up the bowl, digs around, pulls out a piece of paper, and unfolds it with a great flourish.)

SAM

... ohh, this is a good one. It's... THE LIGHTNING TRIVIA ROUND! Fire up your fact engines, people!

(SAM pulls some trivia cards from his pocket)

SAM

Now, contestants, are you ready?

DIRK

I may not have been born ready, Sam, but I've sure spent this past year making myself into the smartest human being I've ever met in my life.

MAVIS

I'm so full of trivia, when Wikipedia articles need citations they come to me.

SAM

You know the drill, guys: answer questions - win points! Aaand, go! Quick, which country's name means "Honest father's house"?

DIRK

(Slamming his fist on the podium) Burkina Faso!

SAM

Right! What's the main spirit in a Clover Club cocktail?

MAVIS

(Cutting in just before Dirk) Rum!

SAM

Ooh, sorry. Dirk?

DIRK

Gin!

SAM

Bingo, dingo! How many kings of France were called Louis?

(There's a pause while they both think.)

MAVIS  
(Clearly guessing) Nine?... Teen?

SAM  
Somehow, that is spot on! Good guess!

MAVIS  
Ain't no guessing here. That was some cold hard logic I threw down there.

SAM  
Whatever you say, Mavis. Next question. What's faster, the speed of sound in air or in water?

(MAVIS and DIRK shout at the same time, slapping the podium)  
In water!

SAM  
Oh, that's close, but the judges say... (holds his finger to his ear) Dirk, you were a split second faster. That means you get the point and you take the round!

(Applause sign)

DIRK  
Told you. I'm a regular polymath now. My days of coasting along on swimming and athletics are long past.

MAVIS  
Did you check the microphones work? Because I feel I definitely said my answer first. You should ask the judges for a replay.

SAM  
No can do, I'm afraid! Their arbitrary, capricious word is law. But don't worry, all hope is not yet lost. You can win back those points in...

(He picks up the bowl. Another drumroll, and another piece of paper)

SAM  
It's... oh my stars, it's HAND TO HAND COMBAT.

(Applause sign again)

SAM

Just a couple of ground rules...

MAVIS

(Interrupting) Hand to hand combat? (Abrupt change in personality) Oh, you are going down harder than the asteroid that blasted the dinosaurs!

DIRK

Oh yeah? You're going to fold so fast, origami masters will call you for advice.

SAM

Okay... So, uh, you just fight until one of you yields, and-

MAVIS

Trust me, by the end of this round, they'll have to rename it 'hand to bloody stump combat'.

DIRK

Well, they'll spell the word 'loser' 'M-A-V-I-S' after I'm done with you.

SAM

(Clearly uncomfortable) Choose your weapons and let! The round! Begin!

(SAM retreats to the corner of the stage. MAVIS and DIRK each take a knife from the table and begin squaring off. Music if possible. It's obvious from fairly early on that MAVIS has the big advantage.)

MAVIS

When I said 'winning isn't everything', I was telling the truth. Winning against you really will be nothing.

DIRK

If my shoulder wasn't still f-... busted, you'd be on the floor already. You'd be... (MAVIS gets a knife to his neck) oh that hurts. That hurts.

MAVIS

Gonna yield?

DIRK

I'd sooner... (MAVIS tightens her grip) I yield. I yield.

(Applause sign)

SAM

(striding back to centre stage) And it's all over. Mavis,

you've brought yourself back to within an inch of the title of Human of the Year 2016. How do you feel?

MAVIS

(suddenly dropping the knife, back to her normal sweet self)  
Oh, well, golly, you know, it's fun enough just being here. I'm not here to win, but if it happens, it happens! And if I lose, then I'll be better for having had this experience.

SAM

Well, you did a very good impression of being in it to win it. It's close...

DIRK

The closest Human of the Year contest you've ever had! See, there's a bit of lightning trivia for you.

SAM

Before we begin our final round, how are you both feeling?

DIRK

Like I'm just inches away from reclaiming my former glory. Like I'm about to teach younger me a lesson in sticking the course and not wimping out when it gets tough.

SAM

And Mavis?

MAVIS

You know me! Still totally sure that as long as everyone works super hard to get better all the time, that whether we win or lose doesn't matter in life. (Trying to convince herself)

SAM

It's been an absolute riot getting to know you both over this series. We've had some good times! Remember the lumberjacking round?

MAVIS

You never thought I'd be able to take down that redwood, but I proved you all wrong! I absolutely destroyed that tree!

SAM

You sure did. And Dirk, your performance in the motocross was phenomenal. I'm so glad you managed to walk away from that last crash. You must have bones of titanium!

DIRK

Well, that's what the doctors all say. All I know is I drink my milk, make sure I get eight hours of sleep a night, spend the other sixteen training, and the rest takes care of itself.

And may I say, Sam, you've been a great host.

MAVIS

If there was a hosting round, you'd definitely make it your bitc... your own.

SAM

You guys almost make me wanna compete myself!

DIRK

Well, maybe you should! Next year. After I win.

MAVIS

I think you mean after I win.

SAM

So anyway, time for the final round... of the whole season! One of you will be walking home with this around your shoulders. (He picks up the medal.) The eyes of the world are on you, so give it your best in the grand finale, the... (Putting the medal down briefly to draw the last piece of paper) POETRY SLAM. (When he puts the bowl back down, he picks the medal up again, and he holds it for the rest of the play) My favourite round! Are your rhymes ready, are your poems primed, are your lines locked and loaded?

MAVIS

Sam, I've got flow like the Amazon River, and I'll deliver like Amazon.com

DIRK

You've heard of freestyle? Well, my style you couldn't buy at any price. It's priceless. Priceless-style.

SAM

Wow, I wish I was half as confident in my poetry... So, then, show us what you've got! Mavis, you're up first. Blow us away, cowgirl!

MAVIS

(Swaggering out, gesturing with her hands to punctuate the beat)

*They call me Mavis*

*Say I'm the greatest*

*I can rhyme like Wordsworth*

*And, um, I always get my words' worth.*

DIRK

(Tapping out a beat on his podium)

*Dirk is my name*

*Rapping is my game*

*It's really a shame  
Mavis can't play this game  
Properly  
She's a flop...erly.*

(SAM puts his hands over his face, too ashamed to watch)

MAVIS

*My poems are the best  
While Dirk's are just messed  
Up, like a dog's dinner  
He's a loser, I'm a winner  
Where this game is concerned  
I haven't even... haven't even... returned? Learned? Earned?*

DIRK

*Mavis is just illin'  
While I'm here chillin'  
Who's ever heard a better poem?  
Well, I don't know 'em.  
Get a real critic  
Cos my flow's electri tic (forcing the rhyme)*

MAVIS

*I'm gonna win this  
Not gonna spin this  
Dirk's little foibles  
Will never... (tries to think of a rhyme for 'foibles')*

(SAM jumps between them, looking  
legitimately furious)

SAM

*Time to turn the toibles.*

Oh yeah! I went there!

*I guess I was a poet  
But too afraid to know it, to blow it  
And cos I didn't crow it  
That means I couldn't grow it  
So I'm lying low, it comes naturally  
But now I see that hyperbole  
Is no match for me.  
Laggard watch me go, blagger watch me, yo  
This braggadocio ain't just swagger, no.  
It's not the foes you taunt,  
It's the flows you flaunt.  
Win or lose, we out.*

(Everyone falls silent in shock at  
this flagrant breach of the rules.)

SAM

(Puts his finger to his ear.) Sorry, what's that? But the rules, they... really? So that means... I win?

(After a good pause, Tom holds up the applause sign. Reluctantly, even MAVIS and DIRK join in. SAM puts the medal on himself. He bows and lights go dim [but not off]. DIRK, MAVIS and SAM quickly move in a line with some space between them, from stage right to stage left. Lights go back up. They talk to an invisible interviewer.)

DIRK

How do I feel? Well, you know what? Last time, I quit in the semi-final. This time, I made it all the way to the end. I beat myself, and that's what counts. Take that, younger Dirk!

MAVIS

Is that really what I was like? Oh turn that video off! I told you, competition makes me into such a... oh I'm gonna say it. Such a bitch! I'm glad that bitch didn't win!

SAM

Human of the Year 2016! What can I say? I want to thank my fans, I want to thank Dirk and Mavis for having such bad flow, and I'll just say this... winning? It's awesome!

(Black-out)