

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Photo of Yale's "We Suck" Prank Shown to Be Doctored.



by B. S. Pile

Cambridge, MA

On November 20, 2004, during the annual Yale-Harvard football game (aka "The Game"), Yale students passed out cards to Harvard fans, which when lifted together were to spell, unbeknownst to the fans, "WE SUCK." This prank got ESPN coverage, a page on Wikipedia, and its own website (<http://www.harvardsucks.org>). There's only one problem, the prank didn't quite work out the way its authors claimed it did. I was there, and this is what actually happened.

It all started when I came to see my very first "The Game" on that chilly Saturday at Harvard stadium. Not being much of a sports fan, I wasn't expecting too much. In fact, I was mostly hoping for a wardrobe malfunction, or at least a hyped up commercial or two.



An unedited photo taken by this reporter at the game

Alas no such luck. The marching band and cheer-leaders tried really hard though. But then, shortly before half-time, a bunch of random cards sprung out (see above photo). I wasn't able to read what it was supposed to say. Was it coded communication meant for some terrorist sleeper cells? Was it written in some extra-terrestrial language? Who knows? I snapped a few photos and nearly forgot about the whole event. The game ended with Harvard crushing Yale: 35-3.

It wasn't till a few weeks later that I got word that it was just a dumb Yale prank. I found the prank website, which walks the viewers through the meticulous planning for the flip-cards distribution to the unsuspecting audience. The major Yale chutzpah was pretending to be members of the nonexistent Harvard "Pep Squad". Apparently they really did put quite a bit of thought into this. Only their execution

wasn't so good. The idea wasn't very original either, since Caltech pulled this exact prank at the 1961 Rose Bowl. Apparently Caltech had a much more elaborate version of this, and unlike here, they got it to work. But what do you expect - it's Yale we're talking about.

Quite amused at how this prank backfired, and relieved that it didn't prompt a deadly sleeper cell attack or an alien invasion, I filed away the whole thing away into my mental "for boring cocktail parties only" folder. Two and a half years have since passed and I have yet to be part of a cocktail party sufficiently boring to pull this one out yet, when quite by accident, I came across the Wikipedia entry for this prank (yes, it is indeed there). But what I saw really pissed me off. Not only were the authors considering this a successful prank, they posted the following photo.



Photo from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yale's_%22We_Suck%22_Prank

Hmmm, doesn't quite look the same as the original, does it? If you compare the two photos carefully you can pretty easily see the doctored they must have done. In real life, I'd say they did a pretty decent job on the "K", but the rest of the letters look like alphabet soup that's been sitting in the chicken broth for too long. It's interesting to note that the above photo is the ONLY photo that has been circulated... and in the video, which deals mostly with the planning, the footage of the actual prank is cut suspiciously short.

Now perhaps Photoshop helped a few overeager Yalies save face among their peers, but posting such blatantly false information on Wikipedia is a line we cannot, we must not let them cross. At HSP, our fight for journalistic integrity starts one Wikipedia article at a time, long after the event of relevance has faded into obscurity.

