

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / The Happy Pod: Teamwork and pride - Saudi women's football

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I'm Dr. Laurie Santos, host of the Happiness Lab podcast. It's never too late or too early to learn how to feel happier. So my new season has well-being tips for you, whether you're aged three or a hundred and three. Or six like me. Did I mention I have some amazing co-hosts for this season? And do not forget cute and furry. How could I grover? I'll be joined by my fabulous friends from Sesame Street. Be sure to listen wherever you get your podcasts. The documentary from the BBC World Service brings the globe to your ears through original documentary storytelling. Search for the documentary wherever you get your BBC podcasts.

Hi, I'm Ed. Using it starts, I'm welcoming you to the Happy Pod.

Hi, I'm Christina.

I'm Robin.

We're in Utah and welcome to the Happy Pod.

Hi, I'm Mark Dickey, currently in Turkey. And I'm grateful to be on the Happy Pod.

This is the Happy Pod from the BBC World Service.

I'm Jackie Leonard and in this edition, uploaded on Saturday, the 23rd of September.

People from the outside might just think that we're here just waking up and going to the gym and then going to the field and kicking a ball around. But it's so much more than bad.

The rapid rise of women's football in Saudi Arabia. An ambitious plan to release 2000 Southern white rhino into the world in Africa.

Something at this scale has never been attempted before. We're going to need all the help that we can get. It's going to give us a lot of sleep this night, but we are extremely excited about the possibility.

Also in this podcast, what it takes to win the award for Younger Astronomy Photographer of the Year.

The picture is really amazing. It is incredibly colourful, but it's really nicely balanced.

We were just really blown away by how well every aspect of it was done.

And the people offering respite care for pets in the US.

That was a blessing to me to know that I could go through what I was going through and still know that my dogs were well taken care of and that they'd come back home to me.

Women in Saudi Arabia were only permitted to drive in 2018 and it was a year later that the women's football department of Saudi Arabian football was established.

Now they are ranked in FIFA with a world-class Premier League team and there are 4,000 female

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football trainees. There's been a new documentary on the rise of the women's national team called Destined to Play.

Little kids are looking at you and they're watching you play and they're getting inspired and you realise that you're doing more than just playing the game.

It includes women's national team midfielder Leigh Ann Juhari and women's football technical director at the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, former head coach of the national team, Monica Stab. They told us about the development of Saudi women's football.

I've always loved football and my whole family tree and my country. We're huge football fans. It's in our blood. So I was always inspired to play and finally when I came back to Rajid in 2017 I joined my first proper team and I was really surprised to find a team here because at that time there wasn't a lot of support and there wasn't really a platform. So when I found the team and I joined it was like a dream come true and bit by bit the development was out of this world.

But tell us a little bit about when you were growing up because football was always there in the background but perhaps women's football, girls' sport hasn't always been encouraged in Saudi Arabia.

Well there was always women playing in their neighbourhoods and they were renting out fields and playing but it was never official. It was never something that was in social media or something that people can go and watch the games.

Monica you've worked all over the world.

What are the specific challenges for you of finding and nurturing women players in Saudi?

It was a big challenge to change of course their mindset now they're going to be a national player because before they played with their brothers, with their cousins, with their uncles on the street on somewhere on the ground and I thought okay you give your best and then they won the first game

and I was just thinking wow.

Do you remember how you felt the first time you ran on to a pitch for an international representing your country?

Oh well, yeah that was quite a moment. It felt like the whole camp felt like a dream because we never ever played a game together and a lot of us it was the first time we even meet each other. We just held each other's hands and really put all our trust in each other. We had no idea what's going to happen. We had no expectations and that's how we went in. We went in with our own expectations of ourselves and our own spirit and we really poured our hearts out

and I remember it just felt like there's nothing left to do but give everything you know because I know everyone back home is watching and so it was definitely so so so exciting. It's like a once in a lifetime moment to be honest.

They have a dream. They want to go to the World Cup. Saudi is a crazy football nation.

I didn't know that. I'd just been coming on a plane from Ria to Damam.

I was sitting there and I said can I take a picture coach? I said do you know me?

Yeah of course I know you. I said huh? You know I felt in the beginning when I was still the coach in the first year I was like a pop star. Everyone I was recognized in the supermarket.

This doesn't happen in my country Germany for sure.

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And one of my uncles I remember for our second ever official it had much. We lost. My uncle has never texted me okay on WhatsApp. He texted me with an angry emoji. Why did you guys lose? And I was like I was loving it. I was like oh my god it was so beautiful to see that he really cared about it to him because I'm playing for obviously the team that we all support as well. Do you still encounter any social or family opposition to girls and women being out on the field and playing football? Well to tell you the truth I've been around in many countries and of course in Muslim country it's not easy. I'm not saying that every parents are happy my daughter is going to play. Of course not. We had prejudice in our country in Germany. It was banned from our FA in Germany and I know I've been going through now 53 years of fighting women football. I've been around the world trying to convince every man mainly men also women of course but the girls want to play the game. They're just happy to play the game. They won't be part of the game and it's such an enjoyable game. I mean like everything in the world there's always going to be a different side. There's always criticism but the enthusiasm we've seen and the support we've seen definitely overshadows it. What does being part of a sports team a team of women what does it mean to you? What it means to be in a women's team is it's so much respect and support. We like to sing we always have it's called a rap which is like a group of people that have the drums and the microphone and everything. Probably what my favorite one is the victory hopefully will be for us. Midfielder Leanne Duhari and we also heard from Monica Stab. Now last week we heard about the international efforts to rescue American caver Mark Dickey who suffered a medical emergency deep in the Turkish Moorja cave system. We spoke to the head of the European Association of Cave Rescuers because Mark himself was in hospital. Well now he's out. So Mark how are you? I am doing very well. I've received excellent care from the moment the mini ICU arrived in the cave. So from that moment the recovery started and has been continuing since. So at this point I've been discharged from the hospital if I'm up and about still weak on a day to day basis. But I'm happy and I'm out there and doing stuff. We heard that message that you sent up when you were still awaiting rescue and you sounded confident and calm. But I did read that there was a point when you thought you wouldn't actually get out. I am exceptionally proud of the caving community and I am happy to give them this pure from the heart truly meant words. Like I had no doubt whatsoever that I was going to reach the surface once I crossed that point of

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survival.

This is representative of the caving community the international caving community and it's an amazing thing.

We are a tight knit bunch no matter where you come from.

We knew their capabilities and we knew their friendship.

We knew that they would do whatever they could to get there.

For people who can't see the appeal what is the appeal of exploring caves?

Honestly adventure exploration.

There is science behind it as well and I am not a scientist but I like the discovery.

I like the pushing the limits of human exploration going places that no humans have ever been before.

Seeing things that have never been seen and sometimes these cascades are just stunning.

And I gather that although you are currently in Turkey you are planning to meet up with some of the people involved in your rescue.

Oh absolutely.

Once I am free to travel I will be immediately heading over to Hungary.

And I will be honest while I probably won't participate too strongly I have a feeling there is going to be a party.

I have a feeling he is right.

That was Mark Dickey.

Now to a hugely ambitious plan to re-wild 2000 white southern rhinos from a captive breeding program across Africa over the next 10 years.

The animals were taken on by the conservation group African Parks after an auction fails to attract any bids.

They hope to relocate them in protected areas across the continent to help secure the species future.

Peter Fernhead is the chief executive officer and co-founder of African Parks.

Rhino are going through a very very tough time.

The poaching pressure on these animals is just incredible and more than 50% of the rhinos in South Africa have been poached in the last 10 years.

So we are talking about a species that is under tremendous pressure.

Now African Parks is talking about re-wilding over 2000 southern white rhino.

Tell us about the origins of these animals and how they came to be with you.

In South Africa there is a very active sector where people are able to buy and sell wildlife.

And a particular individual who had a particular passion for rhinos through very successful breeding he built that population up to these 2000 animals.

But the farm has been facing financial ruin and then he put the whole farm and all the animals on auction at the end of April.

But he did not have a single bid that was received.

And as a result of that we were facing something of a conservation crisis where the largest single population and probably with the best diversity of all white rhino on the continent of Africa was now at incredible risk.

So African Parks was approached by quite a few conservationists and that's why now today we're now also responsible for a rhino farm with these 2000 animals.

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So we want to make sure that these rhino in approximately 7 to 20 conservation areas across the continent are completely successfully re-wilded.

And in doing so those areas are safe secure conservation areas for all species and for mankind and society that depends on them.

And that for us I think would be the absolute pinnacle of success to be able to achieve that on the back of these rhino.

Now obviously 2000 rhinos is no small proposition. How are you going to do that? What exactly are you going to do?

Well I think the first thing is probably with a lot of sleepless nights because this is an enormous undertaking.

I mean something at this scale has never been attempted before.

So fortunately we have access to the best people in the business, the best veterinarians, the best logistics people, the equipment.

So with a huge amount of difficulty we're going to need all the help that we can get from people that want to be part of the solution.

We're going to need to engage governments as potential recipients of some of these animals.

As I said it's going to give us a lot of sleepless nights but we are extremely excited about the possibility.

And what sort of protection will they have from predation by poachers and the like?

So when we engage with governments and we engage with the conservation sector we will be looking at their ability to make sure that the areas that they're going to be safe.

We want to make sure that this is a successful strategy for the conservation of white rhino across the continent.

Why did you get involved in conservation?

Why would you want to do anything else?

It's a passion and it's something where I think everyone that works for African parks has a passion for conservation, for Africa, for the people of Africa and those are all completely intertwined.

I have that passion, it was instilled in me as a young boy and it's only ever grown since then.

Peter Fernhead of African Parks

Still to come.

Everyone says we are lazy, we say for example we are well organised to have time to be lazy sometimes.

The contest to be crowned Montenegro's laziest citizen.

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It's never too late or too early to learn how to feel happier. So my new season has well-being tips for you, whether you're aged 3 or 103.

Or 6 like me.

Did I mention I have some amazing co-hosts for this season?

And do not forget cute and furry.

How could I grover? I'll be joined by my fabulous friends from Sesame Street.

That's us.

I'm so happy to see you.

Merry friends.

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Oh I am so excited.

This is gonna be so magical.

I had just come out of one of my bare-knuckle boxing matches. I don't know why.

But the first thing that came to my brain was what if I do a drag show?

Remarkable personal stories told by the people that lived them.

I could easily have pulled that trigger. But that was not my brief. I was not an assassin. I was not told to do that. I was not told to murder him.

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Berlin Arts Week brings together museums, galleries and independent artists to show off their latest creative projects.

And its scope stretches far beyond Germany.

Berlin has been hailed as a hotspot for Asian artists.

And our reporter Peter Goffin has been to one gallery that's showcasing Chinese and Japanese works.

It's a cool September night in Berlin and I'm in a rooftop garden for a screening of short films by up-and-coming Chinese language directors.

To keep warm, the audience sips traditional herbal tea, specially chosen by a self-described Chinese tea practitioner,

to complement this program's theme of relationships and sexuality.

This is the first of three Chinese film nights hosted by Desiree Firley,

a German gallery owner who's built a collection of ancient and modern East Asian art in a sprawling Second World War bunker just south of Potsdamer Platz.

I'm in love with Asia and focusing now on China.

I thought it's beautiful to show different versions of filmmakers.

The young important generation who is really forming pictures now in China and hopefully also outside of China.

The films are a gateway to modern Chinese culture.

But for members of the Asian diaspora in Berlin, they're also an opportunity to reconnect with the region.

It's really good to show East Asian culture as well.

I feel like really it's really, really freedom.

The Firley collection is also showing the work of Japanese-born artist Liko Ikimura,

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who's lived and worked in Berlin for more than three decades.
There are wispily painted landscapes and sculpted rabbit figures on black velvet cushions.
From the right angle, the creatures look like parts of the human anatomy.
Ikimura arrived in Berlin in 1991 to become a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts.
She says Berlin has maintained the anything-goes improvisational spirit of those early years after the wall came down.
But she also says the art scene can still be a little too domestic and inward-looking for foreign artists.
It was not so easy for me to start my artistic career here.
It's kind of a melting pot.
It's not only Asian or social Africa and in America.
But I would say if you compare with London or Paris or New York,
Berlin needs another decade to be more and more really open-minded.
Ikimura says collections like this one, combining different cultures and time periods,
infuse some desperately needed uniqueness into the arts world.
The tendency of the contemporary art now is kind of a similarity and it's boring.
You know, I don't want to see in Hong Kong the same thing like in New York and the same is also in Berlin.
And this is why I feel very honored to be in the core of the town.
We do something different. It's so beautiful and this is the most important tendency that we need.
That report by Peter Goffin in Berlin.
Now, some of the other things to catch our attention this week, the rediscovery of an elusive bat in Brazil.
The *histiotis aliensis*, which has big triangular ears, hadn't been seen since 1916,
but it's been confirmed that the second-ever specimen was discovered in a survey in the Brazilian state of Paraná.
The environmental group WWF says the snow leopard population in Bhutan is up nearly 40% in milestone achievement thanks to conservation efforts.
The National Snow Leopard Survey of 2022-2023 found that there are now at least 132 snow leopards in the country.
And some good news for a dog abandoned as a puppy in Thailand.
Buttons was taken in by an animal charity which was surprised to get an adoption application from the British rock star Liam Gallagher.
He is said to be, and I quote, totally smitten and he describes Buttons as biblical.
Now, time for a bit of stargazing. There were over 4,000 entries from 64 countries and now the winners have been announced for the Royal Observatory Greenwich Astronomy Photographer of the Year.
And the images aren't just beautiful, they're scientifically important as well.
The winners were Marcel Drexler, Xavier Strottner and Jan Sonti.
Dr Ed Bluma was one of the judges. So what was so special about their picture?
It's an astonishing image because the picture quality itself is really, really high.
So fundamentally it's a great picture of the Andromeda galaxy.
What it also has that really, I think, put it head and shoulders above other trends this year is that

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it was able to, by looking at WI-9's oxygen, reveal this and in the image.

It's a bit strange, it kind of looks like a smudge, but this region of WI-9's oxygen that has been there in any other picture you've seen of that region of space, but in the pictures themselves they haven't revealed it.

So it's revealing something new and it's an astonishingly good picture.

And looking at the young astronomy photograph of the year, that was two 14-year-old boys from China, Runway Zhu and Bin Yu Wang.

Describe their picture for us.

So this is a picture of a Nebula, it's called the Running Chicken Nebula.

Does it actually look like a running chicken in any way at all?

I was going to say, once someone sort of points it out, you can maybe see, maybe, the picture is really amazing.

It's got lots of this lovely detailed structure to it.

It is incredibly colourful.

We were just really blown away by how well every aspect of it was done.

You talked a little bit earlier about the sort of kit that photographers in this particular competition will be making use of, as well as the technique.

Talk us through the sort of process.

Some people are using very large, robotically controlled telescopes, but having said that, we've had people that have taken snapshots on iPad.

So taking snapshots definitely has a place in the competition.

And why are competitions like this important?

Well, I think there's a few things.

I mean, one of them is just that they produce these amazing images that everybody can enjoy and recognising the hard work that people put into it.

That was Dr Ed Blumath.

I will share the winning photographs on social media using the hashtag TheHappyPod on platforms that still do hashtags.

And then you'll just have to look for me on the other ones.

I'm sorry.

Now, we've talked before about the connections between humans and their animals and what a difference they can make to health and well-being.

But what happens when we can't take care of them for unforeseen and unavoidable reasons like homelessness or hospital treatment when you just don't have anyone who can step in?

We've been talking to Christina who co-founded Rough Haven in Utah in the US and to pet owner Robin.

Nothing like this in Utah or even across the country, really, of taking someone's pet when their person is just experiencing a very temporary crisis in their life and didn't have that network of friends and family who could care for them and their pet was their life.

So that's what we saw, the need, and we just kind of hit the ground running.

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We keep in touch with the owner.
They get updates on their animals
and then we happily reunite them when the time comes.
So it's the best feeling to see these pets go back to the family who loves them.
So Robin, I understand you actually made use of Rough Haven.
Would you mind explaining to us what happened, how you came to need them?
I had a medical emergency that was pretty serious.
I had no one to take my dogs.
And the thing that I'd have to give them up would have been devastating.
And a friend of my son suggested that I contact Rough Haven
and they were just a godsend to know that I could go through what I was going through
and still know that my dogs were taken care of and that they'd come back home to me.
And now you actually are part of the fostering program, aren't you?
I am. I tell them I have a revolving door.
When you pick up one, bring me another.
And just to know that they can go home to their people like my dogs were able to come home to me.
That means everything to me.
I just want to thank Christina. I'm grateful to have met them.
They are just a group of the most amazing people.
And there needs to be more opportunities out there for people who come into bad times
to be able to fall back and know that they can still have their pets,
which to me, and I'm sure a lot of other people, means everything.
That was Robin, and we also heard from Christina, co-founder of Rough Haven in Utah.
Now, one of the world's oddest annual competitions is now into its second month.
As we record this podcast, four people remain in the running to become Montenegro's laziest citizen.
And they don't have to do so much as lift a finger to prove it.
It all started 12 years ago as a response to the regional stereotype that Montenegro's were,
shall we say, not the hardest workers.
And as our Balkans correspondent, Guy De Laune reports,
they've decided they're going to take that lying down.
They are actually physically mentally really strong people.
Boris Krunic is one of the organisers of the competition at the Ethno Village Montenegro,
a collection of log cabins and stone huts nestling under the nearby mountains.
They usually have a small, funny joke of us, that Montenegro people are lazy people.
So we came up with an idea to try on that joke to make some competition that makes everyone laugh
and to show the people that actually maybe we are that.
I thought you were going to say the other way round that we'll have this competition
that shows people that people from Montenegro aren't lazy at all.
But no, you're trying to confirm the stereotype.
Yeah, I mean, we don't actually confirm it.
But we say, for example, that everyone says we are lazy.
We say, for example, we are well organised to have time to be lazy sometimes.
Montenegro may be internationally renowned for its dramatic mountains

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and beautiful Adriatic coastline, but in the neighbourhood it's a different story. When it was part of Yugoslavia, its people were the butt of jokes, labelled as the laziest in the country.

Even Montenegro's current Prime Minister, Brejtana Bazović, played up to the image at a conference with other regional leaders in Slovenia last month. We are a Euro-optimistic country of fun and fun.

And because it's a very good atmosphere, our wish is to keep the good weather to extend the touristic season.

The laziest citizen contest has gone international.

In the current edition, competitors from Russia, Ukraine and Serbia have all been vying for the title.

That is, if vying is the right word for relaxing in a prone position on a mattress under the trees or in one of the log cabins.

Twenty-one competitors started with the daydream of going home with the grand prize of a thousand euros.

Serbia's Jovan Sarancenin is one of four still standing, lying, as the competition dawdles into its second month.

I can assure you that it is very hard to stay lazy this much.

I actually think that it is more harder to work than to lay down in this state.

The sedentary Serbian favourite Jovan Sarancenin ending that report by the vigorously energetic guide Ilone.

And that's it from us for now.

Remember, if you'd like to be part of the happy pod, you can email us with your story or your sound or the small victory that brings you joy.

As ever, the address is GlobalPodcast at bbc.co.uk.

This edition was mixed by Ricardo McCarthy.

The producer was Anna Murphy.

Our editor is Karen Martin.

I'm Jackie Leonard and until next time, goodbye.

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