

Mars mission needs volunteers; Basketball's Bryce the MVP; a star munching black hole discovered; and the dog that won the lottery.

That's what's making news, kid's style...

THE LOWDOWN

How would you like to live on Mars? Millions of miles from Earth - way out there in space - far, far away from friends, family and even an internet connection — the horror!

Because that's what four astronauts are about to do ... well, not really go and live on Mars - because that's a long way away - but volunteer to live for a year in a huge shed down here on Earth which has been filled with red sand and made to look like the surface of the red planet in our solar system.

It's called a Mars simulation ... an imitation down here on Earth of what it would be like up there on Mars. And NASA - the American space agency - is looking for four people to volunteer to go into the pretend Mars habitat and live there .. For. A. Whole. Year.

That's right - one long year of living on fake Mars, trying to grow vegetables in the sand, doing pretend space walks out on the fake Mars surface - and generally testing out what it might one day be like when humans eventually go to live on Mars.

Because, yes: that's the plan, didn't you know? To set up a human settlement on Mars that can be self-sufficient - meaning it produces its own food and water and energy - so that people like you and me can live up there for our whole lives if we wanted.

I know right? Crazy!

But before you start packing your Paw Patrol wheelee suitcase and putting your hand up to volunteer - you might have to wait a bit. NASA is only considering air force pilots with a minimum of 1000 hours flying time under their belt. And look - I obviously don't know each and every kid listening to this podcast - but I'm willing to bet there aren't too many of you that fit that description

SPIN THE GLOBE

Each day we give the world globe a spin and find a news story from wherever it stops - and today we've landed in China - where a dog is being celebrated for sniffing out a winning lottery ticket - not once, but twice.

According to reports out of Guangdong, a woman was walking her pet dog past a shop selling scratchies when the dog dragged her into the shop and sunk its teeth into one. Because one scratchie had her dog's teeth marks in it - she was obliged to buy it. And later that night she discovered she'd won just over \$200.

The next day the woman returned and her dog sniffed out a scratchie that won her \$4.

And while that was a whole lot less than the day before, the woman still spent some of her winnings on dog treats.

Clever dog!

SPORT TIME

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Perth Wildcat, Bryce Cotton has entered the Aussie sporting history books this week after being named MVP for the NBL.

Now - that's two acronyms in a row - MVP and NBL - so let me explain. MVP stands for Most Valuable Player. And NBL stands for National Basketball League - which is the big professional basketball competition in Australia.

And as well as having what is quite possibly the coolest name in the league - and a shout out to all the Bryces out there - Bryce won the award on Monday night after a season in which he helped the Wildcats to second position in the comp, after having produced 26.6 points per game. Which is a lot.

Still not impressed? Try this on for size ... it's the fourth time that Bryce has won the MVP award - elevating him to semi-GOAT status ... oh dear - there's another acronym .. GOAT stands for Greatest of All Time .. which of course someone with a name like Bryce would be in the running for...

SPACED OUT

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From Mars simulations to sun-munching black holes .. today's podcast has a distinctly spacey feel.

And that's because researchers at a university in Canberra have made a major discovery of a black hole out in space that is munching on stars even as we speak.

Black holes occur in space where gravity is so strong that nothing can escape it ... they're called black holes because they suck in everything that surrounds them ... and in the case of this new discovery - its a black hole that - get this - consumes the equivalent of our entire solar system EVERY SINGLE DAY.

Now, this is the thing when you talk about outer space and the universe and how vast it is – often you’ve got to try and wrap your head around concepts that just want to make your brain explode.

This black hole is the fastest growing black hole ever discovered - the more a black hole eats every day, the bigger it is. Think of it as an outer space equivalent of the very hungry caterpillar.

But don’t worry - it’s not about to eat us up any time soon. It’s so far away that light from the black hole takes 12 billion years to travel across space to reach Earth.

Boom. That’s the sound of my mind being blown...

THE S’QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you’ve been listening ...

1. In which country did a woman’s dog pick a winning scratchie?
2. Is the planet Mars the third, fourth or fifth planet away from the Sun? (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars)
3. Which team does Australian basketball MVP Bryce Cotton play for?

SHOUT OUTS

It’s February 21 Birthday of the late actor Alan Rickman .. you probably know him better as Severus Snape in the Harry Potter movies .

It’s also a special day for these Squiz Kids celebrating a birthday today...Cade from Ballarat, Emme from Shelley, Deepanshu from Oran Park, Jacob from Baldivis and Mia from Redbank Plains.

Happy belated birthday to... Arfan from Westmead, Esther from Wentworth Falls and Alice from Surrey Hills.

Classroom shoutouts today go to... class 2M with Miss Macartney at Thurgoona Public School, class 5/6 with Mrs Martorella at St Joachim's Primary School in Holland Park, class 4C with Mrs Charles at Plumpton Public School, class 5E and Miss Edwards at Blacktown South Public School, Mr Brophy’s class at St Anthony's Primary School in Kedron and The Intermediate Intensive English class with Ms Sarah at QSI International School of Suriname. Well, that’s a first ... welcome aboard Surinam!

And a special shout out to my new friends at Chester Hill Public School - especially to all the kids in Year 5 and Year 6 and their excellent librarian Mrs Hume. Looking forward to seeing you again today as we continue our Newshounds adventure, along with Federal Education Minister, Jason Clare and NSW Education Minister, Prue Car (CHEER)

The S'Quiz Answers:

1. China
2. Fourth (mercury, venus, earth, mars)
3. Perth Wildcats