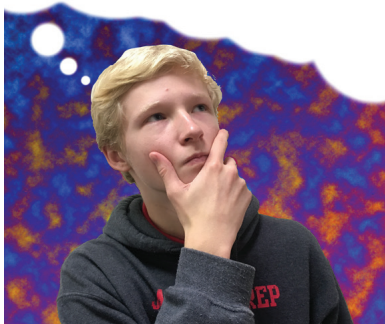


The Mugshots Challenge: an experience of culinary debauchery

What Is It?



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It started on a Wednesday. I was eating oatmeal for lunch on Patriot Avenue and had a hankering for a burger. While I was at it, I could go for the biggest burger around. I had heard of the Mugshots challenge over the different times I had visited the restaurant chain, and there and then aspired to try it after school on Friday. The challenge reads on the menu as follows,

THE MUGSHOT This monster is three seasoned patties piled high with 6 strips of HICKORY SMOKED bacon, cheddar and Swiss cheese, mayo, mustard, lettuce, tomato, and red onion served with our beer battered fries, an onion ring, and a hand-battered pickle. Finish the whole plate in 12 minutes or less and it's on us plus a t-shirt! If not, 25 bucks and a stomach ache. Good luck!! NOT AVAILABLE FOR TAKE-OUT

My last meal was on Wednesday night, and I did not eat all of Thursday or Friday morning in order to clean out my stomach and make me sufficiently hungry beforehand. Drinking several bottles of water and one Arizona tea would help me practice swallowing large amounts. My two day training period consisted of research; I was watching videos of competitive eaters performing the challenge and reading articles on speed eating. Drinking large amounts of water

beforehand to keep the esophagus open and lubricated, keeping my head up straight to open the airway as much as possible, and strong chewing and fast swallowing would lead to my success. It didn't matter how much food I could get in my mouth at one time, if I couldn't chew and swallow fast enough I wouldn't make it in time.

I met up with my friends shortly after school in the parking lot of the location off Lakeland Drive. Ben Atkinson asked me what I thought my chances were, and I cockily answered him "50/50" When the waitress came to take our orders, her small chuckle at my request should have been warning enough to scare off my efforts, but I did not heed them. The thing came out and it was as big as my head. The staff member accompanied me and stated the rules such as the time limit, the fact that no one else could help me, and that I

could dissemble the burger before the timer started. I arranged my plate and dug in, and I went through the five stages of grief after the first bite.

It was an awful experience, the patties and buns were far tougher than I expected and it was much harder to chew and swallow. In my haste I was gorging as much as possible, but I knew I would not make it in time after that. It was as if my stomach was a tugboat at anchor and I had launched a hot and greasy torpedo straight at it. My only solace was the veggies of the dish, with the lettuce and tomato offering cool relief as opposed to the inferno of brown carbohydrates and proteins. I finished it out making it through the top two patties and buns, not even touching the fries or the ground floor of the burger. I opened my eyes to people clapping in support of my effort, but the applause did little mitigate how sick I was feeling. I left

the restaurant with a to go box, a heavier stomach, and lighter pockets, having learned a valuable lesson at the expense of my stomach. Don't bite off more than you can chew.



The monstrosity that is the Mugshot. Photo courtesy of Drew Laird