

= Beach Games =

" Beach Games " is the twenty @-@ third episode of the third season of the US version of The Office , and the 51st of the series . In this episode , the office goes to a nearby lake for some " beach games " . It is revealed that Michael (Steve Carell) is being interviewed for a position at Corporate and that the winner of the beach games will become regional manager . Meanwhile , Dwight (Rainn Wilson) and Angela (Angela Kinsey) sabotage Andy (Ed Helms) , and Pam (Jenna Fischer) spends her day taking notes of the office workers ' activities .

The episode was written by Jennifer Celotta and Greg Daniels and directed by Harold Ramis . Filming took place at a fake beach near Hansen Dam , as it was " the bleakest lake [they could] find . " The crew had to deal with hot temperatures during the day and " frigid " weather at night . One of Helms ' scenes involved him being trapped on a lake in a sumo wrestling outfit , forcing him to wear a harness and be pulled by a boat manned by a crew member . For the fire walk , orange and yellow gels and lava rocks were used , and gas lines were installed to produce flames .

An estimated 7 @. @ 2 million viewers watched " Beach Games " on its first American broadcast on May 10 , 2007 , resulting in the episode placing fourth for the night in its timeslot . It received mainly positive reviews from television critics , and many cited the sumo suit scenes as particular highlights . Most critics praised Pam 's speech at the end of the episode , though one found it out of character .

= = Synopsis = =

When Michael (Steve Carell) is invited to interview for a position at Dunder @-@ Mifflin corporate headquarters in New York City , he assumes he will get the job and decides to hold a Survivor @-@ like competition at Lake Scranton to determine his successor . The entire office travels to the lake by bus , except for Toby (Paul Lieberstein) , whom Michael will not allow to attend , much to Toby 's disappointment because he anticipated getting to see Pam (Jenna Fischer) wearing her bikini .

Michael selects the " tribe " captains ? Jim (John Krasinski) , Dwight (Rainn Wilson) , Andy (Ed Helms) and Stanley (Leslie David Baker) ? and instructs Pam to take detailed notes on the events of the day , which include games such as egg and spoon races and hot dog eating contests . Initially unaware of the purpose of the exercise , the employees do not all take it seriously . Once the job in New York is revealed , Andy and Dwight step up their efforts , Stanley tries to be enthusiastic but gives up , and Jim decides to interview for the same position that Michael is pursuing . Karen (Rashida Jones) also applies for the position .

To support her secret lover Dwight , Angela (Angela Kinsey) sabotages Andy , leaving him adrift in the lake in an inflatable sumo wrestling costume . Michael 's final event is a walk across hot coals . Initially , only Pam volunteers , but Michael refuses to let her walk across because she is not being considered to replace him . However , Michael cannot even bring himself to do it . Dwight throws himself on the coals , refusing to leave until he is given the job , and he writhes in agony until he is dragged off .

As a last @-@ ditch effort to salvage the day , Michael assembles a " Tribal Council " stand @-@ up comedy competition . Jim declines to participate , and reveals that he has applied for the position in New York . Separated from the group , a barefoot Pam runs across the hot coals and , feeling a new sense of confidence because of the experience , interrupts the Tribal Council to berate her colleagues for treating her poorly , citing the fact that almost no one attended her art show . She rounds on Jim , and tells him that she called off her wedding because of him , that it is " fine " that he is with someone else now , but that she misses the fun that they had as best friends before he transferred . As she runs to cool her feet in the water , the cameraman turns to Jim who is now in a blank stare , shaken by the confession .

= = Production = =

" Beach Games " was written by co @-@ executive producer Jennifer Celotta and series creator

Greg Daniels , and was directed by Harold Ramis , whose credits include the episodes " A Benihana Christmas " and " Safety Training " . Celotta and Daniels came up with the idea for the opening scene while researching medical symptoms at WebMD ; they began considering ideas for the episode 's cold open , and decided to write on what " we 're doing right now , " resulting in Michael researching symptoms . Michael 's later conversation with David Wallace set an important foundation for both the season and the series , as it established that several people would be competing for a corporate job and solidified the CFO as an important character . The actor who plays Wallace , guest star Andy Buckley , was then working at Merrill Lynch as a stockbroker .

Originally the crew sought to film at a lake that resembled Lake Scranton . However , upon arriving at one in the area they found that it was too beautiful , as they had wanted a lake that was the equivalent of the dour office : " the bleakest lake [they could] find . " Eventually , much of the episode was filmed at a fake beach at the reservoir of Hansen Dam , where it was " a thousand degrees during the day and minus 40 at night , " Celotta remarked in the DVD audio commentary . " We had tents pumping air conditioning that didn 't work all day long , " according to one crew member . And at night , the production crew set up heaters everywhere because the weather became " frigid " .

Actress Kate Flannery later said that the days of filming were extremely " hot " , and she became sick of hot dogs after eating many of them in the contest seen in the episode . Many cast members spit out the hot dogs after putting them in their mouths , an act that sometimes activated Ed Helms ' gag reflex . The cast members found the sumo suits uncomfortable , both due to the hot weather and the inability to sit down . Actress Angela Kinsey previewed before the episode broadcast that she would " forever look at John Krasinski differently , because he looked so hilarious to me " wearing his sumo suit . For the scenes of Helms floating in the lake in his sumo suit , the actor wore a harness and a fishing line that snaked out through his sleeve , the purpose being to drag him farther out on the lake . A crew member pulled him in a row boat ; the crew would film a take of the scene , and then would have to wait fifteen minutes to do it again .

To create a safe enough fire pit to allow the actors to walk on it , the crew used a " light box buried in the ground with orange and yellow gels on it , with lava rocks on top , " according to Ramis . Gas lines were also buried in the sand to supply a steady stream of flames . Many of the scenes and lines of dialogue were improvised , such as Andy throwing a rock at a duck and Jim guiding an unsuspecting Karen into the water . For Pam 's speech , Daniels and Celotta knew it was important , and discussed with Ramis for about 45 minutes about how best to shoot it . Many different takes were shot , and Celotta thought Fischer " was so amazing , take after take after take . " Ramis believed the past 28 episodes had contained a slow build @-@ up to this scene . Daniels wrote most of the speech , though Celotta did contribute some parts .

The third season DVD contains a number of deleted scenes . Notable cut scenes included Jim receiving a call informing him of the job opening , Michael annoying Pam when she 's preparing the hot dogs by telling her to grill faster , Dwight sumo wrestling with Stanley , Ryan asking to participate in the fire walk , and Andy failing to flag down a passing car .

= = Cultural references = =

On the bus , the cast sing songs such as the Kenny Rogers song " The Gambler " and the Flintstones theme song . Ramis encouraged them to sing , as he had never ridden on a bus where people did not sing . Also in the episode , Michael wears Sandals gear and a beaded necklace , a reference to his Jamaican vacation in " Back from Vacation " . According to Helms and the episode 's writers , the plot references the reality television series Survivor and The Bachelor , and The Apprentice . Before their work on The Office , the camera men used in this episode shot Survivor for four years . Several media outlets noted similarities between Michael and Jeff Probst , the host of Survivor .

= = Reception = =

The episode first aired in the U.S. on May 10 , 2007 , attracting 7 @. @ 2 million viewers and a 3 @. @ 9 / 11 ratings share among adults aged 18 to 49 . It ranked fourth in its timeslot behind episodes of Survivor : Fiji , Ugly Betty , and Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader ? . It was a special 28 @- @ minute " supersized " episode .

Entertainment Weekly columnist Abby West considered Pam 's speech to be " a terrific payoff for those of us invested (some might say too much) in the Jim @- @ Pam @- @ Karen love triangle . " West also praised other aspects of the episode , such as the fire walk and the sequences with Stanley ' to her , " everyone brought his or her A game (in hilarity , if not in effort) to the race to succeed Michael . " IGN 's Travis Fickett rated " Beach Games " 8 @. @ 5 / 10 , an indication of a " great " episode . Like West , he highlighted Stanley for praise , and also liked Helms being trapped on the lake . Fickett concluded that " while this episode 's closing scene doesn 't have the impact of Jim telling Pam he was in love with her at the end of Season 2 , it is one of those long awaited moments that we knew was coming . And Jenna Fischer , as Pam , handles it perfectly . Once again the Scranton branch is facing some big changes , and the show has us eagerly awaiting the season finale . "

Give Me My Remote writer Kath Skerry liked the cast 's scenes with the sumo suits , but saved most of her praise for Pam 's speech . She declared that it " was AMAZING . Jenna Fischer blew me away with that speech . It ? s what I have been hoping for since the first episode of this season . It didn 't end with Jim swooping in and kissing Pam but there ? s still one episode left in the season . So that ? s what we have to ponder over the next week . " Jay Black of AOLTV also enjoyed the episode . He wrote , " I thought that it was a bit more low key than some of the previous episodes (hilarious sumo outfits notwithstanding) and that suited me just fine . I thought that Michael 's ridiculousness , always a difficult balancing act , was reigned @- @ in to just this side of believable where it belongs . I thought that it was filled with a great assortment of gags , both character @- @ based and farcical . " However , Black was critical of Pam 's speech because it felt both " forced " and out of character for Pam to publicly state her feelings .