

= Team Homer =

" Team Homer " is the twelfth episode of The Simpsons ' seventh season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on January 7 , 1996 . In the episode , Homer starts a bowling team with Moe , Apu , and Otto . When Mr. Burns discovers the team was funded with his money , he insists on joining . Meanwhile , Bart 's " Down with homework " T @-@ shirt incites a student riot that leads to the implementation of a uniform dress code .

The episode was written by Mike Scully and directed by Mark Kirkland . Scully came up with the idea for it when he went bowling one day . The episode features cultural references to Mad magazine and the film Caddyshack . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from fans and television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 9 @.@ 4 , and was the third highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

Unable to afford the \$ 500 registration fee to join a bowling league , Homer and his friends ( Moe , Apu , and Otto ) go to Mr. Burns for a sponsorship . Homer sneaks into Burns office , where he finds an anesthetized Burns ( who mistakes him for the Pillsbury Doughboy ) . Homer takes this opportunity to get Burns to sign the check . Meanwhile , at school , Bart 's " Down with homework " T @-@ shirt incites a student riot , and as a result , Principal Skinner forces all students to wear uniforms in order to prevent it from happening again .

Back at the bowling alley , Homer and his friends enter the bowling league competition , calling themselves the Pin Pals . They beat three teams before moving up into second place in their league . Meanwhile , Burns recovers from his stupor and discovers the check he wrote to Homer . Burns surprises everyone when he reveals he not only isn 't mad but also wants to join the team ( replacing Otto in the team ) , but since Burns is a horrible bowler , the team is convinced they will lose the championship .

Back at school , Skinner 's dress code demoralizes the students until a rainstorm soaks through the uniforms , causing the grey color to be washed out , revealing tie @-@ dye colors that make the playful spirit of the children return . At the bowling alley , before the championship game begin , Burns gives the team new shirts . Two pins away from victory , Burns takes his turn . Otto tips over a vending machine and the vibrations help the Pin Pals win by knocking down the pins . As the team celebrates their win , Burns takes the trophy and keeps it for himself . Cheered on by his teammates , Homer attempts to break into the mansion and recover the trophy ; however , this ends disastrously when the hounds are released and catch Homer a few feet from the gate , mauling him severely .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Mike Scully . He was bowling " a lot " at the time and one day on when he was bowling he came up with the idea for " Team Homer " . The idea for the school plot came later in production when the school that Scully 's children went to was thinking of " switching over " to school uniforms . Both Scully and his children were against it so he decided to put it in the episode .

Former show runner of The Simpsons David Mirkin thought the episode was " really fun " because there were " lots of characters " in it and it featured " lots of terrific animation " . Mirkin liked that viewers could see the different characters " team up " and how they pair off . " It 's kind of cool to see them hang around like this . Particularly Homer 's group which has some nice emotion and they really comes together as a group , " Mirkin commented .

The episode was directed by Mark Kirkland . When he first read the script , he thought the challenge of this episode was that the bowling theme had already been covered in the season one episode " Life on the Fast Lane " . Since it had been done before , Kirkland felt pressure to make the bowling alley look " really good " . Kirkland and his team of The Simpsons animators at Film Roman

all went over to a local bowling alley and had lunch . They checked out the whole alley for inspiration and drew sketches . " Life on the Fast Lane " deals with Marge becoming infatuated with Jacques , a French bowling instructor . Mirkin points out that Jacques makes a brief appearance in this episode , but without a speaking role . Also appearing with non @-@ speaking roles are Mindy Simmons , Lurleen Lumpkin and Princess Kashmir , the three women who almost broke up Marge and Homer 's marriage .

Mirkin remembered the episode " very fondly " because when it was finished , the staff got customized Simpsons bowling balls , bowling bags , and Pin Pal shirts as gifts . Scully said the bowling balls were " really cool " because they were yellow and had the Simpsons logo on them .

Doris Grau , script supervisor for the show and voice of Lunchlady Doris , died on December 30 , 1995 , from respiratory failure at a hospital in Los Angeles , California . " Team Homer " was one of the last episodes to feature her voice , and included a dedication to her .

In one scene , Homer tells Marge : " We were so close to winning the championship . Now , thanks to Burns , it 's never going to happen . And I spent so much time building that trophy case . " The scene then cuts to the trophy case with an Academy Award in it that Homer has stolen . In the original Fox broadcast , the name in the inscription on the Academy Award was Haing S. Ngor . In American syndication and the season seven DVD , the name was changed to Don Ameche ( who had won for Cocoon ) . Ngor , who won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for the 1984 film The Killing Fields , was murdered on February 25 , 1996 , between the original and the syndicated broadcast . Producers were concerned the syndicated episode would imply Homer had murdered Ngor to steal the statue .

= = Cultural references = =

Bart and Milhouse buy an issue of Mad magazine . Bart also puts a Mad iron @-@ on reading " Down with Homework " on one of his T @-@ shirts , which causes controversy at school . Milhouse is shocked to see the new school uniforms , and his jaw drops , a " Woody Allen @-@ esque " type of joke . The final bowling scene is similar to the final golfing scene in the 1980 film Caddyshack . Homer references the song " Mr. Roboto " by Styx . Moe 's unsuccessful attempt to sideline Mr. Burns by hitting his leg with a crowbar is done in a similar manner to Shane Stant 's attempt in 1994 to sideline figure skater Nancy Kerrigan by physical assault . When Martin and Lisa are modeling the new grey uniforms , the song playing in the background is " Spanish Flea " , by Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass . , which had previously appeared in the third season episode " The Otto Show " .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Team Homer " finished 58th in the ratings for the week of January 1 ? 7 , 1996 , with a Nielsen rating of 9 @.@ 4 . The episode was the fourth highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following The X @-@ Files , Beverly Hills , 90210 , and Married ... With Children .

Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from fans and television critics . It was named the fifth best episode of the show by MSNBC . They praised how the episode utilized Burns 's physical weaknesses for laughs , and Homer 's line ; " I guess some people never change . Or , they quickly change and then quickly change back . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson said that to his surprise , " the dress code plot works the best " . He liked the mockery of Mad magazine and the " overemphasis on the way it disrupts the educational process " . Jacobson thought the bowling plot had plenty of " nice moments " too , " and these add up to a solid show . " Jennifer Malkowski of DVD Verdict considered the best part of the episode to be when Homer ends a phone conversation with the " highly quotable " line , " I gotta go . My damn wiener kids are listening . " The website concluded its review by giving the episode a grade of A ? . Mirkin described the episode as " excellent " , and praised Scully 's " great " script .

The episode received criticism from the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , who said that " Team

Homer " is one of their least favorite episodes . They thought the school uniform plot was " a lot more satisfying than the bowling story " They added that the scene where Martin and Lisa model the new uniforms is the highlight of the episode .