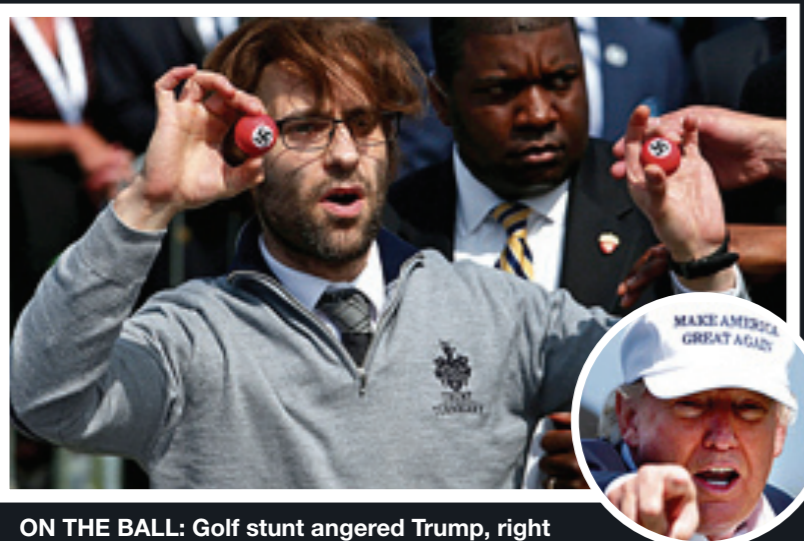


SIMON SAYS A BIG PRANK YOU TO HIS EASY TARGETS



DOLE LOTTA FUN: He interrupts May's Tory speech to give her a P45



ON THE BALL: Golf stunt angered Trump, right

Picture: TIM MERRY



FAKING IT: Simon chucks pretend dollar bills at Fifa's Blatter

THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW

SIMON BRODKIN
COMEDIAN

THE day he got a telling-off from Fifa chief Sepp Blatter is one of comic Simon Brodkin's sweetest memories.

It was Monday, July 20, 2015, and incurable prankster Simon had just interrupted a press conference to shower Blatter with fake dollar bills.

"This is for the North Korean 2026 World Cup bid!" he'd cried, in the character of his comic alter-ego, idiotic superstar footballer Jason Bent.

"What's funny is we both ended up getting sent out of the room," he chuckles, "like a couple of school-kids who'd misbehaved."

"The press conference obviously couldn't carry on with the guy surrounded in banknotes."

"So there we were, both stood outside, and he went to me, 'You should be ashamed of yourself!'"

"I told him, 'You've done a couple of things yourself that you might want to think about...!'"

Of course, Blatter is by no means the only prominent figure to have fallen victim to one of Simon's headline-

grabbing stunts. Others famously targeted have included PM Theresa May (it was Simon who interrupted her Tory conference speech a couple of years ago to hand her a fake P45) and Donald Trump, shortly before he was elected US President.

Trump was visiting his Turnberry golf course in Scotland when Simon, posing as a member of staff, managed to outwit security, sneaking past with a bag full of swastika-emblazoned golf balls.

Just as Trump began his speech, Simon stepped out of the crowd and scattered dozens of these balls in front of the podium.

This did not make him hugely popular.

"Get him out of here," Trump barked.

"Luckily, it was the Scottish police who swept in," Simon tells me, "and saved me from being handed over to US law enforcement!"

Perhaps wisely, Simon has put the pranks on hold lately (each takes weeks of almost military planning), to focus on just being himself. Or the stage version of himself. For a decade

The stunts have to be funny

Blatter was a BLAST!

now he's done stand-up in the guise of chirpy chav Lee Nelson, but he's about to strip that away for his Edinburgh Festival Fringe show, 100% Simon Brodkin.

He'll be talking instead about topics such as his childhood, his iffy parenting skills and his days as a junior doctor.

So will that be scary for him? All these years, has he effectively been hiding behind these other characters?

"Yes," he admits, "there's some truth in that. After all, when you're being yourself you're vulnerable. You're exposed."

"Obviously I've exposed myself many times in public before! But not in this way..."

If there's one aspect of Simon's new show that links to all his previous stuff - as Nelson, as Bent, as a prankster, etc. - it has to be his bare-faced

cheek. "Yes, I think there's a cheekiness that overlaps everything I do."

"Comedy needs warmth. And that includes the stunts. I certainly never want anyone I'm doing a stunt on to be frightened. I'd even like them to see the funny side themselves."

"I'm not sure Trump did. But Theresa May - my mate Theresa - made a joke about the P45 stunt just a couple of weeks ago."

"So that's clearly someone who doesn't have hate in her heart for me..."

With his other targets having included Kanye West (popping up uninvited during Kanye's 2015 Glastonbury set), Manchester City (sneaking on and warming up with the players) and Britain's Got Talent (as the Rapping Rabbi, pure genius), Simon has built up an impressive pranking CV.

And it's clear there'll be further additions, if not imminently. "The stunts have to be funny, and the target has to be right," he insists.

"No-one is off limits, although I might want to avoid going in hard with Kim Jong-un..."

When I tell him it's his shamelessness that impresses me most, that I'd never have the balls to do what he does, he replies: "It just feels normal to me."

Which I guess begs the question: does Simon Brodkin have some kind of screw loose to do this sort of stuff?

Simon smiles as he considers his response.

"Yes probably," he concludes. "Under other circumstances I'd probably be on heavy medication!"

● 100% Simon Brodkin is at The Pleasance Baby Grand in Edinburgh from August 1-24. Info and tickets at edfringe.com

STAR'S FAVOURITES

FILM: The Big Lebowski
BOOK: Oh, The Places You'll Go, by Dr Seuss (I'm a slow learner)
TV SHOW: Gomorrah
ACTOR: Jason Bateman
COMEDIAN: Richard Pryor
SPORTSPERSON: Kevin De Bruyne
SPORTS TEAM: Manchester City
SPORTING EVENT: Man City v Man United
SONG: Red, White & Blue by The Rapping Rabbi
SINGER: Bob Marley
BAND: A Tribe Called Quest
FOOD: Margherita pizza, roasted veg, egg in the middle
COLOUR: Yellow (but don't rely on that, I'm colour-blind)
DRINK: Smoothie... of your choice (let's live a little)
CITY: London / Manchester
HOLIDAY DESTINATION: Ibiza
GADGET: Sonos speakers
APP: BT Sport
SUBJECT AT SCHOOL: Biology (kicked out of the others)
FIGURE FROM HISTORY: Martin Luther King
STUNT TARGET: Anyone deserving
ANIMAL: Kitten