

The smell of U Ky's annual manure-the-plants program

The smell of the carpets at the Day's Inn (AKA, the "Why Didn't I Try For Reservations Earlier at the Tournament Hotel" Hotel)

Taking bets whether the waitress's cigarette ash will fall into your smothered, mothered, scuppered and shuttered hash browns at the Waffle House

Telling the waitress at Waffle House that you don't want the grits politely enough so as not to start yet another War Between the States

Wondering if they just bring out last year's grits when you come upon the tub of them at the Breakfast of Champions

Wondering if last year's grits were just brought out from the year before *that* when you come upon the tub of them at the Breakfast of Champions

Ducking down behind the seats when the judges are solicited for the bubble rounds

Finding out that you're debating in one of the bubble rounds in front of three judges who just ducked down behind the seats in front of you

Having only enough strikes to eliminate half of the judges who you know detest you at the root of your existence

Looking at the strike sheet and not knowing any of the judges, and mistakenly striking everyone you should have kept, and vice versa

Working 4 years to get to TOC, and going 0-6

Working 4 years to get to TOC, and your mother tells you that you can't go because it's your little brother's Bar Mitzvah that weekend, and you're not even Jewish

Having to run the Jan-Feb topic. Again. And again. And again.

Not getting to watch the Kentucky Derby for the one weekend in your life that you're actually in Kentucky on Derby weekend

The only newspaper you can find is USA Today

The only wireless connection you can find is to Jon Cruz's computer, and he's tying up the line sending photos of JWP's family to VBD, starting with when JWP was a boy (one of twins, actually, the other twin being Elvis W Patterson—EWP—who went on to become a legendary R&B performer and spokesman for the Waffle House), and when he isn't providing ex-cruz-iating coverage of the proceedings to VBD he's planning the countdown to the 2008 TOC, starting Monday at about 6:00...

