

# Reflections on Fat Bear Week

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Unbeknownst to me (until yesterday), [Fat Bear Week](#) has been a big event for the past ten years. As far as I can tell, it's like a reality show in which the contestants are bears, instead of humans. And unlike some human reality shows where the goal is to lose as much weight as possible, the goal here seems to be to gain as much weight as possible. As with other reality shows, there can be drama between contestants and – apparently because the bears really want to win – sometimes even violence.

Earlier this year – perhaps around the same time that one of the bears in the competition (32 Chunk) attacked a cub belonging to a rival bear (128 Grazer) in the Alaskan wilderness – another group of contestants were competing in another reality show in the Nevada heat. [Beast Games](#) is an upcoming reality-competition show which, despite the name, seems to involve human contestants. A few weeks ago, five of those contestants filed a [lawsuit](#) against the show's production companies.

The plaintiffs claim (among many other things) that the production companies misrepresented the number of contestants and the odds of winning, in violation of California's false advertising and contest laws. (Fat Bear Week avoided this problem by having clearly defined brackets.) We don't know whether the Beast Games were subject to "official rules," but that's typically where those types of disclosures are found. Not having a good set of rules can lead to problems. Just ask the My Pillow Guy.

Mike Lindell is a man who makes pillows that are soft to touch and claims that are hard to prove. In 2021, Lindell claimed to have proof that China interfered with the last presidential election and he launched a contest challenging competitors to "find proof that this cyber data is not valid data from the November Election." A contestant submitted proof, but Lindell refused to award the prize. Lindell ultimately [lost](#) the case because of what appeared to be [sloppy drafting](#) in the rules.

I don't know what 128 Grazer will get as a result of winning this year's competition, but that type of fame can lead to endorsement deals. Those can be tricky, too. In June, we [reported](#) about a controversy involving a hot dog eating contest sponsored by Major League Eating. The rules for the hot dog eating contest may be different than the rules for Fat Bear Week's salmon eating contest, but it seems that both contests fundamentally involve eating large quantities of food, so it's hard not to see the parallels.

Joey Chestnut – a record-holding hot dog eater – was banned from this year's competition because of his sponsorship deal with a company that makes plant-based hot dogs. Major League Eating and Chestnut disagreed as to whether he was subject to "hot dog exclusivity provisions." We've worked on sponsorship agreements related to reality competitions, but never in the man-eat-dog world of competitive eating, so we don't know what's standard here. That should have been addressed in any agreement between the parties, though.

Whether you're working on a contest or on an endorsement deal, you need to think carefully about your contracts with your contestants and endorsers. The contracts need to include clear and precise provisions explaining how things work and what each party is expected to do. They should also include provisions designed to protect you when things go wrong, such as when one contestant mauls the offspring of another contestant. (It can happen – see above.)

No animals were harmed in creating this image. It was generated by AI.