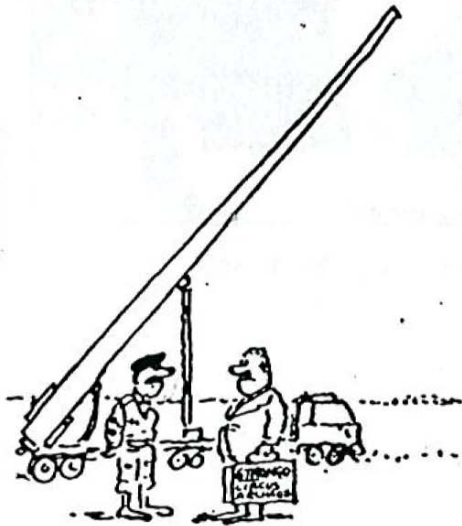


Iraq strongman says goodbye to circus

Austin

ACTUALLY, MR. STRONGO, WE WERE
LOOKING FOR A HUMAN CANNON-BALL.



John Ezard

ARCHAOS, the destructive French circus troupe whose name draws on the words anarchy and chaos, has had one of its stars lured away by the slightly more lavish display of those tendencies currently brewing in the Gulf.

The troupe, which is due to appear at the Edinburgh Festival today, was obliged to announce yesterday that it has lost its strongest man, Zanouk al Habib, aged 26. He has gone home to Iraq to be with relatives, and possibly to fight.

By repute Mr Habib is 6ft

9in tall and weighs 27 stone. Adrian Evans, the show's producer, said last night the true figures were nearer to 6ft and 17 stone.

However, he is as broad as he is tall, and Archaos is scouring Scots body-building clubs for someone who can manage his speciality act: ripping a 200 lb engine from a car and hurling it like a caber.

The show also features a mock chainsaw massacre and kamikaze ropemen. But Mr Habib's act always stood out. "He was a very big part of the show," said its spokesman, Mark Borkowski.

Mr Evans said: "After the Gulf trouble started, he

began getting aggro in bars as an Iraqi. He did not want to be the excuse for any aggravation, so he asked to go home to be with his own. We all understood.

"He was an impressive presence for his character as well as strength. He is a bit of a crazy person, a volatile wild man. Our founder Pierre Pillot-Boudin found him when he was a merchant seaman, tearing up a bar in Barcelona.

"Replacing him is quite a challenge for Scotland. We will search until we find somebody suitable, not necessarily a man. There is a woman in Paris whom we are desperately trying to trace."