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'Buy England' at Weblo

AFP [THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 2007 12:46:50 PM]

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SAN FRANCISCO: An online virtual world playfully branded "Monopoly on steroids" is offering England to the highest bidder, with the winner to be crowned king or queen.

The website Weblo.com, a reality-based virtual world launched in December 2006 by a Montreal-based firm of the same name, announced it was putting "England on auction."

Bidding begins Thursday and is expected to top 70,000 dollars by the time the auction gavel drops July 12.

California is the most costly Weblo "property" to date, bought at auction for 53,000 dollars, according to company spokesman Sean Morrow.

"We thought we could break out of the mold by not just letting someone be the president of a country, but the virtual king or queen," Morrow told AFP.

"We already have teams of Weblonians, citizens of Weblo, expressing interest." The monarch of Weblo's England not only has the opportunity for prestige and profits at his or her own Weblo profile page, they get a percentage of all financial transactions in a virtual equivalent of taxes.

Unlike Internet virtual worlds of Second Life and Entropia Universe, members of Weblo are represented by MySpace-like profile pages rather than animated characters called "avatars."

Instead of fantasy planets or islands such as those in Second Life or Entropia, Weblo virtual properties are web pages themed on places, people or things from the real world.

"The real-world element of Weblo sets us apart from other virtual worlds," Morrow said.

"People have an affinity to their home towns, schools, the houses they grew up in -- so people are registering them as profiles. With Weblo you build a profile of yourself and favorite things and have a chance to monetize it."

Weblo properties vie for visitors with updates of news, photos, video, journal entries or other content in keeping with the theme,

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