

Reading

You are going to read an extract from a book about how people succeed in sport. Choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Path to the top

Matthew Syed talks about how he became a table tennis star. At the age of 24, I became the British number-one table tennis player for the very first time.

Table tennis is a pretty big sport in the UK, with 2.4 million participants, thousands of teams, and serious riches for those who do well. But what made me special? What had marked me out for sporting greatness?

I came up with a number of factors: speed, determination, mental strength, adaptability, agility and reflexes. I had no particular advantages, having been born into a family in an ordinary suburb of an ordinary town. Mine was a triumph of individuality; a personal journey of success against the odds. This, of course, is the way that many who have reached the top in sport, or indeed in any other field, choose to tell their stories.

Many of us live in a culture that encourages this kind of individualism. The film world of Hollywood is full of such narratives, often sugarcoated with emotion. But while these stories are inspirational, and compulsively entertaining, are they true?

Here is my story in table tennis. When I was eight years old my parents, for reasons they are still unable to explain (neither of them plays table tennis), decided to buy a table tennis table and to put it in our large garage. I don't know the exact percentage, but you can imagine that there were not many youngsters of my age in my home town who possessed a full-size, tournament-specification table. Fewer still had a garage in which it could be housed full-time. This was my first bit of good fortune. My second piece of good fortune was having an older brother called Andrew who came to love table tennis as much as I did. We would play for hours in the garage after school: duelling, battling, testing each other's reflexes, experimenting with new spins, investigating new bats, inviting over friends who, although often more able in other sports, were surprised to see just how far we had advanced in table tennis. Without knowing it, we were happily acquiring thousands of hours of practice.

Mr Charters was a teacher at the local primary school, Aldryngton. He was the coach of almost all the after-school sporting clubs, the manager of the school football team, the caretaker of the badminton equipment and the organiser of school sports day.

But Charters cared about one thing above all: table tennis. He was the nation's top coach and a senior figure in the English Table Tennis Association. The other sports were just a front, an opportunity to search out sporting talent wherever it emerged so he could focus it – determinedly and exclusively – upon table tennis.

For a period, the streets around Silverdale Road, where the school was situated, produced more outstanding table tennis players than the rest of the nation combined. It seemed to go against explanation or belief. Had something spread genetically throughout the local neighbourhood without touching the surrounding roads or villages? Of course not: the success of Silverdale Road was about the coming together of factors of a similar kind to those that have, from time to time, happened in other parts of the world. In particular, all of the sporting talent was focused entirely on table tennis, and all of the potential players were encouraged by an outstanding coach. And as for me, with a table in the garage and a brother as passionate about table tennis as myself, I had a head start before I even got to Aldryngton School.

1- Why does the writer compare his story to those told in films?

- A to illustrate the interest in stories of people succeeding through their own talents
- B to suggest that the stories of real people can be made into good films
- C to complain that film-makers are not so interested in the stories of sports people
- D to show the importance of realising that everybody has a unique story to tell

2- The writer refers to the purchase of the table tennis table as 'good fortune' because

- A his parents only bought it because they recognised his talents.
- B it was not a logical item for his parents to spend their money on.
- C the garage was only just big enough for it to fit in.
- D it was an unusual hobby for a boy to have at the time.

3- Why did the brothers spend so much time playing table tennis together?

- A They knew by practising a lot they would do well later.
- B They wanted to show their friends how good they were.
- C They knew they weren't good at other sports.
- D They were inspired to compete against each other.

4- What is meant by 'the other sports were just a front' in lines 49–50?

- A The children didn't appreciate Mr Charters' efforts to improve their table tennis.
- B Mr Charters got annoyed that he had to spend time on sports other than table tennis.
- C Mr Charters used other sports to find children who might be good at table tennis.
- D Other sports Mr Charters taught were less popular with the children than table tennis.

5- What point is the writer making in the last paragraph?

- A The fact that Silverdale Road produced so many table tennis players can be explained.
- B Similar circumstances in other parts of the world have not had the same results.
- C It became clear that the success of Silverdale Road could only continue for a short time.
- D The people in surrounding villages wished they had the same sporting facilities.

6- What do we find out about the writer in this text?

- A He wishes he had had the chance to try other sports too.
- B He is grateful for the opportunities which came his way by chance.
- C He is aware that success can take some of the pleasure out of a sport.
- D He realises the importance of not getting emotional about a sport.

Reading • Part 2

Questions 6 – 10

The teenagers below are all looking for a magazine to read.
On the opposite page there are descriptions of eight magazines for young people.
Decide which magazine would be the most suitable for the following teenagers.
For questions **6-10**, mark the correct letter **(A-H)** on your answer sheet.

6



Olaf would like to read stories that people his own age have written. He is also keen on music and would like some recommendations on the best bands to listen to.

7



Becca wants to know more about the lives of famous people who frequently appear in the news. She is also interested in clothes and would like recommendations on what to wear.

8



Hiro is interested in learning more about the latest international events. He is also keen on the cinema and would like to read different opinions on what to see.

9



Gina is interested in geography and the natural world. She would also like to read articles that tell her about the lives of people from other countries.

10



Chris enjoys going to concerts and wants to find out more about the people in his favourite bands. He is also keen to read articles written by other teenagers.

Teen Magazines

- A** **Youth World** is an entertainment magazine full of ideas on what to do. It provides details of all the latest films, concerts, exhibitions and fashion shows. If you are someone who prefers to stay in, it also recommends the best DVDs to watch.
- B** **Teens Now** is a successful music magazine for teenagers that lists who is playing, where and when and how to get tickets. Interviews with well-known singers and groups as well as detailed biographies are included. It also gives its readers the chance to send in their own articles.
- C** **NS Teens** magazine is well-known for its wildlife and environmental content but it also has articles on the history and culture of people from around the world. Some of the articles are long and detailed but the magazine is also famous for its fantastic photo-journalism. There are also letters from readers as well as maps and fact sheets.
- D** Some leading journalists write for **Teen People**, a music magazine aimed at the teen market. There are interviews with new bands as well as the latest news on recordings, tours and festivals. A popular feature is the annual reader's vote for the best new band.
- E** **Top Teens** is easy to read and full of colour photographs. There are a range of different sections including those offering fashion and beauty advice. But the majority of its pages are devoted to interviews with the popular, well-known stars of cinema, music and sport.
- F** The only environmental magazine written by teenagers for teenagers is **Young WB**. Readers are invited to send their articles and photographs to the magazine's offices and material is chosen for the next issue. As well as articles about the natural world, the magazine also has many special offers and competitions.
- G** **Teenplus** is very different from the average teen magazine that simply offers articles on pop stars and fashion. This exciting new magazine informs readers about what is happening in the world through its in-depth articles on current affairs, politics and science. It also offers a variety of reviews on recent books, films and music CDs.
- H** No journalists write for **Teen Voice**. This magazine depends completely on articles sent in by its teenage readers. It gives young people the opportunity to publish their creative work, such as poems or short works of fiction or to voice their opinions on important issues. They can also write reviews of the latest music CDs.

Reading • Part 3

Questions 11 – 20

Look at the sentences below about a comedy club for young people, called *Comedy Kids*.

Read the text on the opposite page to decide if each sentence is correct or incorrect.

If it is correct, mark **A** on your answer sheet.

If it is not correct, mark **B** on your answer sheet.

- 11 *Comedy Kids* operates a number of internationally-based clubs for young people.
- 12 *Comedy Kids* comedians have had as much experience working with children as with adults.
- 13 According to John Winterton, he is the first ever young people's stand-up comedian.
- 14 John looks like most people's idea of a typical entertainer for young people.
- 15 *Comedy Kids* will hold special parties at their clubs for young people if requested.
- 16 A lot of *Comedy Kids* comedians have the right qualities for performing at young people's parties.
- 17 Guests at *Comedy Kids* parties are invited to perform if they wish.
- 18 *Comedy Kids* have discovered lots of good young comedians who have not been trained.
- 19 In a year's time there'll be more classes available for young people wanting to be comedians.
- 20 *Comedy Kids* prefer it if the young people who join them are already quite confident.

Comedy Kids



Do you enjoy watching comedy? Do all your friends at school think you tell great jokes? Then why not come and see what's happening at *Comedy Kids*?

Comedy Kids own comedy clubs in several countries that are run just for young people aged 10-15. They're real clubs with real comedians, who are just as familiar with working in adult comedy clubs as they are working with children. But don't take our word for it – come and see for yourself!

The *Comedy Kids* company was set up by John Winterton, who says that no-one had thought of being a stand-up comedian for young people until he came along. In fact, his act quickly became so popular that he soon found lots of other comedians who wanted to join his company and perform for families and young people. And if you think, as many others do, that a young people's comedian leaps on stage in a brightly-coloured costume and big red nose – think again. John usually appears dressed in a cool black jacket and trousers – more like a Hollywood movie star than a circus clown!

If you're having a party at home *Comedy Kids* can come and perform for you there at your party – just ask! Of course, it's not the same as performing on stage, so we're always looking for comedians in the clubs who are good at working with small numbers of young people – and we've discovered there aren't many of them about! But the ones we have found are brilliant. Your very own comedian will also help you to tell your guests some jokes and silly stories – and they can join in too, if they want! It'll be fun – and very different from any party you've ever had before!

Here at *Comedy Kids*, it's not just about the adults telling the jokes. We also have very short 'open spots' where young people get the chance to perform. But we've yet to find someone who can do that without preparation, so we've set up the world's first 'Comedy Classes' to teach young people how to tell jokes on stage. At the moment our classes are only monthly, but we're planning to start a number of others over the coming year. So if you want to be a comedian but don't want to wait until you grow up, this is where you can do it. And if you're creative but feel you're lacking in the confidence to speak up, we can certainly help. We'll listen to what you want to do, and try to make it happen.

So what are you waiting for? Come and join *Comedy Kids*!

Reading • Part 4

Questions 21 – 25

Read the text and questions below.

For each question, mark the correct letter **A**, **B**, **C** or **D** on your answer sheet.



Underwater research

Fourteen-year-old Miguel Diaz talks about an exciting science project

Last month I got the chance to take part in an underwater research project in an area of the Gulf of Mexico called the Flower Gardens. A team of professional researchers, led by the scientist Dr. Matt Phillips, was trying to learn more about the fish and various creatures that live in this part of the sea. The Flower Gardens are a long way from the shore and we spent three days on a boat.

The team used a piece of underwater equipment called a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) to collect information. The ROV could measure water depth and temperature and it also had a camera that sent live film back to the boat. The ROV was great fun. It was controlled by a computer on the boat, and I was allowed to operate it a few times.

However, the thing I enjoyed most was diving into the water. At first, I was quite frightened – mainly because I couldn't see land in any direction. But as soon as I jumped into the water, I wasn't afraid anymore. It was amazing to see the colourful fish swimming around and I could see all the way to the Flower Gardens, which are almost 30 metres down.

I will never forget the Flower Gardens. The trip was like a holiday but I also learnt new things about science and research projects. The team was very friendly and everyone was happy to explain what they knew about the sea. It was a great opportunity and it has made me think about my goals in life. The experience will definitely help me work harder to become a scientist.

- 21** What is Miguel Diaz doing in the text?
- A** describing the part he played in a science project
 - B** explaining how to apply for a place on a science trip
 - C** giving advice on understanding difficult areas of science
 - D** persuading others to organise their own science projects

- 22** What does Miguel say about the ROV?
- A** It was difficult to operate.
 - B** It could only go so far under water.
 - C** It was an expensive piece of equipment.
 - D** It recorded what was happening under water.

- 23** What was Miguel's attitude towards diving?
- A** His main worry was losing sight of the boat.
 - B** He enjoyed it less than other parts of the trip.
 - C** His feelings changed once he was in the water.
 - D** He was quite disappointed by the variety of fish.

- 24** What effect has the trip had on Miguel?
- A** It has changed his opinion of science.
 - B** It has improved the way he works in a team.
 - C** It has made him a lot more interested in the sea.
 - D** It has encouraged him to work towards his goals.

- 25** What might Miguel write in his diary about the trip?

A

It was very interesting working with Dr Phillips and his team but I wish someone else my age had been on the trip.

B

Going to the Flower Gardens was great fun. I now know much more about science but I realise there's still a lot more to learn.

C

The trip was like a holiday and I saw some amazing fish. The only thing I disliked was collecting information about the sea.

D

The Flower Gardens is a beautiful place but scientists are worried that pollution levels there will increase.