16 The Greatest of the Century

Pre-Reading

Think about the following questions.

1. What are your favorite sports?
2. Who are famous athletes in those sports?
3. Which of those athletes do you consider as the greatest all-around athlete?

Vocabulary Preview

Write the letter of the word or phrase with the same meaning as the underlined word.

a. choose	d. in the same way
b. do not believe	e. person who did something incredible
c. get	f. professional work

1. ___ Babe Ruth is a <u>legend</u> in baseball.
2. ___ I <u>doubt</u> that anyone will ever break the player's record.
3. ___ Nicklaus does charity work. Tiger Woods does charity work, <u>likewise</u>.
4. ___ Pelé began his soccer <u>career</u> when he was a teenager.
5. ___ The coach will <u>select</u> one player to join the All Star team.
6. ___ The winner will <u>receive</u> an award from the BBC.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

The Greatest of the Century

Track 31

As the new century began, several groups came up with the idea of selecting the greatest sports person of the 20th century. These groups included the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), *Sports Illustrated* (SI), and the World Sports Award **Organization**. Interestingly, all three named the same person as the Sportsman of the Century!

One man who was among the athletes appearing at the top of these three groups' lists was golf legend Jack Nicklaus. Certainly, no one would doubt that he was the greatest golfer of the century. His sixth Masters win in 1986 at the age of forty-six amazed golf fans all around the world. Nicklaus is also known for his **charity** work to help children in need.

The second sports legend appearing on all three lists, but not winning the top **honor**, was Pelé. This soccer star led Brazil's World Cup team to **victory** in 1958 when he was only seventeen years old. He is the only soccer player in the world to receive three World Cup winning **medals**. Over his career, Pelé personally scored more than 1,000 **goals**. In addition to his soccer fame, Pelé is also known for working to try and improve life for poor people in Brazil and around the world.

Likewise, the athlete named the Sportsman of the Century by the BBC, SI, and the World Sports Award is known for more than just his sports skills. This man spoke out against the **abuse** of **civil liberties** even to the point of having his awards in his sport taken away. Then, later in life when faced with **Parkinson's disease**, he **boldly** continued to work for his beliefs. Almost forty years before receiving the award as the Greatest, this athlete called himself the greatest. And he proved it. The Sportsman of the 20th Century without a doubt is the boxer Muhammad Ali.

Reading Time _____ minutes _____ seconds 310 words

4 *organization*: a group of people working together to do something
9 *charity*: free support or aid
12 *honor*: award; praise
12 *victory*: first place
14 *medal*: an award shaped like a coin
15 *goal*: the score awarded by putting the ball in the net in soccer
20 *abuse*: unfair or cruel treatment
20 *civil liberties*: freedom or rights of people in a society
22 *Parkinson's disease*: a nerve disease usually occurring in older people that causes shaking, slow speech, and walking without raising one's feet
23 *boldly*: bravely

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Reading Comprehension

Choose the best answer.

1. What is the focus of the reading?

a. A problem with an award
b. Important sports organizations
c. The career of the greatest sportsman
d. The winner of a prize

2. How did Nicklaus amaze golf fans?

a. By giving money to charity
b. By playing a very long game
c. By taking his name off of the list
d. By winning when he was older

3. According to the reading, what is Pelé known for, other than soccer?

a. Helping the poor
b. Speaking out for civil liberties
c. Telling people about Brazil
d. Working with children's charities

4. Which of these questions is NOT answered in the reading?

a. How many boxing matches did Ali win?
b. What did Ali call himself during his career?
c. What kind of health problem did Ali have?
d. What led to Ali's boxing award being taken away?

5. As used in the reading, what does the word "faced" mean?

a. Competed against
b. Had to deal with
c. Turned toward
d. Was in the direction of

Idiomatic Expressions

Find these idioms in the reading.

- **in need** [not having enough; poor]
  There are many families in need these days.
- **speak out against** [to publicly tell others about a problem]
  Professors sometimes get in trouble when they speak out against the government.
- **to the point of** [to the surprising end that; as far as]
  She was very upset. She was almost to the point of crying.

Fill in the blank with one of the above idioms. Change its form if necessary.

1. About fifty students who _____ the war were put in prison.

2. I saw a person _____ in the park, so I bought him lunch.

3. The distant shore became smaller and smaller, almost _____ disappearing completely.

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Summary

Fill in the blanks with the correct words or phrases.

boldly	**doubt**	**legends**
receiving	**select**	**spoke out**

Three organizations made lists to 1 _____ the Greatest Sportsman of the last century. The groups listed many 2 _____ from the world of sports, but all three amazingly chose the same person as the greatest. In addition to 3 _____ many awards in his sport over his career, this sportsman 4 _____ against the abuse of civil liberties. He also 5 _____ faced a serious disease later in his life. Without a 6 _____ , the greatest sportsman of the 20th century is Muhammad Ali.

Listening

A Little Different

Track 32

Listen to the dialog and choose the best answer.

1. What are the people talking about?

a. A French athlete
b. Ali's career
c. An interview with Pelé
d. An organization's list

2. What is the man's opinion?

a. He agrees with *L'Equipe*.
b. He finds most sports boring.
c. He has doubts about her information.
d. He thinks the magazine is wrong.

3. Why does the woman believe that he has that opinion?

a. Both athletes are famous.
b. He can't read French.
c. He is a boxer.
d. Soccer interests him more.

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Discussion

Discuss the following questions.

1. Which athlete do you know more about: Muhammad Ali, Pelé, or Jack Nicklaus?
2. Which other athletes are well known for doing charity work?
3. Who are some great athletes in boxing, soccer, or golf today?

Grammar

Comparatives and Superlatives

Comparatives are used to compare two things, and they are formed using *-er* or *more ~ (than)*. Superlatives are used to compare more than two things, and they are formed using the *-est* or *most ~*.

No one would doubt that Jack Nicklaus was the (greatest / most great) golfer of the century. Over his career, Pelé personally scored (better / more) than 1,000 goals.

Writing

Write your own short paragraph by answering the questions below.

What I Know About Ali

(1) Which athlete do you know more about: Muhammad Ali, Pelé, or Jack Nicklaus? **(2)** Where did you learn about this athlete? **(3)** What did you learn about him? **(4)** Why does this information stand out in your mind?

Example

I know more about Muhammad Ali than I do about Pelé or Jack Nicklaus. I learned about Ali's life and sports career from a book about famous athletes. From that book, I learned that Ali did not join the army because of his beliefs. This information stands out in my mind because his heavyweight boxing title was taken away from him at that time.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Vocabulary and Idiom Review

A. Choose the best word or phrase to fill in the blank.

1. The _____ of the ripe apple was soft and sweet.
   a. drug b. flesh c. legend d. organization

2. I was surprised to hear how many _____ of bananas there are in the world.
   a. civil liberties b. element c. species d. victories

3. The second-place runner will win a silver _____.
   a. goal b. honor c. medal d. pollution

4. Some terrible animal owners _____ the animals under their care by not feeding them.
   a. abuse b. doubt c. mention d. receive

5. The store _____ most of its products from China.
   a. conquered b. imported c. selected d. scored

6. It would be interesting to have a _____ in the travel industry.
   a. career b. charity c. century d. controversy

7. The mall was closed because of the snowstorm; most of the stores downtown were _____.
   a. boldly b. legally c. likewise d. typically

B. Choose the correct form of the word to fill in the blank.

8. I found an online bookstore with a great _____ of detective novels.
   a. selection b. select c. selective

9. That was _____ the worst movie I've ever seen. It was awful!
   a. doubt b. doubtful c. undoubtedly

10. The police may be called to investigate cases of _____.
    a. abuse b. abused c. abusive

LIVEWORKSHEETS