

Against the odds

I can understand a text about inspiring sporting achievements.

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1 Write the nationality adjectives for these countries.

- 1 America American
- 2 Australia _____
- 3 Brazil _____
- 4 Britain _____
- 5 Canada _____
- 6 China _____
- 7 France _____
- 8 Germany _____
- 9 Hungary _____
- 10 Italy _____
- 11 Japan _____
- 12 Poland _____
- 13 Russia _____
- 14 Slovakia _____
- 15 Spain _____
- 16 Sweden _____
- 17 Turkey _____

2 Read the texts and answer the questions. Write D (Dara), E (Emil) or B (Bonnie).

Which sportsperson ...

- 1 won three gold medals at one Olympic Games? ____
- 2 competed most recently? ____
- 3 competed in the Winter Olympics? ____
- 4 won the most gold medals? ____
- 5 had the longest Olympic career? ____

AMAZING OLYMPIANS

Dara Torres

Dara Torres was born in Los Angeles in the USA. She was part of a large family, with four older brothers and a younger sister. At school her best sport was swimming.

At the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, Dara was part of the American team and she won a gold medal in the relay. She also competed at the Olympics in 1988, when she won two medals, and 1992, when she won one gold medal. After a break of seven years without competitions, Dara won five medals at the 2000 Games in Sydney, including two gold. And amazingly, she competed again in Beijing in 2008. She won three silver medals at those games. In total, Dara won twelve Olympic medals, including four gold medals.



Reading Strategy

Make sure you answer every question in a multiple-choice task. If you are not sure of an answer, try to exclude one option and then guess between the other two. You have a 50:50 chance of being correct!

3 Read the Reading Strategy. Then choose the correct answers (a–c).

- 1 Dara Torres was part of a family with
a four children. b five children. c six children.
- 2 Dara Torres did not compete in the Olympic Games in
a 1992. b 2004. c 2008.
- 3 In how many Olympic Games did Emil Zátopek compete?
a one b two c three
- 4 In his first marathon, Emil Zátopek
a came second out of a hundred runners.
b stopped running because of an injury.
c came first and set a new record.
- 5 In how many different events did Bonnie Blair win gold?
a one b two c three
- 6 How many Olympic gold medals did she win in total?
a three b four c five

Emil Zátopek

Emil Zátopek was born in Czechoslovakia in 1922, the youngest of six children. At the age of fifteen, Emil started work at a shoe factory. The factory organised an athletics competition and Emil came second out of 100 runners. He started to train seriously, and in 1948, he competed in the London Olympics, where he won the 10,000 metres and came second in the 5,000 metres.

But his greatest achievement was at the next Olympic Games, in Helsinki in 1952. He won gold medals in the 5,000 and 10,000 metres. Then he decided to enter the marathon too. It was his first marathon ever – and he won it. He set new Olympic records in all three of his events. He competed at the 1956 Games, but didn't win any medals because he had a bad leg. He retired in 1957.



Bonnie Blair

Bonnie Blair was born in 1964 in New York, USA, and learned to ice skate when she was only two years old. Her whole family loved speed skating but Bonnie was the most talented. In 1984, Bonnie competed in the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, but she didn't win any medals. Four years later, however, she won gold in the 500 metres, and in 1992 she won gold medals in the 500 and 1,000 metres. Because of a change in the rules, the next Winter Olympics took place after only two years, in 1994. Bonnie won gold medals in the same two events. She retired from skating in 1995.

