

# A little

'All kids need is a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them.' Magic Johnson, the American basketball player, said this about children in sport. But what if a child is born without an arm or with a serious illness? Is there still hope for them? What kind of help do they need? Here are the stories of two children who had someone who believed in them.

**Lionel ('Leo') Messi** started playing football at a local club in Rosario, Argentina, at the age of five. When he was eleven he stopped growing. Doctors discovered he had a hormone problem. He needed expensive treatment.  
 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Then the director of FC Barcelona noticed the boy and invited him to move to Spain. The club promised to pay for his treatment. So Lionel and his father moved to Europe. Messi grew and trained. He started playing for the Barcelona first team before he

# Reading help, a little hope



was eighteen. Then, at the age of nineteen, he became the youngest Argentinian to play in the World Cup.  
 25 Soon he was one of the most famous footballers in the world. In 2007 Messi started a foundation which pays for medical help for poor children.

How can a girl born without a hand become a table tennis star? When **Natalia Partyka** was seven, she wanted to play Ping-Pong like her older sister.  
 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Six months after she started training, Natalia took part in the first national tournament for disabled players. After that she never looked back. The Polish table tennis player won her first international medal at the age of ten. When she was fifteen, she won gold and silver medals at the Paralympics in Athens in 2004. Four years later, in Beijing, she was one of only two athletes who took part in the Olympics and the Paralympics at the same time. 3 \_\_\_\_\_. At the 2012 Paralympics  
 40 in London Natalia won gold and bronze.



**2 Read the article. Are the statements true (T) or false (F)?**

- 1 Lionel Messi is from Brazil. ☒
- 2 Lionel Messi had a health problem when he was a child. ☐
- 3 Lionel Messi started to play for Barcelona's first team at the age of nineteen. ☐
- 4 Lionel Messi helps children in need. ☐
- 5 Natalia Partyka has got one leg. ☐
- 6 Natalia Partyka's older brother played table tennis. ☐
- 7 Natalia Partyka didn't play in the Paralympics in Beijing. ☐
- 8 Natalia Partyka won a silver medal at the Paralympics in London in 2012. ☐

**3 Read the sentences in Exercise 4 and look at the underlined words and phrases. Then match statements 1–7 below with sentences A–D.**

- 1 The sentence before is probably about a man. ☒
- 2 The sentence before is probably about a woman. ☐
- 3 The sentence before is probably about two or more people. ☐
- 4 Something was expensive. ☐
- 5 Perhaps the person did or said something unusual. ☐
- 6 The sentence before probably says something like 'one (person)' or 'the first one'. ☐
- 7 The sentence before is probably about a bad result. ☐

**4 Read the article again. Complete gaps 1–3 with sentences A–D. There is one extra sentence.**

- A Her parents weren't surprised and they helped her from the start.
- B It was the worst result in their career.
- C The other one was the South African swimmer Natalie du Toit.
- D It cost too much for his family and even for the local football club.