

READING. The Bats

THE BATS

In Argentina, the land of Messi and Maradona, everyone lives and breathes football. In every neighbourhood, kids spend hours kicking balls, hoping one day to play for a top team. So the creation of the blind football team The Bats (Los Murciélagos) wasn't a huge surprise.

Nobody, though, expected them to become one of the world's best teams in the sport. With hard work and determination, they won the 2002 Blind Football World Championship. Since then, they've won two World Championships, two Copa Americas and three Paralympic medals.

Of course, the obvious question is, how does someone without sight play football? Well, it's done by using echolocation, which is used by bats to navigate. Noises, like kicking a ball, send out sound waves, or echoes. A blind person learns to identify the size, shape and distance according to the echo he or she hears. And that's why at blind football games the spectators must be still, so the players can concentrate on the sounds of the ball, and on each other. They constantly call out "Voy" so they won't run into each other.

It is truly astonishing to see how the players manage the ball. It would be easy to forget they are blind if they didn't wear masks. You may ask why a blind football team wears masks. Well, not everyone in the team is completely blind. Since some members have partial vision, masks are worn so nobody is at a disadvantage on the playing field.



The Bats' fame has contributed to the growing focus on sports for the blind in Argentina. When the team was started in 1991, they played on a dirt field with broken nets and goalposts. Eventually, they began training at CENARD, the National Centre for High-Performance Sports. However, they could only use the field if no other team needed it. Things have come a long way and today, there is a National Football League for the Blind with 22 teams as well as development centres where blind children can play.

Once, the story of blind football players only evoked sympathy from the public. Fast forward to the present, and The Bats have achieved recognition for who they really are – high-performance athletes.



1. Read the magazine article. Then write True or False next to each sentence. Find evidence in the text to justify your answers.

1. It wasn't surprising that The Bats became successful. _____
2. Players are not allowed to make sounds during the game. _____
3. Masks are worn only by the partially blind. _____
4. At first, The Bats were not given the same opportunities as others at CENARD. _____

2. Answer the following questions.

1. Why wasn't it a surprise that there was the creation of a blind football team in Argentina?
2. Why is it important that it's quiet during the games?
3. Why are masks worn?
4. How have attitudes changed towards The Bats?

3. Find words or expressions in the text that mean the opposite of:

1. noisy (3rd paragraph):
2. equal (4th paragraph):
3. stayed the same (5th paragraph):

VOCABULARY

1. Choose the correct answer. Pay attention to the words and phrases in bold.

1. Jack's **in the lead**, with Ben running right *behind / ahead* of him!
2. We finally **beat** them after *winning / losing* every match against them this year.
3. Our school's sport **trophies** are *exhibited near the gym / include a swimming pool*.
4. The **tournament** will consist of *a large silver cup / five games*.
5. The crowd **went wild** with *excitement / boredom*.

2. Complete the sentences with the words below.

award effort let us down cheer score championship

1. It takes a lot of _____ to become a world-class athlete.
2. It really encouraged us when our fans began to _____.
3. Our team needs to _____ one more basket to win.
4. He received the _____ for Best Coach of the Year.

5. The British Open is a major golf _____.
6. Our team's best swimmer didn't show up at the competition. He really _____.

3. Rewrite the sentences using the words below. Do not change the original meaning of the sentences.

sportsmanship defeated opponents speed

1. We're playing against the Dolphins.
The Dolphins are _____.
2. How fast did Seth run?
What was _____.
3. Being respectful and fair in a game is more important than winning.
Winning is not as _____.
4. When Tom and I played tennis, he lost.
I _____.