

Team talk

I'm on my feet, team scarf raised above my head, yelling at the TV as our top scorer touches down in the closing seconds of the game. I look around at my grandpa, dad and uncle and tears sting my eyes. It's an emotional moment. Three generations of the same family united in their love for their team. I was raised on a diet of live and TV games, and team stats. Even my first party dress had the Chicago Bears logo all over it. So I can't say that I really chose the team, it chose me. But if a team or sport isn't in your family DNA, how do you know who to root for?

The most obvious route to becoming a sports fan is geographical. If there's a team or player who competes for your hometown, it creates an almost automatic affinity. You share the same space, the same history, maybe even the same accent. Local sportspeople are a source of civic pride and provoke fierce loyalty in their fans, even when the sporting performance is less than perfect. There's also a practical consideration: living in the same area as your team or homegrown hero means you actually get to see live games and follow their progress in local news.

Another reason is style. On occasions, a person can be simply so impressed by an individual sportsperson that they adopt the sport. Seeing Angelique Kerber return a seemingly impossible shot can turn a non-sports fan tennis crazy. Likewise, Usain Bolt powering along the track has made athletics fans of us all. Dream teams can also have the same effect. Now you don't need to be from the city of Barcelona to back Barca football club. Like many other soccer teams, they have developed into a brand that stands for style and success, with huge international appeal.

Some say that sport shouldn't be about style at all, but about a gut feeling that you will support players through thick and thin. Which brings me to the possibly less noble reasons for choosing a team. For any 'true' supporter, the worst kind of fans are those who jump on the bandwagon. They shout their support loudest when times are good and the top trophies are being won, but are nowhere to be seen when the bad times hit. These fair-weather fans follow a team or player through the glory days only to switch allegiance at the first sign of trouble. And they really annoy the fans who remain loyal through the inevitable highs and lows of sporting life.

If team-switching makes you a fake fan, so does peer pressure. No one should support a team or player because they are told to. Of course, if you spend time with a diehard fan of any sport, the enthusiasm starts to rub off on you. So you may find yourself developing a genuine interest and benefiting from that person's knowledge. But to be told you have to offer your support because your dad / mom / boyfriend / girlfriend does is the road to boredom and resentment. And by the way, it's always clear when a person is at a game who doesn't really want to be there.

So what about my own case? Do I consider myself a 'true' fan? Of course. Hasn't there been pressure from my family to do what they do? Well, I don't see it that way. I don't have to devote myself to their team or to sport at all. I enjoy the tight connection that being in a fan family offers me. The support we show our team is an extension of the support we show for each other. It's a kind of inheritance, as much as having my dad's nose, being good at music like my mom, or owning a ring that was my grandma's. Who wouldn't want to root for that?

Read the blog post and choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D).

- 1. What is the main purpose of the first paragraph?**
A to illustrate the difference between live sports and games on TV
B to ask the reader about their experience of being a sports fan
C to highlight the role of relatives in becoming a sports fan
D to tell an interesting story about a family who likes football

- 2. What does the writer say about being a fan of a local team or player?**
A The sportspeople don't have to play brilliantly to get huge support from the fans.
B Fans from the same area are more likely to know about the history of their club.
C It's cheaper to get to matches if you live in the same geographical area as your team.
D If you can't get to a stadium to see a game, it's easy to follow it on the news.

- 3. According to the writer, what might make a person become a sports fan?**
A being influenced by a particular brand of sports clothes
B developing an interest in a sport you have never tried before
C travelling to another country and seeing the international importance of sport
D witnessing outstanding sporting performance by a team or player

- 4. What does the writer mean when she uses the phrase 'jump on the bandwagon' in the third paragraph?**
A shout very loudly at matches, but not really understand the game
B withdraw support when a team stops being successful
C not consider yourself a true supporter of a team
D annoy people by talking about nothing else, but your team

- 5. In the fifth paragraph, the writer suggests that you can't be a true fan if you**
A ever find your team's performance boring.
B don't listen to others who have more knowledge than you.
C haven't made the choice of team voluntarily.
D don't have friends who are as enthusiastic as you.

- 6. In the final paragraph, how does the writer summarise the importance of family and sport?**
A Being under pressure from her family shows she's a true fan.
B Being fans of the same team brings the family closer together.
C Having to devote time to sport is just part of family life.
D Having the same interests as older generations is something to be proud of.