
Lionel Messi

WORKSHEET A

Wembley Stadium, London, UK, May 28, 2011, the 54th minute of the Champions League soccer final between Barcelona and Manchester United – and the ball, again, was with Lionel Messi, this time about 25 meters from the United goal. United players had been sticking to him like limpets, but now, losing concentration for a moment, they gave him a couple of meters of space. They shouldn't have: a dart forward, a fierce shot, and Messi had scored Barcelona's crucial second goal in what would eventually be a 3–1 victory.

And so Messi won his third Champions League winners' medal, to add to two FIFA World Player of the Year awards. Not bad for someone still only 23 years old.

Most soccer experts say Messi has the potential to become the best soccer player of all time – a title they usually give either to the Brazilian Pelé (who played at the highest level from the late 1950s to the early 70s) or the Argentinian Diego Maradona (late 70s to mid-90s). Some have even suggested he is *already* the greatest ever.

Born in Argentina in 1987, Messi is not only Maradona's compatriot, but has occasionally been described as his heir. There are certainly similarities: Messi is also short (1.70 m) and has an incredible ability to dribble – he can run around or through the opposition with the ball under his control, almost as if it were tied to his cleats with invisible string. There are physical differences, however: whereas Maradona was very stocky, Messi is not particularly muscular; indeed, he doesn't even look particularly athletic. When he got into the Barcelona first team at the age of 17, at first sight he looked less like a professional soccer player than a teenage fan who had come onto the field from the stands. But he gave a different impression as soon as he touched the ball.

There is a very good reason for Messi's physique. As a boy in Argentina, he was diagnosed with growth hormone deficiency and doctors believed he might not grow taller than 1.5 meters. His parents could not afford the expensive hormone treatment the doctors recommended, so they desperately hoped a major soccer club, seeing his potential, would sign him and agree to pay for it. That is exactly what happened when, in 2000, the 13-year-old Messi flew to Spain to have a trial with Barcelona. The coach watching the trial was so amazed that he wanted Messi to join the club immediately, but he didn't have a contract for him to sign. In fact, he didn't even have a piece of paper. The solution? Messi's first contract with Barcelona was written on a napkin.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Here are some simple definitions for words that appear in the text on Worksheet A. Find the words they refer to and fill in the blanks.

1. **s _ _ c _ _** (adjective): physically strong and powerful without being tall
2. **_ _ _ l** (noun): an area or structure that a ball must go into or through to score points in some sports; or the point or points that you get by putting the ball into/through it
3. **c _ m _ a _ _ _ _** (noun): someone who is from the same country as you
4. **d _ _ _ _ _ e** (verb): to find out what physical or mental problem someone has by examining them
5. **_ _ _ i _ g** (noun): thin rope, used for tying things together
6. **st _ _ _ s** (plural noun): a part of a sports stadium where people sit or stand to watch a game or event
7. **_ _ pk _ _** (noun): a piece of cloth or paper used for protecting your clothes and wiping your mouth and hands while you are eating
8. **p _ t _ _ _ _ _** (noun): the possibility to develop or achieve something in the future
9. **c _ _ _ _ l** (adjective): extremely important
10. **_ ig _** (verb): to write your full name on a document to show that you agree with what is written in it; or to officially employ someone to work for a particular organization
11. **_ _ _ _ ss _ _ n** (noun): the opinion that other people have about you because of the way that you look, speak, or behave
12. **a _ f _ _ _ _ s _ _ _ _** (phrase): when you first see something or find out about something, before you know more details
13. **l _ _ _ e _** (noun): a small sea animal that has a shell and sticks tightly to rocks
14. **d _ _ t** (noun): a sudden, quick, short movement
15. **_ _ _ ch** (noun): someone who trains a sports player or team

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

One word has been taken out of each line of the text: how many of the missing words can you remember and replace?

- (1) Wembley Stadium, London, UK, May 28, 2011, the 54th of the Champions
- (2) League soccer final Barcelona and Manchester United – and the ball, again, was
- (3) with Lionel Messi, this time about 25 meters from the United. United players had
- (4) been sticking him like limpets, but now, losing concentration for a moment, they gave
- (5) him a couple of of space. They shouldn't have: a dart forward, a fierce shot, and
- (6) Messi had Barcelona's crucial second goal in what would eventually be a
- (7) 3–1.
- (8) And so Messi his third Champions League winners' medal, to add to two
- (9) FIFA World Player of the Year awards. Not bad for someone still only 23 years.
- (10) Most soccer experts say Messi the potential to become the best soccer player
- (11) of all time – a title they usually give either to the Pelé (who played at the
- (12) highest level from the late 1950s to the early 70s) or the Diego Maradona
- (13) (late 70s to mid-90s). Some have even suggested he is *already* the ever.
- (14) in Argentina in 1987, Messi is not only Maradona's compatriot, but has
- (15) occasionally been described as heir. There are certainly similarities: Messi is also
- (16) short (1.70 m) and has an incredible ability to dribble – he can around or through the
- (17) opposition with the under his control, almost as if it were tied to his cleats with
- (18) invisible. There are physical differences, however: whereas Maradona was very
- (19) stocky, Messi not particularly muscular; indeed, he doesn't even look particularly
- (20) athletic. When he got into the Barcelona first at the age of 17, at first sight he
- (21) looked less like a professional soccer player than a teenage who had come onto the
- (22) field from the stands. But he a different impression as soon as he touched the ball.
- (23) There is a very good reason for Messi's physique. As a in Argentina, he was
- (24) diagnosed with growth hormone and doctors believed he might not grow taller
- (25) than 1.5 meters. His could not afford the expensive hormone treatment the
- (26) doctors recommended, so they desperately hoped a major soccer, seeing his
- (27) potential, would sign him and agree to pay for it. That is exactly what when, in
- (28) 2000, the 13-year-old Messi flew to to have a trial with Barcelona. The coach
- (29) watching trial was so amazed that he wanted Messi to join the club immediately, but
- (30) he didn't have a contract for him to sign. In fact, he didn't even have a of paper.
- (31) The solution? Messi's first with Barcelona was written on a napkin.