

High-tech camel racing (Mon 11 Apr, 2005)

WARM-UPS / POST-READING ACTIVITIES

CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about: high tech / camels / camel racing / child labor / robots / the Arabian Gulf countries / the desert / local heritage.

For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

ROBOT BRAINSTORM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “robot”. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

ROBOTS IN SPORT:

- a. What do you think of the idea of using robots in sport? Would it make the sport more exciting? Do we still need humans? Are there some sports that would be better than others to have robot players?
- b. In pairs / groups, talk about the rights and wrongs of replacing sports players with robots. Reach a conclusion. Change partners and explain what you talked about and the conclusion you reached.
- c. Talk about the following ideas with your new partner(s):
 - robo-goalkeepers in soccer or hockey
 - robo-bowlers/batters in cricket or robo-pitchers/hitters in baseball
 - robo-golf players to challenge Tiger Woods
 - robo-drivers to beat Michael Schumacher every time
 - robo-boxers
 - robo-jockeys to ride horses and camels
 - robo-sumo wrestlers
 - robo-table tennis players
 - Other?

OPINIONS: Talk about the following opinions based on the news article.

- a. Sport is for humans only.
- b. Robots would make things much faster and more exciting.
- c. I think the prospect of human versus robot is interesting.
- d. For some sports, like athletics, it is pointless to have robots.
- e. Robot jockeys would mean the camels ride faster and suffer more injuries.
- f. Racing any animals is cruel and should be banned.
- g. I wonder what purists think about robots in such a traditional sport.
- h. I don't like the idea. Soon sports stars will be Sony or Apple, not Ronaldo or Tiger Woods.
- i. At least there would be no doping controversies.
- j. Why not? Robots are set to become a major part of our lives.

PRE-READING IDEAS

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'age' and 'old'.

TRUE FALSE: Guess whether the following statements about the article are true or false:

- a. A new virtual reality camel racing game is set to become a bestseller. T / F
- b. Robot jockeys will replace human jockeys in the UAE. T / F
- c. Jockeys in camel racing are usually children under the age of sixteen. T / F
- d. A prototype robot jockey was tested in the desert. T / F
- e. The robot jockeys will be pre-programmed for each race. T / F
- f. Gulf countries have been under pressure to stop using child jockeys. T / F
- g. Human rights groups say there are 40,000 children racing camels. T / F
- h. Camel racing is a new tradition in the UAE. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| (a) advances | mock-up |
| (b) age-old | simultaneously |
| (c) jockeys | sturdy |
| (d) prototype | stuck to |
| (e) anticipation | grueling |
| (f) robust | developments |
| (g) punishing | reckon |
| (h) estimate | riders |
| (i) adhered | expectation |
| (j) at the same time | traditional |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (a) high-tech | perfecting the robotic jockeys |
| (b) age-old | local heritage |
| (c) test | races though desert sands |
| (d) watching with | jockeys |
| (e) working on | anticipation |
| (f) been under international | to the international regulations |
| (g) stop using child | advances |
| (h) punishing | sport of camel racing |
| (i) adhered | run |
| (j) a popular | pressure |

GAP FILL

High-tech camel racing

BNE: New high-tech _____ will be introduced to the age-old sport of camel racing in the United Arab Emirates from next year. Robot jockeys are to be used, displacing the _____ of using children under the age of sixteen. The first test run of a _____ robo-jockey took place in the UAE desert on April 10th. Watching with _____ were the UAE President, Prime Minister, Camel Racing Federation members, and racing fans. Engineers have been working on perfecting the robotic jockeys since 2002. Their challenge was to produce a lightweight, _____ and remote-controlled rider. Gulf countries have been under international pressure to stop using child jockeys, some as young as four, in the _____ races though desert sands. Human rights groups estimate there to be 40,000 children racing camels in the Gulf. A UAE spokesman, Shaikh Sultan, said: “with the production of the first generation of robot...the UAE will have _____ to the international regulations governing camel racing while at the same time preserving the traditional character of camel races as a popular local _____.”

robust
prototype
tradition
adhered
heritage
punishing
advances
anticipation

HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google’s search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on UAE. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. CHILD RACER:** Imagine you are a child camel racer. Write a letter to the Camel Racing Federation to explain why you disagree with the robots and how it will adversely affect your life.
- 4. ROBOTS IN SPORT:** Write a short article about the pros or cons of using robots in sport. Talk about your article in your next class.

DISCUSSION:

- a. What was the most interesting thing in this article?
- b. Did anything in this article surprise you?
- c. Did you want to know more about anything in this article?
- d. Do you like camels?
- e. What do you think of camel racing?
- f. Do you like or disagree with any other kinds of animal racing?
- g. How do you feel about robots in sport?
- h. Have you ever ridden a camel?
- i. What should be the minimum legal age for children to work?
- j. Should such traditional sports change in such a big way?
- k. Would you like to see a camel race in the desert?
- l. Would you like to go to the United Arab Emirates?
- m. Do you ever bet / gamble on horse racing, dog racing camel racing etc?
- n. Should animals be used in sport?
- o. In which sports is it OK to use animals?
- p. Up to 40,000 children will have no job after the robots are introduced. What will become of them?
- q. Did you like this discussion?
- r. Teacher / Student additional questions.

TEXT

High-tech camel racing

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