Winning is Killing or Hitting

by Lindsay Clandfield

This is a vocabulary and idiom lesson for intermediate and above students. The aim is to highlight the metaphorical meanings of several words and phrases related to winning and losing in sports. The emphasis is on meaning, with an activity to incorporate these expressions into use.

COURSEBOOK LINK:
Try linking this lesson in with any coursebook unit on sports.

Stage One
Write the word football on the board. Ask learners to call out words and names that they associate with football. When you have around ten words on the board, write American football and ask students to do the same. Do students know what football is called in America? (answer: soccer) Explain that in this lesson learners will be looking at language that is used to describe sports competitions, like football and American football.

Stage Two
Explain the first activity and hand out the worksheet. Learners can use dictionaries to find out the meanings of the word. If you do not have any dictionaries, ask the students to compare in pairs what words they know, then go through them. Explain that all these words are related to hitting or killing. Then draw attention to the metaphor box.

Stage Three
Check that learners are familiar with the Champions League (it is a European football league, the top teams from each country play against each other). They then read the scores and circle the correct answer. This activity also gives some practice of the passive tense. You could do a quick review of the past passive at this point if you wish.

Answers:
Manchester United *thrashed* Real Madrid three nil.
Bayern Munich were annihilated in last night's match.
Paris Saint Germain *were knocked out by*, Glasgow Celtic losing five - two.
Juventus *were beaten by* Sporting Lisbon in an exciting match which ended in overtime.

Stage Four
Have learners check their answers in pairs. Tell them that they are sports commentators for the BBC (British Broadcasting Company) and must read out their answers in their best British accent. Circulate and check. You could ask the learner with the best accent to read out the answers to the class.

Stage Five
Now direct learners' attention to the second chart, the results for the National Football Association (NFA) of the United States. Using the language from the earlier exercise, ask them to work in pairs and write four similar sentences about the results. Then repeat stage four (above) but this time tell the learners that they are American sports commentators and must give the results in their best American accent.

Stage Six
To finish off the lesson, ask learners to sit in groups of three or four and discuss the questions in exercise 8. Do some feedback on this at the end of the activity.

Winning is Killing or Hitting

1. Look at these words and check that you understand the meanings.

to knock out	to clobber
to beat	to annihilate
to thrash	to slaughter
to hammer	

METAPHOR BOX

In English, winning a competition is like *hitting* or *killing* your opponent. Losing is like *being injured*.

from the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners

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2. Look at the results for the Champions League Football tournament.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FOOTBALL RESULTS

Manchester United 3	**Real Madrid 0**
Bayern Munich 0	**Locomotiv Moscow 2**
Paris Saint Germain 2	**Glasgow Celtic 5**
Juventus 2	**Sporting Lisbon 3**

3. Circle the correct words to make the sentences true.

- Manchester United *thrashed/were thrashed by* Real Madrid three nil.

- *Bayern Munich/Locomotiv Moscow* were annihilated in last night's match.

- Paris Saint Germain *knocked out/were knocked out by* Glasgow Celtic, losing five - two.

- Juventus *beat/were beaten by* Sporting Lisbon in an exciting match which ended in extra time.

4. Work with a partner. You are a sports commentator for the BBC. Read out the sentences above in your best English accent. Does your partner have the same sentences?

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5. Look at the American National Football League (NFL) results.

AMERICAN NFL RESULTS

San Francisco 49ers 35	**Washington Redskins 7**
Green Bay Packers 35	**Chicago Bears 13**
New York Jets 14	**Oakland Raiders 0**
Miami Dolphins 23	**New York Giants 10**

6. Write four sentences to describe these results. Use the language from exercise 2 to help you.

7. You are a sports commentator for ESPN sports network. Read out your sentences in your best American accent.

8. Discuss the following questions:

- Are competitive sports like football very popular in your country? Do people "belong" to a certain team?
- Do you think sports in your country are too competitive?
- Do you think too much money is spent on sports like football?
- Do you have any of these metaphors for winning and losing in your language?