



A different ball game

Challenger characteristic: To accept differences as positive and of equal value to similarities.

It was the highlight of the animal kingdom's sporting year – the great football final between Plains United and Savannah Wanderers. Reg the Lion had been chosen to captain Plains United, while Makena the Gazelle would lead the Wanderers.

Reg looked at all the animals that roamed his territory but he always came back to the same conclusion: lions were the best. Lions were strong and brave, and worked well as a team. Yes, some animals were faster but, overall, lions came out on top, so he built his entire team around one pride.

Makena looked at all the animals of the savannah. There were so many different ones to choose from! In the end, she made her selection and the two teams took their position ready for kick-off.

Vicky the Vulture, the match referee, blew her whistle and they were off. The Plains players were strong and fierce, and knew exactly what each one was going to do. Leo used his strength to nudge Makena off the ball and passed it to Brian the Lion. Brian quickly exchanged passes with Ian and approached the goal. Defenders Terry the Elephant and Ron the Rhino couldn't catch him and Brian slotted the ball underneath Hafisa the Hippo and into the Wanderers' net. One-nil to United.

Makena gathered her players for a quick chat. 'Listen team,' she said, 'we're not lions, so don't try to be like them. Let's play to our own strengths.'

With Ozzy the Ostrich and Rita the Cheetah down the wings, the Wanderers were soon using their speed to out-run the United defenders. Rita put in a high cross that only Geoff the Giraffe could reach. He nodded it down for Deborah the Zebra, whose powerful back-kick saw the ball rocket into the back of the net.

Now, the Wanderers defence were using their strength to break up the lions' attacks. Terry even used his trunk to pick up the ball. While Vicky the Vulture was frantically flicking through the rulebook to see if it counted as handball, he blasted it forward. Hilda the Wildebeest powered through the Plains defence to make it two-one.

That's how it finished. The lions came over to congratulate the winners. Captain Reg smiled at Makena. 'That was smart,' he said. 'While I stuck to what I know, you had the wisdom to see that everyone has strengths, even if they're not the same.'

'That's kind of you,' replied Makena. 'It's only natural to value what we have in common but sometimes it's the differences that make the difference.'



Please read through the questions overleaf and help your child to write sentences to answer them.

Questions

In what way did similarities help the lions?

What differences did the Wanderers use to their advantage?

What did Reg learn from the game?
