

6.4 Reading

Sporting heroes • illness and injury • sportspeople

Glossary

jockey (*n*) = a person who rides horses in races

treatment (*n*) = something that is done to make someone who is injured or ill better

put down (*phr. v*) = when a vet painlessly kills an animal which is badly injured or because it is dangerous

disease (*n*) = an illness which affects a person, animal or plant

spectators (*n, pl*) = people watching a sporting event who are there at the event

determined (*adj*) = having a strong desire to do something, so that you will not let anyone stop you



There are many stories of sports stars who **recovered from** serious injury or illness and became champions once again. However, there is one story that tells of not one, but two sporting heroes who made an impossible dream come true. Bob Champion was a young jockey with a bright future. ¹ He went to the doctor because of his injuries and was shocked when he discovered that he had cancer. He needed medical help, and quickly. At that time, there was a new, but untested, treatment for the disease. It lasted many months and made him very weak. At times, he nearly died.

At the same time, there was a successful horse called Aldaniti. His trainer knew he was a great runner and jumper. Unfortunately, during one race, the horse suffered a serious injury. It was the sort of injury from which horses rarely make a **full recovery**. The vet advised the horse's trainer to put the horse down but the horse's owners refused. ²

By this time, Bob Champion was out of hospital. He was weak and could only just stand up. However, he was determined to get better. Slowly, he **regained his strength**. Eight months later he returned to his job as a jockey. A month after that, he rode the winning horse in a race. Soon afterwards, Aldaniti also returned to training. His trainer was very careful with him. He didn't want the horse to get hurt again.

Early the next year, both Bob Champion and Aldaniti were almost **back to full fitness**. Now, there was a new plan. Bob decided to ride Aldaniti in the Grand National, one of Britain's most famous horse races. The thousands of spectators at the race and the millions more watching on TV knew all about the pair's **battles against ill health and injury**. ³ And it was perfect. The next day, Aldaniti returned home. Thousands of people stood on the streets of the village to welcome him. Aldaniti, and Bob Champion, were real sporting heroes.