



ESL Podcast 741 – Playing in a Tournament

GLOSSARY

standings – rankings; a list of how good or strong people or teams are when compared against each other

* We played pretty well last year, but we weren't at the top of the standings.

to seed – to put an athlete or a team in a position based on the likelihood of winning

* The team is seeded 12th, but I have a feeling they're going to do better than that.

in a bracket – a drawing showing which teams will play each other, with the winners playing other winners until one final winner is left; a group of teams that compete against each other in a tournament

* It seems unfair that they're in a bracket with kids who are so much bigger than they are.

tournament – a competition to determine which athlete or team is the best; championship

* That high school usually wins the annual basketball tournament.

double-elimination – a type of tournament competition where a team that loses two games cannot win the tournament, but a team that has lost only one game could still win the tournament

* Blake was really disappointed he lost the tennis match, but he still has hope, since he's playing in a double-elimination tournament.

out of contention – not longer being considered for something; not eligible; not meeting the requirements for something

* Xanda says the interview was terrible and he's sure he's out of contention for the job.

title – the winning position in a tournament or championship

* If you want to win the title, you'll have to practice more often.

round-robin rounds – a type of tournament or championship where every team plays against every other team

* The round-robin rounds are interesting, because we get to meet all the other players, but it involves playing a lot of games.



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defending champion – the athlete or team that won a championship or tournament last year and is trying to win again this year

* Do you think the defending champion has an advantage, or does the defending champion face too much pressure to win?

to rank – to assign someone or something a position based on how good or big it is

* This city was ranked number three on a list of the most polluted cities in the country.

season – the period of time when games are played for a particular sport each year

* Christopher played football last season, but this fall he wants to play soccer instead.

injury – damage to one's body; being hurt on one's body

* Elyssa had a broken arm and wrist, a sprained ankle, and many other injuries from playing sports when she was a kid.

run-in – a disagreement with someone; a fight with someone; a disagreeable encounter

* Ever since Mark had a run-in with the police, his girlfriend's parents won't let her date him.

let's just say – a phrase used when one doesn't want to provide a lot of details and is providing only a general statement about something

* - Were the test questions confusing?

- Let's just say that all my studying was a waste of time.

clash – an argument or disagreement due to people having different opinions or beliefs about something

* How did they ever fall in love and get married, given their clashes on politics, religion, and parenting?

demanding – needing a lot of special attention and care; creating a lot of work for other people

* Finnian is a very demanding patient, always asking for soup, massages, extra blankets, special music, and more.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which type of tournament would involve the greatest number of games?
 - a) A single-elimination tournament.
 - b) A double-elimination tournament.
 - c) A round-robin tournament.
2. Which statement describes the team's performance?
 - a) Last year's performance was better than this year.
 - b) Last year's performance was weaker than this year.
 - c) Last year's performance was about the same as this year.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

title

The word "title," in this podcast, means the winning position in a tournament or championship: "College recruiters spend a lot of time talking with high school players who have won their regional title." A "title" is also a deed, or legal ownership of a piece of land and/or a building: "Were you nervous when you signed the title documents for your first home?" When talking about people, a "title" can refer to the name of one's job or the prefix that comes before one's last name: "The job doesn't pay very well, but it has a great title: 'Executive Vice-President of National Sales Management.'" Or, "After your wedding, did you ask people to use the title 'Mrs.' or did you continue to use 'Ms.'?"

clash

In this podcast, the word "clash" means an argument or disagreement due to people having different opinions or beliefs about something: "Everyone expects the politicians to bring up clashes over job creation during the next debate." A "clash" can also mean a short battle or fight: "The local police are reporting a series of clashes with rebels in the mountains." The phrase "a scheduling clash" refers to a conflict when two things are supposed to happen at the same time, but cannot: "Jacques set up a meeting for Wednesday, but I couldn't attend because I had a scheduling clash." Finally, the phrase "color clash" refers to two colors that look bad next to each other: "The paint colors they chose for their home created a terrible color clash."



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CULTURE NOTE

Types of Tournaments

In this episode, we discussed two types of tournaments: double-elimination tournaments and round-robin tournaments. But there are several other common types in U.S. sports. These include single-elimination, up and down, and consolation tournaments.

“Whereas” (while, used for contrast) the double-elimination tournament makes it possible for a team to still win the tournament even after it has lost one game, a “single-elimination tournament” makes that impossible. In a single-elimination tournament, as soon as a team loses a game, it cannot win the tournament.

An “up and down tournament” is used when there isn’t very much time, or when there aren’t enough “courts” or “fields” (the places where the game is played) for all the teams. This is a common tournament type in elementary and junior high schools. All the teams play “simultaneous” (happening at the same time) games for a specified period of time. When that time ends (even if individual games have not ended), the winners move “up” to a lower-numbered court or field and the losers move “down” to a higher-numbered court or field. When the tournament ends, the winning team is in the lowest-numbered court or field.

A “consolation” tournament allows teams to continue to play even when it is clear that they cannot win the tournament. As teams lose games in the main bracket, they are moved to a second bracket where they can continue to play against other teams that have lost games. In this type of tournament, each team gets to play at least two games.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – a



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 741: Playing in a Tournament.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 741. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English as fast as possible.

This episode is a dialogue between Irene and Kent. It uses vocabulary we would talk about in describing a formal competition or tournament. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Irene: How is your team doing in the standings?

Kent: They're seeded sixth and they're in a bracket with one of the best teams in the tournament. Our team has already lost to them.

Irene: I thought it was a double-elimination tournament.

Kent: It is. That's the only reason they're not out of contention for the title.

Irene: Why did the organizers get rid of the round-robin rounds?

Kent: I think it's because they wanted to cut down on the number of games overall. I'm not sure.

Irene: Your team is the defending champion. What happened this year? Why aren't they ranked higher?

Kent: They didn't have a very good season. There were a lot of injuries, and as the coach, I had some run-ins with a couple of the new players. Let's just say we had some clashes in personality.

Irene: Isn't there a game this afternoon?

Kent: Yeah, but I have to feed my team first. They won't play until they get what they want.



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Irene: What do they want?

Kent: Ice cream. Who knew six-year-olds could be so demanding?

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Irene saying, “How is your team doing in the standings?” The “standings” (standings – plural) means the list of how good a set of teams are. Standings always relate to the rankings: is your team in first place, in second place, in last place, and so forth. So in any competition, especially a sports competition where you have different teams playing over a long period of time, you will have standings – you will have rankings. Some will be best, some will be worst. Well, one will be best and one will be worst – you get the idea.

Kent says that his team is seeded sixth and they’re in a bracket with one of the best teams in the tournament. “To be seeded” comes from the verb “to seed” (seed), which here means that you put an athlete or a team in a certain position in a tournament so that the better the team, the more likely they are to advance in the tournament. It can be quite complicated, but basically where you are seeded in a tournament determines whom you will be playing. Kent says that his team is in a bracket with one of the best teams in the tournament. The best way to understand a bracket is to take an example. Let’s say that you have eight teams, and you want to determine who is the best among the eight teams. So you have team A play team B; team C plays team D. The winner of the A-B game plays the winner of the C-D game. And then, for the other four teams – E and F, G and H – E plays F, G plays H, and the winner of those games play each other. Then finally, the winner of the A-B-C-D “bracket” or side of the tournament plays the winner of the E-F-G-H side of the tournament. So, a “bracket” is the – you can think of it as the A and B is a bracket, or the A, B, C, and D could be considered a larger bracket or section of the tournament. Kent is saying that his team is in a bracket with one of the best teams in the tournament. So if his team is A and team B is the best team, well, he’s in a difficult bracket – or his team is. A “tournament” is just another name for a competition to determine who is the best person in this game, whatever the competition is about.

Irene says, “I thought it (meaning the tournament) was a double-elimination tournament.” There are different kinds of tournaments – different kinds of competitions to determine who is the best team or player. One kind is called a “double-elimination.” “Elimination” is when you lose and are out of the tournament. That is, you can no longer go forward. Now my example of the



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eight teams is what we would call a “single-elimination” tournament. That is, if you lose once that’s it, you don’t play anymore. In a double-elimination tournament it’s more complicated. You actually have to lose two games before you are eliminated from the tournament; that’s double-elimination.

Kent says yes, it is a double-elimination tournament. He says, “That’s the only reason they (meaning his team) is not out of contention for the title.” “To be in contention” (contention) means that you can still win; it’s still possible for you to be the champion – the best player. “To be out of contention” is the opposite; it’s to be eliminated from the tournament or to be in a place where you can no longer win first place. Kent says that his team is not out of contention for the title. The “title” here just means the winning position, first place, number one. “Title” has some other meanings in English as well; take a look at our Learning Guide for those.

So Irene then asks, “Why did the organizers (the people who organized or put the tournament together) get rid of (or eliminate) the round-robin rounds?” “Round-robin” (robin) is another kind of tournament; we’ve talked about single-elimination and double-elimination. A “round-robin” tournament is where all of the teams play each other. So A plays B, A plays C, A plays D, A plays E, F, G, and H; all of the teams play each other. It’s a much longer kind of tournament, and usually only works when there are a smaller group of teams and when you have a lot of time.

Kent says, “I think it’s because they wanted to cut down on the number of games overall.” What Kent is saying is that he believes the organizers eliminated the round-robin rounds – that is, they got rid of them – because they wanted to decrease or cut down on the number of games overall. “Overall” here means the total number of games. But then he says, “I’m not sure.”

Irene says, “Your team is the defending champion.” The “champion” is the winner, the number one position, the person who wins the tournament. “Defending” here means the person or the team that won it last time or last year. So if the Dodgers win the World Series – my favorite baseball team – next year they would be the defending champions because they won it last year. Unfortunately, they haven’t won it since I think like 1988, so they are not exactly defending champions! But if they did win last year, then they would be the defending champions this year, and if they win this year they would be the defending champions next year, and so forth. Irene asks, “What happened this year? Why aren’t they ranked higher?” That is, why isn’t his team ranked or put into a higher position in the tournament. “Rank” here is related to the idea of being seeded in a tournament.



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Kent says, “They didn’t have a very good season.” A “season” is the period of time when games are played for that particular sport. The football season is from, I don’t know, late August to, say, January. The American baseball season is from April to October. Those are the months or the time periods when the teams play. Kent said, “There were a lot of injuries (meaning a lot of players got hurt), and as the coach, I had some run-ins with a couple of the new players.” A “run-in” is a disagreement with someone, a fight with someone. “I had a run-in with my boss the other day.” That means I had a disagreement or an argument with my boss. Kent says he had a run-in with a couple of the new players on the team. He says, “Let’s just say we had some clashes in personality.” The expression “let’s just say” is used when we don’t want to give the person a lot of information about the topic; we don’t want to give them a lot of details, so we’re trying to make a general statement – a summary statement about what happened. Kent says, “Let’s just say we had some clashes in personality.” A “clash” (clash) is an argument or disagreement between two people who have different opinions or beliefs about something. “Clash” has a number of other meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations. And of course, The Clash was a famous punk rock group back in the late 70s-early 80s when I was a young person, many years ago.

Irene says, “Isn’t there a game this afternoon?” Kent says, “Yeah (yes), but I have to feed my team first (he has to give them some food). They won’t play until they get what they want.” Irene says, “What do they want?” Kent says, “Ice cream. Who knew six-year-olds could be so demanding?” “To be demanding” means to need a lot of special attention and care, which usually creates a lot of work for other people to take care of you. Of course, we find out that the team that Kent is coaching is not an adult team; it’s a group of six-year-old children.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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Irene: What do they want?

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[end of dialogue]

This episode was written by the top-ranked podcast scriptwriter in all of Hollywood, Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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