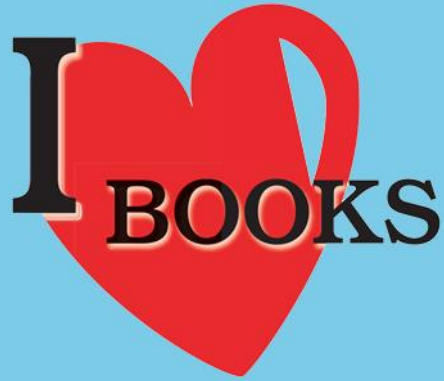




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Opening extract from
**Olympic Sport: the Whole Muscle-
Flexing Story 100% Unofficial**

Written by
Glenn Murphy

Published by
Macmillan Children's Books

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Some material in this book has previous been published in 2012
by Macmillan Children's Books in *Does Farting Make You Faster?*

This edition published 2016 by Macmillan Children's Books
an imprint of Pan Macmillan
20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR
Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-1-4472-5468-3

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library.

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

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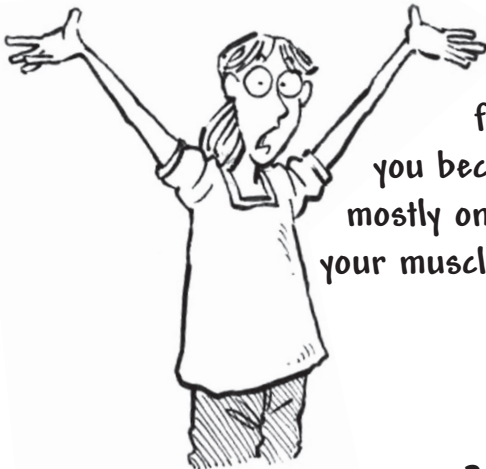
BIGGER, BETTER, FASTER, STRONGER

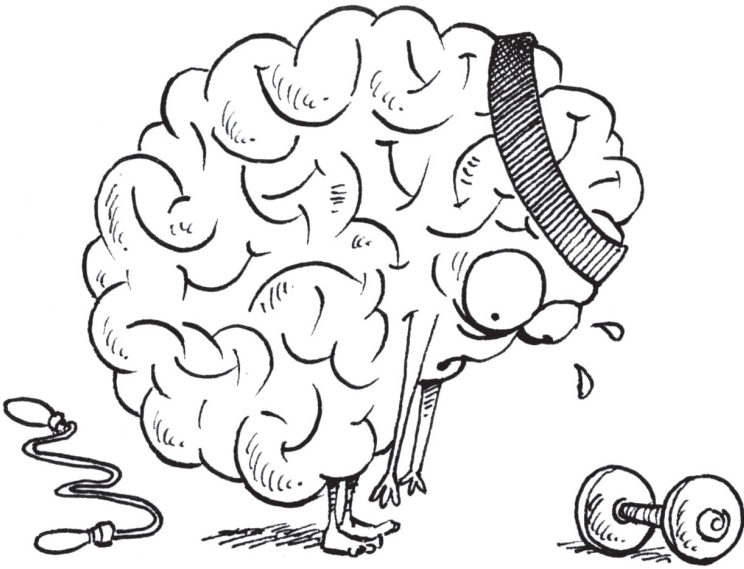
Are Olympic athletes born stronger and faster than the rest of us?

For the most part, no. All babies are born with more or less the same bone and muscle structures. It's not really the body you're born with that's important - it's what you do with it that

counts. How big, strong or fast an athlete

you become will depend mostly on how you feed and train your muscles, nerves and brain.





Is that really true?

For the most part, yes. Of course, if you suffer from a disease or growth problem, then your body may not develop quite as well, and it will be much tougher to reach the top levels of certain sports. Likewise, if you don't eat a healthy diet, or suffer from **malnutrition** (starvation or a lack of nutritious food) at a young age, then your muscles may never develop to their full size later on. But, all other things being equal, most healthy people should be able to reach Olympic levels of speed and strength with the right kind of training.

Where It All Started

The 2,700-year-old tradition of the **Olympic Games** began in **ancient Greece**. The first was held in the city of Olympia around 776 BC. In the earliest versions of the Games, the only events were footraces like **sprints** and **marathons**. But later came other events like boxing, wrestling, javelin and discus throwing.

Sporting (Dis)abilities

Until recently, it was often assumed that people with physical disabilities simply could not compete in top-level sports. But with modern training methods and technology, many disabled athletes are proving this idea false. South African sprinter **Oscar Pistorius** was born without the fibula (shin) bones in both legs, and at eleven months old had to have his legs removed from just below the knee and replaced with metal prostheses (or artificial limbs). By age thirteen, he was on the school rugby team, and went on to compete in tennis, wrestling and water polo tournaments. In 2004, he took up sprinting and, fitted with new, custom-designed carbon-fibre 'cheetah' legs, he went on to win three gold medals in the 100m, 200m and 400m events at the 2008 Paralympic Athletics World Championships. At the 2012 London Olympics he became the first amputee to compete against able-bodied athletes.

So with enough training I could run like an Olympic sprinter . . . jump like a high jumper . . . out-throw a shot putter?

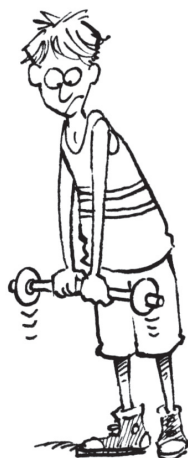
Well, depending on your height, shape and body type, you may be better suited to some sports than others.



Body type

Long and lean

Short and stocky



Suggested sport

Basketball/High Jump

Powerlifter

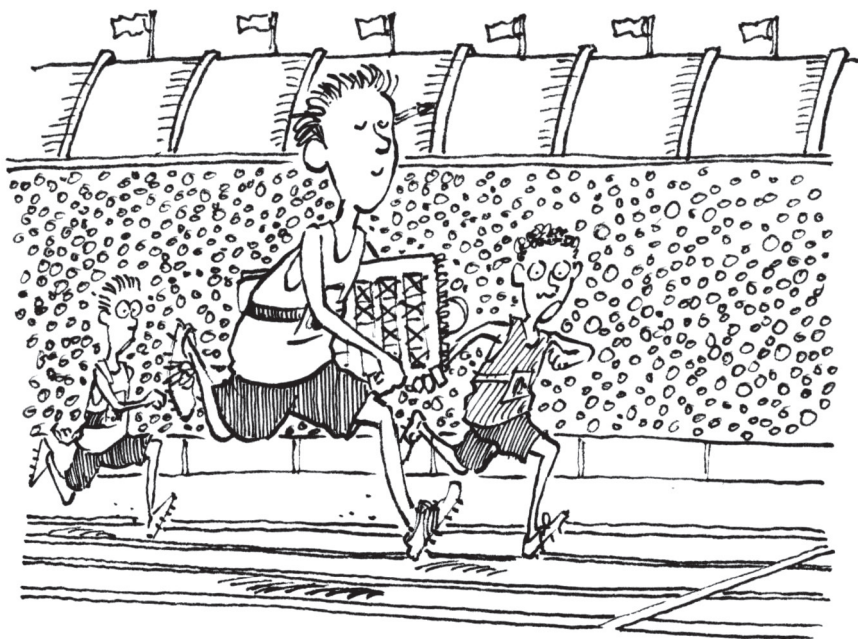
That said, there aren't that many sports in which height or weight are necessarily a big advantage. And with enough time and practice you can become good (if not great) at more or less any sport. How far you eventually go will depend partly upon your natural shape, but mostly upon your **training**.

So how long would I have to train to be a top athlete?

Well, it varies from person to person, and from sport to sport, so it's hard to say. Some experts reckon that 10,000 hours of training is enough to take you from beginner to expert athlete. That seems to be the minimum for getting to a top level in most sports.

10,000 hours? So if I start now and practise for two hours a day . . .

. . . then maybe you'll become an expert in around 5,000 days, or thirteen and a half years.



Nearly fourteen years?

Yep. Of course, you can become very good at your favourite sport with a lot less. A little sports training each week is much better than none at all, and will still make you stronger, faster, healthier and more skilled.

Most professional athletes train for several hours a day, six days a week. So, if you want to be an **Olympic champion** by the time you're twenty-five with just two hours of training a day, you need to start at age eleven!

Yikes. Better get to it, then!

No time like the present . . .

Does your body have bits especially for doing sports?

Well, no – not quite. Your body has systems for doing lots of different things, including keeping you upright, keeping you well fed and keeping you aware of your surroundings. None of these systems developed especially for doing sports. But a couple, like the musculoskeletal and nervous systems, are particularly handy for learning the physical skills needed for modern sports.

Born to Run

Our brain and bodies evolved the ability to jump and throw, not to leap over high bars or throw javelins in sporting competitions, but because physical abilities like this helped our ancestors survive. Having a well-developed musculoskeletal and nervous system was particularly important for high-energy, physical activities like running, hunting and fighting. Later on, we turned these highly developed systems to other things.

