



- Rosie:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English, I'm Rosie and with me today is Rob.
- Rob:** Hello there.
- Rosie:** In this programme, we take a look at an interesting story from this week's news...
- Rob:** ...and we teach you some useful vocabulary while we're doing it!
- Rosie:** This week's story is about racing animals. Everyone will be familiar with horse racing, but can you think of any other animals that you can race?
- Rob:** Well I know that some people race greyhounds – that's a particular breed of dog – or my granddad used to race pigeons!
- Rosie:** Did he? Well the animal we're talking about today is a lot slower than dogs or pigeons. Today we're going to be talking about snails.
- Rob:** Snails? As in the slimy creatures with a shell that live in the garden?
- Rosie:** Yes exactly. But before we delve into this weird sport, it is customary in 6 Minute English for me to ask you a quiz question!
- Rob:** Yes it is... So, is this one going to be about snails, then?
- Rosie:** Of course it is! The Giant African snail is the biggest snail in the world. But how big can it grow? Is it:
- a) 18cm long
 - b) 36cm long
 - c) 48cm long
- Rob:** I wouldn't like to come across any of those in my back garden! But I'll say b) 36cm long.
- Rosie:** Well, as ever, we will find out if you are right at the end of the programme. Now, let's get back to the story about racing snails!
- Rob:** The Olympic Games may be over for another four years, but snail racing **enthusiasts**, or fans, hope that their sport might feature as an Olympic event one day!

Rosie: The 49th World Snail Racing Championships took place this week in the town of Lagardare in south west France.

Rob: The lively village has hosted, or held, the competition for the last thirty years and attracts many tourists to the village.

Rosie: Listen to this first part of a report from BBC correspondent Chris Bockman. What word does he use to mean 'tired and moving slowly'?

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Master of ceremonies dressed in drag launches the start of the races - around 80 competitors place their snails on slippery tables with a red circle in the middle that acts as the starting point. The rules are pretty simple: the first snail that reaches the end of the table, around 70 centimetres from the centre, goes into the play offs with a final at the end. Under a searing heat of around 30 degrees centigrade, the snails, like humans, are a little sluggish.

Rosie: So, did you hear the word?

Rob: Yes, it was '**sluggish**.' It's a really good way to describe feeling tired and slow.

Rosie: And snails certainly move pretty slowly. In the report, we also heard that the master of ceremonies, or the person who introduces the competition, was dressed '**in drag**.'

Rob: That's a way to describe a man who is wearing women's clothes.

Rosie: He starts the race off. Instead of the traditional phrase "Ready, steady, go," the snail racing championships begin with "Ready, steady, slow!"

Rob: Well, I suppose snails aren't the fastest creatures in the world, and they are even slower when it's hot outside. We heard in the report that the heat was described as '**searing**' – that means it's very, very hot.

Rosie: Even though the snails only have to travel 70 centimetres, the race is definitely not a **sprint**. A sprint is a short, very fast race.

Rob: It may not be fast, but there is a very important incentive - or reason to motivate - the snails.

Rosie: In the second part of the report, we'll hear from Patrick Dubos, the mayor of the town. Listen out for the reason why a snail might want to be crowned the winner of the race...

Insert

*After the competition, we sit down for a snail feast and eat 170kg of snails. We eat all of them, except for the winner, which I **pardon**, a bit like in bull fighting.*

Rosie: So all of the snails are cooked and eaten at the end of the competition!

Rob: Well, except the winning snail, which is **pardoned**. That means it is spared or saved from being eaten! Lucky thing!

Rosie: Some people may think that it is **cruel**, or unkind, to eat the competitors.

Rob: But snails are a very popular dish in this part of the world, of course.

Rosie: Let's hear the final part of the report from Chris Bockman. What are the snails cooked in?

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And this is the sound of the cook stirring two massive steaming cauldrons full of snails cooked in ham, tomatoes and garlic. They'll be eaten and washed down with local red wine.

Rob: So all of the snails are cooked in massive cauldrons. That's a huge cooking pot.

Rosie: Well, all but one. This year's winner was a seven year old snail named Sebastian, who was given a trophy at the end of the competition.

Rob: I wonder if he'll be back to defend his title next year?

Rosie: Well, we'll just have to wait and see! Now, we're coming to the end of the programme, so it's time to find out the answer to the quiz question. I told you about the world's biggest snail, the Giant African snail. Is it:

- a) 18cm long
- b) 36cm long
- c) 48cm long

Rob: And I said b) 36cm long. So was I right?

Rosie: And you were wrong! The world's biggest snail is 18cm long and has a shell with a 9cm diameter.

Rob: That's still pretty big for a snail!

Rosie: Yes it is. That's all from us, but do join us again for more 6 Minute English from bbclearningenglish.com. Bye for now!

Rob: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

enthusiasts	fans
sluggish	tired and moving slowly
in drag	(a man) wearing women's clothing
searing	intense
sprint	a short, fast race
pardoned	excused from a particular fate
cruel	painful, unkind

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