

Niger Wrestlers Face Off in Championship Event

In this video from Al Jazeera English they take a look at wrestling in Niger where it has become a national sport. The sport is so important in the country that some wrestlers use "sorcerers" to help them win!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBCvQ66y8vM>

Warm-Up Questions

Do you prefer to watch sport, play sport or neither?

Have you ever been to a sporting event? What?

Have you ever participated in a sporting event? What?

What do you do to prepare or for good luck before a test, interview or event?

Listening Questions

How many teams participate in the competition?

When did wrestling become a national sport in Niger?

How many people in each team?

What do the sorcerers do?

How much money does the winner get?

Transcript

In Niger's second largest city, Zinder, an event that is as much about culture and pride as it is competition. This is the national championships of traditional wrestling, held once every year. Eight teams representing each of Niger's eight provinces have come together to compete in front of thousands of fans.

This traditional sport dates back to harvesting season when villagers used to fight after collecting their crops. With the arrival of the military council in 1975 they thought that wrestling would be the sport that brings all the youths together and a national competition was introduced.

Teams of fifteen wrestlers are helped by their coaches, and for some, their sorcerers. The role of the sorcerers is to write and play spells on their wrestlers and perform rituals prior to each fight. But different competitors have their own theories on how to best achieve success.

This sport requires physical strength, good training and an excellent cleric.

Some wrestlers resort to sorcerers who resort to black magic and jin but we rely only on the holy Koran which is alive with worldly secrets.

For those who can't make it to the stadium this is very much a television event as well.

Both viewers and spectators saw home province Zinder win this year's title after beating the defending champions. Niger's Prime Minister Brigi Rafini was on hand to present the victors sword as long as a \$20,000 dollar check. And from there it was time to celebrate with the people of Zinder and to start to plan how to wrestle back the trophy again next year.

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