

Sayings About Sports (Part 2)

(Story words: ball, court, pool, racing, race, marathon)

In tennis, people take turns serving and returning balls on a court which is divided by a net. Balls are either on one side of the court or the other. The phrase, “The ball is in his court,” means that it is the other person’s turn to act or respond. People may say, “I have not reached out to Frank again about dinner; after all, the ball is in his court.” People often have a firm idea about whose turn it is to make a text or call and may often wait for the person whose turn it is to make the next move.

When playing pool, players score by hitting balls (which have numbers on them) and “sinking them” into the pockets of the pool table. In some games, to score you must first “call the shot” by predicting where the ball will go, saying something like, “Three ball in the corner pocket.” When people say that someone is “calling the shots,” they are saying that a person is directing the plans. For example, someone might say, “Meg is calling the

shots for the fundraiser: the bake sale will be Friday and the cake walk will be Saturday, rain or shine.”

There are also sayings that refer to horse racing (which in the past was more popular than today). When people say something is a “photo finish” or “down to the wire” they are referring to the end of a horse race. Horses are so fast and run so close together that it is hard to see which horse finishes first. In the old days, they strung a wire across the finish line to help them detect the winner. Often a horse would win “by a nose.”

When competitors are very even, people say that the outcome will go “down to the wire.” For example, if two very skilled firms are competing for the same contract, someone might say something like, “Winning the contract will go down to the wire.” Or, “I think Widder Incorporated has it by a nose.”

People also run in races, and these races can be short or long. A sprint may be 100 or 200 meters, whereas a

marathon is 26.2 miles. While a runner runs “all out” in a sprint, runners should not run “all out” in a marathon, or they will run out of steam before the end. People use the phrase, “This is a marathon not a sprint,” to express the idea that when doing a long, hard project you have to be careful to conserve some power and not get too tired out.