

SWIMMING'S STRANGEST RECORDS

The Enhanced Games, the Supersuit Arms Race, and the Sport of Finswimming

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____



*Greek swimmer Kristian Gkolomeev celebrates his headline-making 50m freestyle swim at the 2026 Enhanced Games.
(Photo: Wired)*

PART 1 — Key Vocabulary

Study these terms carefully. They appear throughout the reading passages and exercises below.

Term	Definition
<i>enhancement</i>	an improvement to physical ability or performance, especially through drugs, technology, or medical intervention
<i>controversial</i>	causing strong public disagreement or debate, often about ethics or fairness
<i>buoyancy</i>	the ability of an object or body to float or rise more easily in water
<i>drag</i>	the resistance a body experiences while moving through water or air, which slows it down
<i>compression</i>	the tight, supportive fit of a garment against the body, sometimes used to improve performance
<i>incentive</i>	something, often a financial reward, that motivates a person to take a particular action

Term	Definition
<i>governing body</i>	an official organization with the authority to make and enforce the rules of a sport
<i>unofficial</i>	not formally recognized or certified by an official governing body, even if it actually happened
<i>propulsion</i>	the force that drives a body or object forward, especially through water
<i>apnea</i>	the practice of voluntarily holding one's breath, especially while swimming or diving underwater
<i>arms race</i>	a competitive escalation between rivals, each trying to out-develop the other with new advantages
<i>legacy</i>	the lasting impact or influence that a person, event, or era leaves behind

PART 2 — Vocabulary Practice

Match each term on the left to its correct definition on the right.

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. buoyancy | A. resistance a body faces moving through water |
| 2. drag | B. the ability to float or rise more easily in water |
| 3. compression | C. an official organization that enforces a sport's rules |
| 4. governing body | D. not formally recognized by an official body |
| 5. unofficial | E. the tight, supportive fit of a performance garment |
| 6. legacy | F. the lasting impact an era or event leaves behind |

Fill in the blank with the correct vocabulary word.

- The Enhanced Games allow athletes to use medically supervised _____ that would get them banned from the Olympics.
- Critics called the full-body 2008 racing suits _____, arguing they gave some swimmers an unfair advantage over others.
- The suits worked partly by increasing _____, helping swimmers sit higher and flatter in the water.
- Because of the banned substances involved, Kristian Gkolomeev's fast time will remain an _____ mark rather than a recognized world record.
- FINA, swimming's international _____, banned full-body suits starting in 2010.
- The suit era of 2008-2009 is often described as an _____, with brands competing to build the fastest possible fabric.

PART 3 — Reading Passage 1: The Enhanced Games

On May 24, 2026, an unusual sporting event took place in Las Vegas, Nevada. Called the Enhanced Games, it welcomed athletes competing in swimming, track and field, and weightlifting under a rule no major sporting body had ever allowed: the open, medically supervised use of performance-enhancing drugs. Founded by entrepreneur Aron D'Souza, the event promised huge cash incentives, including a \$1 million bonus for any athlete who broke a world record. Supporters described it as a bold experiment in bodily autonomy, arguing that adults should be free to choose what substances they put in their own bodies under proper medical supervision. Critics called it something closer to a "steroid Olympics," warning that normalizing enhancement at the elite level could pressure ordinary athletes, and even teenagers, to take dangerous risks with their health.

Swimming produced the Games' most talked-about moment. Greek swimmer Kristian Gkolomeev, a former Olympian, swam the 50-meter freestyle in 20.81 seconds, touching down faster than the existing world record of 20.88 seconds. The performance earned Gkolomeev his million-dollar bonus and made headlines around the world. It also came with an asterisk: because his swim involved both banned substances and a swimsuit not approved by swimming's international governing body, the time will never be recognized as an official world record. Elsewhere at the event, results were far less dramatic. Track stars including Fred Kerley failed to break their own target records, and organizers acknowledged that despite the promise of enhancement, most competitors simply raced close to their normal personal bests.

The Enhanced Games reignited a debate that has followed swimming, and sports in general, for decades: where exactly should the line be drawn between training smart, using better equipment, and altering the human body itself? Supporters of traditional, drug-tested competition argue that removing anti-doping rules removes the very thing that makes elite sport meaningful — a fair test of what a human body can do unaided. Enhanced Games organizers counter that regulation, not prohibition, is the safer path forward, since athletes already use enhancement in secret without medical oversight. Whichever side is right, one swimmer's asterisked 20.81 seconds has ensured the debate will not go away quietly.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is the Enhanced Games, and what rule makes it different from other major sporting events?

2. What incentive did organizers offer athletes who broke a world record, and who earned it in swimming?

3. Why won't Kristian Gkolomeev's 50-meter freestyle time be recognized as an official world record?

4. According to the passage, how did most other athletes perform at the event, compared to expectations?

5. What argument do supporters of the Enhanced Games make in favor of allowing performance-enhancing drugs?

6. What argument do critics make against the Enhanced Games, according to the passage?

PART 4 — Reading Passage 2: The Supersuit Arms Race



Australia's Eamon Sullivan and the USA's Michael Phelps on the blocks in full-body polyurethane suits, 2008. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Long before the Enhanced Games, swimming lived through a different kind of controversy: an arms race not over drugs, but over fabric. In February 2008, Speedo unveiled the LZR Racer, a full-body suit built from an ultra-lightweight, water-resistant material reinforced with rigid polyurethane panels. The suit reduced drag, increased buoyancy, and effectively compressed a swimmer's body into a more hydrodynamic shape. At that summer's Beijing Olympics, roughly 94 percent of swimming races were won by athletes wearing the LZR Racer or a suit like it. World records fell at a pace nobody had seen before, and other manufacturers scrambled to release polyurethane suits of their own, each one claiming to shave off a few more hundredths of a second.

The following year made the controversy impossible to ignore. At the 2009 World Championships in Rome, swimmers wearing the latest generation of high-tech suits broke 43 world records at a single meet — an almost unbelievable number for a sport where records typically fall by fractions of a percent. Coaches, athletes, and journalists began calling the suits "technological doping," arguing that a swimmer's equipment, not their training or talent, had become the biggest factor separating winners from everyone else. Some competitors without access to the newest suits found themselves unable to compete on a level playing field, no matter how hard they trained.

FINA, swimming's international governing body, responded by banning full-body polyurethane suits starting January 1, 2010, restricting men to knee-length suits and women to shoulder-to-knee designs made only of textile material. The decision instantly changed the sport, and the results proved lasting: many records set during the 2008-2009 supersuit era stood untouched for over a decade, some for more than fifteen years, as swimmers using ordinary suits struggled to match times that technology, not just muscle, had helped produce. Even now, a handful of those marks remain among the oldest standing records in the sport — a strange legacy for a controversy that lasted barely two years.

True or False

Write T for True or F for False.

1. The LZR Racer was released by Speedo in February 2008. T / F
2. The suit era's controversy was mainly about banned drugs, not equipment. T / F
3. At the 2009 World Championships in Rome, swimmers broke 43 world records at one meet. T / F
4. FINA banned full-body polyurethane suits starting in 2010. T / F
5. Every world record from the supersuit era was broken again within a year of the ban. T / F
6. The passage describes some supersuit-era records as remaining unbroken for more than a decade. T / F

Comprehension Questions

1. What made the LZR Racer different from a normal swimsuit, according to the passage?

2. What happened at the 2008 Beijing Olympics that showed the suit's impact on the sport?

3. Why did some people call the high-tech suits "technological doping"?

4. What specific rule did FINA introduce starting in 2010?

5. According to the passage, what happened to many world records set during the supersuit era after the ban?

6. Why might the passage call this a "strange legacy for a controversy that lasted barely two years"?

PART 5 — Fill in the Blank

Use the word bank to complete each sentence. Use each word only once.

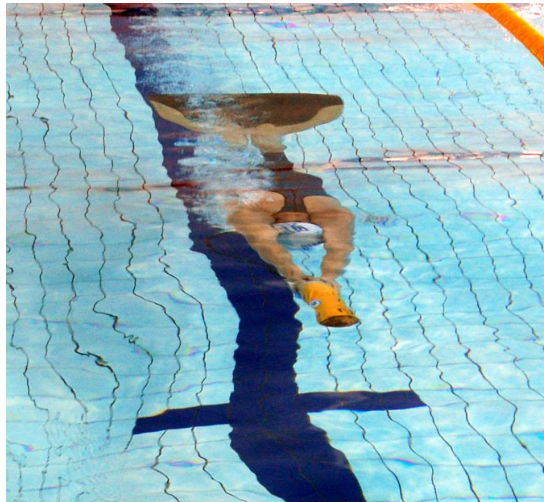
*enhancement · controversial · buoyancy · drag · compression · incentive · governing body · unofficial
· propulsion · apnea · arms race · legacy*

1. A finswimmer relies almost entirely on the _____ generated by a single large monofin instead of a normal flutter kick.

2. Some finswimming disciplines require swimmers to practice _____, holding their breath underwater for an entire length of the pool.

3. CMAS, the sport's international _____, has overseen finswimming competitions since the 1960s.
4. Even though it produces speeds far faster than regular swimming, finswimming remains a relatively _____ sport that most casual fans have never heard of.
5. Whether it's a banned suit or a banned substance, sports keep returning to the same debate about where fair _____ ends and cheating begins.
6. For a sport competing for wider recognition, being excluded from the Olympics has become an unwanted part of finswimming's _____.

PART 6 — Reading Passage 3: Finswimming



A finswimmer races using a monofin — sometimes called the "Formula 1 of swimming." (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Not every swimming sport gets an Olympic stage — and few illustrate that better than finswimming. Governed internationally by CMAS (the World Underwater Federation), founded in 1959 by ocean explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau and others, finswimming replaces the flutter kick of normal swimming with large rubber fins, dramatically increasing propulsion through the water. In its most striking version, called monofin swimming, a single large fin binds both feet together, and swimmers move through the water with a powerful, dolphin-like undulation rather than an alternating kick. The result is startling speed: top finswimmers can cover a pool significantly faster than the best Olympic freestyle swimmers, earning the sport an informal nickname among fans — the "Formula 1 of swimming."

Finswimming is organized into several distinct disciplines. Surface finswimming looks closest to a normal swim race, with a snorkel allowing swimmers to breathe without lifting their heads. Apnea finswimming removes the snorkel entirely, requiring athletes to hold their breath for the length of the race, testing lung capacity as much as raw speed. Immersion finswimming takes the sport underwater completely, with swimmers wearing a compact air tank and mask to swim below the surface for the entire distance, resurfacing only at the finish. Each discipline demands a different balance of strength, technique, and, in the case of apnea events, the ability to perform under real physical stress from holding one's breath.

Despite its speed and its long history — finswimming has been part of the World Games since 1981 and boasts competitions in more than 130 countries — the sport has never made it into the Olympic Games. Its

close resemblance to conventional swimming has made Olympic organizers hesitant to add what some see as a variation of an existing sport rather than something entirely new. Advocates argue that finswimming's speed, its distinct equipment, and its dedicated global community make it more than deserving of a spot on the world's biggest stage. For now, though, finswimmers keep setting records that most casual sports fans will simply never see.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is CMAS, and when and by whom was it founded?

2. How does monofin swimming differ physically from a normal swimming stroke?

3. What are the three finswimming disciplines described in the passage, and how does each differ?

4. According to the passage, why has finswimming never been added to the Olympic Games?

5. What evidence does the passage give that finswimming is a well-established, global sport?

PART 7 — Discussion Questions

Discuss with a partner or your class. There are no wrong answers — support your view with reasoning and examples.

1. Do you think events like the Enhanced Games should exist? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think the supersuit era caused such intense controversy compared to other equipment upgrades in sports history?
3. Is it fair that some of swimming's oldest surviving records were set using suits that are now banned? Why or why not?
4. What is the difference between an athlete using better equipment (like a faster suit) and an athlete using performance-enhancing drugs? Do you think both should be treated the same way by sports rules?
5. Should finswimming be added to the Olympics? What would need to change for that to happen?
6. What responsibility, if any, do sports federations have to protect the meaning of a "fair" record?

PART 8 — Opinion Essay

Prompt: Swimming has repeatedly faced controversy over what should count as a fair competitive advantage — from banned suits to banned substances to sports left out of the Olympics altogether. Using evidence from the passages above, write an essay arguing where you believe the line should be drawn between fair innovation and unfair advantage in sports. Write at least three paragraphs: an introduction with a clear thesis, at least one body paragraph drawing on specific details from the passages, and a conclusion

that addresses at least one counterargument to your position.

Sources

Wikipedia, "Enhanced Games" and "LZR Racer" · Wired, "A Swimmer Broke a World Record at the 'Steroid Olympics'" · Enhanced.com, official newsroom coverage · Yahoo Sports, Enhanced Games results coverage · Smithsonian Lemelson Center, "The Impact of Invention on Sport" · Swimming World Magazine, retrospectives on the full-body tech suit era · SwimSwam, coverage of post-ban world records · CMAS.org, "Fun Facts" history of finswimming · Wikipedia, "Finswimming"

Worksheet for educational use — 18K English · 18kenglish.com

ANSWER KEY — SWIMMING'S STRANGEST RECORDS

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Part 2 — Vocabulary Matching

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. B — the ability to float or rise more easily in water | 2. A — resistance a body faces moving through water |
| 3. E — the tight, supportive fit of a performance garment | 4. C — an official organization that enforces a sport's rules |
| 5. D — not formally recognized by an official body | 6. F — the lasting impact an era or event leaves behind |

Part 2 — Fill in the Blank

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. enhancement | 2. controversial |
| 3. buoyancy | 4. unofficial |
| 5. governing body | 6. arms race |

Part 3 — Comprehension: Reading Passage 1 (Enhanced Games)

1. A 2026 sporting event that openly allows medically supervised performance-enhancing drugs, unlike any major sporting body.
2. A \$1 million bonus for breaking a world record; swimmer Kristian Gkolomeev earned it in the 50m freestyle.
3. Because his swim involved both banned substances and a non-approved swimsuit, so it can't be certified by swimming's governing body.
4. Most other athletes performed close to their normal personal bests rather than the dramatic results organizers expected.
5. That adults should have bodily autonomy to choose enhancement under medical supervision, since athletes already do it in secret.
6. That normalizing enhancement could pressure ordinary athletes, even teenagers, to take dangerous health risks.

Part 4 — True or False

1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. F 6. T

Part 4 — Comprehension: Reading Passage 2 (Supersuits)

1. It used an ultra-lightweight, water-resistant fabric with rigid polyurethane panels that reduced drag and boosted buoyancy.
2. About 94 percent of swimming races at the Beijing Olympics were won by swimmers wearing the LZR Racer or a similar suit.
3. Because equipment, rather than training or talent, seemed to be the biggest factor separating winners from everyone else.

4. FINA banned full-body polyurethane suits, limiting men to knee-length and women to shoulder-to-knee textile suits.
5. Many of those records stood untouched for over a decade, some for more than fifteen years.
6. Because a technology-driven controversy lasting barely two years left records that outlasted it by well over a decade.

Part 5 — Fill in the Blank

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. propulsion | 2. apnea |
| 3. governing body | 4. unofficial |
| 5. enhancement | 6. legacy |

Part 6 — Comprehension: Reading Passage 3 (Finswimming)

1. CMAS, the World Underwater Federation, founded in 1959 by Jacques-Yves Cousteau and others.
2. It replaces the alternating flutter kick with a single large monofin and a powerful, dolphin-like undulation.
3. Surface (uses a snorkel, closest to normal swimming), apnea (no snorkel, holds breath), and immersion (full tank and mask, swims fully underwater).
4. Its close resemblance to conventional swimming has made Olympic organizers hesitant to add it as a variation of an existing sport.
5. It has been part of the World Games since 1981 and has competitions in more than 130 countries.

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STUDENT ANSWER SHEET

Swimming's Strangest Records

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Record all answers below. For Parts 7 and 8, use the space on your main worksheet.

PART 2A — Vocabulary Matching (write the letter)

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

PART 2B — Fill in the Blank

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

PART 3 — Comprehension: Passage 1 (Enhanced Games)

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

PART 4 — True or False

- | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. T / F | 2. T / F | 3. T / F |
| 4. T / F | 5. T / F | 6. T / F |

PART 4 — Comprehension: Passage 2 (Supersuits)

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

PART 5 — Fill in the Blank

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

PART 6 — Comprehension: Passage 3 (Finswimming)

1. _____

4. _____

2. _____

5. _____

3. _____

Parts 7 and 8 — use the space provided in the main worksheet · 18K English · 18kenglish.com

ANSWER SHEET — ANSWER KEY

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PART 2A — Matching

1. B 2. A 3. E 4. C 5. D 6. F

PART 2B — Fill in the Blank

1. enhancement 2. controversial 3. buoyancy 4. unofficial 5. governing body 6. arms race

PART 3 — Comprehension: Passage 1 (Enhanced Games)

1. An event openly allowing medically supervised PEDs. 2. \$1M bonus for a world record — earned by Kristian Gkolomeev. 3. Banned substances + a non-approved suit make it uncertifiable. 4. Most competed close to personal bests, not dramatically better. 5. Bodily autonomy under medical supervision. 6. Could pressure ordinary athletes/teens into risky enhancement.

PART 4 — True or False

1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. F 6. T

PART 4 — Comprehension: Passage 2 (Supersuits)

1. Ultra-light fabric + rigid polyurethane panels cut drag, boosted buoyancy. 2. ~94% of Beijing Olympic swimmers won in the suit. 3. Equipment, not talent, seemed to decide winners. 4. FINA banned full-body suits, limiting length/material from 2010. 5. Many stood over a decade, some 15+ years. 6. A two-year controversy left records that outlasted it by over a decade.

PART 5 — Fill in the Blank

1. propulsion 2. apnea 3. governing body 4. unofficial 5. enhancement 6. legacy

PART 6 — Comprehension: Passage 3 (Finswimming)

1. CMAS, founded 1959 by Jacques-Yves Cousteau and others. 2. Single monofin + dolphin-like undulation instead of alternating kick. 3. Surface (snorkel), apnea (no snorkel, breath-holding), immersion (tank, fully underwater). 4. Too similar to existing swimming for Olympic organizers. 5. World Games since 1981; competitions in 130+ countries.

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