

EXERCISES IN
**Work It
Out!**

The Most Decorated Gymnast of All Time

Simone Biles

Nonostante la sua giovane età, Biles è la ginnasta che ha vinto più medaglie nella storia. Con la solita grinta, ora si allena per raggiungere nuove mete durante le prossime Olimpiadi di Tokyo, dove continuerà a stupire il pubblico con i doppi salti mortali che solo lei riesce a fare.

UPPER INTERMEDIATE **B2**

ON CD **6**

GLOSSARY

- 1 to achieve:** raggiungere
- 2 milestones:** grandi traguardi
- 3 siblings:** fratelli (e sorelle)

US gymnast Simone Biles has achieved¹ milestones² in sport. Last October, she won five gold medals at the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Stuttgart, Germany, becoming **the most decorated athlete in the history of gymnastics**, with a total of twenty-five gold medals.

TALENT

Born in Columbus, Ohio, Biles and her three **siblings**³ spent periods of their childhood in **foster care**⁴, before Biles

was adopted by her grandparents. She showed extraordinary talent for gymnastics as a child, and was **home-schooled**⁵ while she completed her training. By the age of sixteen she had become a world **all-around**⁶ gymnastics champion.

SIGNATURE MOVES

Just 4 feet 8 inches tall⁷ but **powerfully built**⁸, twenty-two year-old Biles shows confidence and calm on the **beam**⁹, the **bars**¹⁰ or the **vault**¹¹. Her ability to **flip**¹² in the air and **land**¹³ with incredible **ease**¹⁴



Clockwise from left: Biles on the beam at the Artistic Gymnastics World Championships in Stuttgart in 2019; performing on the floor at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro; taking a selfie with a fan (above).

impresses judges, and her floor exercise routines are outstanding¹⁵. Biles even had two signature moves¹⁶ named after her¹⁷: the Biles and Biles II.

ME TOO

The gymnast has also shown great courage in other contexts. After taking a year's break¹⁸ in 2017, citing the immense pressure of the sport, the following year she spoke out¹⁹ about having been sexually abused by the former US gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar. At the time²⁰, Nas-

sar was already serving a 175-year prison sentence after pleading guilty²¹ to seven counts²² of sexual assault of minors. He is accused of many more.

POSITIVE ROLE MODEL

Biles came back from this trauma stronger than ever. Her optimism, determination and drive²³ are an inspiration to young athletes from all over the world. She also places emphasis on a balanced life however, and believes it is important to develop²⁴ activities outside the gym.

NEXT CHALLENGE

Having won four gold medals and one bronze at the last Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Biles is currently preparing for Tokyo 2020, which, she has said, will be her last Olympic Games. Everybody is looking forward to seeing what the brilliant and brave gymnast is capable of. ☺

GLOSSARY

- 4 **foster care:** affido
- 5 **to home-school:** studiare a casa
- 6 **all-around:** concorso completo individuale
- 7 **4 feet 8 inches:** alta quattro piedi e otto pollici (142 cm)
- 8 **powerfully built:** dalla costituzione robusta
- 9 **(balance) beam:** trave
- 10 **(uneven) bars:** parallele
- 11 **vault:** volteggio
- 12 **to flip:** fare salti montali
- 13 **to land:** scendere, atterrare
- 14 **ease:** facilità
- 15 **outstanding:** eccezionali
- 16 **signature moves:** salti distintivi
- 17 **to name after:** prendere il nome
- 18 **a year's break:** un anno di riposo
- 19 **to speak out:** esprimersi
- 20 **at the time:** allora
- 21 **to plead guilty:** dichiararsi colpevole
- 22 **counts:** accuse
- 23 **drive:** impulso, grinta
- 24 **to develop:** sviluppare



Clockwise from above: Simone Biles and Madison Kocian rest between performances at the Olympics in 2016; US gymnastics team members (left to right) Aly Raisman, Madison Kocian, Laurie Hernandez and Simone Biles at the 2016 MTV Awards; Biles on the vault in Stuttgart in 2019.





INTERVIEW

A PERFECT TEN

At twenty-two years of age, the gymnast Simone Biles has broken every world record in the sport. The US gold medalist, who also holds¹ Belize citizenship² through her mother, is the most decorated gymnast of all time and a heroine for young athletes across the world. Resilient and focused, Biles emphasises the need to support oneself in a notoriously competitive sport: “I don’t follow in anyone’s footsteps³,” she stated in a recent interview, “I make my own.” This summer, Biles will compete in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games before the expectant eyes of the world. She faces the competition, and the pressure, with remarkable⁴ self-confidence, determined to simply do her best⁵, as she explained:

Simone Biles (American accent): I don’t know, I guess I didn’t really think of that... in going into an Olympic year or a non-Olympic year, I never really feel like I’m a big name because everybody puts that on me, I don’t put it on myself or I don’t really pay attention⁶. So going into every year I feel like I just try to be better than I was the year before.

SUPER SKILLS

Biles is a global superstar with two signature gymnastics moves named after her. She confessed just how much this means to her:

Simone Biles: I feel like, for me, getting the skills⁷ named after me is really exciting just to go out there and prove to my-

self that I can do them, especially under all of the pressure that will be there that night. So putting my name on a skill is really rewarding⁸ just because it’ll be in the code forever, as well as the medals, but it’s something that I can hold on⁹ to just because I’m the one that did it first. So it’s really exciting.

HARD TIMES

In 2018, in a case that shocked the world, Biles joined¹⁰ other young gymnasts in accusing the former US gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar of sexual abuse. It is important that we accept our vulnerability as a means¹¹ to make us stronger, said Biles.

Simone Biles: It’s really hard to talk about [it], I just feel like... I don’t know, I don’t mean to cry but it’s just... it’s hard coming here for an organisation and having had them failed¹² us so many times. And we had one goal, we’ve done everything that they asked us for even when we didn’t want to and they couldn’t do one damn¹³ job... You had one job, you literally had one job and you couldn’t protect us. And it’s just really sad because now every time I go to the doctor or training, I get worked on¹⁴... it’s like “I don’t want to get worked on,” but my body hurts, I’m twenty-two and I have to go to therapy, but it’s just hard and we try to work through it¹⁵ but it’ll take some time. I’m strong, I’ll get through it, but it’s hard. ☹

SPEAK UP Explains

The most decorated athlete in the history of gymnastics. L’atleta più premiata nella storia della ginnastica.

Oltre all’accezione di ‘abbellire’, ‘ornare’ (per esempio, *I like decorating the Christmas tree* – mi piace addobbare l’albero di Natale), il verbo *to decorate* si usa per indicare i riconoscimenti o i titoli dei quali una persona viene insignita. In italiano esiste l’espressione ‘conferire una decorazione’, usata per riconoscimenti speciali di meriti civili o militari, ma non per medaglie sportive.



Top left: Biles at the 2019 US Gymnastics Championships. Below: Biles with her five gold medals won at the 2019 Gymnastics World Championships in Stuttgart, Germany.

ADVANCED C1

ON CD 7

GLOSSARY

- 1 **to hold:** avere
- 2 **citizenship:** nazionalità (lett. cittadinanza)
- 3 **to follow someone’s footsteps:** seguire i passi
- 4 **remarkable:** notevole
- 5 **to do one’s best:** fare del suo meglio
- 6 **to pay attention:** dare importanza
- 7 **skills:** salti, movimenti
- 8 **rewarding:** gratificante
- 9 **to hold on:** afferrarsi
- 10 **to join:** unirsi
- 11 **a means:** un mezzo, una risorsa
- 12 **to fail:** deludere, fallire
- 13 **damn:** maledetto
- 14 **to get worked on:** ricevere trattamento
- 15 **to work through it:** superare