
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The English We Speak

Giant killer



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Feifei

This is The English We Speak. I'm Feifei.

Rob

And hello, I'm Rob. Hey, Feifei. Did you see the match last night?

Feifei

The match? No, Rob. I had better things to do!

Rob

Oh, you should have done. My local team beat Manchester United 3-0! It was a giant-killing!

Feifei

Well I'm glad I didn't watch it – who wants to see giants being killed?

Rob

Feifei, nobody was killed and there were no real giants. The giant is the team that is usually stronger, more powerful or skilful than the other team – and the killing happens when the weaker or less skilful team beats them. And that's what happened last night. It was brilliant!

Feifei

I see. So a giant-killing describes a situation when a weaker or less skilful person or team beats a stronger or more skilful opponent.

Rob

Yep. And we call the winning team 'giant killers' – so my team can be called 'giant killers'!

Feifei

So is this phrase used for sporting competitions?

Rob

Yes it is. It's not just used in football – although the giant-killing in the game last night was amazing! I mean, did I mention the score was 3-0?

Feifei

OK calm down, Rob. Let's hear some other examples of the phrase 'giant-killing'...

Examples

We're celebrating our village cricket team's giant-killing over a professional county team!

There was a giant-killing at the tennis match today – a brand new player beat the third-seeded player in straight sets!

The non-league team have become giant killers in the FA Cup – they could go all the way to the final.

Feifei

This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English and we're hearing about the sporting expression 'giant-killing' – that's when a strong or skilful player or team is beaten by a less strong opponent. The winners are called 'giant killers'. So a giant-killing is quite an achievement?

Rob

It sure is. It's unexpected but it's great when it happens.

Feifei

I understand, Rob – it comes as a surprise because you're so used to losing!

Rob

Never mind, Feifei. If you're not a football fan, you'll never understand.

Feifei

Hmm, I suppose this programme is a bit like a giant killing.

Rob

Why's that then?

Feifei

The weaker, less skilful presenter beats the stronger, more skilful presenter by getting more lines to stay in the script.

Rob

Errr, I don't think so, Feifei. You always have more to say.

Feifei

That's true. Now, isn't it your turn to make the tea?

Rob

OK, if you say so. See you later.

Feifei

Ha! 1-0 to me. Bye.