

# Miro the Hero

**Miro Legin lost his legs to a land mine accident when he was 13 years old. But that never stopped him from following his dreams.**

Miro Legin lost his legs in an explosion. Years later, he raced a marathon, which is 26.2 miles. Look at the quote below. Why do you think independence is so important to him?

pre-reading quiz

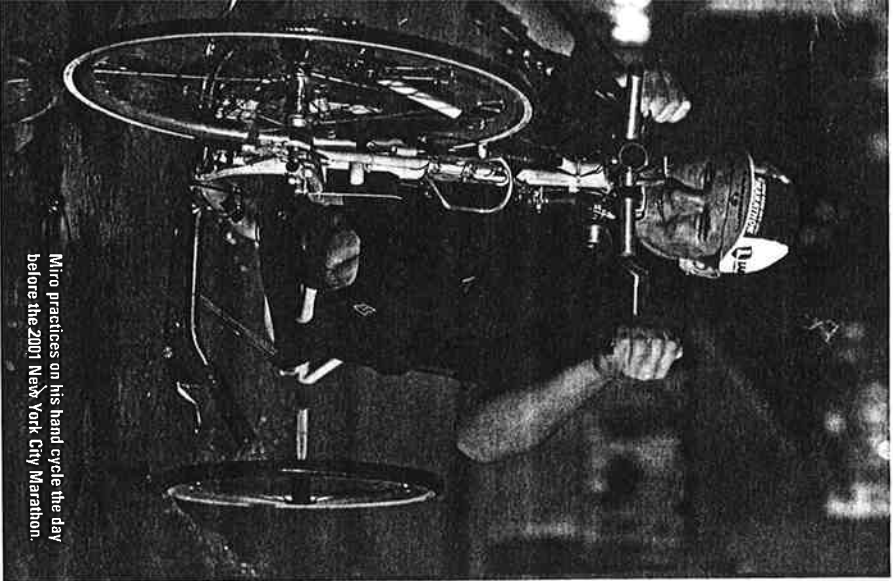
## Fact or Opinion?

A **fact** is a statement that can be proven true. An **opinion** is a statement that is a belief and cannot be proven true. Circle "F" for fact, and "O" for opinion.

<b>F</b>	<input type="radio"/>	Racing on wheels is fun.
<b>F</b>	<input type="radio"/>	This teen raced in a marathon.
<b>F</b>	<input type="radio"/>	A marathon is 26.2 miles long.
<b>F</b>	<input type="radio"/>	This teen is very brave.

**"I don't want people to feel sorry for me. Some people treat me like a kid because I'm in a wheelchair. That bothers me a lot."**

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Miro practices on his hand cycle the day before the 2001 New York City Marathon.

Last November Miroslav Legin (nickname Miro) entered the New York City Marathon for the second year in a row. He covered the 26.2-mile distance in 1 hour, 52 minutes, and got a medal. About 30,000 people run the marathon every year, but Miro stood out from the crowd. The 19-year-old competed on a

Bosnia and Herzegovina. Like many kids, Miro loved his family, didn't like school much, and enjoyed sports and games with his friends.

In 1992, the year Miro turned 10, Bosnia went to war. Times were hard. Miro and his brother had to work to help support their family. They hauled wood for their neighbors. Miro remembers, "They'd only give us like two bucks each. But we were surviving."

#### AN INNOCENT VICTIM

On December 14, 1995, the war ended. Many people were left poor and unemployed after all the fighting, but life slowly began to go back to normal. For Miro, however, more changes were on the way.

Six months later, Miro was walking near the front lines, where most of the fighting had taken place. People didn't know it, but there were still some land mines around. A land mine is a small bomb buried in the ground where people can't see it. As Miro was walking along, one exploded beneath his feet.

"I almost passed away," Miro says. He survived in the end, but his legs didn't. What was left of them after the explosion could not be repaired.

Miro spent 55 days in the hospital. "They treated me well," he says. He also went to Germany several times for more

treatment. It wasn't easy traveling to another country alone. "Nobody spoke my language," Miro remembers. People were always asking Miro how he'd lost his legs. He told them about the land mine. "It's a small thing," he told people. "It's the size of a burger, and it can ruin your life."

#### LIFE GOES ON

But Miro wouldn't let the land mine ruin his life. He knew that with the right treatment and help, he could have a full and happy life.

In September of 2000, Miro went to New York City for more treatment. There, Miro met Dick Traum, the president and founder of the Achilles Track Club. This group of physically challenged athletes compete in races using wheelchairs and

hand cycles. Dick, a physically challenged athlete himself, told Miro about the New York City Marathon.

The race was only a few weeks away. Miro was inexperienced at racing. He asked Dick how long the race might take him. Dick said, "I think it'll take you four hours." Miro finished the 26.2-mile race in two hours, 38 minutes. He beat other experienced racers, including Dick. The next year, Dick sent Miro an invitation to the same marathon. Miro trained hard and did even better than before.

#### A PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Now Miro is 19. He's already overcome his hardest challenge, getting used to life in a wheelchair. He has even become an athlete. But his life

still isn't easy. "I have a hard time when I see my friends playing soccer and other sports you need legs for," he says.

Miro knows he's come a long way since he was injured at age 13. Now he has new goals to pursue. He wants to settle in New York, where life is more accessible for people in wheelchairs. He also has career goals. "If I ever get a chance, I'll be a New York City cop," Miro says.

Police officers have to be determined and brave. Miro has displayed both qualities many times in his life. And he believes his wheelchair will make him a great undercover officer. He plans to apply for training as soon as he becomes an American citizen. "Being a cop is my dream," he says with a smile. ■

#### Word Builders

Find these words in the story. Then, use them in a sentence of your own. overcome: gotten over something pursue: to go after something, like a goal displayed: shown to the public

post-reading activity

## Just the Facts

Look at each sentence in the maze below. Decide whether it is a fact or an opinion. Connect each fact from start to finish with a line. Do not pass through an opinion. The correct path will take you through 8 facts.

