
HONORABLE

“Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.”

~ **C.S. Lewis**

“Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.”

~ **John Wooden**

“Your true character is most accurately measured by how you treat those who can do nothing for you.”

~ **Mother Teresa**

“The time is always right to do the right thing.”

~ **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

“Respect for ourselves guides our morals, respect for others guides our manners.”

~ **Laurence Sterne**

Sports, as well as life, are not always seen in terms of wins and losses but rather how we treat others and seek to make the world better. It has been said that success is our ability to make ourselves better and significance is our ability to make others better.

At Jesse Owens Stadium in Columbus, Ohio on June 5, 2012, athletes and spectators alike would learn what a true champion looked like. Earlier that

day, Meghan Vogel, a junior runner for West Liberty-Salem High School, would win the 1600-meter State Championship. She had a great career up to this point and would eventually go on to be a successful collegiate runner. Despite the success she attained, she would be known for what happened later that day in the 3200-meter race.

Vogel did not have her best race that day in the 3200-meter race. In fact, the 1600-meter champion found herself in last place with only a few meters left in the race. Suddenly, one of the competitors that was in front of her, collapsed. Instead of advancing from last place and passing Arden McMath, Vogel stopped, helped up her opponent and finished the race by carrying her competitor across it. McMath finished the race just barely ahead of Vogel because Vogel made sure her opponent earned her rightly deserved spot. McMath was ahead the whole race and Vogel just didn't think it would be fair to finish in front of her at the last moment due to her cramping. ¹

The best part about this story is that this wasn't out of the ordinary for Vogel. In other races, she has shared words of encouragement with devastated competitors after races. She is a leader on her team that has led them to achieve more than they ever expected. These selfless acts are an avenue for growth not only in ourselves but in our teammates. Acts like these, make us stand out for our strong sportsmanship.

Individuals might win once in a while on the scoreboard but to be a true champion, an individual must have a sense of honor. A sense of

sportsmanship. We all know the commonly recited phrase, winning isn't everything it's the only thing, but in life that is not always true. Sporting events come and go. Fame, awards, and records are fleeting but a person's integrity, character, and honor are lasting. Those traits can lead to a life of significant and leaving a legacy that makes the world a better place. When we forget that winning really isn't everything, we often lose sight of the skills it entails to become a true champion. We also could get caught up in lying, cheating, or selfish behavior just to get to the top of the leader's board.

Good sportsmanship requires humility. Humility doesn't mean that you think less of yourself, but rather that you think about yourself less and others more. We have the choice after winning a big game – will we throw that in our opponent's face, or will we humbly thank them for competing and wish them future success? Vogel demonstrated to athletes around the world that success is a lot more than crossing that finish line first.

Sportsmanship is working in harmony with others on your team. If our teams work in harmony, we will be stronger, we will be more successful. There can't be tension. In the same way, in individual sports such as tennis or track, fairness and honesty are a true testament of a good sport. Yes, good sportsmanship is being a good teammate, but it's also being a good opponent and all around good person.

By practicing being a good sport, we can develop our character and learn lessons for not only

in our sport, but in everyday life. Success will be an outcome of someone with good character traits such as honesty, sportsmanship, and respect. Respect others and they will respect you.

We don't have to be the most skilled athlete on the court and we don't have to be MVP on our teams to display good sportsmanship. Good sportsmanship goes a long way. Good sportsmanship is contagious and will spread around a team rapidly. We must be grateful for the opportunity we have as an athlete to compete. It's important to show thanks to those that help make us better through competition. Sportsmanship is one of the traits that is most evident in a person that has honor and respect.

When we respect ourselves. When we respect others. When we respect the game. When we respect life. Only then can we really demonstrate who we really are.

Do we show gratitude and thank people when they do something nice for us? Do we publicly praise our teammates when they do something that largely goes unnoticed? Do we put our lunch tray away so that the lunch lady doesn't have to? Do we greet the custodian with a smile and a hello? In fact, do we even know the custodian's name that keeps our school from being a messy heap of trash? Do we make eye contact with people that are talking with us? Do we respect our coach's game plan? Do we respect others that are different from us?

We have differences as people. We listen to different music, we have different backgrounds, we grew up in different cultures, we have different preferences and we even have different opinions.

That doesn't make us right and someone else wrong. It just makes us different. If you are going to maximize your potential for success in life, you have to understand how to work with others and respect others.

Usain Bolt is one of the most accomplished track athletes ever. He was the first person to ever hold the world record in the 100-meter and 200-meter sprints at the same time. After winning a race at the 2012 Olympics, the Jamaican-born Bolt was being interviewed on television when he stopped the interview to stand at attention while the U.S. national anthem was being played as Sanya Richards-Ross was on the medal stand for winning the women's 400-meter race. This was an impressive sign of respect and sportsmanship.

Sportsmanship and respect is a great opportunity to demonstrate to the world what kind of person we are. It is a reflection of our character as much as it is the other person. Meghan Vogel didn't know Arden McMath's views on politics. She didn't know if she was a nice person or not. She didn't know if she treated others kindly. But Meghan Vogel knew that the right thing to do, the honorable thing to do was to help a fallen competitor during a race.

That is how we become significant and truly leave a legacy. Legacy is not just what we leave when we die. We leave a legacy every time that we leave the room. We leave a legacy every time that we interact with others.