

NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION

FOCUS ON RESPECT



REACH FOR THE RINGS

OLYMPIC EDUCATION

VISION

The United States Olympic Committee is dedicated to preparing America's athletes to represent the United States in the ongoing pursuit and achievement of excellence in the Olympic Games and in life.

Our Olympians inspire Americans, particularly our youth, to embrace Olympic ideals and to pursue excellence in sport and in their lives.

MISSION

The United States Olympic Committee is an organization mandated by Congress under the Amateur Sports Act of 1978, to govern Olympic, Pan American and Paralympic Games, and related activities in the USA. The USOC represents athletes, coaches and administrators of Olympic sport, and the American people who support the Olympic movement.

USOC members include Olympic and Pan American sport organizations (the National Governing Bodies), affiliated sport organizations, community-based and education-based multisport organizations, athletes' representatives, Armed Forces, Disabled in Sports, state fund-raising organizations, associate members and representatives of the public sector.

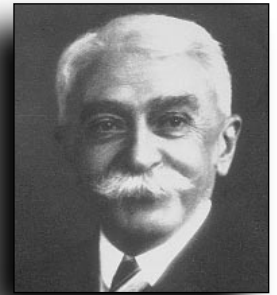
REACH FOR THE RINGS

FOCUS ON RESPECT

What draws us to the Olympic Games is the promise that we will witness physical feats that are almost unimaginable: a gymnast seeming to float like a bird above the balance beam; a runner pushing the limits of endurance; a skater spinning and leaping in choreographed perfection.

But the Olympic Games have flourished not on muscle and athleticism but on the noble ideal that the honorable pursuit of victory in sports builds and demonstrates character. Good character is ethics in action.

The Olympic Games are distinguished from all other sporting events by the unwavering demand that all who compete under the Olympic flag strive to embody that ideal. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the French nobleman who revived the Olympic Games in 1896, believed the role of sport is "at once physical, moral and social." He fostered the notion that sportsmanship, fair play, integrity and tolerance would be the foundation upon which the Olympic Games would stand.



Pierre de Coubertin

The athletes who represent their countries at the Olympic Games are much like you and your classmates. Most are young, some just 15 or 16 years old. Most have overcome obstacles — a physical disability, for example, or a cultural prejudice or a fear of failure. And they all share a respect for their own talent and hard work, for their teammates and opponents, and for the game they play.

Throughout the history of the Olympic Games, ordinary men and women have demonstrated extraordinary character through good sportsmanship, whether it is a bobsledder helping to fix the sled of his rival or two athletes from warring nations walking arm-in-arm before the world. They inspire us to see what is best in the human spirit — and thus what is best in ourselves. They prove over and over that character counts.

When we watch Olympic athletes triumph over their own physical limitations and moral frailties, we know there is hope for all of us to reach for the rings in our own way.



Jesse Owens

HISTORY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

ANCIENT GAMES

Archaeologists believe the ancient Olympic Games began more than 4,000 years ago in Olympia, a valley in Greece. Recorded history of the Games dates back to 776 B.C., when the five days of sporting events were primarily religious ceremonies. Held every four years, the Olympic Games attracted as many as 40,000 spectators, who slept on the ground, conducted their worship and cheered the athletes.

Only men were allowed to compete, in the nude, in running, wrestling, the pentathlon, horse riding and chariot races. Women were barred from watching or competing, and were even put to death if they were caught at the early Games.

Victorious athletes were crowned with an olive wreath and treated like heroes for the rest of their lives, each with a splendid statue for all to admire.

After Greece was conquered and made part of the Roman Empire, the Olympic Games moved to Rome in 146 B.C. The original purpose of the Games was forgotten, and in 394 A.D., Christians forced Roman Emperor Theodosius to end all pagan rituals, including the Olympic Games. These ancient Games had lasted more than 1,200 years, longer than any single ceremonial event in history.

“Everybody should have a dream. Everybody should work toward that dream. And if you believe hard enough, whether it be in the Olympic Games, or in the business world, or the music world, or the educational world, it all comes down to one thing. One day we can all stand on the top of the victory stand, and one day we can watch our flag rise above all others to the crescendo of our national anthem, and one day, you can say, ‘On this day, I am a champion.’”

JESSE OWENS
Track and Field, 1936

ACTIVITY

Use the newspaper to collect examples of people demonstrating respect. Place your clippings in an individual notebook or on a classroom bulletin board. Look for examples from many different areas: sports, the arts, government, the community. Use news stories, feature stories or opinion columns. Write a brief explanation of why you included the person or group in your collection. Divide your examples into three categories:

- **Respect for Oneself:** People who persevere to overcome obstacles, who take a stand, who succeed without hurting others.
- **Respect for Others:** People who encourage others to get along, who work to increase understanding and appreciation among different ethnic, cultural, racial or gender groups.
- **Respect for Competition:** People who show good sportsmanship in a competitive situation, who follow the rules, who bring honor to an activity or event.

MODERN GAMES

Fifteen hundred years later the Olympic spirit was rekindled, thanks to the vision of Pierre de Coubertin, a French aristocrat and educator who founded the modern Games. De Coubertin believed that inviting athletes from around the world would lead to new international friendship and better cooperation among nations. He also felt it would benefit athletes by exposing them to people with different cultures and customs.

In 1896, the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece. Although amateur athletes from all over the world were invited, only 13 countries were represented. Americans dominated the track and field events. All competitors were given medals and, as in ancient times, winners were awarded a crown of olive branches.

In these first modern Games, Greek fans had little to cheer about until the marathon was won by Spiridon Louis, a Greek shepherd running the only international race of his life. His wobbly arrival back in the stadium after racing 26 miles caused pandemonium, as two sons of King George ran alongside Louis as he crossed the finish line to the cheers of 80,000 spectators. The first Olympic celebrity had emerged at the modern Games.

Since this renaissance, the Olympic Games have become the greatest sports event in the world. They have faced many political crises and their demise has been predicted often. But they have survived two world wars as well as revolutions, controversies and conflicts.

In the eyes of de Coubertin and those who succeeded him, the social and moral value of the Games — the noble spirit of sportsmanship and pursuit of victory with honor to dispel prejudices and foster understanding — was more important than the competitions themselves.

A TRIUMPH OVER PREJUDICE

Perhaps no single episode in Olympic history illustrated this value more powerfully than the track and field competition in the 1936 Games in Germany. The Olympic Games began that summer as the world was inching closer to a second World War, in large part because of the racist dictatorship of German Chancellor Adolf Hitler. Hitler tried to use the Olympic Games in Berlin to promote his belief that Germany’s blue-eyed, blond-haired Aryan race was superior to all others. “Americans ought to be ashamed of themselves for letting their medals be worn by Negroes,” he said. “I myself would never shake hands with one of them.”

When early on in the Games two black Americans won the gold and silver in the high jump, Hitler left the Olympic Stadium rather than congratulate them. But Hitler had a more difficult time ignoring another black American, this one by the name of Jesse Owens.

The son of sharecroppers and the grandson of slaves, Owens arrived in Berlin with a strong character and great expectations for the 100- and 200-meter sprints, the long jump and the 4x100 relay. He knew that Hitler and many in the Olympic stadium thought he was inferior because of his skin color, but he would not be distracted.

He was spectacular, winning golds in both sprints and another in the relay. But in his first two attempts in the long jump, Owens stepped over the foul line

as he launched himself into the air.

“I was scared stiff that I would blow it on my third and last attempt to qualify and not make it to the finals,” Owens said.

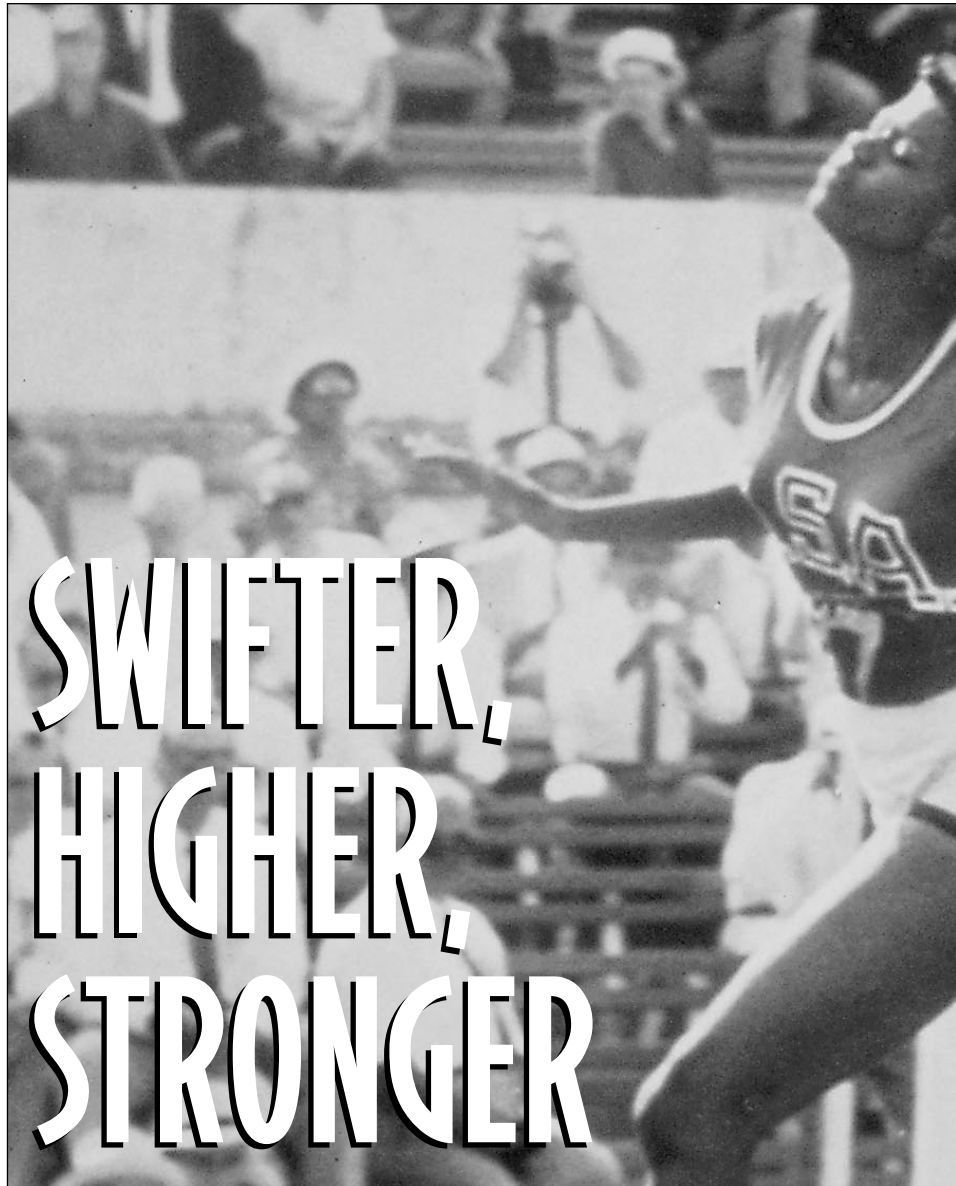
In the truest spirit of sportsmanship, another man of great character, the German champion Luz Long, did an extraordinary thing. Long, Owens’ fiercest rival, took his towel and laid it a foot before the foul line. “You can use this for your takeoff,” Long told Owens in broken English. “You should then qualify easily.” Owens used the towel to guide his leap and qualified for the final. Then he defeated Long to win the gold.

After Owens’ victory, Long embraced the champion, and they walked arm-in-arm in front of Hitler’s box. “You can melt down all the medals and cups I have and they wouldn’t be a plating on the 24-karat friendship I felt for Luz Long at that moment,” Owens wrote in his memoirs.

For him, the greatest prize of the Olympic Games was Long’s brave and unselfish act. Long had risked his countrymen’s scorn, and perhaps even endangered his life, to honor the Olympic ideal of respecting one’s opponents, no matter what their nationality, religion or color. The Olympic Games allowed Owens and Long to reach across an enormous divide of prejudice and send a message of tolerance and understanding that quietly reverberated around the world.



Opening Ceremony



SWIFTER, HIGHER, STRONGER

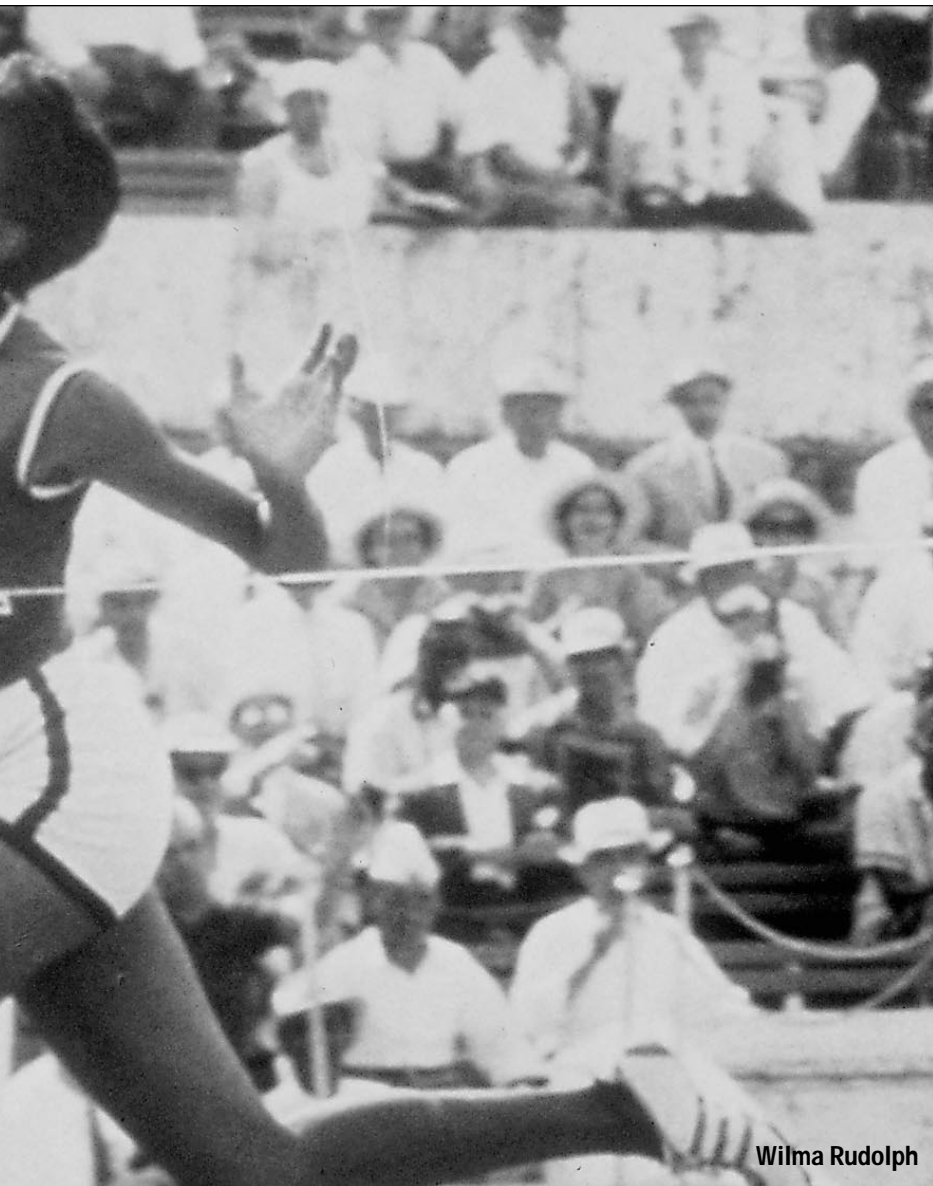
ACTIVITY

Locate and read a newspaper story about a student who has excelled in a non-athletic situation. Organize information about the person's quest for success in a circle chart. Draw a circle. Divide the circle into thirds. In one section of the circle, list the person's motivation for success — why he or she has this goal. In another section, list the obstacles or difficulties the person faced in achieving the goal. In the third section, list the actions the individual took to become successful. Beneath the circle, write several sentences explaining what you think the student's future will be in his or her chosen field.

The Olympic motto, “Citius, Altius, Fortius,” is Latin for “Swifter, Higher, Stronger.” This motto embodies the Olympic athlete’s drive to be the best he or she can be. It means pushing one’s athletic skills to the limit, but it means more. It means demonstrating responsibility by developing the discipline and dedication to make strengths out of weaknesses, to overcome obstacles, to grow from defeats and by mastering oneself.

The greatest Olympians teach others about character through their example. Wilma Rudolph was a role model who inspired everyone through what she did and who she was.

Rudolph was born prematurely, the 20th of 22 children, in rural Tennessee. At age 4, she suffered from polio, pneumonia and scarlet fever and her left leg was paralyzed. By the time she was 6, she could hop on one leg. By 8, she was walking with a leg brace and then an orthopedic shoe. Every Saturday, her mother would drive her to a hospital 60 miles away for treatment. “Then, during the week, my brothers and sisters would take turns massaging my leg,” Rudolph wrote in her autobiography. “If it wasn’t for my family, I probably



Wilma Rudolph

“When I stood on the victory stand to receive my first gold medal, I was in a daze. I said to myself: ‘Is this really me?’ This is what the Olympics are all about.”

WILMA RUDOLPH

Track and Field, 1956 and 1960

would never have been able to walk properly, much less run.”

“My father pushed me to be competitive,” Rudolph said. “He felt that sports would help me overcome my problems.”

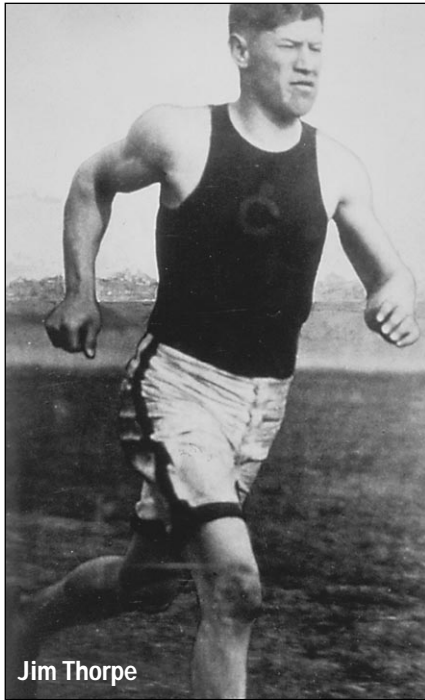
At a summer camp, a track coach discovered Rudolph’s running talent and helped her train. By 16, she was good enough to win her first Olympic medal, a bronze in the women’s 4x100 relay in the 1956 Melbourne Games.

At the 1960 Rome Games, Rudolph tripped over a water main and sprained her ankle but still managed to win three gold medals — in the 100, 200 and 4x100 relay.

“From the moment she first sped down the track in Rome’s Olympic Stadium,” Time magazine wrote, “there was no doubt she was the fastest woman the world had ever seen.”

After her 1994 death from a brain tumor, Rudolph remains a shining symbol. “She showed that it was okay for a woman to be powerful and black and beautiful,” said Benita Fitzgerald Mosley, a 1984 gold medalist.

Wilma Rudolph inspired male athletes, too. “Everybody says Wilma was a great role model for young women track athletes,” said Edwin Moses, one of the greatest hurdlers in history. “But she was a hero to all of us in the sport.”



AN ALL-AROUND HERO

Another hero symbolizing the Olympic motto is Jim Thorpe, a Native American who was born in the Oklahoma Territory.

Thorpe first gained fame as a football player in 1911, scoring all the points for tiny Carlisle College when the team beat Harvard 18-15. He was chosen an All-American halfback in 1911 and 1912. An all-around athlete, he earned varsity letters in 11 different sports and was chosen to represent the United States at the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm, Sweden.

Thorpe's legend grew in Sweden as he competed in the decathlon and pentathlon, two sports made up of multiple events. He came in first in five events: the long jump, shot put, high jump, hurdles and discus; second in two: the 100-meter and 1,500-meter runs; and third in three: the 400 meters, pole vault and javelin.

When Sweden's King Gustav placed the Olympic laurel wreath on Thorpe and gave him his second gold medal, the King said: "You, sir, are the greatest athlete in the world." Thorpe replied, "Thanks, King."

Back in the United States, Thorpe became a national hero, honored with a ticker-tape parade down Broadway in New York City. He went on to play professional baseball with the New York Giants and the Cincinnati Reds and professional football with the Canton Bulldogs. When the Associated Press polled sportswriters in 1950, they voted Thorpe the Greatest Athlete of the Half-Century.

In 1913, Thorpe was stripped of his Olympic medals after admitting he was paid \$25 a week to play semiprofessional baseball in North Carolina several years before his Olympic victories. The Olympic code at that time forbade any athlete to compete in the Games if he or she had been paid to play any sport.

The public rallied to Thorpe's side, and when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) tried to award the gold medal to Sweden's Hugo Wieslander, who finished second to Thorpe in the decathlon, Wieslander refused to accept it.

Efforts to reinstate Thorpe's medals were not successful during his lifetime. In 1982, the IOC allowed his name to be returned to the record books, and replacements for his gold medals were presented to his children.

ASTHMA SUFFERER SWIMS TO GOLD

The Olympic motto is also personified by Olympian Amy Van Dyken of Colorado, one of the best U.S. swimmers training for the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney.

At the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996, Van Dyken became the first U.S. female athlete to win four golds at a single Olympic Games.

Yet in high school, Van Dyken says, she sometimes felt "like a nerd" because she suffered from severe asthma and wasn't able to play sports as well as her peers. She had trouble breathing due to all three forms of the illness — exercise-induced, allergy-induced and infection-induced asthma. A doctor suggested swimming.

From age 6 to 12, Van Dyken swam and loved it, but her asthma prevented her from completing a lap of the pool. "I'd swim halfway," she says, "and there would be little Amy hanging on the lane line, gasping for air."

Van Dyken says she was such a poor swimmer in high school that her teammates refused to swim with her. But she persisted and after winning the 50-meter freestyle on the last night of the Atlanta Games, she exclaimed, "This victory was for all the nerds!"

Amy Van Dyken couldn't do anything about her asthma, but she could decide

how it would affect her life. Rather than being overcome by her illness, she overcame it through determination and hard work. Rather than be a victim, she became a champion.

“For all the kids out there who are struggling, and their peers say they’re terrible, I hope I’m an inspiration,” she says. “If they love it and just keep plugging away at it, something good will come out of it.”

BLIND ATHLETE’S CHALLENGE

When Jeni Armbruster of Colorado Springs started losing her sight at the age of 13, her biggest fear was that she would not be able to play sports. As a star basketball player in seventh and eighth grades, she showed potential for a major college scholarship. But by age 14, she was disheartened by her worsening eyesight and her inability to compete in the sport she loved.

“I still played basketball with my partial sight, but I wasn’t as good as I used to be. I wasn’t as competitive,” she recalls.

Armbruster’s vision problems were caused by a degeneration of the optic nerve. By 17, she was completely blind.

In her search for a sport to replace basketball, she discovered a new sport: goalball. A mix of softball and soccer, goalball is played on a court the size of a volleyball court, with three players who are either blind or blindfolded.

“Everyone has obstacles in life,” Armbruster says. “Whether it’s blindness or anything else, everyone has to find their own way, whether you go over the obstacles, or under or around them.”

By age 18, Armbruster was ranked among the top goalball players in the world and she won a bronze medal in the sport at the Atlanta Paralympic Games in 1996.

“I was fortunate to have found goalball,” she says. “I was also fortunate to have family, friends and teachers who challenged me. They didn’t give up on me, so I couldn’t give up on myself.”

Armbruster is studying for a master’s degree in criminology in Huntsville, Texas. Besides playing goalball, she enjoys backpacking in Europe, downhill skiing, rock climbing and playing golf.

“It used to be, ‘Oh, you’re a tomboy.’ Now it’s ‘Rock on, you’re a tomboy!’ Now it’s OK if you can bench press your husband.”

AMY VAN DYKEN,
Swimming, 1996



Amy Van Dyken

TEAMWORK



1980 Men's Hockey Team



1996 Women's Basketball Team

If you ask retired athletes what they miss most about competing, they are likely to say working as a team and the joy of being part of something that is greater than any single individual. Becoming a team means melding various personalities and abilities into a single unit with a shared vision.

BEING PART OF A "DREAM TEAM"

Coach Tara VanDerveer faced such a challenge in 1995, when she took over as coach of the women's basketball team that would compete for the United States in the Atlanta Games the following year. She had to train 12 women, all of whom had been stars on their college or professional teams, to put aside their own egos for the good of the team.

Teamwork requires each athlete to be unselfish, to be willing to sacrifice personal glory in a cooperative effort to achieve a common goal. As the 12 women worked together over the year, they learned humility and sacrifice. They grew close, appreciating each other's strengths and accepting their weaknesses. The team didn't have much height, so they compensated by being quick and by being in better physical shape than any team they played.

Lisa Leslie stood 6 feet 5 inches tall, the tallest player on the team. The pressure was heavy on her, given her background. She once scored 101 points for her high school team. But with the Olympic team, she shied away from individual glory.

"People feel I haven't lived up to expectations," she said after one of the team's exhibition games. "People go only as far as looking at points. They don't look at all the other factors. I score as many points as my team allows me."

By the time the women's "Dream Team" reached Atlanta, they had won all 52 of their exhibition games. Then they went on to win all eight Olympic games to earn their place at the top of the victory stand. When it was over, the players huddled in the locker room and held hands. They didn't give thanks for the gold medal. Instead, as one player put it, they said a prayer "for what we've had together."

TEAMWORK MAKES MIRACLES

If the 1996 women's basketball team taught lessons about unselfishness and humility, the 1980 men's ice hockey team embodied the deep respect and loyalty teammates must have for each other in order to be successful. No one gave the 1980 hockey team a chance for gold. They were a ragtag team of no-names who had just been beaten 10-3 by the Soviets in an exhibition game.

"We all came from similar backgrounds," recalls team captain Mike Eruzione. "We all got up early to go to the rink, spent our allowances on sticks and pucks, experienced hard practices and sacrificed other areas of our lives to play a sport we loved."

The team didn't even have the best college players, much less the best pros. But this suited coach Herb Brooks just fine. He wanted players who would be disciplined and unselfish enough to pass the puck and set up their teammates for shots.

When the United States managed to reach the semifinals against the mighty Soviets, millions of Americans gathered around their TV sets. At the time, with inflation spiraling and dozens of American hostages being held in Iran, Americans felt they had little in general to cheer about.

The Soviets scored the first two goals. By the end of the first period, the United States had tied the score, with goaltender Jim Craig making save after save. The Americans wouldn't give up. It was as if they were playing out on the ice all the struggles that ordinary people faced every day. Their refusal to back down lifted the spirits of an entire nation.

With just six minutes left in the match, the U.S. team went ahead 4-3 and held on for victory. "Do you believe in miracles?" announcer Al Michaels screamed to the TV audience as cheers of "U-S-A!" echoed through the rink at Lake Placid, New York, and across the country. Two days later, the United States won the gold medal by defeating Finland, 4-2.

"It wasn't a miracle on ice," Eruzione recalled years afterward. "It was an accomplishment by a group of athletes who believed in themselves and who believed in each other. It was an achievement by a group of 'lunch-pail hard hats' who ignored the beliefs of the majority and continued to train with courage and heart."

OPENING CEREMONY

All Olympic Games begin with an Opening Ceremony and a Parade of Nations. Greek athletes enter the stadium first, in honor of the original Olympic Games, followed by athletes from other nations in alphabetical order. Athletes from the host country enter last.

Athletes from each nation walk together as a team, following a sign with their country's name written in the language of the host country. Athletes and coaches from large countries march by the hundreds. Some less populous nations, such as Angola or Lebanon, may have only one or two athletes.

Often the underdogs draw the loudest cheers, as when the tropical island of Jamaica — which has no snow — sent a bobsled team to Calgary in 1988, inspiring the movie "Cool Runnings." The presence of such unlikely athletes gives hope that no dream is impossible.

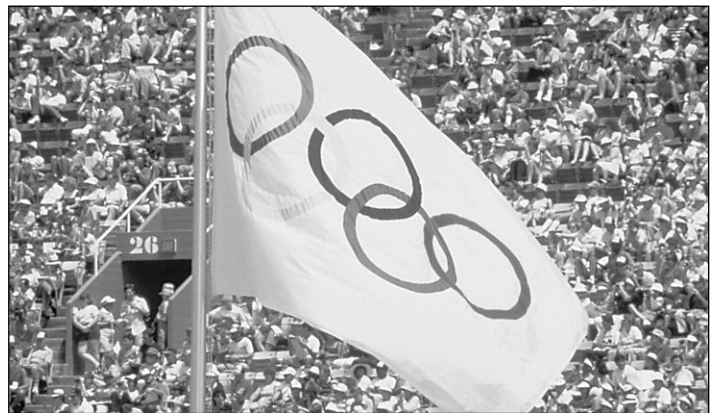
The Opening Ceremony includes the entrance of the Olympic flag, the playing of the Olympic hymn, the lighting of the flame and the pledge by both athletes and judges. To entertain TV viewers from around the world, host countries stage elaborate spectacles of singing, music and dancing performed by thousands of adults and children.

This gathering symbolizes the ideal of unity and respect that are at the core of the Olympic Games.

ACTIVITY

Select a team sport. Think of the physical skills athletes need to participate in that sport, such as speed, strength and endurance. Now think of the personal skills needed to be a successful team, such as teamwork, cooperation, resiliency, courage and dignity.

Put yourself in the position of coach and recruit an imaginary team from athletes appearing in the sports section of the newspaper. Select individuals you would put on your team. However, you may *not* select a person who actually plays the sport for which you are recruiting. For example, you may not select a real football player for an imaginary football team. Your players must all come from different sports. List your recruits and explain how the skills required in the sports they play can be used for the position in the sport you have selected.



SEEKING A PEACEFUL PLAYING FIELD



Five interlocking rings simply and dramatically symbolize the Olympic ideal of global unity. Designed by Pierre de Coubertin, they represent the union of the five major continents that competed in 1896: Africa, North America, Asia, Australia and Europe. The five colors of the rings are blue, black, red, yellow and green.

De Coubertin believed that if the athletes of the world can join as one in the name of sport, then there is hope that the countries of the world can exist peacefully as well. He found inspiration for this ideal in the ancient Olympic Games. Respect for the Games was so deep that soldiers stopped battles between city-states for the duration of the competition.

But despite the modern Olympic organizers' best efforts to discourage political interference, there have been times when the world's conflicts encroached on the Olympic Games.

The Olympic Games were canceled in 1916 during World War I, when 10 million men were killed and Europe was left in devastation. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) banned the defeated nations — Germany, Austria, Hungary and Turkey — from taking part in the 1920 and 1924 Games.

World War II caused the cancellation of the Olympic Games in 1940 and 1944. They resumed in 1948 in London, but Japanese, German and Italian athletes were banned even though the war had ended three years earlier.

South Africa was barred from the Olympic Games from 1970 to 1992 because of its practice of apartheid. In 1972, several African nations threatened to boycott the Olympic Games if Rhodesia, ruled by whites, was allowed to compete. The IOC consented and barred Rhodesia.

In 1980, the United States and 35 other countries refused to take part in the Moscow Games because the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan. Four years later, the Soviets refused to come to the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

The worst political tragedy of the Games occurred in 1972. That year, Germany staged the "Games of Joy" in Munich to help erase the memory of Adolf Hitler at the 1936 Berlin Games. But joy turned to tragedy when Arab terrorists in black masks stormed a men's dormitory at the Olympic Village where 28 Israelis were sleeping. With automatic weapons and hand grenades, the Black September terrorists murdered two Israelis and held nine others hostage. For the next 23 hours, millions watched the excruciating drama on TV. The terrorists killed all nine hostages as German police tried to rescue them.

Many felt the Olympic Games should have been stopped. Others agreed with IOC President Avery Brundage that the Olympic Games should not yield to criminal pressure. Eighty thousand people attended a memorial ceremony for the slain ath-

letes in the Olympic Stadium. That afternoon, with the approval of Israeli Olympic officials, the Games resumed.

LENDING A HELPING HAND

No one personified the ideal of sportsmanship better than kayaker Scott Shipley. At the 1996 Atlanta Games, Shipley showed his character when the kayak of one of his competitors hit a rock and sank during an early run.

The hard-luck kayaker was a young man from Bosnia named Samir Karabasic. For four years, Karabasic had lived in a trench in Bihac, Bosnia, as his country was torn apart by civil war. When he slipped away to paddle his kayak on a nearby river, he was under constant threat of sniper and mortar fire.

Karabasic arrived at the 1996 Atlanta Games with a second-hand kayak to compete for Bosnia. In his first run on the Olympic course, the boat, patched together with epoxy and duct tape, hit a rock, broke in two and sank, seeming to take Karabasic's dreams down with it.

That's when the 25-year-old Shipley, three-time World Cup champion, helped out. In an act that epitomized the Olympic spirit of sportsmanship, Shipley gave Karabasic the boat he used to win the 1995 World Cup title. The gesture drew worldwide attention.

After the Olympic Games ended, Shipley traveled to Bosnia with \$40,000 in equipment for the paddlers of Bihac.

Neither Shipley nor Karabasic won a medal in 1996, but Shipley was honored with the USOC's prestigious Jack Kelly Fair Play Award and the Diploma of Honor, awarded by the International Committee for Fair Play.

THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE AND CLOSING CEREMONY

Besides the competition for medals, a highlight of the Olympic Games for most participants is the Olympic Village, where athletes and officials from more than 190 countries live together for 17 days. A cyclist from France may learn the newest dance craze from an American sprinter; the sailing team from New Zealand may go to a party with the athletes from Japan.

At the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, more than 10,000 athletes gathered on the 320-acre campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology, sharing tables in the cafeteria, playing video games and relaxing together.

Friendships forged in the Olympic Village are symbolized in the Closing Ceremony, with a march of all athletes, no longer grouped by country.

This tradition began at the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne. A 17-year-old Australian named John Ian Wing wrote to the head of the Organizing Committee. His letter said, in part, "I believe it has been suggested a march be put on during the Closing Ceremonies and you said it couldn't be done. I think it can be done. . . . The march I have in mind is different than the one during the Opening Ceremony. . . during the march there will be only one nation. . . . What more could anybody want if the whole world could be made as one nation?"

It was done: The athletes left behind their countries' flags and walked into the stadium together as a single team.



Scott Shipley

ACTIVITY

Locate a newspaper story showing how your country cooperates with another country. Write a paragraph describing what each country brings to the situation and why they are cooperating. Conclude your paragraph with a statement explaining why you agree or disagree with the actions of the two countries.

THE OLYMPIC OATH

At the Opening Ceremony of every Olympic Games, an athlete chosen by the host city holds a corner of the Olympic flag, raises his or her right hand and says:

“In the name of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honor of our teams.”

This Olympic Oath, pledging to uphold the Olympic spirit of competition and fair play, is a symbolic gesture on behalf of all athletes. It means all athletes should demonstrate character by doing the right thing even when it is costly. It means never sacrificing ethical principles to the desire to win.

As any true champion — whether an Olympic athlete or not — knows, a victory must be earned fairly to be truly golden. Any victory attained by cheating or any other unfair tactic is not a victory at all. One way some athletes cheat is by using prohibited performance-enhancing drugs.

The U.S. Olympic Committee and the International Olympic Committee have stringent policies banning the use of all performance-enhancing drugs, such as anabolic steroids, stimulants, narcotic painkillers, beta blockers, diuretics and drugs that mask banned drugs.

Although they harm the body, drugs can give an athlete an advantage over competitors that destroys the ideal of fair play. Athletes are tested for drug use before and after they compete. Any Olympian found using drugs before an event is disqualified. If discovered after, the athlete is stripped of medals and suspended.

Yet the obsession to win can drive some athletes to extremes. Often, the pressure to win can be crushing, with a millisecond difference between gold and silver amounting to millions of dollars in endorsement contracts and appearance fees after the Games. Unfortunately, this pressure sometimes tempts athletes to cheat by using drugs.

After testing positive for steroids in the 1988 Olympic Games, a Canadian sprinter was stripped of his gold medal and banned for life from competition. In the 1970s, the East German government sponsored drug use, which was not confirmed until after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. With the drugs, East Germans at five Olympic Games did remarkably well. And generations of their opponents were ripped off.

Actually, the East Germans were ripped off, too. The consequences of taking steroids included physical side effects, such as, for some, the inability to have children.

Some of today’s athletes are turning to new substances that are undetectable to official tests, including human growth hormone, erythropoietin (EPO) and testosterone.

With the new drugs come increased health risks. Growth hormones can cause grotesque skeletal deformations, such as a jutting forehead and elongated jaw. EPO can turn blood to the consistency of yogurt, making it too thick to flow. The misuse of EPO has been blamed for killing at least 18 Dutch and Belgian cyclists since 1987.

The Olympic Oath stands for fair play and good sportsmanship. This means honesty and fair tactics in competition.

ACTIVITY

Locate a news story about a situation you think should be changed. The situation may be in your community, your country or the world. Write a brief paragraph describing the situation and explaining why you think it should be changed. Then make a five-step plan you would follow to bring about the change. Your actions must be fair and within the rules of a civilized society.

DO THE RIGHT THING



Carl Lewis

RESPECTING ONE'S ABILITIES

Gold medal sprinter Carl Lewis is one of many Olympians calling for higher levels of sportsmanship and tough enforcement of rules against performance-enhancing drugs. Lewis was the most decorated American track and field Olympian in history and arguably one of the greatest athletes of all time, winning nine gold medals in five Olympic Games over a span of 16 years.

But even as an Olympic star, Lewis had to muster his own self-respect to withstand many pressures. At the 1984 Los Angeles Games, Lewis decided not to take his last four jumps in the high jump. He felt his first jump — over 28 feet — was good enough to win. Spectators pressured Lewis to make his other jumps but he resisted, conserving his energy for his other events.

“The weather was getting cold and I had two more events to run, so I made the decision to rise or fall on my first jump,” Lewis said. Respecting his own abilities and not allowing outside pressures to intervene, Lewis won a gold medal in the event.

In 1987, Lewis' father died of cancer. At the funeral, Lewis took one of his gold medals and placed it in his father's hands. To his mother, he said, “Don't worry, I'll get another one.” In the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, Korea, however, Lewis came in second in the 100 meters, behind an athlete later found to have been taking illegal performance-enhancing drugs. Lewis wanted to protest but kept quiet. “I didn't have the medal to replace the one I had given (my father), and that hurt. But I could still give something to my father by acting the way he had always wanted me to act, with class and dignity.” Lewis shook the winner's hand and walked away.

After the winner was disqualified for taking drugs, Lewis was awarded the gold medal. Four years later in the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, few in the stadium would forget the sight of Lewis, running the anchor leg of the 4x100 relay with his head held high and his face beaming. It was a new world record and admirers nicknamed him “King Carl.”

THE VALUE OF CHARACTER AND SPORTSMANSHIP

Pierre de Coubertin identified good sportsmanship as a guiding belief, and he valued character and sportsmanship over winning. This is why the Olympic Games are based on the ideal of fair play.

“The Olympian views each day of practice, each party unattended, each distraction withstood or temptation resisted as a part of the price gladly paid to experience that wonderful feeling when the national anthem is played,” says John Naber, the most highly decorated member of the U.S. Olympic Team at the 1976 Games in Montreal, where he won four gold medals and a silver in swimming.

“The understanding that the prize must be paid for in advance includes the realization that for the prize to mean anything, it must be earned fairly. To win a race, I must follow the rules and compete honorably against the competition,” Naber says.

A classic story about doing the right thing is told about Naber as a high school graduate trying to qualify for the 1973 World Championship competition in swimming.

“The race was especially important because the fastest 100-meter back-stroker would also earn the right to swim on the U.S. 4x100 meter medley relay,” Naber remembers. “The U.S. relay team was so strong that I knew if I made the team I would almost certainly win at least one gold medal at the Worlds.”

Naber got a fast start and made a quick turn at the end of his first lap, then saw an official standing over his lane raise her arm. He finished the race in first place and was being congratulated by other swimmers when the head referee informed him he was disqualified because a judge said he had not touched the wall.



John Naber



Jackie Joyner-Kersey

The U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) honors the ideal of fair play every year with the Jack Kelly Fair Play Award, named after four-time Olympic rower Jack Kelly, who served as president of the USOC. Since 1985, the Fair Play Award has been given every year to an athlete, coach or official who displays an outstanding act of fair play and self-sacrifice.

Jackie Joyner-Kersey won the award in 1998 for her lifetime of good sportsmanship. She grew up in East St. Louis, Missouri, in a small house with no heat and in a neighborhood infested by gangs and drugs. Her parents ran a strict household and emphasized education.

Her grandmother named her Jacqueline

after first lady Jacqueline Kennedy. "Some day," she said, "this girl will be the first lady of something."

After watching the 1976 Summer Games on TV, Joyner threw herself into athletics with a passion, competing in track, basketball and volleyball. Then, when Joyner was 18, her mother died.

"She was the one who planted the seed that, even though I was black and female and from a family for which nothing came easy, I could achieve great things in this world," Joyner said. "She taught me that the key to success was to set goals, and not to be deterred by hardship or distracted by temptations."

UCLA recruited Joyner to play basketball. She became an All-American, but still says her greatest accomplishment was graduating in 1985.

"The Olympics were fun, but it was more important to me to graduate from college," she says. The first lady of track retired last year after winning three gold medals, one silver and two bronze.

Now Joyner is busier than ever. She is a businesswoman and entrepreneur, heading her own sports marketing firm. She chairs the St. Louis Sports Commission and, as a way to give back to the community that supported her, Joyner has created the JJK Youth Center Foundation to build a community center in her hometown of East St. Louis.

"When I leave this earth, I want to know I've created something that will help others," she says. Ask Jackie what her limits are and she'll say she has none. As she often tells audiences, "The only person who can stop you from reaching your goals is you!"

Naber's coach offered to protest the call. With a world title at stake, Naber's head was swirling. He knew that what he decided now would follow him the rest of his life and say something about the kind of person he was.

"I knew what I had to do," he says. "My parents didn't raise a cheater." Naber admitted that he had not touched the wall.

This respect for himself and for others is one of the contributing reasons Naber was chosen to carry the Olympic flag at the opening of the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

"Those who merely think it's a race of the fastest are missing the point," Naber says. "The whole purpose of the Olympic Games is not to win but to grow as a person and become a better person through the process."

NOT TO WIN, BUT TO TAKE PART



Andre Agassi

THE OLYMPIC CREED

“**T**he most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win, but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered, but to have fought well.”

These words were spoken in 1894 by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games. Known as the “Olympic Creed,” they aptly describe the beliefs that inspire the Games.

This means there are no losers at the Olympic Games. Everyone who takes part is a winner, with respect to last a lifetime. Those who compete to their greatest ability and with integrity are winners, whether they return with medals or not.

FREQUENT FLYER FINDS GLORY IN TAKING PART

Cammy Myler competed in four Olympic Games and never won a medal, but she knows the glory of taking part.

Myler has been America’s brightest woman star in the luge, one of the most dangerous Olympic sports. In the luge, riders lie flat on their backs on sleds that careen on a downhill course at speeds of 60 to 70 miles an hour.

As a seven-time national champion, Myler was the most successful female luger in U.S. history. Despite three knee surgeries, she competed in four Olympic Games, finishing seventh in Nagano, Japan, in 1998.

“If you’re relying on being number one to feel good about yourself, you have a lot to learn,” Myler says. “I was striving for a medal, but I realized that taking part really is the most important thing. Even though I never won a medal, competing opened so many doors for me. I got to travel and meet interesting people, and the experience at the Olympic Games gives you a unique feeling of globalism. It’s not often you get to gather with people from over 100 other countries and have fun.”

One of Myler’s greatest honors came at the Lillehammer Games in 1994, when the U.S. team voted to have her carry the flag in the Opening Ceremony.

Her motivation to be the best she can has kept her busy ever since. After graduating cum laude from Dartmouth, she is now studying law at Boston College. If she could, she says, she would fly at another chance to be an Olympian.

GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR TENNIS ACE

Tennis champion Andre Agassi says playing in the Olympic Games was the greatest accomplishment of his career. Agassi had won Wimbledon and the U.S. and Australian Opens. He’d won millions of dollars in prize money.

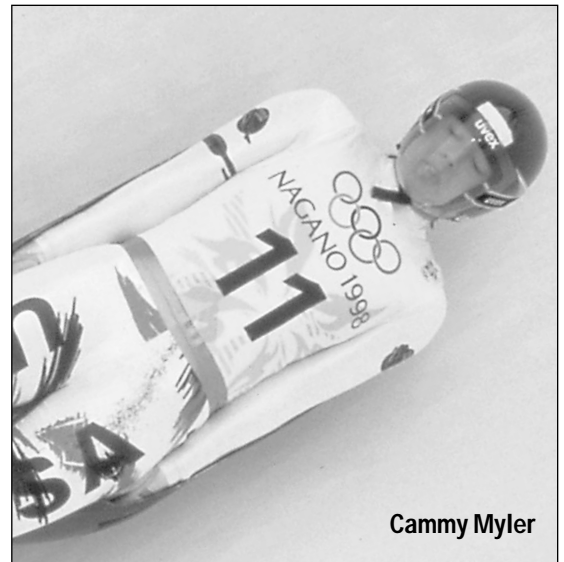
Yet he wanted more than anything to compete in the Olympic Games, where the prize money is zero.

“I can’t get into the heads of athletes who chose not to be here,” Agassi said of pros who compete only for hefty payoffs. Agassi yearned to play in the Games because his father, Mike, had boxed in the Olympic Games for Iran in 1948 and 1952.

“My father is as proud, if not prouder, of my being at the Olympics than of anything I have ever accomplished,” said Agassi.

After Agassi’s final match at the 1996 Games in Atlanta, he tossed his racquet in the air, hugged his father and cried as he stood on the victory stand.

“To me, this is the greatest thing I’ve accomplished in this sport,” he says.



Cammy Myler

ACTIVITY

Locate a news story about a citizens’ group that is trying to improve the community in some way. There are many people in such groups who do not get their pictures in the paper and do not get individual recognition. These people contribute their time and talents because they want to be part of an important project or cause. Write a letter to the editor praising the “behind-the-scenes” people who work in the organization in the news story you’ve selected.

“I learned to win by learning to lose — that means not being afraid of losing.”

JEFF BLATNICK,
Wrestling, 1980 and 1984



Stories of great Olympians are more about overcoming failures and losses than they are about winning. In fact, athletes often see failure, even repeated failure, as a necessary step toward excellence.

Champions like these are not willing to give up. They share a faith that their struggles will have positive outcomes.

Perhaps no one understands this better than speed skater Dan Jansen of Wisconsin, who may be remembered more for his comeback after failures than for his gold medal.

In the 1984 Olympic Games in Sarajevo, Jansen, 18, was thrilled to place fourth. Four years later in Calgary, Canada, he was favored to win two golds. Then he got a call from his mother on the morning of his first race. His beloved sister Jane, dying of leukemia, probably would not live through the day.

“I talked to Jane and told her I was going to win for her,” Jansen said. His sister died five hours later.

In his first race, Jansen suffered a bad fall. In his second, he fell again. A national TV audience grieved with him.

In the 1992 Olympic Winter Games, Jansen was favored to win gold but failed to do so. He finished fourth in the 500 meters and a disastrous 26th in the 1,000 meters. With a change in the Winter Olympic cycle, Jansen could make one more try two years later at the 1994 Games.

Cheering him on were his parents and his wife, Robin, holding baby daughter Jane, named after Jansen’s late sister. In his first race, to his family’s horror, Jansen slipped and finished eighth. Four days later, Jansen faced the final race of his Olympic career.

“I was not confident,” he says. “All I could think of was, ‘This will be over soon. In a minute and a half it will be done.’”

The rest is Olympic history. Jansen skated the best race of his life, setting a world record.

During his decade of disappointments, millions of Americans had become aware of Jansen’s story. When he finally won the gold, America cheered as the courageous athlete skated a victory lap with his baby daughter in his arms. As he stood atop the victory stand, Jansen recalls, “I was hoping the national anthem would never end.”

SEEING FAILURE AS A STEPPING STONE

Dan Jansen

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A SKI JUMPER

If anyone understands Jansen's ups and downs, it is Masahiko "Happy" Harada of Japan, who had more downs than ups at the 1994 Olympic Winter Games.

A world champion at 25, Harada soared 122 meters on his first jump, giving Japan a commanding lead. Now he was expected to take a leap that would give his team its first ski jumping gold medal in two decades.

Harada stood on top of the ramp with his country's rising sun symbol painted on each cheek. Then he sailed off like a wounded bird. His 97.5-meter jump was the worst of anyone in the top teams, dropping Japan to a silver medal.

Like a warrior falling on his sword, Harada collapsed on the snow in despair. He told reporters he would face shame in his homeland for the next four years.

In Nagano in 1998, Japan again counted on Harada to help his team win a gold medal. But while competitors soared up to 125 meters, Harada plopped down under 80 meters in his first jump. Again, a national TV audience in Japan covered its eyes. Harada had one jump left.

Facing a life that could label him as a "sempan," which is Japanese for "choker," Harada lifted off and flew an amazing 137 meters. The jump clinched a gold medal for Japan.

Because he had the self-respect not to be defeated by his failures, Happy Harada became a national hero in Japan.

OLYMPIC HEIGHTS ON THE VICTORY STAND

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the Olympic Games is the awards ceremony. At the end of each event, the three top finishers stand on a platform. The winner stands in the middle at the highest level; the other two stand lower at his or her sides.

Then the medals are awarded: gold for first, silver for second and bronze for third. The flags of each medal winner's country are raised as the gold medal winner's national anthem is played.

Anyone who sees this moving ceremony finds it hard to forget. And all Olympians who attained these heights had to overcome the depths of many failures.

ACTIVITY

Think of an area in which you have not succeeded in the way you would like. Use stories and ads from the newspaper to help you develop a plan to improve your performance. Find someone in the newspaper who is an inspiration; someone who could serve as a coach; a service that would help you; and a product you could use. Make a list of your choices and write a brief explanation of how each would help.



Babe Didrickson

WOMEN IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

ACTIVITY

Find a feature story about a female athlete. Write a brief essay about her accomplishments. Describe what you admire about her.

BREAKING THE TAPE

Olympic women in the first half of the century often faced social and cultural obstacles that discouraged and even prohibited their participation. Women were barred from the first modern-day Olympic Games in Athens in 1896.

In 1900, they were allowed to compete, but only in golf and tennis. Women athletes at that time were expected to be modest, frail and “ladylike.” They were not supposed to sweat.

As decades passed and women won the right to vote, as they joined the work force and bobbed their hair, participation by women in the Olympic Games increased, reflecting society’s changing views of women in general.

As athletes, women became stronger and more muscular. They began believing in themselves, shedding stereotypes and gaining self-respect.

By 1988, more than a quarter of the athletes in the Olympic Games were women. As role models to the millions of women and girls watching, they have won admiration and respect for their strength, courage and grace.

OPENING DOORS AND LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

Mildred “Babe” Didrickson was a pioneer athlete who opened doors and leveled the playing field for the many women she inspired to live their own dreams.

The sixth of seven children, she grew up in Beaumont, Texas, playing baseball and football with the boys — and usually beating them. As a teenager, she was small — only 5 feet 4 inches tall and 110 pounds — but she was a gifted athlete.

From the golf course to the tennis court, the diving board to Olympic track and field, she thrilled crowds and filled record books with her accomplishments.

At the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, the 18-year-old Didrickson qualified for five events, but Olympic rules at the time limited her to competing in only three. She won gold in the 80-meter hurdles, and shared a world record in the high jump with a leap of 5 feet 5 inches. However, because she had dived headfirst over the bar instead of feet first, she was awarded the silver medal. It wasn’t until later years that the headfirst style was permitted.

After the Olympic Games, the Associated Press voted Didrickson Woman Athlete of the Year five times and Greatest Female Athlete of the Half-Century.

But most important, Didrickson was a pioneer who inspired generations of women to take part in sports. Before Didrickson’s fame in the 1930s, women were discouraged from participating in any sport that couldn’t be played in a skirt. With her achievements, Didrickson was a role model for women who wanted to have more fun and gain self-respect through their athletic pursuits.

COURAGE AND COOL ON THE SKI SLOPES

Downhill skier Picabo Street is another heroine known for her courage and cool.

With her Cat-in-the-Hat name, Generation X taste, intellect and rags-to-



Flo-Jo's medals and nails

riches story, Picabo (pronounced Peek-a-boo) Street has had an uncanny ability to come back after injury over and over again to show what champions are all about.

With her blazing speed, Street became the first American to win a Downhill World Cup in the '94-'95 season and she has dominated women's skiing ever since. She won a gold medal in Japan in 1998 in the Super G and silver in the downhill in the 1994 Olympic Games.

Street grew up in an Idaho town with a population of only 33. Her family had chickens in the yard and no TV.

Her parents may not have had a lot of money, but they did have respect for her Olympic goals. "When you're jumping so high for something so far up in the sky," she says, "you have to know that there is definitely someone there who can catch you, someone who knows how to catch you and when." Street says her parents were just that way.

"Women in sports are no longer pioneering; we're established as a movement and we are growing," Street says. "I'm proud to be part of that."

BREAKING THE TAPE WITH STYLE

Among the Olympic heroines, Florence Griffith Joyner was a unique star who broke stereotypes almost as often as she broke the tape at the finish line.

Nicknamed Flo-Jo, her beauty and grace made her a media star, with her stylish running outfits, long hair and long, painted fingernails. She got offers from movie and TV producers, modeling agencies and magazines, glamorizing the image of America's track stars.

She grew up in poverty, the seventh of 11 children raised in the tough Watts section of Los Angeles. When she began running at age 7 in elementary school, her life took an exciting turn.

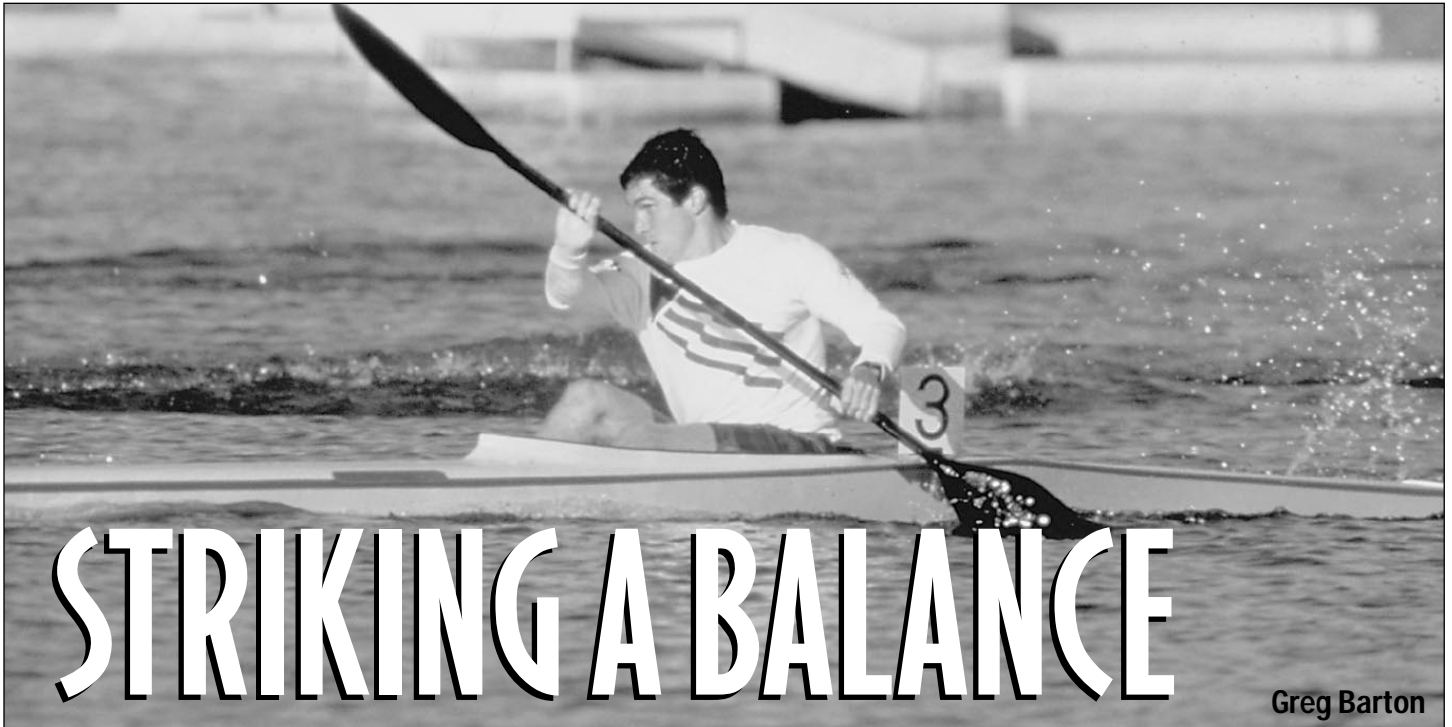
By 1984, Griffith made the Olympic team and won the silver medal in the 200 meters. After dropping out of track for a while and working in a bank and as a hairdresser, Griffith married Olympic gold medalist Al Joyner, the brother of Jackie Joyner-Kersey, and returned to training.

"It was time to run better or move on," she said. She ran better, winning three golds at the 1988 Seoul Games.

In September 1998, Griffith Joyner died suddenly at her Southern California home at the age of 38. The coroners said she had suffered a seizure in her sleep. At her funeral, Flo-Jo was eulogized for breaking cultural stereotypes and for leading female athletes to be more visible and taken more seriously.

Al Joyner, Griffith's husband, said he hopes people remember her for more than the records she set. "It was the love she had for the sport," he said. "Her motto was, 'I believe in the impossible because nobody else does.'"





STRIKING A BALANCE

Greg Barton

DISCIPLINE OF BODY AND MIND

To live up to the Olympic ideal of a unified mind, body and spirit requires discipline and balance.

Any student knows how difficult this can be. There never are enough hours in the day to get everything done and still have a social life. Add to this three to five hours a day of physical training, and you get an idea of what life is like for an Olympic athlete.

Swimmer Pablo Morales took a break from Stanford toward the end of his freshman year in 1984 to train for the Olympic Games in Los Angeles. He won silver medals in the 100-meter butterfly and the 200-meter individual medley, and a gold in the medley relay.

But he was disappointed that he had not won an individual gold, as he was expected to do.

So for the 1988 Games, he spent an entire year doing nothing but training. The strategy backfired. He failed to make the Olympic team. He promptly retired from swimming and entered Cornell Law School.

But in 1991, the desire to swim returned. Surprising everyone, Morales began training for the 1992 Olympic Games. This time, though, he did not immerse himself completely in the sport. "I learned in my time away from swimming that there's more to life than swimming," he said. "And to enjoy everything life has to offer, I also learned that life would go on whether I reached my goal or not."

At age 27, after having been away from swimming for 3½ years, Morales won a gold medal in the 100-meter butterfly. He had finally come to understand what Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Games, meant when he said he was a firm believer in the Greek ideal of exercising mind and body in harmony.

"I have often noticed that those who find themselves first in physical exercises are also first in their studies," de Coubertin said. "The serious commitment in one area promotes the desire to be first throughout."

MIND AND BODY IN HARMONY

More than a century later, the idea of exercising mind and body in harmony still flourishes. Sprinter Lucinda Adams made the 1956 and 1960 Olympic teams while getting a master's degree in education at Tennessee State University. She won a gold medal in the 400-meter relay at the 1960 Rome Olympic Games.

"Athletics combined with education make you a stronger person in mind, body and spirit," Adams says. "It's education that will open doors for you, education that can be your way out of a difficult family or community situation. Today's athletes don't just walk out onto the field. They work in the classroom to get the education they need to be successful in everything they do."

Dot Richardson was the shortstop for the U.S. softball team that won the first gold medal in the history of the sport at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. While she trained, she studied medicine to become an orthopedic surgeon.

"There are many things I have learned in sports that I use all the time in my medical career," she says. "I have self-confidence and determination to face things like failure. I think you learn the most about yourself as a person in the tough times by how you deal with them. And I have learned the importance of the ability to work with others, and not just other doctors but my patients as well."

NO TIME FOR SELF-PITY

The story of Olympian Greg Barton is one of the best examples of discipline and balance.

As a child, he did daily chores on his parents' farm in Homer, Michigan, a town of only 2,000 people. It was there he gained the strength to be an athlete despite a disability.

"I was born with club feet," Barton says. "My toes pointed inward and I had to walk on the outside of my feet. After a series of unsuccessful childhood surgeries, I ended up with limited motion in my ankles and one leg an inch shorter than the other.

"It often hurt to run and sometimes even to walk. It would have been easy to say, 'I can't do sports,' and let my feet be an excuse, but I am thankful that my family kept me from sinking into self-pity."

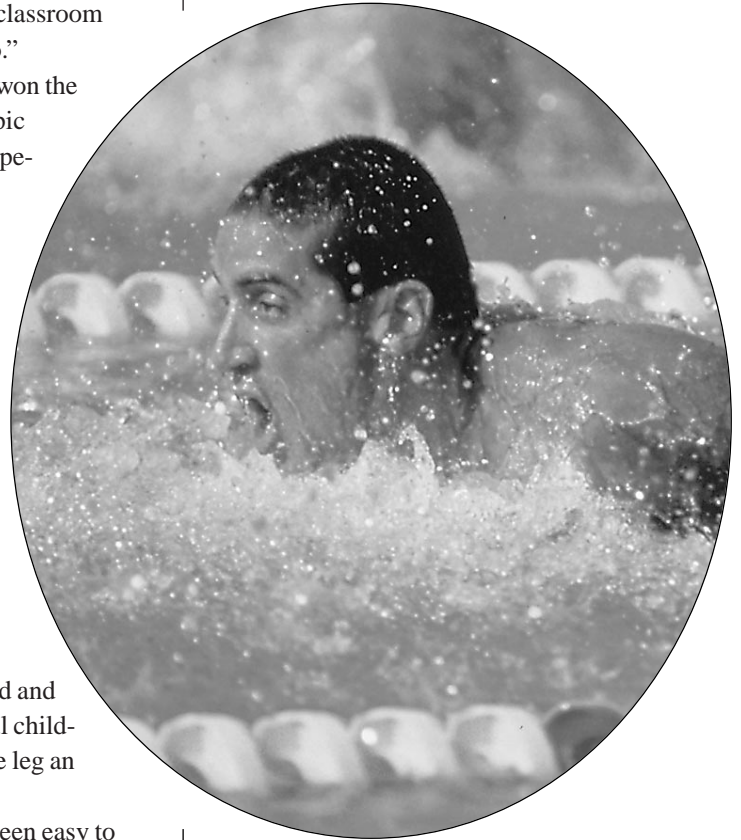
Then as a teenager, Barton discovered kayaking. "It's an upper-body sport," he says. "Your feet are used only minimally in the kayak to brace yourself in the boat so the upper body can apply power to the paddle. Kayaking is the perfect sport for me."

In 1984 in Los Angeles, Barton became the first American man since 1936 to win an Olympic medal in kayaking. Four years later, he became the sport's superstar when he earned two gold medals on the same day — less than two hours apart.

While he trained, Barton studied mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan, where he graduated summa cum laude. That too took discipline and balance.

"When life seems to be coming at us head-on," Barton says, "when our schedule can't handle even one more thing, when we feel we've got more plates spinning in the air than a circus performer, don't panic. Focus on one thing at a time, give each task your undivided attention, and you'll be surprised at what you can accomplish.

"You can do more than you ever dreamed possible."



Pablo Morales

ACTIVITY

A balance between the body, the mind and the spirit are important for all people. If you were the coach of a school athletic team, what would you recommend for your students to be sure they had a good balance in their lives? Look through the newspapers for events, activities and products that could help your students to develop in all three ways. Make a list of two recommendations each for growth of body, mind and spirit.



COURAGE AND DIGNITY SHINE IN OLYMPIC FLAME

The ancient Greeks began every Olympic Games by lighting a torch from the rays of the sun and keeping it lit throughout the competition. To them, the Olympic flame symbolized the enduring light of peace that the Olympic Games shed on the world. It means the same to us today, and we still begin every Olympic Games by lighting a torch — using a flame lit by the sun in Olympia, the site of the ancient games.

In the months leading up to the Games, thousands of runners relay the sunlit torch from Olympia to the current Olympic site, using planes and boats when necessary to transport it across the globe. During the Opening Ceremony, a final runner carries the torch into the Olympic stadium and lights the cauldron that will burn until the Closing Ceremony 16 days later.

One emotional torch lighting occurred at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. Swimmer Janet Evans had the honor of carrying the torch up a long ramp inside the Olympic stadium toward the cauldron. As she reached the top, Muhammad Ali, who won a gold medal in boxing in 1960, emerged from the shadows. With his hand trembling from Parkinson's syndrome, Ali slowly touched the torch to an igniter. This sent the flame racing toward the huge cauldron, which suddenly burst with light and illuminated the sky.

COURAGE ON AND OFF THE RACING TRACK

Other great Olympians have shown similar generosity. Lance Armstrong is one of the top cyclists in the world and one of the most admired U.S. Olympians for the courage he has shown both on the racing track and off.

Armstrong was the second-youngest rider in history to win the Road Race World Championship, and he competed in two Olympic Games. In Barcelona in



1992, he came in 14th in the road race and in the 1996 Games in Atlanta, he was 12th.

In the fall of 1996, Armstrong was diagnosed with an advanced form of testicular cancer, which had spread to his lungs and brain. Doctors predicted he would live only six weeks. But after surgery and chemotherapy, Armstrong recovered and resumed training.

Feeling fortunate, Armstrong went beyond his own athletic pursuits to help others. He established the Lance Armstrong Foundation, raising over \$500,000 for testicular cancer research.

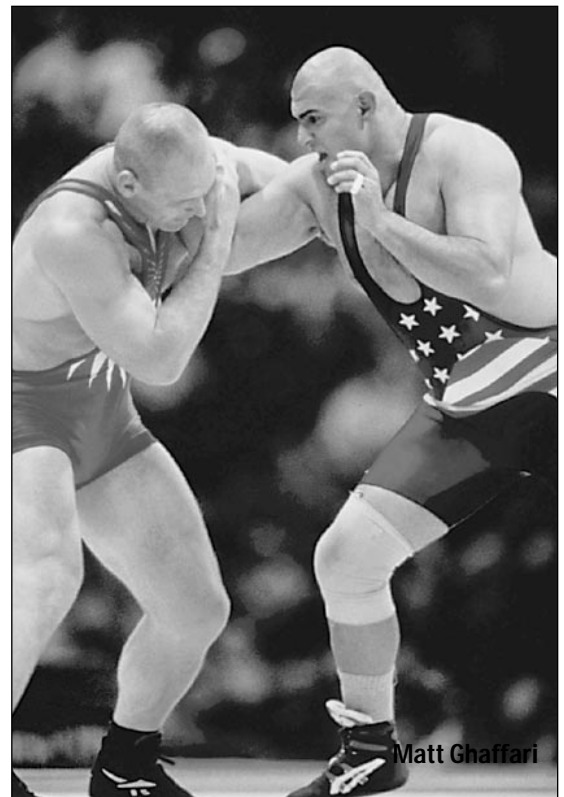
Besides working for the foundation to help other cancer victims, Armstrong is training for the 2000 Olympic Games in Australia. He says he is grateful to be back to the sport, “proving to myself and my family and other cancer survivors that if I can ride in the front, anybody can ride in the front.”

FINDING THE COURAGE TO INSPIRE

This kind of spirit shines in great Olympians such as Matt Ghaffari. A native of Iran who immigrated with his family to America, Ghaffari won a silver medal in Greco-Roman wrestling at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, but made bigger headlines for what he did several days later.

When a bomb exploded in Centennial Park near the Olympic venues, one bystander was killed and 100 injured. Some athletes talked of going home, and some did. Ghaffari walked into the hospital and visited the bombing victims, the first Olympian to do so. He felt a lump in his throat and butterflies in his stomach as he stood by the door of the 12-year-old girl whose mother had died in the blast. He was scared to go in, but he did.

“What does it matter how strong, how fast, how smart or how wealthy someone becomes if he cannot inspire others?” Ghaffari said. When he placed his





Tara Lipinski and Michelle Kwan

medal around the girl's neck, "it could not have mattered less that my medal was silver instead of gold," he said. "Her smile was my victory."

Ghaffari's gesture and his fellow Olympians' decision to go on with the Olympic Games reflected the steadfast, undying light of the Olympic flame.

"It was a time to show the world that when athletes and Olympic leaders talk about courage, determination and will, we are not expressing hollow clichés only relevant for pep talks," Ghaffari said.

SHINING IN A TIME OF DISAPPOINTMENT

The spirit of the Olympic flame lights each athlete in a different way. Sometimes it shines brightest

in moments of disappointment, as it did for skater Michelle Kwan.

When Kwan was 5 years old, she began skating at a rink near her family's home in Torrance, California. Soon, her parents were driving her to a training center at Lake Arrowhead, two hours away. She was just 13 when she earned a spot on the U.S. Olympic team as an alternate. Four years later, she was the world champion and favored to win the gold medal in Nagano, Japan, in 1998.

She skated beautifully in Nagano, but the younger Tara Lipinski was also brilliant and won the gold medal by a slim margin.

At a news conference afterward, tears streamed down Kwan's face as she sat next to Lipinski, who was chatting happily about her triumph. When it was time for Kwan to speak, reporters held their breaths, wondering how Kwan would handle her disappointment.

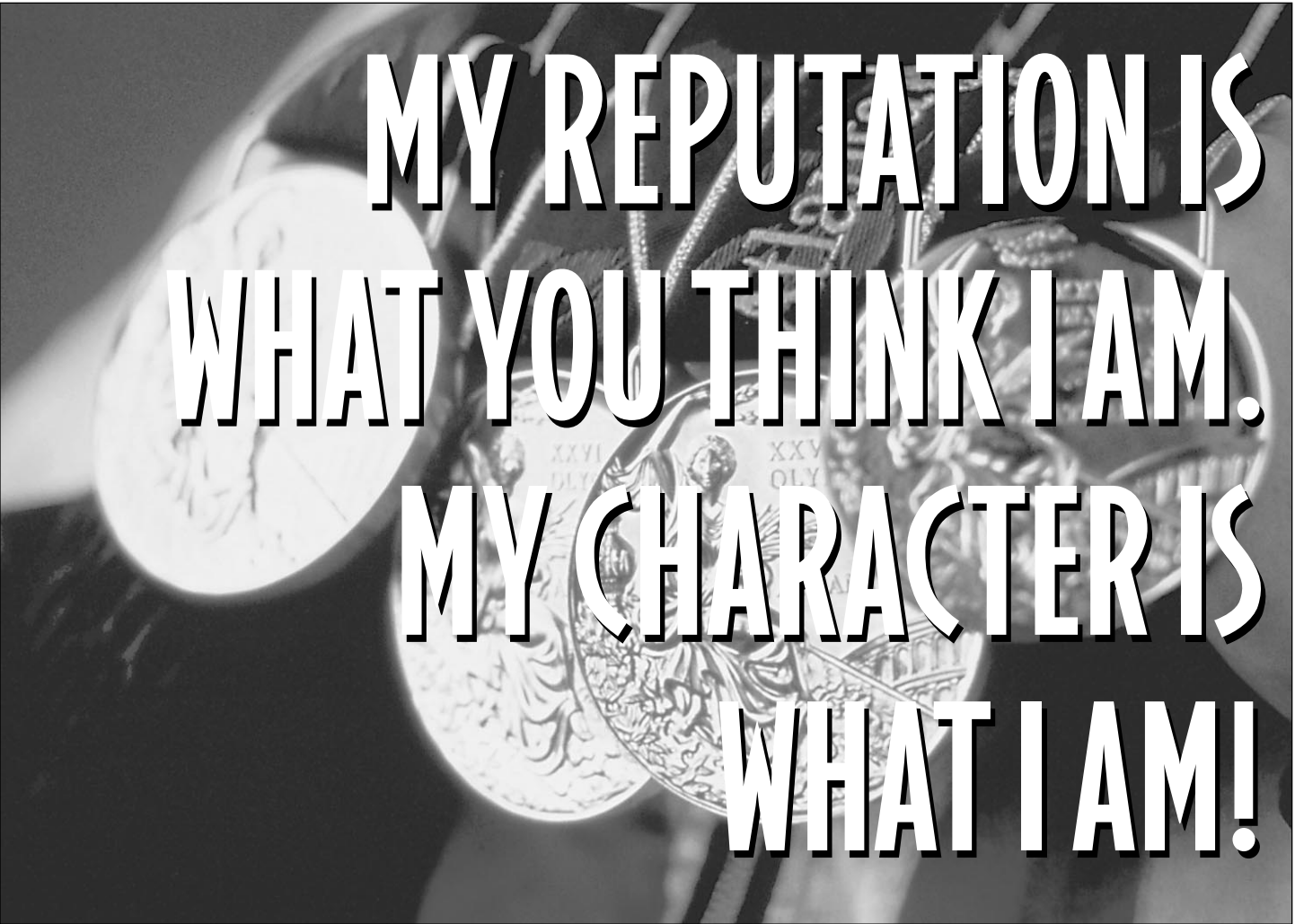
There was an awkward silence, then Kwan turned to Lipinski and said, "I like you, Tara!" Everyone laughed in relief.

Kwan said she felt that she won the silver medal, not that she lost the gold. She thought she trained hard enough and skated well enough to win, but realized that "working hard is no guarantee that you're going to win a gold medal. . . . That's life."

Mike Penner of the Los Angeles Times wrote: "Of all the losing locker rooms I have visited in two decades as a sportswriter, listening to grown men rationalize . . . I have never seen anyone cope with crushing defeat with more poise, dignity and maturity than a teenage girl named Michelle Kwan."

ACTIVITY

There are many situations in life in which there are winners and losers, such as sporting competitions, debates and elections. These are reported in your newspaper. Locate and read newspaper stories in which winners and losers are identified. Collect the quotes from both winners and losers and compile them in a "Compete with Dignity" notebook. After a week, compare your quotes with those collected by a classmate. Discuss what you can learn from the competitors in your notebook.



**MY REPUTATION IS
WHAT YOU THINK I AM.
MY CHARACTER IS
WHAT I AM!**

BY MICHAEL JOSEPHSON, Character Counts

An Olympic medal represents athletic excellence . . . one of the highest achievements in sports. Glory, honor and pride come with winning a medal. The medal of good character represents personal excellence . . . the highest achievement in life. With this medal too, comes glory, honor and pride.

Only a few exceptional athletes can win an Olympic medal. Winners work hard to improve their natural talents. They learn to get the very best out of their physical potential. It takes perseverance, endurance and dedication to reach the top in world competition. Olympic winners earn their reputations. They are admired for what they did.

Everyone can earn the medal of good character. But it too takes hard work. It isn't easy in a world full of temptations and bad examples to be one's best, to be deserving of honor and esteem. Those who wear the medal of character are admired for what they are.

Reputation without good character beneath is hollow and fragile. Not everyone of good character can win an Olympic medal but only people of good character can be worthy of it.

Just as the world's finest athletes train themselves to strengthen their skills and develop the mental toughness demanded by victory, all of us can strengthen

the inner qualities and develop the attitudes demanded by good character. We can choose to build our lives on the foundation of the “Six Pillars of Character”—trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship.

In the long run of life, it is not reputation but character that counts most. Character counts because healthy and lasting personal relationships, rewarding careers and inner peace — the fruits of good character — are the only roads to happiness.

The Olympic spirit blends physical and moral excellence. It envisions noble striving in the honorable pursuit of victory. The standards of honor are captured in the idea of sportsmanship — a commitment to honesty, integrity and fair play, treating others with respect, and the ability to win and lose with grace. Sportsmanship is good character in action.

**MY LIFE IS MY ANTHEM
I AM THE SINGER AND CHARACTER IS MY INSTRUMENT**

The stories in this publication demonstrate the power and beauty of men and women who have met every challenge of victory. These special athletes are joined by others of all ages, from all over the world, who have challenged themselves to be the best they can be. Together they form a majestic chorus of courage, perseverance and dedication that stirs the soul and clouds the eyes with tears of joy, inspiration and pride at the potential of humanity.

Olympic champions represent all people — athletes and nonathletes alike — who dream and pursue giant dreams and who find out that the lessons of the journey are more important than the destination. They teach us all to live by an oath similar to the Olympic Oath:

“I promise to take part in the challenge of life, respecting and abiding by the moral rules that govern it, always striving to bring out the best that is in me and others, in the true spirit of good citizenship, for the glory of the good life and the honor of living.”



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EDUCATION RESOURCES

SPORT DEVELOPMENT VISION

Every child in America will have the opportunity to participate and maximize his/her potential in Olympic sports.

SPORT DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1

To create awareness of Olympic sports, Olympism and the opportunities to participate and compete in sports.

2

To stimulate Olympic sports participation opportunities (by providing leadership).

3

To enhance opportunities to pursue excellence in Olympic sports.

4

To define national leadership standards.

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