

# QUALITIES OF A GREAT "ATHLETE"

From Dr Bruce Brown, National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics

**Having each of these qualities is at least as important *beyond* sports.**

**CONFIDENCE** An *athlete* displays a quiet inner **confidence based on preparation**, her own and that of her teammates. Confidence is **a belief based on your daily work habits and your constant progress**. This kind of confidence is **contagious** within a team, built as athletes subject themselves to **tough challenges and practices** and see the value in **hard work**. **These athletes develop a "go for it" mentality, become unafraid of failure, remain confident in "rough waters". They prepare hard every day.** When success follows, athletes tell you it's because of the effort they put into preparation.

The **non-athlete** has a **false confidence, not built on preparation** but on factors she doesn't control. Maybe she is blessed with great athleticism. Maybe she thinks that the team will "carry" her. In either event, she does not put the same effort or attention into practices as do the *athletes* on the team.

***Having true confidence is a choice.***

**TEACHABLE SPIRIT** *Athletes* **wants to learn and improve. They bring an enthusiasm for "continuous improvement" every day.** They know that correction happens because a coach sees potential in them to get better. They have learned to take **correction as a compliment** and look at correction as an opportunity to improve. The athlete responds to correction with verbal and physical cues that she is listening and learning.

The **non-athlete** looks at any **correction as criticism**, and often **responds with an excuse.**

***Having a teachable spirit is a choice.***

**PRIDE** The pride of an *athlete* is a shared one. It is found in **the "shared joy of the inner circle", a feeling among team members that no one on the outside can understand.** Shared pride involves a desire **to become as good as possible for yourself and for your group of teammates.** It involves unselfishness, and accountability. Team pride is developed in parts of the game that require more effort than skill, where determination is more important than talent (**DIMITT**). (Example: "optimistic recovery" by everyone when a ball is lost.)

The pride of a **non-athlete** is **self-oriented, often selfish.** Such players often develop a **"sense of entitlement"**, where she thinks athletic skill should guarantee **special treatment.**

***Developing the right kind of pride is a choice.***

**ACCOUNTABILITY** The *athlete* is **responsible** and demonstrates it when she **takes personal accountability for what happens to her.** When things are not going well, **she looks at herself first to see where she can act to make a difference.** She becomes a problem solver, better able to cope with stress and more likely to persevere when facing difficulties. She realizes that **"you are either getting better or you are getting worse"**, that if you are not making steady improvement, you are losing ground to those athletes who are.

The **non-athlete blames everyone but herself** when things do not go well. She often fixes her focus on things she cannot control rather than those she can.

***Being accountable is a choice.***