



NAIA “CHAMPIONS OF CHARACTER”

RESPECT

Like it or not, the behavior of your athletes and coaches during competition is often the most public reflection of your school and community. Each game and practice is an opportunity for everyone involved in sports to reveal their personal character and model what they have learned. The NAIA Champions of Character program is founded on five core values: Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, Servant Leadership and Sportsmanship. A true athletic philosophy needs to both a belief statement and an action statement. Sound athletic programs say with their words and actions, “this is what we believe, so therefore, this is what will be seen if you watch us play. Each of these core values can be seen in the behavior of coaches and athletes. In this article, we will focus on some of the methods an athlete can use to demonstrate **RESPECT**.

An athlete with respect for the game, and the team has learned to have a **teachable spirit**. In athletic terms, they are coachable. They are able to take correction as a compliment. They understand that the coach’s job is to identify areas of weakness and help them improve. They also equate correction as a by-product of the coach seeing potential in them to get better, and have enough inner confidence to not feel criticized or singled out. An athlete, when corrected, gives the coach both verbal and physical cues that they are listening and learning. Their body language and voice are saying, “thanks for believing in me and that I am capable of being better”. An athlete is consistently seeking new information and is eager to go through the learning process. They demonstrate respect for coaches and teammates by being attentive and focused during instruction because without attentiveness, improvement is limited.

An athlete has developed **work habits**. They can subject themselves to hard, productive work. They are committed to continuous improvement. They have learned to concentrate and do the physical work required for a full practice session. Their ability to work and learn, assist in the production of the next part of the core value of respect, **respectful confidence**. The athlete has a quiet, inner confidence based on preparedness. True team confidence is gained from the collective preparation of the group. Work habits of an athlete are directed toward achieving excellence of both individual and team goals. Genuine confidence is based on belief, and belief is based on consistency of accomplishment and daily work habits.

It is essential that an athlete demonstrates **respectful pride**. Pride is a two-edged sword. On one hand, there is the ego kind of pride, which centers on individual accomplishments, while respectful pride is a shared feeling between all team members that no one on the outside can understand. The good kind of pride comes from “shared joy of the inner circle” of athletes. It allows teams to take ordinary things and make them something special, and it allows individuals to be aware and appreciate other people, roles and accomplishments.

An athlete with **RESPECT** has made the choices necessary to be unselfish with their effort and attention, their preparation can be counted on by teammates and they have committed to the strength of the inner circle.

Excerpts from *The Call to Coaching* – Bruce E. Brown, NAIA Special Presenter