

What Can Cinderella Teach Your Athlete About Humility?

By Michelle Wells, Guest Contributor



Humility is an elusive character trait...

Just when you are finished telling somebody all the ways in which **you** are humble, it seems to disappear.

Risky as it may be to identify humility in yourself, we all know and recognize when we see it in someone else – and it is hard to ignore. Not to be mistaken for a lack of self-confidence or a wimpiness, humility is a rare but valuable quality that hints at gratitude, assurance, and depth of character.

So what does true humility look like? And what is its worth in the athletic setting?

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As parents of young athletes, we are confronted with a sports culture that, very often, confuses confidence with arrogance. This mindset is surely the opposite of humility and does little to develop a healthy team or a mindful athlete.

True humility, however, exists when **a quiet confidence** allows one to be transparent, and authentic without fear of losing anything.

The latest rendition of the Cinderella story has some great visuals of this type of humility in action that are worth looking at.

Humility Has a Servant's Heart

Whether you have seen the latest Cinderella movie or you only vaguely remember the classic tale, visions of the young girl dancing and singing while she worked, are sure to come to mind.

In spite of the unfair treatment that Cinderella suffered, under her stepmother and stepsisters, she seemed to have a gracious attitude toward them. Not only did she willingly serve them but she was not humiliated by doing it.

So how does this play out in the team sports setting?

And how does humility benefit individual athletes or the team as a whole?

Here are some examples:

- A team Captain that leads by treating the youngest and least experienced team members with dignity
- Skilled athletes that engage in nurturing/helping teammates that are struggling
- An athlete that seeks to clean up after the team, carry equipment, provide additional support, without being asked

Humility Elevates Others

Even in the fairytale land of Cinderella, it seems unusual to come across someone who never promotes themselves but rather seeks to elevate those around them. Yet this is clearly the way that Cinderella conducts herself from the way she treats the creatures she encounters all the way to the end when she unassumingly tries on the glass slipper.

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Our kids will have ample opportunity to promote their own skills and brag about victories while being part of a team. However, the rare athlete recognizes that he has limitations and cannot accomplish anything alone. He also genuinely seeks to encourage and lift up his teammates.



An environment where athletes elevate each other looks like:

- Supportive comments when teammates are doing well AND when they are struggling
- Kind and respectful attitude toward opponents
- Specific and creative compliments that inspire the best in others
- Appreciation shown toward coaches and their assistants for the work they do

Humility Extends Grace

In the most recent rendition of the Cinderella story, she extends grace to her step-family – or in today’s vernacular, she cuts them some slack – when the prince asks her about

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them. He inquires about how they treat her and her response is, "... they treat me as well as they are able."

Once again, the sports platform gives our young athletes plenty of opportunities to **practice** this form of humility – which is necessary if it is to grow and develop in them. Here are some ways this can play out:

- Respond with honor and respect toward a team that does not deserve it
- To esteem officials regardless of the unpopular calls they might make
- Understanding toward a fellow athlete that seems to be having a bad day and treating others poorly
- Respect toward a coach and his instruction, even when you disagree with it

Final Words of Wisdom from a Fairy Godmother

Cinderella's fairy godmother seemed to be onto something in regards to humility when she said, "This is perhaps the greatest risk any of us will take, to be seen as we truly are."

Your young athlete will always face the temptation to convince the world he is something he is not.

But true humility exists in the authentic confidence and assurance we gain from having a servant's heart, elevating others, and extending grace to those around us.

Michelle Wells is a wife to one and a mom to six, with 20 plus years of experience at both. With a love for being active in sports she took her passion for competitive training to the world of triathlons where she rocked the elite age group level for several years. In an effort to share her enthusiasm for a balanced and healthy life she inspires others through personal training and freelance writing.

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