



Lou Gehrig: Create Your Opportunities

“Today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth.”

You probably would not expect a remarkable statement like this to come from a man who was just diagnosed with a deadly, degenerative disease. But Lou Gehrig was a man well-known for taking advantage of the opportunities presented to him. Just 14 years prior to making this famed speech, Lou would step into a once-in-a-lifetime circumstance as a 1st-base fill-in for Wally Pipp—the Yankee’s star— who is now remembered for sitting out because of a headache. Gehrig went on to never miss another game until diagnosed with ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig’s Disease) 14 years later. He helped the Yankees win 6 world series titles, was named American League most valuable player 2 years and was elected to the Hall of Fame.



Let’s take a look at 3 qualities that are critical to creating opportunities and being prepared to seize the ones that come along.

1) Consistency: It’s often assumed that legends are ALWAYS legendary. But did you know that even though Lou played for the Yankees for over 2,100 games in his career, he didn’t make it on the team with his first try? It actually was on his 4th attempt that he became a permanent player—the fated day he stepped in for Wally Pipp. Gehrig was known for being a consistent presence and eventually, it paid off.

Does your young athlete approach his sport with a consistent effort and attitude? Is he able to see that there is always a bigger picture in play? Or that all the little steps often lead to real progress? Consistency in efforts, attitude, character should always be an important part of athletic development.

2) Hardworking: Lou’s consistency impacted his work ethic. He had an unwillingness to miss a game and it resulted in a playing streak of 2,130 games. (Incidentally, his streak held as the longest until Cal Ripken Jr. surpassed it with 2,632 consecutive games, 43 years later.)

From the time he was a rookie—often playing in the shadow of the great Babe Ruth—until the time he had to remove himself due to ALS, Gehrig’s perseverance earned him the nickname the “Iron Horse.” Do you and your athlete focus on the value of working hard? Are you taking advantage of teaching moments to talk about why persistence and a good work ethic are crucial to success? Share with your child stories of people in history—like Lou Gehrig—who exemplified that hard work, even when no one is watching, pays off.

3) Humility and Thankfulness: Lou Gehrig had to share the stage with another legendary baseball player—Babe Ruth. It would have been easy for Gehrig to feel like he was always playing 2nd fiddle to this baseball Great. But instead of becoming a rivalry, Gehrig and Ruth became an unmatched power-hitting tandem. This was thanks to Lou’s quiet, unassuming, and humble nature. Then when life dealt Gehrig, what anyone would consider a blow, Lou ended his career and finished life with a thankful attitude. Do you encourage your athlete to view her skills and success through a lens of humility and thankfulness? Are you commending her for things that come naturally or are you recognizing hard-earned character development instead?

Regularly ask your athlete to think about the things they are thankful for. Walk them through viewing the world from a teammate or competitor’s eyes. Model a humble and thankful approach in your own life. Consistency, Hardworking, and a Humble Thankfulness will not only serve your athlete well in sports—preparing him for the opportunities that come his way, but will also pave a path of success well into adulthood.



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Discussion Guide for Parent and Athlete

1

Which of Gehrig's qualities does your child demonstrate the most - Consistency, Hard work, or Humility?

2

Think of other famous athletes who have created opportunities due to their personal qualities, perseverance, or character.