

PRACTICE

Building Character Through Soccer



Compassion:

*Deep awareness of the suffering of another and doing something to help
Synonyms: mercy, kindness, empathy, benevolence*

Compassion Story

In an era when many sports stars are considered selfish and arrogant, one player, Manute Bol, a compassionate giant, traveled an unlikely path to the NBA and used his position to tirelessly help others in need. Manute, whose name translated means “A Special Blessing” was born in Sudan in 1962 and although he started as a boy playing soccer, he grew too tall for the sport and took up basketball in his teens. By the time he was finished growing, he stood 7 feet 7 inches tall. He was selected and played for the Sudanese National Team prior to coming to the United States to attend college at the University of Bridgeport. He attended UB where he played for two years prior to being drafted into the NBA in the second round by the Washington Bullets in 1985. Manute had been selected by the San Diego Clippers two years prior in 1983 by the San Diego Clippers but the pick was ruled invalid and Manute was not allowed to play prior to enrolling into college. After college, Manute had a lengthy NBA career playing for four different teams over a ten year span. He wasn't a great offensive player, but his tremendous height helped him to become a great shot blocker and he is second all-time in the NBA in blocked shots per game. He is considered to be one of the greatest shot blockers of all time despite the odds against him ever making it to the United States.

Although his NBA playing career was a success, it was what he did off of the court to help others that was more remarkable. Bol founded the Ring True Foundation to raise funds to help Sudanese refugees. He gave millions of dollars (a large percentage of his salary) to the cause and was a true ambassador for those in need in his own country. Manute was also involved in the Sudan Freedom Walk, a three week march from New York to Washington DC, to raise awareness and to find a solution to end the violence in Darfur (Sudan). The cause was also aimed to end modern day slavery and human rights abuse in Sudan. Bol was a huge proponent of education and worked closely with Sudan Sunrise, an organization that was formed to raise funds to improve education in Sudan and build schools that would enroll students regardless of tribe or religious affiliation. Throughout most of his playing career and beyond, he worked tirelessly to help others. At the time of his death in 2010 due to acute kidney failure caused by complications from the condition that had given him his height, he had given generously of himself to aid the people of his country in need. His compassion for others has made a difference in the lives of thousands. Manute Bol was a giant on the court but his love for others was even bigger.

