

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 June 2012, at the Division III girl's state track meet in Columbus, Ohio, an act of kindness and compassion showed us that there is much more to sports than winning and competition. Meghan Vogel, a talented junior runner for West Liberty-Salem High School (West Liberty, Ohio), won the 1,600-meter title with a personal best time of 4 minutes 58.31 seconds, received her medal, and had about an hour to rehydrate and prepare for the 3,200-meter race.

Depleted of energy from her first race, Vogel was falling off of the pace but fighting fatigue and working toward the finish line. With about 20 meters to go in the 3,200, Arden McMath, a sophomore from Arlington High School, fell to the ground just in front of Vogel. Without hesitation, Vogel stopped to help McMath stand and supported and carried her across the finish line. As they crossed the finish line, Vogel made sure to keep McMath ahead of her.

Vogel said after the race, "Any girl on the track would have done the same for me. I remember moving to her position," she said. "(McMath) was doing the best she could to keep her body upright. There was a lot of shake in her legs, which is totally understandable."

Vogel's mother, Ann, heard the cheers from the stands as her daughter stopped to help another runner in need and she quickly ran around the perimeter of the track to see her daughter after the race. "It wasn't easy to get around with all of the people standing there but I was hearing the crowd and I could see tears running down people's faces."

McMath was aided and checked after the race by medical staff. It is against race regulations to aid another runner during a race. By rule, a runner would be automatically disqualified for such an infraction, but meet officials chose to leave McMath and Vogel in the results rather than take action. McMath finished the race in 14th place with a time of 12:29.90, and Vogel 15th in 12:30.24.

"I don't consider myself a hero. I just did what I knew was right and what I was supposed to do" Vogel said in response to the outpouring of support she received.

Compassion in sports is powerful and acts of kindness and generosity often demonstrate the inherent good in people. It can also serve to remind us how we can positively affect the lives of others in times of need.

See the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1WOZhsi9hU>

