

# PRACTICE

Building Character Through Soccer



**Respect:**

*To treat others with a positive feeling of esteem or deference*

*Synonyms: courtesy, esteem, appreciation*

## Respect Story

Respect in sports is often more important than winning. In key moments, displays of respect will define an athlete's entire career. That is certainly the case with long distance runner Iván Fernández Anaya who, on December 2, 2012, was competing in a cross-country race in Burlada, Navarre, and headed toward a second place finish. He was quite some distance behind the leader, Kenyan Abel Mutai, as they approached the finish line. Mutai had been the bronze medalist in the 3,000-meter steeplechase at the London Olympics months earlier and a win vs. this field would have been a great accomplishment for Anaya. As they approached the finish line, Mutai, the leader, mistakenly pulled up and slowed down 10 meters before the finish, thinking he had already crossed the line and won. Fernández Anaya caught the Kenyan quickly but instead of passing him and taking advantage of the mistake to win the race, he stayed behind the Kenyan and gestured him to finish the race as the winner.

Anaya said "I didn't deserve to win it," I did what I had to do. He was the rightful winner. He created a gap that I couldn't have closed if he hadn't made a mistake. As soon as I saw he was stopping, I knew I wasn't going to pass him." Although the race was not a qualifier and nothing was at stake, Anaya stated that he would have done the same if the reward was higher. "But even if they had told me that winning would have earned me a place in the Spanish team for the European championships, I wouldn't have done it either" said Anaya of his gesture.

Although winning often defines an athlete's career, gestures of sportsmanship and respect can describe an athlete more completely and in the case of Iván Fernández Anaya, it is clear that his respect for an opponent was greater than his desire to win at all cost.

To see more regarding this gesture: (video in Spanish)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dy\\_LxkRZEbl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dy_LxkRZEbl)



