

PRACTICE

Building Character Through Soccer



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Teamwork:

To work together as a group toward a common goal

Synonyms: collaboration, cooperation, coordination

Teamwork Story

Teams are made up of individuals, and yet a team only emerges when the individuals come together in support of common goals.

Rowing is the ultimate teamwork sport; there are no individual stars. It takes months of practice for the same crew members to achieve the same sense of self, rhythm, & consistency. Everyone and everything must be exact to achieve maximum team performance. Even a tiny mistake can throw off the delicate rhythm of the team.

At 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin Germany, the American Olympic rowing team consisted of mostly junior college students from the University of Washington. Don Hume, Joseph Rantz, George E. Hunt, James B. McMillin, John G. White, Gordon B. Adam, Charles Day, Roger Morris, and Robert G. Moch all had to learn how to work together to achieve a common goal.

The team faced a series of challenges. Initially they had to fund their own way to Europe, enduring a long-distance rail and boat journey across the Atlantic. Furthermore, Don Hume fell seriously ill on route to the Olympics, unable to eat properly or practice.

At the start of the 2000-meter final, a 75,000-strong crowd cheered for the formidable German team who had already won five gold medals and one silver in the six previous events. James McMillin remembered his thoughts at the starting line. "I had felt that if we rowed the best we knew how, we could get there, but when I looked around everything went wrong from that point on." First, the Americans were placed in the worst lane in the race. Don Hume was the engine tasked with setting the rowing pace for the team. Yet he was almost lifeless, still ill with eyes closed, shivering, and struggling to breathe normally. Finally, they began in last place since coxswain Bobby Moch failed to notice that the race had started.

With about 800 meters to go, not wanting to let the team down, Hume found a new strength and began rowing with authority. The rest of the team responded with aplomb and the Americans were back in the race, passing into 6th, 5th, 4th & 3rd place and matching the Italian and German teams stroke for stroke towards the finish line. As they crossed the line together, the rowers couldn't tell who had won. The men in all three boats collapsed in exhaustion as they awaited the results.

After a long wait, the announcement came: USA 6:25.4 (Gold), Italy 6:26.0 (Silver), Germany 6:26.4 (Bronze). Just one second separated the three boats. It would be the most physically demanding race any of them would ever row, but one they could only complete as a team.

We are all on more than one team all the time: the family team, the neighborhood team, perhaps the school team. So how can you contribute positively to the team?

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Follow Up Questions:

Write a brief description of a time when your team achieved a goal by working together. What did you learn from the experience?

Write a brief description of how teamwork can aid in achieving long term success.

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Write a brief description of a time when you could have been a better teammate.

What practical steps can you take to work better with others in your everyday life?
