

Who Really is the Greatest?

Ready:

“Everyone who exalts himself, will be humbled; but the one who humbles himself, will be exalted.” Luke 18:14

Set

Muhammed Ali’s death brought an outpouring of adulation. Unquestionably Ali was a superb athlete - probably the greatest boxer of all time. But his achievements were marred by his arrogance and bombast. He roared, “I am the greatest,” even before he’d won much of anything. He was in the face of opponents, predicting how he would humiliate Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, and anyone else entering the ring with him.

Contrary to what coaches and parents taught, Ali established the principle it was good to boast, to gloat and to prance *as long as you won*. He was the exact opposite of such great athletes as Jesse Owens, Roger Bannister, Johnny Unitas, Oscar Robertson, Roger Staubach, Jackie Robinson, or Lou Gehrig and other true superstar athletes who were the face of American sport.

We could name athletes in other sports who quickly followed the Ali mode of braggadocio, pride, and gloating over opponents. Now gloating is the standard, not an exception, in many sports. As the old saying goes, sports do not so much build character as reveal it. Happily, some athletes still display remarkable character and poise. It was gratifying to see solid Christian athletes like Tamika Catchings competing well and standing up for Jesus at the Olympics in Rio. You see amazing soccer stars like Brazil’s Kaka or NHL players like Ryan Carpenter openly proclaiming their faith.

That’s a hopeful thing. It is encouraging to those of us who are dedicated to FCA as an important influencer of young men and women and a ministry of ambassadorship for Jesus Christ. We need to do more as coaches and athletes.

Go

1. Is there a difference between gloating and celebration of hard-won successes?
2. Are you able to play hard, and compete with joy and yet remain humble?
3. How do you show humility?
4. Remember, “humility comes before honor.” Proverbs 18:12

Workout

Luke 18:9-14; 1 Corinthians 1:31; Philippians 2:3-11; 1 Peter 5:5; Proverbs 24:17

Bible Reference:

Luke 18:9-14
1 Corinthians 1:31
Philippians 2:3-11
1 Peter 5:5



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