
What are the qualities that make a good sportsman?

In the 1988 Seoul Olympics, Canadian athlete Ben Johnson failed a drug test after his recent win in the 100m, and got banned from athletics for 3 years. Does this sound shocking to you?

There is no doubt that sportsmen have tried to compete unfairly all the time. Doping is a clear example of the unacceptable things athletes do to win. So building on this, what are the qualities that make a good sportsman?

I can summarise it into 3 points - commitment, respect for the sport, and not taking the result too seriously.

To begin with, a sportsman is disciplined and committed to his sport. He has to focus on his task ahead and remove all distractions to achieve his best. Footballer Francesco Totti is a brilliant example of what a dedicated sportsman should be. Ever heard of a footballer who spent 25 years at a single club? Totti has for Roma. His sheer love for the football motivated him to continuing playing. That, is true commitment.

Furthermore, a sportsman respects the rules of the sport. This means he does not do anything dishonestly to win. An infamous counter example is "diving" in football, where players intentionally fall to fake a foul so that a card or a penalty is awarded. This is a very disrespectful act. It completely degrades the value of football, reducing it to a matter of who can act better.

Notice how I did not use firstly, secondly and thirdly as signposting words. Which brings me to my final point -- a sportsman never takes winning and losing too seriously. The importance of sports is in the fun of competing and trying one's best. In the 2014 World Cup Quarter Finals, Brazilian player David Luiz had the graciousness to comfort Colombian player James Rodriguez after winning 2-1. This was a true display of humility, no matter the result.

The values of a good sportsman can be applied in amateur sports and games as well, even if you aren't one. Next time when you win a match, remember to give the opponents a good handshake, alright?

Thank you.