

The Portrait of a Teammate

Our club's Polaris star this year is the **portrait of a teammate**: competitive excellence, joy of sport, kindness, belonging, and team spirit. You play a central role in the resonance and internalization of this normative ideal. I will now review each virtue in turn.

Competitive excellence¹ is striving for growth and giving our best. It is revelling in the adversity of sport and understanding that challenge breeds development. It is completing every metre of a Bronco, ensuring you cross the line on each repetition. It is refining your craft with integrity. Competitive excellence requires a balanced life; one of scholarship, art, physical activity, and community. A great competitor must surround himself with other great competitors; those who will demand she reach higher. It requires discipline, doing the hard work, even when your motivation is low and especially when no one is looking. Competitive excellence is mental and spiritual preparation, just as much as it is physical. To be the man in the arena is a gift. Hers is the mind of a champion. It is the calm in the chaos of a storm. The great competitor practices humility in victory and grace in defeat. Indeed, failure is their greatest teacher. And, they have peace, for they know they did their best. That is something more than any medal or title. It is a promise: that those who strive for excellence live an abundant life; one that is sure to bear many fruits in the grand scheme of things.



Joy of sport² is enjoyment for the game. We play and have fun amongst friends. The intricacy of the game creates a sense of achievement. The community of the game engenders happiness. Our physical participation pumps up our endorphins. The game itself is respite, perhaps from the worries of the day. Though not just respite, it is training: the armour of confidence to overcome life's challenges. We smile. We laugh. We cheer. That is Touch Rugby, more than any outcome on the pitch. In the desire of winning, we should protect foremost our youthful innocence. We owe this to ourselves. And, it is our responsibility to share this with others: that we practice kindness, belonging, and team spirit. This is the work of friendship: to create common bonds, or what Aristotle calls *sunaisthesis*. But the most important joy comes from our own flourishing: the experience of becoming; of learning about ourselves; and of making our souls grow.

Kindness³ is lifting our teammates and taking good care of ourselves and others. It is an activity—a difficult one. It requires that we be more than mild, sensible, or reserved. We must be bold and courageous—unafraid to be loving and generous. Both to ourselves and others, but mostly to others: and to help them belong. **Belonging**⁴ is appreciating the unique contributions of our teammates and recognising our common values. To belong is to generously expand our fellow human beings by opening our hearts to them. And this takes strength and bravery: to reject the temptations of ambition, fear, and anxiety; and to carry up the most hearts. Rest assured; team spirit is luminous. **Team spirit**⁵ is celebrating and working hard for our teammates. It is the quiet strength of humility; the noble courage to be unselfish. Comparison is the thief of joy. He is the one who shouts encouragement and whispers criticism. She is the one who gives generously and receives gratefully. These wonderful people are the **portraits of teammates**. Interesting and fascinating as they may be, they are defiantly and truthfully themselves. And they help us to be better: to live a good life.

¹ For more on “competitive greatness,” I recommend *Wooden on Leadership* by John Wooden.

² For more on joy of sport, I recommend *You Make a Difference!* by Chris Brown and “Man of La Mancha” by Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion.

³ For more on “kindness,” I recommend *Congratulations, by the way: Some Thoughts on Kindness* by George Saunders.

⁴ For more on belonging, I recommend “Color Blind or Color Brave” by Mellody Hobson.

⁵ For more on team spirit, I recommend *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio.