

## RESPECT YOUR TEAM MATES AND YOUR TEAM

To understand respect for teammates and team, we have to understand the nature of a team effort. What is a team? A team is a group of individuals who agree to cooperate in order to achieve something as a team. In athletic competition, the individuals cooperate so that the team can win. To a great extent, that simply means that each individual tries his or her best. If I'm taking a three-point shot, I do my best to make it. Every basket I make is added to the score of the team. If I work on my technique, execute my turns in the correct fashion and work to the best of my ability that contributes to the effort of the team. On this line of reasoning, if we then add up all of the individual efforts of the team members, we get the total team effort. In basketball the shots, rebounds, steals and successful defense all lead up to the team total. And if we turn to team competitions in individual sports, such as tennis, track or swimming, it seems even more reasonable to say the team effort consists of the sum of the individual efforts.

Let's look first at the team version of an individual sport in which it may be harder to understand what a team effort might consist of. Consider, for example, team tennis—that is, tennis competition in which two teams compete against one another as teams (as opposed to players representing their schools as individuals in a district, regional, or state tournament). If one school plays another in a dual match that means that the school that wins the most individual matches wins the dual match. If the format is six singles matches and three doubles matches, the school that wins five or more of these matches wins the dual match. Obviously, teamwork is involved in doubles. But leaving that aside for now, the “team” effort, on first examination, means nothing more than how well the singles players and doubles teams play their individual matches. The team effort is equal to the sum of the individual efforts. If our number 2, 4, and 6 singles players win their matches and our number 2 and 3 doubles teams win their matches, our team wins five of the nine individual matches and therefore wins the dual match. Simple math. . .

Or is it? What if the two senior girls on the number 1 doubles team, knowing that the number 3 doubles match was the one that could go either way, had worked with their teammates on the number 3 team all week in practice, preparing them for the match? What if the number 3 singles player after losing her match went over to the number 1 player, who's sulking in the team van after losing a close match, and tells her they need to get over to the number 6 singles match to give their teammate some support? What if one of the lower players, who never gets to play a match but can outrun the number 1 player, lines up all year long next to the number 1 player during running drills, challenging her to keep up? If these sorts of things happen routinely, becoming a part of the team's makeup, if players do these sorts of things because they feel a commitment to the team, not merely to themselves individually, the effects do begin to “add up.” Actually, they don't simply add up; they increase geometrically. Imagine how the geometry works for our swimming team!

As part of a team effort in the fullest sense of the word, individuals become capable of more than they are capable of individually, and the team becomes capable of more than the sum of what the individuals on the team are capable of individually. Now apply it to a team sport, such as basketball, baseball, soccer, volleyball, or football, and this phenomenon becomes even more obvious. The same is true for the sport of swimming and the principle is the same “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts”. When a team truly becomes a team, in fact it becomes impossible to speak of summing up at all. We talk of chemistry and everything coming together. We talk of intangibles—we even talk about a kind of “magic.”

How does this magic come about? There are no guarantees, but it requires the genuine respect of the team members for each other and for the team. If I understand the nature of a team, then I recognize I have an obligation as a team member to respect my teammates and my team. What does this require? As a member of a team, I have a responsibility to compete in the pool and to behave on and off the deck in such a way as to contribute to the team's effort to win—that is, to contribute to the team's effort to “play” the game as well as it can. My excellence as a team athlete, like my excellence as a human being, should make my teammates more excellent. If one is courageous, self-controlled and if I have good judgment in my application of my character traits, my excellence will contribute to my fellow teammates.

## **Respect works for our athletes as well as our parents!**

All of the aforementioned aspects of a successful team are also important for the parents of our athletes as it is important to understand how powerful positive PARENTAL behavior can be for the health of our TEAM. This starts with each individual just like the athletes by sitting together in the stands, wearing Poseidon team attire and supporting the coaching staff at all times. We will be at our very best when we take care of our own athletes' issues and stay clear of all other families' athlete concerns. This is accomplished by working together treating each other with respect, speaking positively about each other and each other's athletes, cheering for all the athletes not just your own and choosing to support the TEAM at all times makes the condition of our TEAM the best we are capable of becoming. Now that is when POSEIDON SWIMMING magic occurs!