

Grade 9 Life Orientation Worksheet

Positive personal qualities - disabled athletes

Positive personal qualities – article and questions

First read this adaptation of an article by Mary King on April 23 2009 about the way in which athletes with disabilities are able to score alongside their peers.

The world will see more athletes with disabilities on the courts, in the water, and on the field. Don't be fooled by appearances, though. These competitors play to win.

Don't be misled by a missing limb or two (or more). Don't think a basketball team is handicapped by a player who is blind, or be disillusioned by a runner who has no feet. Above all, leave pity and inspiration at home, because there's no place for those feelings in the stands or on the field.

Meet a new breed of athlete that plays hard and plays to win. More and more athletes with disabilities are competing on an individual level, while others are qualifying for positions on teams that are composed primarily of able-bodied players. The rules stay the same when disabled athletes participate, and in most cases no concessions are allowed for what a player might lack. What the players bring to the table is sheer talent and unleashed determination.

Four Athletes Breaking New Ground

- *Kyle Maynard*. This 23-year-old former high school wrestling star is a congenital quad amputee (born with both arms missing at the elbows and both legs missing at the knees). Trained in jiu-jitsu, he hopes to become licensed in Mixed Martial Arts. In an interview with Ariel Helwani (Fanhouse Web site: "Kyle Maynard's Amateur MMA Debut Shrouded in Controversy, Secrecy"), Maynard states, "I feel like if I can go the distance or better with this, it's going to prove to a lot of people that cliché saying that you can't judge a book by its cover is the truth."
- *Matt Steven*. Not just a kid from the neighborhood, Matt is a blind kid who sinks free-throws on the basketball court. Matt ice-skates, rides a bike, and plays soccer, according to ESPN's online and print columnist Rick Reilly, in a recent submission, "Matt Steven Can't See the Hoop. But He'll Take the Last Shot." So how does Matt sink free-throw shots? His brother taps the hoop with Matt's white cane, making sound.

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- *Kendall Bailey*. An athlete multiply-disabled from cerebral palsy, mental retardation and autism, just to name a few of his diagnosed conditions, Kendall is one of the fastest breaststroke swimmers in the world.
- *Bobby Martin* was born with nothing below the pelvis, but he makes do with what he's got. What he's got is everything he needs both on and off the football field. He propels his body by using his arms, the movements as graceful as any conditioned athlete. Bobby has spent time in the ring too, as a wrestler.

Do Athletes with Handicaps Have an Advantage?

Controversy arose when South African runner and world-class sprinter, *Oscar Pistorius*, made the decision to try and qualify for the 2008 Summer Olympics. A double amputee, Pistorius uses carbon fibre trans-tibial prosthetic devices that look like blades. When Pistorius set his goals for the Olympics in Beijing (2008), the International Association of Athletics Federation was forced to determine if the runner's prostheses gave him an unfair advantage over the other competitors. Pistorius was finally given the opportunity to compete, but his time was not quite enough to make the Olympic team.

Now answer these questions about what you have read.

1. Do disabilities stop athletes from competing? Explain your answer. [2]
2. Should we feel sorry for disabled athletes? Explain your answer. [2]
3. What does the writer say all these athletes have? [2]
4. Name the four American athletes mentioned in the article. [4]
5. What is the name of the South African sprinter known as the "Blade Runner"? [2]
6. Was he given permission to compete in the Beijing Olympics in 2008? [2]
7. Do you feel that athletes with handicaps have an advantage? [2]
8. Name any four positive personal qualities all these athletes have. [4]

Total marks: 20

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Suggested Solutions

Question number	Possible marks	Solutions
1 - 8	20	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. No, they get by on talent alone. [2]2. No, they don't want pity; they want to compete on equal terms. [2]3. Sheer talent and unleashed determination. [2]4. Kyle Maynard, Bobby Martin, Matt Steven, Kendall Bailey [4]5. Oscar Pretorius [2]6. Yes, but he didn't qualify. [2]7. Personal response. [2]8. Any four of these or similar: talent, drive, determination, perseverance, courage, ability, bravery. [4]