

Who will you push across the finish line?

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Quite often in life we are so consumed with being the first one to cross the finish line, whether in a race, in a game, at work, or in school--we want to be the best or first. It's natural to want to win and succeed. And when deserving, it is an honor. But what if it's not deserving? Sometimes people achieve the objective or win the contest but it is clear to every witness that someone else was more deserving.

It really comes down to morality or self awareness as to how the winner perceives their prize when they know they weren't the most deserving of it. This isn't a column about judging others or to make anyone feel bad about accepting the gold medal on the podium; however, it is intended to shine light on those who place others on the pedestal rather than themselves. And hopefully, you see the merit in doing this when necessary.

During a game of Texas Hold'em poker, imagine you lay up your cards at the end of a hand, declaring you have a straight. At that moment, the players remaining in the hand acknowledge that you win the hand. While pulling in the chips, you notice that one of the remaining players, who indicated they had two pair, which loses to a straight, also had a flush, which beats a straight,

but they didn't realize they had a flush. What do you do? Do you stack up the chips on your pile and think to yourself: "What a sucker!" Or do you point out to the other player that they had five hearts in their hand and slide the winning chips over to them?

Ferdinand Reinhardt Bie, who was a Norwegian track and field athlete who won a Silver Medal in the Pentathlon at the 1912 Summer Olympics in Stockholm, refused to accept the Gold Medal after Jim Thorpe's subsequent disqualification for having played semi-pro baseball in 1913. In 1982, Thorpe was reinstated as champion by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) but still listed Bie as co-champion. The Bie family, in keeping with Ferdinand's dying wish in 1961, still did not accept the Gold Medal. Eventually on July 15, 2022, the IOC announced that Thorpe was the Gold Medalist and Bie was the Silver Medalist. The Bie family accepted the Silver Medal.

It is quite clear that Ferdinand Reinhardt Bie was a man who believed in winning with integrity. He knew Thorpe beat him and did not want to be declared the winner on any set of conditions. Would you have done the same thing if you were him?

In 2012, Spanish athlete Iván Fernández Anaya was competing in a

cross-country race, running second, some distance behind race leader Abel Mutai, from Kenya. As the two runners headed toward the finish line, Anaya noticed Mutai mistakingly pull up 10 meters short of the finish line, thinking he had won the race. As Anaya came up to Mutai, he yelled at Mutai to continue running--that he had a few more yards to go. Mutai did not understand him due to the language barrier. Anaya ended up pushing Mutai across the finish line to ensure Mutai would win the race. He could have ran past him and won but chose not to. A journalist asked Anaya, "Why did you let the Kenyan win?"

Anaya replied, "I didn't let him win, he was going to win."

The journalist insisted again, "But you could have won!"

Anaya replied, "But what would be the merit of my victory? What would be the honor of that medal? What would my mom think of that?"

In this scenario, Iván Fernández Anaya was a man of true honor who was clearly raised by a great mother.

Sometimes in life, you have to push someone else across the finish line when they deserve to be the first one across it. There is no true honor in taking credit that rightfully belongs to someone else.

~ The End ~