

# Success in Sports: What Makes an Olympian?

By JULIA WANG

With the Olympic Games raging, we all wonder: what make these athletes so good? From rising star Simone Biles to five-time Olympic champion Michael Phelps, all participants are pursuing their dreams on the global level.

As a cross country runner, I have witnessed outstanding athletes from around the state push themselves to their limits. Are these athletes naturally better than us, or do they work harder? Running five kilometers at less a pace of less than six miles per minute requires a great deal of endurance and stamina. All workouts, even the easy ones, contribute to increased speed and endurance at races, but one must train the correct way both physically and mentally to achieve these results. For training, quality matters more than quantity.

According to Daniel F. Chambliss' article "The Mundanity of Excellence," hard-core athletes differ from others based on three qualities: technique, discipline, and attitude. These are ingredients for success in any field, whether it be academics or music.

Technique is practicing the right way, discipline is being consistent, and attitude is maintaining passion. Oftentimes, with a responsible coach and a supportive team, the first two aspects are simple to obtain. However, humans tend to lose passion

for repetitive activities. Those who continue to push on with intrinsic motivation are the ones we see on TV.

Here at NCSSM, I believe that we all have the tenacity and zeal to pursue our dreams and persevere. As long as we uphold the motto "work hard, play hard," we can balance successful careers with happy lifestyles. Most of us are involved in multiple activities, ranging from band to sports to Science Olympiad. Practically everyone has given up one or more activities, such as piano and dance, in my case.

Giving up one or two activities is not the end. Quality beats quantity. Once you give up on one endeavor, you have more time and energy to spend on things that matter. As a rising junior, I do not know what the quantitative limit of programs an individual can take part in is, but I have heard many students participate in a variety of activities. Choose what interests you the most, and try to stick with it.

In his blog on PrepScholar, Fred Zhang states, "You should aim to develop one area that you're super strong in." This area is called the "big spike." Colleges, and people in general, admire individuals who excel in one particular area. Of course, the more things you excel in, the better, but you should focus on one to make it your specialty.

Every Olympic athlete has identified their "big spike." They have woven their way



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Gymnast Nastia Liukin performs on the floor during the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

up to the international level of competition. Next we ask, what happens afterward? Take retired Olympic gymnast who won gold in the 2008 Women's Gymnastics All-Around Finals Nastia Liukin, for example.

"Life off the beam," says Liukin, "has been great. School has been a huge accomplishment, another milestone. I'm moving on with my life but am still so involved in gymnastics. It's my first love. When one door slams shut, another opens. Because I didn't make the team, I started working with NBC. I

got to go to London and I'll be commentating in Rio... I've had so many transitions. One of those was after the Olympics when I won. What do I do now?"

One day, our competitions and careers will end. We either

need to keep doing what we love or find new hobbies. Follow Liukin's example and do what matters most at each stage in life.

To wrap up, I end with a quote by Nike: "Life is a sport. Make it count."

*Athletes move up in their ranks through qualitative jumps: noticeable changes in their techniques, discipline, and attitude.*

DANIEL CHAMBLISS

## On the Appropriation of Immigrant Foods

By REN ZHANG

"Ewww ... what is that?" My heart sank as I heard those words echo in my head.

It was 10 years ago and my first day of American elementary school. My mom had packed me my favorite food, *xiaolongbao*, small and bite-sized steamed buns filled with meat and vegetables. Chinese food was the only thing that I had ever really known up until that point – my parents could not afford to take me out to Western style restaurants at the time – but I loved every bit of my mother's cooking.

After that day, though, I began to think that perhaps Chinese food was just as "smelly and disgusting" as my classmates told me daily. Seven-year-olds are ruthless, after all. I remember eventually begging my mom to pack me "white people food," consisting mostly of the Capri Suns, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and Goldfish crackers that my classmates would bring, so that I could fit in.

Almost a decade later, in this age of "fusion cuisines" and sixty-second long cooking videos shared on Facebook, I've started to notice that "ethnic food" has become quite the trend, especially thanks to companies such as Taco Bell and Panda Express. I would hear things like "Wow, you're Chinese? That must mean you get to have Chinese food everyday. Wow, you're so lucky!" By now, I have gotten over the shame I had for my culture when I was young, but whenever I see one of my peers post a picture of "this new food they had discovered" during their recent trip to New York City on Instagram, I can't help but feel a bit of pain as I think back to my grade school years.

My food, once considered "nauseating and probably consisting of dog meat" had caused me so much shame and embarrassment in the past, but it is now one of America's newest food trends. Why wasn't my food accepted until white people started eating it? Where was this when seven-year-old



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Xiaolongbao, "small and bite-sized steamed buns filled with meat and vegetables."

me was throwing out my lunch everyday so he wouldn't get bullied?

It seems that eating immigrant foods such as my own has become a new way for people to feel cultured. The fetishization and appropriation of foods from other cultures needs to end. I'm sick of hearing my fellow classmates gush

over how much they love bubble tea and Pocky but watch them give me disgusted looks when I suggest that they try preserved duck egg and stinky tofu.

Chinese food is more than this. Chinese food is my mother taking an entire afternoon to painstakingly wrap dumplings one by one for dinner that night.

Chinese food is the pleasant aroma of garlic and ginger filling the house as I come home from school. Chinese food is the sound of laughter in air as my family gathers around the hot pot in the cold of winter. Chinese food is a beautiful and fundamental part of my culture, not some cherry-picked and bastardized fad.