

COMMITMENT: WINNERS DON'T QUIT

"Winning is fun ... sure. But winning is not the point. Wanting to win is the point. Not giving up is the point. Never letting up is the point. Never being satisfied with what you've done is the point." -Pat Summitt

In the years leading up to World War II, Karoly Takacs was a renowned member of the Hungarian pistol shooting team, considered the world's top pistol shooter. He had achieved incredible success, winning numerous national and international championships, and was poised to take home the gold medal in the 1940 Olympic Games. However, fate had other plans for him. In 1938, while serving in the Hungarian army as a sergeant, a defective grenade exploded in Takacs' right hand -his shooting hand -shattering both his hand and Olympic dreams. Despite the devastating setback, Takacs refused to give up on his passion for shooting. After spending a month in the hospital, he made a decision that would change his life forever -he would teach himself to shoot with his left hand. For months, Takacs practiced in secret, determined to make a comeback. When he showed up for the Hungarian pistol shooting championship the following year, his competitors were stunned. They assumed he was there as a spectator, but Takacs proved them wrong by winning the championship. Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War II meant that the next two Olympic Games were canceled, leaving Takacs facing yet another setback. Undeterred, Takacs continued to train. By the time the 1948 Olympics in London rolled around, he was 38 years old and still unable to use his natural shooting hand. However, he had qualified for the Hungarian Olympic team, much to the surprise of many. When the pre-Olympic favorite and world record holder asked him why he was there, Takacs simply replied, «I'm here to learn.» Despite being considered an underdog, Takacs won the gold medal, beating the world record by ten points. During the medal ceremony, the previous world record holder, who had finished second, turned to Takacs and said, « You have learned enough.» Four years later, in Helsinki, Takacs won again, becoming the first Olympic champion to repeat in that event. Karoly Takacs' story is one of perseverance and determination in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. He refused to let his injury define him, instead choosing to work tirelessly to achieve his dreams. His remarkable achievements earned him a place among the greatest shots of all time.

"A winner never stops trying." -Tom Landry

Connecting this quote to the story

Takacs's story is a testament to the importance of perseverance, resilience, and a never-give-up attitude. It shows that even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, a true winner never stops trying and remains committed to achieving their goals.

Reflection Questions

1. What can we learn from Takacs's response to the pre-Olympic favorite's question about why he was there? How can we use this attitude to approach competition and handle pressure?

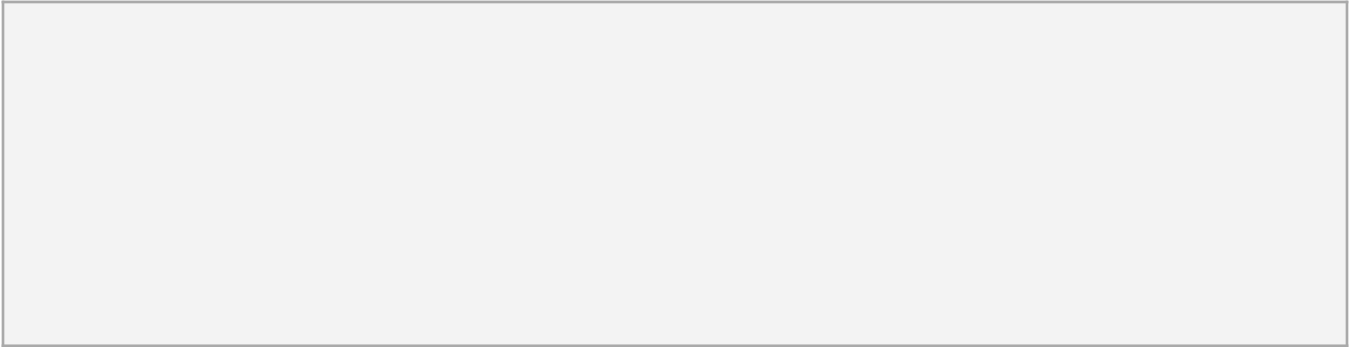
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2. What do you believe it means to be a "winner"?

3. What unique qualities do "winners" possess?

4. How important is mental toughness for athletes in the face of adversity, and how can it be developed?

5. What did Takacs do to become successful?

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