

Passion to Win: winning is everything and the only thing, at the expense of all other values.

Intoxicating Emotions: chasing the rush that comes with victory, being cheered by a crowd, and a sense of success.

None of these are inherently bad. But when all of them exist at the same time—which happens often in sport culture—it accelerates the process of sport becoming an idol. And if sport is your idol, it will eventually bring out the worst in you. Even worse, it’s an affront to the God of the universe who refuses to share his glory with anyone or anything else.

But here is the good news—sport doesn’t have to be an *idol*. Instead, it can actually be an *opportunity* to worship God while we practice, play, and compete in sport—at any skill level. The chart below offers a great framework for understanding the difference between treating sport like an idol vs. sport being a way to worship God.

SPORT = IDOL	SPORT = OPPORTUNITY TO WORSHIP GOD
Use God as rabbit’s foot/good luck charm for your personal gain, win, or power.	God chooses you to reflect his excellent character through your effort, attitude, intensity, and sportsmanship.
Disrespect for the rules (often ignoring or breaking them) and only abide by the rules when it is to your advantage, or if you’re worried might get caught.	Compete by the rules all the time because they express what is fair, just, and orderly (God’s character) in order for the game to flourish.
Winning is everything and the only thing.	Competing to win consists of a serious challenge, while ultimately enjoying the pursuit.
Happy when your opponent competes poorly, or is hurt, because your only concern is your welfare (winning).	Want the best for your team and your opponent, because everyone is striving together toward excellence.

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Unrealistic expectations for yourself/team, and unwillingness to acknowledge your physical limitations.	Embrace your God-given abilities and your physical limitations as you seek to make the most out of your opportunities.
Give 100% only when coach, scout, family, friends, media, and others are watching.	Give 100% both publicly and privately because God is your Audience of One.
Do whatever it takes to win, because the end justifies the means.	What matters most is how you approach and play the game as you strive to win.
View your opponent as the enemy, and view competition with a warlike mentality.	View your opponent as a co-competitor who deserves your respect, and view competition as an opportunity to bring your best and honor God.
Celebrating victory gets expressed through taunting, strutting and forms of showboating because it is all about you.	Celebrating victory is expressed respectfully, appreciatively, and joyfully because it is about more than just you.
Jealous of others’ success, because it means they are outperforming you.	Appreciate others’ success, because it pushes you to be even better.
See sport as a right, and something you must have in order to make it in life.	See competition/sport as a privilege and an opportunity to do what you love.
Unteachable and disrespectful toward coach/authority.	Teachable and respectful toward coach/authority.
See sport as your ticket to escape from your past, your bad circumstances, or your family situation.	Realize that God is the one who redeems your life circumstances and carries your burdens...and he might use sport as part of that process.