



SCHOOL PROGRAM

# ATHLETE STORIES

**Maëlle Ricker —**  
**Respect // Grade 2-3**

## About Maëlle

**BORN** December 2, 1978

**BIRTHPLACE** North Vancouver, BC

**SPORT** Snowboard cross  
**games** Sochi 2014, Vancouver 2010,  
Turin 2006, Nagano 1998

**FAVOURITE HEALTHY SNACK**

Cucumbers

**NICKNAME** Mighty Mouse



# Maëlle Ricker — Respect

**M**aëlle Ricker hears the race announcer's booming voice.

"Riders ready!" he yells.

The sound echoes off the top of Cypress Mountain. Maëlle grips the handles of the start gate. She bends her knees. She's ready to start her race.

"You can do this." She says to herself. "This is your story."

"Feeling confident is a huge part of getting ready for a big race."

The race that is about to start is one of the most thrilling races at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games – snowboard cross. Maëlle will race at the same time as three other women. The race course winds and twists. There are many jumps and turns. It has rained a lot so the snow is very wet and sloppy. That's not the best weather for a race.

"You have to be safe. You always wear a helmet and the safest equipment. You have to respect the mountain. You have to respect Mother Nature. You have to respect the other racers. The sport can be dangerous."

Maëlle knows all about that danger first hand. Four years earlier, at the 2006 Olympic Winter Games in Turin, Italy, Maëlle crashed near the top of the race. Maëlle wanted to finish the race with a medal, instead, she finished the race in a hospital with a concussion.

"I made a technical mistake and caught an edge. I crashed on a jump."

There have been crashes and spills during the qualifying runs for today's final as well. Maëlle has fallen on the course more than once. She fell during practise. She also fell in her first qualifying run. It's hard to move around when there are four racers on the course at the same time. Maëlle knows the fans like to see all the traffic.

"You have to work hard, and train for it. Each of the racers wants to take the fastest way down the hill. It can actually be fun to jostle around out there, and the fans love it as well. But you have to respect each other. We have an agreement on the course that we won't cheat, we won't bully someone else just to win."

A cheater might cut off a competitor, push them, or even knock them over. Maëlle knows her competitor's action is a part of the race she can't control, or worry about.

"It's extremely rare that someone would cheat. We are like a family in the snowboarding world. But it happens. You have to just let it wash off your back. You can't retaliate. You want to win by being the best, not by being a bully, even to a bully."

Maëlle feels at her best today.

"Five seconds warning," yells the announcer.

Maëlle knows the start is hugely important. If she can get out in front, she will have a huge advantage. So she has trained every muscle to shoot her body out of the start gate and into the front of the pack.

"That allows you to set your own race. You pick the line you want to follow down the course. You decide how you want to take a turn or a jump. It's about control, taking control of your race and making your own line down the course."

Maëlle's start is perfect. She bursts into the front. Now it doesn't matter as much what the other boarders do. Maëlle will be the first person into the turns, the first to the jumps, and, if she keeps her body and mind focused and in control, first to the finish line.

"Playing fair is also more fun for everyone. At the end of the race you want the winner to be the best person, the fastest person. That way we also stay friends, not just competitors and you can be happy if you win or if someone else wins fairly."

There's no catching Maëlle this time. She's both fair and fast. She keeps her line, and leads the race from start to finish. The hometown crowd erupts with a cheer.

"I can't describe how happy I felt crossing that finish line."

Winning the race fair and clean just made it even sweeter.



# Maëlle Ricker — Respect

1. In her story, Maëlle says it is important to be safe when playing a sport. She always wears her helmet. Pick a sport or game that you like to play. Draw a picture of you playing safely.



# Maëlle Ricker — Respect



2. In her story, Maëlle says that hard work is important. She also says that it is important to be respectful to others. Respect means knowing what is right from wrong. Respect is also listening well, being nice and making the right choices. How can you be respectful of others, yourself and the world?

**Draw and write how you will practice respect:**

I respect myself by \_\_\_\_\_

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I respect myself by \_\_\_\_\_

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I respect myself by \_\_\_\_\_

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