



SCHOOL PROGRAM

ATHLETE STORIES

Maëlle Ricker —
Respect // Grade 6+

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

A booming voice echoes off the top of Cypress Mountain and rings in Maëlle Ricker's ears.

"Riders ready!" yells the race announcer.

Maëlle grabs the handles of the start gate, bends her knees and gets ready to fly. "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's about to start is one of the most thrilling races at the Winter Olympic Games – the snowboard cross. Maëlle and three other women are about to race down a winding, twisting course of jumps, rollers and banked turns... at top speed and at the same time. It's also been a wet sloppy day and the course conditions aren't exactly ideal.

"You have to be safe so you make sure you always wear a helmet and the appropriate equipment. You have to respect the mountain, Mother Nature and your competition because the sport can be dangerous."

Maëlle knows all about that danger first hand because four years before, in Turin, Italy, she crashed near the top of the race. She had hoped to end that race with a medal, but instead she ended it in a hospital with a concussion.

"I made a technical mistake and caught an edge and then 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 already in training and in her first qualifying run. Maëlle knows that riding in traffic is a big part of the attraction of this event, for the competitors and the fans.

"You have to work hard, dedicate yourself 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 in that situation. We have an agreement on the course that we won't cheat, that we won't bully someone else just to win."

Cheating could be cutting off another competitor, pushing them or knocking 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 actually cheat. We are like a family in the snowboarding world. But cheating happens and 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 certainly feels at her best today.

"Five seconds warning," yells the announcer.

Maëlle knows the start is hugely important - if you can get out in front, you 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 and 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 and 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 because 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 and 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 the article, Maëlle explains that respect, fair play and safety are important in a sport like snowboarding. Think about sports or physical education class games that you like to play. Choose one of the sports/games. Describe what makes the game fair, what safety precautions are needed to ensure everyone is safe and what things participants can do to show good sportsmanship.

Name of sport or game: _____

What makes the game fair?

What are the safety precautions?

What can participants do to show good sportsmanship?



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2. Snowboard cross was officially added as an Olympic Winter Sport in 2006 during the Turin Games. What if you were asked to create a new game that would be included in the next Olympic Games, would you be up for the task?

In the space below, create your own game and answer the following questions:

- What are the rules of the game that make the game fair?
- How do you make the game safe?
- List ways in which the participants can display good sportsmanship.

Name of sport or game: _____

