



UNIT TWO

LESSON SIX

RESOURCE

DANIEL IGALI

Prepared by the B.C. Sports Hall of Fame

Wrestling is to Nigeria, as hockey is to Canada. Daniel Igali, claims he cannot skate very well, but he has put wrestling on the map in Canada and made both his homeland and his chosen home proud of his accomplishments in sport and in life.

Baraladei Daniel Igali was born and raised in the deep interiors of the Niger Delta, in the village of Eniwari, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Daniel came from a family of 20 brothers and sisters, so finding wrestling partners was not a challenge even though there was no organized sport. By 1990, he competed in his first National Championship, but his career in wrestling began to take off when he arrived in Canada for the 1994 Commonwealth Games. Pursuing an education and an athletic career would have been impossible at the time in Nigeria, due to the political instability, so he made the difficult decision to start a new life in Canada leaving his family behind. Adapting to his new life in Canada was not easy, but Daniel worked hard at school, at his sport and to establish himself in Canada. He made friends along the way who were instrumental in helping him attain his goals and he always honours and remembers those who assisted him.

With the help and commitment of his coaches, and Daniel's own drive to be a champion, he competed in several World Championship events, before going on to win the gold in Sydney, Australia at the 2000 Olympics. When that whistle blew and he heard: "Daniel Igali, Canada. Gold!" it was a very emotional moment for Daniel. He had worked so hard to arrive at this moment, trained hard, fought back from injuries and surgery, made many sacrifices both personal and professional and now he was there on the podium receiving the gold medal.



For most people this would be enough, to have achieved such an accomplishment, but Daniel Igali is so much more than just a wrestling hero. He is a hero in how he conducts himself and shares his life and experiences with others. A quote from one of Nigeria's most well-known authors, Chinua Achebe is one of Daniel's favourites and



sums up how he leads his life: “*Beyond the war and the warrior, only the story remains.*” Daniel tries to live his life by this quote and explains that it talks about being good at whatever you do and being nice to people, because the lasting image of you is the impression you leave on people. So it doesn’t matter if you win or lose, it doesn’t matter who you meet, you just have to be a good presence so people can talk good stories about you



At 5 feet 6 inches tall Daniel is not, an imposing figure, as was pointed out at his first meeting with. Muhammad Ali, “you’re so small, how could you be an Olympic champion” was the comment Ali made that had them both laughing. Igali overcame the size disadvantage with speed, determination and keen observation of his opponents. But Daniel also has a huge heart and he wants to make the world a better place. Daniel recognizes that his talents have made

him a role model and he is more than willing to give back to the community. He speaks at schools inspiring students and spends time giving back to the sport that he loves. Daniel has come full circle and now wants to give back to his impoverished homeland in Nigeria. He is currently raising funds and building a school for the less fortunate where he once lived in Nigeria. This project is more than just a school; the structure will also act as the community centre and adult education centre after hours. He feels this is a starting point, education will bring these people a future, bring clean water and medical treatment to their community and most of all bring them hope.

We should all be proud of our true Canadian hero, Daniel Igali