

Humble hero voted UK's favourite sportsman

Winner: "It has been a great year for British sport and long may it continue." Geraint Thomas.

How important is it to be modest? Cyclist Geraint Thomas has won the BBC Sports Personality of the Year award. He has had an extraordinary year, but many are struck by his unassuming personality.

"I really should have thought about what I was going to say," said a shocked Geraint Thomas, as he picked up the BBC **Sports Personality of the Year** award on Sunday evening.

Having just beaten superstars **Harry Kane** and **Lewis Hamilton** to the title, it was a strikingly **modest** reaction.

"To see people of all abilities and ages riding their bikes and living a healthy lifestyle, you can take as much pride in that as winning something like this," Thomas said. "I feel very lucky to have come into cycling when I did. I just went down to the local leisure centre for a swim and instead, I rode my bike."

From these humble beginnings, Thomas has enjoyed a meteoric rise. This year he joined an elite group of athletes, becoming only the third Briton (and first Welshman) to win the **Tour de France** — a gruelling race spanning thousands of miles, comprised of punishing mountain climbs and lightning downhill sprints.

It was his first victory in nine attempts, having spent several years playing a supporting role to more illustrious riders like Bradley Wiggins and Chris Froome. In that time he also won two Olympic gold medals in team cycling events.

Now it is Thomas's chance to take centre stage. "The quiet, silent ones can end up being the superstars," says his old **Headmaster**, Huw Jones-Williams. "He was not a shouter or a gloater."

Indeed, **humility** and quiet determination have been a feature of his career since the early days.

"Almost everyone who has played a formative role in the life of Welsh cyclist Geraint Thomas describes him as a quiet, modest man with a mischievous sense of humour," reports *The Guardian's* Tom Wall.

While he won plenty of races as a teenager, Thomas was willing to let others share the glory. Memories of one race have stayed with old teammate Andy Hoskins: "Geraint was in a winning position," he recalls, "but he let one of his older clubmates take the win. He realised this guy wouldn't get many more chances."

How important is it to be modest?

Champion

It is not that important, some argue. It was not Thomas's modesty that made him a success. It was his grit, talent and desire to work hard that got him where he is today. In fact, having too much modesty can have a negative impact — reducing confidence and stopping people from chasing their goals. It is nice to have humble heroes, but it is not the key to success.

Modesty is essential to being a good person, others respond. It is about knowing yourself, recognising where your qualities lie and having respect for other people. What is more, Thomas is living proof that having a humble personality does not necessarily limit your success. He is a worthy winner and a great role model.

YOU DECIDE

1. Is modesty a virtue?
2. Is Geraint Thomas a deserving winner of the award?

ACTIVITIES

1. Who do you think should have won Sports Personality of the Year? Think about people that have achieved a lot in sport this year and write down your own shortlist of five contenders. Turn to classmates near you and ask them to vote on their favourite. Who is the winner?

2. Write a one-page response to this question: “What makes somebody a good person?”

SOME PEOPLE SAY...

“Modesty is a vastly overrated virtue.”

John Kenneth Galbraith
What do you think?

Q & A

What do we know?

Geraint Thomas is the fifth cyclist to win the BBC Sports Personality of the Year award; Bradley Wiggins was the last to win in 2012. The award has been dominated by male winners in recent years. The last woman to win was Zara Phillips in 2006 — one of only four women to triumph since 1990.

What do we not know?

We do not know the exact share of the vote from last night’s ceremony. Geraint Thomas came first, while Lewis Hamilton and Harry Kane came second and third respectively. The other three shortlisted candidates were cricketer James Anderson, sprinter Dina Asher-Smith and Winter Olympian Lizzy Yarnold.

WORD WATCH

Sports Personality of the Year

First awarded in 1954, the prize is judged according to a public vote, and competitors from any sport are eligible. Athletics has produced the most number of winners.

Harry Kane

Professional footballer for Tottenham Hotspur and captain of England. He won the Golden Boot award at this year’s World Cup, after scoring six goals.

Lewis Hamilton

Formula One driver. Hamilton has won the World Championship five times.

Modest

Having or showing a moderate estimate of one’s merits, importance and talents.

Tour de France

First raced in 1903. The modern editions consist of 21 stages over a 23-day period, covering around 3,500 kilometres.

Headmaster

Thomas was a pupil at Whitchurch High School. Former students include Sam Warburton and Gareth Bale.

Humility

Having a low view of one's own importance.