[**‘Honourable men’**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1647286/honourable-men)

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ARE you among the top 10 in your country in your line of work? Let us make it more challenging: are you among the top 10 in the world in what you do? Well, I am neither, it is not easy. It takes careful study, years of hard work, great ambition, strong perseverance and some good luck. This perspective helps me have immense respect for those honourable men and women who are at the top in whatever they do, not only in their country but also in the world. My respect is also for all those who, with minimal guidance and the scarcest of resources, represented our country in the recent Olympics.

Two honourable men, weightlifter Talha Talib and javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem, won glory not only for themselves but also for our country. They were a hair’s breadth from medals. And lest we forget, they trained without sufficient resources, without the best equipment, without modern methods. Still, they performed better than many who had access to the best of everything. I hope we do not forget them. I hope they live beyond this news cycle. I hope they bring more honour. These are our honourable men.

As soon as these athletes inched towards a medal, the affection of the powerful for them suddenly woke up. Those who manage our sports federations and ministries suddenly wanted a share of the limelight; they thought it was only because of their own ambition, not that of our athletes, that these competitors brought honour. How could they be wrong, how could their judgement lead them astray, for those at the top always are honourable men.

Some sports federation spokesmen gave credit to these athletes. Some took credit away. They thought athletes who did not win medals were not ambitious enough; for ambition is to aim for the top, get there, and then stay there. There are few better examples of ambitious people than those who head our sports, for not only are they at the top but they make sure they stay at the top — not for months, not for years, but for decades. These are our honourable men.

Is it ambition to support our athletes only after they bring us glory?

But then, confusion rages in one’s head. What is ambition? Is it not ambition that, without resources and without trampling on merit, you become the best in whatever you do among millions of people in your country? Is it not ambition to train without the required equipment, without the required resources, and still be able to stand with the 10 best in the world? Maybe all of this is not ambitious enough; after all, those who head our sports cannot be wrong, for they are our honourable men.

In all this, how can politicians ignore the limelight? Yes, it would be unfair not to praise the few who recognised and gave prizes to deserving athletes. But it is sad that they think their responsibility ends there. Why do they not take responsibility for building cities in which it is not easy to pursue sports for our men and women, poor or rich? Why do they not take responsibility for creating and executing plans to nurture sports? Why cannot they take responsibility for all this, when they claim all responsibility for our athletes’ success? They (mostly men) tell us it was their grand ambition that helped the athletes find success. How fortunate our athletes are to be in the company of such ambitious men. How fortunate is everyone in our sports to work under the guidance of these ambitious and honourable men.

Other interesting entities are the private companies. They pay attention only after all eyes fall on our athletes. Rarely do they pay attention before that. Also, some leaders at these companies are still sceptical.

One senior male executive at a large company told me that most of our athletes are not ambitious, they are opportunistic, and if ambition must be learned it must be learned not from mere mortals but from the rich families that create these large companies. But, wait. Is this ambition? Is it ambition to support our self-made athletes only after they bring glory on their own? Is it ambition to not help our talented athletes when they struggle with method, money and machinery, but to rush and stand with them when they find success on their own? But maybe they are right, since in this age few know more about ambition than those with money. We should listen to those who run powerful companies, for these are our honourable (mostly) men.

When our athletes do not perform well, they are not the only ones who are disappointed. I and the whole nation feel disappointed, but not with them. They show their grit. They show their ambition. I am disappointed in those who share the glory of our athletes but not their struggle. I am disappointed in those who lecture on ambition but do not fuel ambition for those with ambition. Am I not right to feel disappointed? Maybe not. Or maybe. For those at the top, since they are a living example of what ambition and honour is, why should one be disappointed with them?

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