

11-2016

Paralympic Gold Medalist Testifies to God's Amazing Grace

Clem Boyd

Cedarville University, clemboyd@cedarville.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/staff_publications



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Boyd, Clem, "Paralympic Gold Medalist Testifies to God's Amazing Grace" (2016). *Staff Publications*. 79.
http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/staff_publications/79

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Cedarville, a service of the Centennial Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@cedarville.edu.



YELLOW



Paralympic Gold Medalist Testifies to God's Amazing Grace

by Clem Boyd

Grace Norman '20 headed to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in September for the international Paralympic Games and came back a gold medalist. Norman brought home the gold in the PT4 Triathlon, which she won September 11, and earned a bronze medal the following day in the 400-meter sprint, finishing in 1:01.83.

The Paralympics victories capped off a tremendous year for the Cedarville freshman, who also won the International Triathlon Union World Championships in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, this year. To win Paralympic gold, Norman swam 750 meters, biked 22 kilometers (about 13.5 miles), and ran 5 kilometers (3.1 miles), in a time of 1:10:39.

Norman, a two-time winner of the USA Paratriathlon National Championships, will run for the Yellow Jackets this winter and spring. She was a prep star for Xenia Christian High School (XCHS), making it to state twice in the 1,600 meters, placing eighth (5:14.09) as a junior and ninth (5:14.46) during her senior year. She also ran with the XCHS 4x800-meter relay team that placed sixth in the 2016 state meet with a time of 9:42.53. She is slated to run for the Yellow Jackets women's cross country team next fall.

Norman, a nursing student, holds two world records in the Paralympic T44 classification in track and field. She is the current record holder in the 800 meter with a 2:22.28 and the 1,500 with a 4:52.16. Norman is the American record holder in the 400 (1:01.83), 800, 1,500, and 3,200 (11:47.53).

While her previous achievements and accolades would be heady stuff for any athlete, getting to compete, and then succeed, in Rio was beyond memorable. "It was the biggest stage I've been on in my sports competitions," Norman said. "Whether it's high school or the Paralympics, I still get nervous for both. But winning the gold in Rio was a bigger accomplishment because of the long training process, and just how big the stage was."



Grace Norman '20 with her parents, Tim and Robin Norman.

According to Norman, the streets in Copacabana were lined with fans from all over the world during her triathlon competition, cheering her regardless their home country. "But it was very nice to see my fans and people from my team cheering really loudly, too," she added.

Norman's dad, Timothy, is a Professor of Mechanical and Biomedical Engineering at Cedarville and an Ironman competitor, while her mom, Robin, a former distance runner at Purdue University, coaches cross country for the former XCHS, now called Legacy Christian Academy (LCA).

"They have been very instrumental in my athletic career," Norman said. "They were coaches of mine throughout high school, and to see me run in college and fulfill those goals, they are so very proud of that. Plus, they will have two of their daughters running for the same school. They think that's cool."



JACKET SPORTS



Norman's older sister, Bethany '17, is a four-year member of the Lady Jacket distance running team. Her younger sister, Danielle, is a junior at LCA.

Norman was born without her left foot and ankle and her right big toe due to an amniotic band disorder. Due to the condition, fetal parts in the womb, such as fingers, toes, and limbs, are caught in fibrous bands and amputated.

"I'm very grateful for my prosthetic," Norman affirmed. "If I would have not been born like this, I probably wouldn't have been given these opportunities to compete on a world stage and share my faith with others. God had this plan for my life all along.

"There's a reason why I'm training so long and it's so hard," Norman said. "He has a reason and plan for me, and I have to trust that His plan is perfect for my life."



The next phase of that plan includes running winter indoor track for Cedarville. "I've looked forward to running for Cedarville most of my life," she shared. "To finally be on the team, it's very exciting. I hope to really strengthen myself athletically, get my best times in a lot of different distances, make varsity for all the teams, and improve all around."

And what about her counsel to young athletes? "I would tell them that if you make goals and put your mind to what you want to do, you can achieve more than you think," Norman said. "Dream big and really go after those goals. Don't let anything in life stop you, whether disabilities, or circumstances. God placed those in your

life to grow you and challenge you, not to stop you."

Clem Boyd is Managing Editor of Cedarville Magazine.

Carsyn Koch '18 Becomes First Cedarville Undergrad to Compete at Olympic Trials

Yellow Jacket Carsyn Koch '18 qualified for the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials, competing in the women's 800 meter on July 1 in Eugene, Oregon. She placed fifth in her preliminary heat in 2:05.57.

She was the only NCAA Division II athlete in the field of 38, which included more than a dozen professionals and eight runners from Division I institutions.

While multiple Cedarville University graduates have participated in the Olympic Trials, Koch became the first undergraduate to qualify. She did so with the 2:02.39 effort she turned in at the Stanford University Payton Jordan Invitational in Palo Alto, California, on May 1.

That mark is the fastest time in women's Division II outdoor history, breaking a record that stood for 26 years.

Koch, from Washburn, Maine, posted the No. 4 time of 2:03.48 in winning the NCAA Division II title on May 28 in Bradenton, Florida.



Her 2:03.58 performance at the Mt. SAC Relays in Norwalk, California, ranks No. 5.

During the winter season, she won the Division II indoor 800-meter championship in 2:05.12, setting meet and school records in the process.

More than a dozen print and electronic media outlets from across the country covered Koch in the months of May and June alone.

At least a hundred supporters showed up at the Callan Athletic Center for her send-off to the Trials on June 28, in addition to the buzz created by Yellow Jacket fans on social media.

"I am proud of all that Carsyn has accomplished in her first two years here at Cedarville," noted Jeff

Bolender '91, Cedarville's Director of Cross Country and Track and Field. "The Olympic trials competition was one that she will never forget. This experience will be invaluable for her as she seeks to compete in future high-level competitions."