

## **Abbey D'Agostino**

### **Courageous Sportsmanship**

At the 2012 Olympic Trials, Abbey D'Agostino was 0.19 seconds away from making the Olympic team in the women's 5000-meter run. In one of the slimmest margins for a long distance race in the history of the U.S. Trials, Abbey finished a disappointing fifth, missing out on the top three and a chance to represent the U.S in the Olympic Games.

Abbey had earned seven NCAA championship honors running for Dartmouth. She ran professionally with New Balance and made the World Championship team in 2015 and the World Indoor Championship team in 2016. However, in her build-up to the 2016 Olympic Trials, she suffered a stress fracture.

Abbey endured and made the 5000-meter final of the Olympic Trials. Throughout the race, the leaders began to separate themselves as rain fell on the track. Despite Abbey's kick to the finish, history seemed to repeat itself, as she ended up in fifth place, the same place she finished four years ago. This would mean she would miss out on an Olympic team berth.

However, because first and second place finishers Molly Huddle and Emily Infeld opted to focus on the 10,000 meter, which they had qualified for earlier in the Trials, Abbey had made the Olympic team.

Finally an Olympian, Abbey ran the first 3 kilometers of the 5000-meter Olympic qualifying race focused, under control, and maintaining contact with the leaders. That's when disaster struck. Within a split second, Abbey was tripped by a woman who had fallen in front of her, causing the runner behind her to trip, and two runners, Abbey included, ended up on the ground.

A runner's first instinct after falling is usually to get up and sprint to catch up. But not Abbey. In a tremendous display of sportsmanship, she stopped to help and encourage the other fallen runner, New Zealand's Nikki Hamblin.

At this point, it was clear the two runners were out of the race, but courageously wanted to finish. Despite obvious pain, Abbey tried to run as her knees continued to buckle. After the two runners finished and embraced, Abbey was wheeled off the track in a wheelchair.

The two runners were given the opportunity to run in the 5000-meter final, but an MRI showed that Abbey had torn the ACL, meniscus, and also suffered a strained MCL. Abbey demonstrated sportsmanship at the highest level. Her willingness to help a fellow competitor and the courage she displayed to finish the race despite a serious injury will be forever remembered as a great Olympic moment.

#### **Questions For Thought:**

1. Abbey was less than two tenths of a second from an Olympic spot in 2012. She used her failure as motivation. How have you used failure as motivation?
2. Abbey caught a lucky break when two of the runners ahead of her at the Olympic Trials decided to focus on another race, thus opening up an Olympic spot. Does proper preparation and hard work increase your chances for lucky breaks?
3. Abbey displayed tremendous courage to finish the Olympic race after a serious injury. What does the word courage mean to you?