

Life's Lemons: Only Sour When You Let 'Em Be

By Courtnee Owens



They say that minor setbacks pave the way for major comebacks and nobody understands that more than an injured, college bound athlete, ravenous for their comeback moment.

Seasoned athletes commonly have at least one bad injury in their sports career that has them sitting on the sidelines for a little while. During this time, it forces these athletes to temporarily accept defeat while simultaneously preparing and tirelessly working toward their comeback.

There is no exception for Australian-native and third year Cal Poly Pomona student Sara Kacmarsky whose world got tossed upside down a year before her debut season as one of UC Berkeley's gymnastics commits.

Born in Cairns, Australia, Kacmarsky had been pursuing gymnastics since she was 3-years old. After moving to the states at age 9, she continued her beloved sport for another 6 years, proudly sharing that the sport instilled a "dauntless mentality" that often put her in situations in which she'd affirm, "Hey, I got this. And if I don't? We're just gonna have to find out"

Kacmarsky stated, "My gymnastics coach asked me one practice if I knew how to do front tuck flip. After I confidently said no, I proceeded to attempt the flip, despite no instruction or practice."

This valiant mentality made her coach of six years believe in her abilities and talents, causing him to push her to limits that even Kacmarsky couldn't always meet.

Nearing the end of her junior year of high school, her major setback delivered. Shattering her hip at gymnastics practice partaking in an exercise in which she pleaded to her coach that she wasn't able to do at the moment, she was forced to reassess what she planned on doing for college after her full-ride athletic scholarship to UC Berkeley was revoked.

During this hiatus from gymnastics, Kacmarsky recounted her post-therapy days with a traumatized yet nostalgic daze stating how being on crutches was "inconvenient and very miserable", also sharing how frustrating and uncomfortable physical therapy was because she was so eager to be healed.

Post-surgery brought a lot of feelings of defeat and animosity, causing Kacmarsky to flirt with the idea of just not going to college at all.

"There was a time that I decided that I didn't want to go to college anymore, after my injury because my expectations for how the next four years of my was supposed to go overtook what could potentially be," admitted Kacmarsky. "I decided, it's not worth my time anymore."

Her family convinced her to go to school and focus on being a "regular" student who focused on studies and career aspirations and after some time, Kacmarsky

reluctantly agreed to start applying to other schools.

Originally planning on majoring in film at Berkeley, Kacmarsky was forced out of her comfort zone yet again when faced with having to decide what to switch her major to. Deciding on communication, she optimistically shared that hopes to still achieve her dream career as a film director while also dancing with the idea of coaching a gymnastics team.

Though this setback that threw all her past goals and aspirations out the window brought along tears, frustrations, hours of physical therapy and a revoked scholarship, Kacmarsky reflected on the incident 4 years later stating, "Regardless of what happens [now] or what trials and tribulations come my way, I'll be good. I know that I'll land on my feet."

She shared how the physical and emotional stress endured during this time proved that if she could overcome that uncomfotability, that stress and that inconvenience, she could overcome anything when asked why she's grateful that this tribulation crossed her path.

She states, "I can't even imagine how my life would be today if I had gone to Berkeley, majored in film and continued to pursue gymnastics. My life would've been solely school and practice. I would've never met the wonderful people I've had the opportunity of meeting here. I look back and realize that my career goals are still possible and I can still be involved with gymnastics, if I choose to. This injury wasn't a setback. It was actually a stepping stone to something better."

Many often say that minor setbacks pave the way for major comebacks, and in Kacmarsky's case, her comeback was a beautifully written, still-in-progress reinvention.

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