

Rudy Garcia-Tolson

Rudy lives by a simple motto: A Brave Heart is a Powerful Weapon. He was born with rare, multiple birth defects – a combination of crippling Pterygium Syndrome, a clubfoot, webbed fingers on both hands, and a cleft lip and palate. His legs would not straighten from the knee and he was forced to crawl or push himself in a wheelchair. While other kids played outside, Rudy sat and suffered. He was an eager little boy trapped in an imperfect body.

At age five, after 15 operations, he told his parents he wanted to move on; he would rather be a double amputee than continue to put up with what his life had become. He had both legs removed above the knee ... and he's never looked back.

The loss of his legs marked the beginning of his life, a life without limits. When Rudy was eight years old, he told the world he would swim in the 2004 Paralympic Games. He was true to his word and brought home the Gold in the 200 Meter IM, while shattering the world record for his class.

Rudy continues to swim as a member of the U.S. Paralympic Elite Team. He's completed numerous triathlons individually, and won several prestigious awards, including the Arete Courage in Sports Award and the Casey Martin Award from Nike. He has become a mentor to others bilateral amputees by showing them he has no limits. Rudy's next goal: to bring home Gold again, competing for the U.S. at the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing.

Through his example, Rudy has helped CAF raise more than \$16 million to ensure his challenged peers have the same opportunities he did.



Sarah Reinertsen

Sarah was born “different”. Her left leg deformed by a condition called proximal femoral focal deficiency (PFFD), Sarah wore a stiff, cumbersome leg brace until she was seven. At that point, the decision was made to amputate.

After the operation, Sarah tried to be like all her friends; she was a Brownie. She was a great student. She had a smile that lit up a room. But she could never overcome being “different”. And nowhere was that more apparent than in gym class. She came in last on field day. She was picked last for teams. Teachers and coaches refused to include her in regular play with the other kids. Instead, Sarah would kick a ball against the wall. Alone.

Life changed for Sarah when, at age 11, she competed in her first disabled track meet. Sarah lined up next to other girls missing limbs. When the gun went off for the 100 Meter dash, she ran hard and finished first. For the first time, she experienced the thrill of competition – and of winning and her life would never be the same.



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Today, Sarah focuses on triathlons, where she has broken new ground and gone where no amputee woman has attempted before – the Ironman Triathlon World Championship in Hawaii (a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike and 26.2-mile run.) In 2005, Sarah became the first woman to finish this grueling test on an artificial leg, finishing in a remarkable 15:05. In 2006, she was the first person with a physical challenge on the hit show, CBS's Amazing Race. Then in August of 2007, Sarah became a World Champion, winning gold in the Physically Challenged Olympic Distance World Championship in Hamburg Germany.

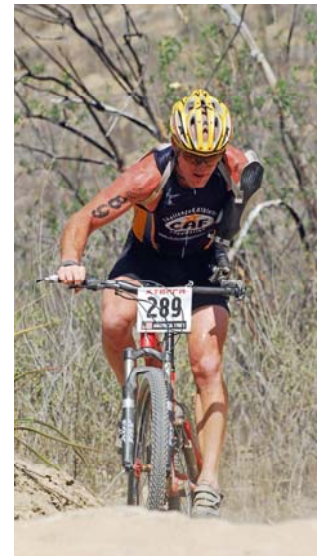
Now Sarah makes a living as a motivational speaker, showing others that no matter your challenge, you can achieve your dreams. She also acts as a CAF spokesperson sharing her knowledge and experience with kids and other physically challenged athletes.

Willie Stewart

Willie Stewart was working construction when in a horrific accident; his left arm was ripped off just below the shoulder, leaving Willie an amputee. A phenomenal three-sport athlete in high school, Willie didn't feel sorry for himself long before he realized that through athletics he could regain his confidence. Once Willie made the decision to grab life's reins with one good hand, there would be no stopping him again.

Only two years later, Willie captained D.C.'s top rugby club at the National Championships. Taking up cross-country skiing to stay in shape for rugby, Willie discovered he was one of the top 10 disabled skiers in his class in the world. He developed these skills and made the elite U.S. Disabled Nordic ski team, representing his country at the Paralympic Games in 1998. Four years later, Willie Stewart won a silver medal at the 2002 Games.

Willie Stewart shows his humor and high spirits by coining himself "One Arm" Willie. He was named one of two Ironman "Outstanding Age Group Athletes for 2004" after a great performance in his third Ironman Triathlon World Championship. He also has competed in other challenging events like the XTERRA Series, Balance Bar 24-Hour Adventure Race and the HURT 100k run in Honolulu, Hawaii. Disabled? Self-pity? Not Willie Stewart. He defies those terms, reminding us an athlete is an athlete and that pre-judgments are worth little in the heat of competition.



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Ryan Levinson

"You can't always choose what happens to you, but you can choose what you do about it."

When people first meet Ryan Levinson they often do not realize that he is a challenged athlete. He is not missing a limb, using a wheelchair, or racing with a guide to help him see. Instead, this world-class triathlete is the first person in history to compete at a championship level despite being ravaged by FSHMD (Muscular Dystrophy), a progressive degenerative muscle wasting disease.

Ryan was diagnosed with MD in 1996 when he noticed some of his muscles rapidly disappearing. Since then, his disease has progressed to the point where he can now no longer hold his arms above his head, do a sit-up, pull-up, or push-up. He has lost major muscles in his chest, arms, back, abdominals, and legs. As his disease progresses, he may become too weak to even close his eyes or move his lips into a smile.



There is no treatment and no cure. No matter how hard Ryan trains he will continue to lose strength and ability. Yet rather than give up, Ryan continues to race with passion and he thrives on inspiring other people to do the same.

This year alone Ryan helped develop and implement the new Physically Challenged divisions for off-road triathlons. He is the current chair of USA Triathlon's Physically Challenged Rules and Logistics Subcommittee. He serves as the XTERRA Physically Challenged "Ambassador", reaching out to help challenged athletes discover triathlon. He acts as a spokesperson for the Challenged Athletes Foundation regularly giving guest lectures at colleges, speaking to schoolchildren, and presenting to local groups. He even makes his living as the first disabled Emergency Medical Technician to run 911 emergency calls with the San Diego Fire Department.

Over the past two years, Ryan has competed in over 20 triathlons and bike races with 15 podium finishes. He is a current USA Champion and has twice placed 2nd at the World Championships. All the while he has lost nearly 15 pounds of muscle due to his deconstructive disease. Even still, Ryan remains competitive to test himself, have fun, and demonstrate to the world that even if you have a disability that is not immediately obvious, there is a place for you in triathlon. CAF is proud to support someone that truly "does the most with what he's got."

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Carlos Moleda

Carlos Moleda grew up in São Paulo, Brazil. At age 18, he chose a life of adventure, moved to the United States and joined the Navy. His ability to work hard and learn fast eventually won him a coveted spot as a Navy SEAL.

A few years later, he found himself in the middle of an intense firefight in Panama. Nine of the 10 men in his unit were wounded – four fatally. Carlos was hit near his spine and leg, and lost feeling in his lower body forever. Competitive sports proved to be the best way to recover from this traumatic injury. Through an unyielding spirit and a passion for competition, Carlos turned his misfortune into his greatest adventure: becoming a champion.



Today, Carlos is a winner of the 367-mile Sadlers Ultra Challenge handcycle race in Alaska, a two-time National Handcycling Champion and a three-time Hawaii Ironman Champion where he holds the record for the physically challenged division. Carlos appreciates how far he's come. To help others, he serves as a spokesman for the Challenged Athletes Foundation and uses his expertise and motivational skills to teach younger kids with disabilities how to ride handcycles.

Major David Rozelle

Major David Rozelle, a below-knee amputee, is an icon, resource and inspirational figure for American soldiers injured in recent conflicts abroad.

While in Iraq, commanding 140 troops of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Maj. Rozelle lost part of his right leg when a landmine exploded under his Humvee.

After completing his rehabilitation, Major Rozelle made the decision to return to active duty and to the same battlefield – the first American soldier to do so in modern times. Now having completed a second tour in Iraq on a prosthetic leg, Maj. Rozelle continues to lead by example and is helping his fellow injured soldiers to reclaim active lifestyles. He strongly believes in the healing power of sports to help accomplish his new mission.



After participating in the 2004 San Diego Triathlon Challenge, Maj. Rozelle became a proud supporter of the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF). He serves as a role model and mentor in CAF's Operation Rebound program. He recently represented the Challenged Athletes Foundation at the Ford Ironman Coeur d'Alene and was recognized with the Ford Ironman Everyday Hero Award.

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Rozelle was driven to conquer the Ironman Triathlon World Championship in Kona – an important goal he set for himself to prove that he’s not only “back in action,” but back with a purpose. In Hawaii he went over an hour faster than his qualifying time with a 12:46:26.

Brendan Driscoll

Nine-year-old Brendan Driscoll does not give up easily. Born with a congenital lower left leg anomaly, Brendan had a left knee disarticulation at Children's Hospital in Boston before he started kindergarten. Despite wearing a prosthetic leg, Brendan loved running, racing and playing tag. He even played in his town soccer league.

But something was missing. What Brendan always wanted most was to be able to keep up with the other kids when running – he hated always being the “slowest.” He knew that a high-tech carbon running foot was the answer. After gaining support from his doctors and physical therapists, Brendan was crushed when the required foot was not covered by his insurance company. But he did not let go of his dreams. That’s when he was introduced to the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF.)



“All my life I dreamed of running as fast as my friends, and thanks to a grant from the Challenged Athletes Foundation, my dream came true,” Brendan enthusiastically explains. “Getting an OSSUR Flex-Run Prosthesis through CAF is the best thing that ever happened to me!”

Brendan is now comfortably in the pack during those PE runs. But that is only the beginning. Recently, he finished a kids’ triathlon wearing a tri-suit that formerly belonged to 2007 Ford Ironman Triathlon World Champion Chris “Macca” McCormack. (Brendan and his Mom picked up the suit at a silent auction at the CAF gala in New York City.) Brendan was competing in his second race when he crashed his handcycle at the Westchester Triathlon. After a quick trip to the emergency room, he showed his true colors, telling the crowd at the triathlon banquet that he would be back next year to finish the race.

Like Macca, Brendan has shown that determination can take you a long way. In 2007, he visited eight states and competed in eight races, three youth triathlons and the Endeavor Games. And now that he’s experienced the thrill of competition, Brendan and his Mom Ginger are motivated to help CAF get more kids like Brendan to the starting line. So far, they’ve raised an astonishing \$17,404 for CAF through the Race For A Reason fundraising and incentive program.

Even at nine, Brendan understands the idea of “paying it forward” and is setting an impressive example for others to follow.

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Scout Bassett

At an early age, before she can recall, Scout lost her right leg. As an infant she was abandoned at a Chinese orphanage to endure hardship and abuse.

For years Scout hoped for something to change her fate. Her dreams seemed a lifetime away. When you least expect it, miracles do happen and Scout was adopted at the age of seven, taking her from an uncertain future to a world of opportunity.

With help from CAF, her parents and doctors, Scout actively competes in tennis, golf, marathons and triathlons. In 2007, she qualified and competed in the ITU Triathlon World Championships in Hamburg, Germany, her first international competition for triathlon. She also shines with academic achievements holding a 3.9 G.P.A., a member of Model UN, DECA, Key Club, Student Council, National Honor Society, and political campaign participant.

Drive, determination, athletics and outstanding academic success have lead Scout to her next journey, attending UCLA on a full scholarship. Scout is passionate about pursuing her athletic interests, educating people about the physically challenged and raising funds to allow remarkable individuals to live active lifestyles. She is an inspiration for all to follow his or her dreams and live extraordinary lives. CAF enthusiastically supports Scout in her athletic, personal and academic goals.



Evan Morgan

On January 1, 2005 while stationed in Al Quim, Iraq, on his second tour of duty, Evan's vehicle struck an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). The 23-year-old U.S. Marine Cpl. was the only person injured by the blast. As a result, Evan lost his right leg above the knee, his left leg below the knee and his sight in one eye. He spent three months at the National Naval Hospital in Bethesda, MD. Then, he was transferred to the Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) in San Antonio, TX, as an outpatient.

Evan began to flourish while at BAMC. Shortly after arriving he began walking using Ossur's Rheo-Knee, and married the "love of his life," Jillian. He became a regular at the gym and even began running. Something had changed in Evan. He was active prior to his injury, but now activity became a necessary part of his life.



"You can't change the past," said Evan, "so you do what you can with what you've been given."

In 2006, Evan swam at the Sempra Energy San Diego Triathlon Challenge (SDTC). Recently, he competed in the swim and handcycle parts of the Nautica Malibu Triathlon, Presented by Toyota. Now at this year's SDTC, with the aid of the CAF, Evan will be taking on the entire half-

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ironman distance course. He hopes that by being active himself, he can show both the able-bodied and those with disabilities the importance of physical fitness.

To top his list of accomplishments, Evan recently became a father with the birth of a beautiful baby girl. To complement that, he was selected as the recipient of 2007 METALCON International steel-framed home, through Homes for Our Troops. With this huge gift, Evan will soon have a new home for his young family.

CAF is proud to support Evan Morgan and his dreams to be active and inspire others. Last year, CAF's Operation Rebound gave Evan the equipment to get him through both the swim and bike parts of a triathlon. Now, he just needs a racing chair to get through the run. As you can imagine, CAF will be there.

Jake Frank

Jake Frank was born with a rare condition that left him unable to walk. Searching for a way to help their son, Julie and Steve Frank of Hazen, North Dakota, found hope after watching Oprah Winfrey interview Rudy Garcia-Tolson and realized it was very possible for their son to lead a normal, active life.

Inspired after seeing Rudy, Jake's parents made the most important decision in his young life: amputate both legs above the knee and have him fitted with high-tech prosthetics that would allow him to participate in sports. Thanks to CAF's relationship with Ossur, Jake was able to receive a pair of running legs to jump-start his athletic dreams.

Today, nine year old Jake is a multi-sport competitor, with a huge appetite for participation in athletics that is matched only by his boundless energy and winning smile.

As a wrestler for the past three years, Jake pinned his way to the top of the podium as a member of his elementary school team. In his "free time" he also swims, rides his bike, shoots archery, and plays baseball, basketball, golf, and runs. In 2005, Jake was named CAF's Rising Star award winner for his level of commitment, dedication and focus to meet an athletic goal. Now his goal is to complete the entire 13.1 mile run portion of the San Diego Triathlon Challenge.

It wasn't long ago that his parents wondered if Jake would ever get the chance to just walk to school like his friends. Now Jake is unstoppable and like his mentor, Rudy Garcia-Tolson, he hopes to eventually compete in the Paralympics.



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Tricia Downing

Trish was training in Golden, CO when she was hit by a car and suffered a T-4 spinal injury. Her back was broken, but not her spirit. Trish's experience working with challenged athletes gave her faith that everything would be okay. From her hospital bed, Trish wrote out her first grant request to CAF – for a handcycle that would get her back on the road ... and back into life. Trish understands that her accident was not an end, but a new beginning. And what a new beginning it has been.



Determined to live life on her terms, Trish turned her misfortune into opportunity, and is now a pioneer in the sport of women's wheelchair triathlon. She has competed in a wide variety of triathlons, from sprint to Iron distance, is a member of the Physically Challenged National Triathlon team and has qualified for and competed in the World Triathlon Championships and the Hawaii Ironman World Championship. She was named USA Triathlon's Physically Challenged Athlete of the Year for 2003. In 2005, she became the first wheelchair racer to compete in and finish the 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike, and 26.2-mile run of the Redman Ironman Triathlon in Oklahoma City, OK.

Tricia's passion for helping others overcome challenges and achieve their dreams is contagious. She is a spokesperson for the Challenged Athletes Foundation and mentors to other recently injured athletes. Through her example, she's inspired other female wheelchair athletes to take on triathlon. Now as a professional speaker, she hopes to share her message of how strength, courage, and perseverance turn "I Can't" into "I Can" when faced with seemingly overwhelming challenges, with schools, businesses and the general public.

Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah

Emmanuel was born in Ghana with a deformed right leg and meager expectations. Abandoned by his father and shunned by his community, his path was pre-determined – become a beggar and rely on others for survival. But Emmanuel chose a different road. He would not sacrifice his dignity and be forced to the streets like others in his situation.



After receiving a bike from the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF), using his left leg only, Emmanuel pedaled 610 kilometers (379 miles) across Ghana. He was determined to spread his message: disability does not mean inability. Impressed by Emmanuel's accomplishments, CAF flew him to the 2002 San Diego Triathlon Challenge to participate in the 56-mile bike portion of the event.

CAF and a key partner, Loma Linda University Orthopaedic & Rehabilitation Institute, wondered if a high-tech prosthetic might help Emmanuel live a fuller, more active lifestyle. But Emmanuel had doubts about the required surgery to amputate his right leg. In Ghana, such an operation could prove fatal. After sharing his fears with Rudy Garcia-Tolson, who had both legs amputated above the knee at age five, he made up his mind.

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Emmanuel would do it, and receive a new prosthesis from Loma Linda. He would stand for the first time on two feet.

Emmanuel's story has been documented by Lookalike Productions in a film called *Emmanuel's Gift*. It shows how a bike changed one man's life and how he, in turn, changed a nation. Since then, Ghana passed a Disability Bill, giving equal treatment and opportunity to the disabled community in Ghana. For his efforts to help the disabled in his country, Emmanuel was selected as co-recipient (with fellow CAF ambassador Jim MacLaren) of ESPN's 2005 Arthur Ashe Courage Award.

Thank you, Emmanuel, for having the courage to fight for change.

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Fundraiser Notes:

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