

Pass It On®...

The Agony, the Ecstasy, and the Redemption that Olympic Competition Brings.

Derek Redmond, the 400-meter record holder from Great Britain, delivered one of the most inspiring moments in athletic history at the Barcelona games in 2012.

Track pits athletes against each other in the oldest of sports: running. Long-distance runners learn how to pace their gaits, while sprinters focus on getting every ounce of energy moving in a straight line for a short distance. The middle distance of 400 meters pushes the human body in an all-out sprint for what seems an impossibly human distance.

Middle-distance runners will tell you that they actually sprint 300 meters and fight for the last 100. It takes years of precise training to lower personal times by tenths of seconds. The body becomes a high-performance mix of speed and endurance. To reach the Olympics is to endlessly train from childhood.

After years of this stringent work ethic, Derek Redmond broke the 400-meter record in Great Britain. One goal remained in his life: To win gold at the Olympics.

“When I took my place on the starting blocks, I felt good. For once, I had no injuries, despite eight operations in four years, and I’d won the first two rounds without breaking a sweat — including posting the fastest time in the first-round heats. I was confident, and when the gun went off, I got off to a good start.”

Redmond was very familiar with the pain cycle: the hurt during a race, the aches after, the minor injuries and the major ones that required surgery. He was well-acquainted with the pain it took to get back to running form after a surgery. At the world-class level, an athlete’s body is so highly tuned that it can be constantly on the cusp of injury. And so it was with Redmond.

“I got into my stride running round the first turn, and I was feeling comfortable,” he recalled. “Then I heard a popping sound. I kept on running for another two or three strides; then I felt the pain. I thought I’d been shot, but then I recognized the

agony. I’d pulled my hamstring before, and the pain is excruciating, like someone shoving a hot knife into the back of your knee and twisting it. I grabbed the back of my leg and hit the deck.”

As Redmond lay helpless on the track, one thought pounded in his head: “I did not want them to write ‘Did Not Finish’ next to my name.” Redmond got up and began hobbling toward the finish line. He had 200 meters to go.

What he didn’t see was his father pushing his way past the Olympic official and running onto the track. Since childhood, his father had always supported him. In that moment, he would do it in front of the world. Jim Redmond shouldered his son’s weight, and together, the two of them shared the struggle of completing the race.

Redmond did not win a medal that day, but victory does not always crown the fastest. Lasting victory is often bestowed upon the most courageous, the most compassionate and those steadfast companions who are on their team.

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