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Maddy Doane: a profile of perseverance

By Jon Kingdon



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When someone uses the term "Third time's a charm," it's generally a reference to something positive. Such was not the case for Maddy Doane, a senior at Campolindo High School. Doane would suffer a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her knees in eighth grade, ninth grade and 10th grade, all while playing soccer - twice in the right knee and once on the left knee, the third time a noncontact injury.

Disheartening hardly speaks to what Doane went through: "Each recovery took about a year and I played for about a month and tore the ACL again. That was frustrating. I liked to put in the effort and see it pay off, so it was not easy to see all the work I put in to build back my strength and then see it go down the drain again." After the third surgery, the doctors recommended swimming or running track instead of soccer since they were noncontact sports with straight forward movement.

Though active in many sports while growing up in San Francisco, Canada and moving to Lafayette in the fourth grade, ultimately settling in Moraga, Doane said her first love had been soccer: "I did run track in elementary school but I was mainly focused on soccer and thought it would be my only sport." Doane's speed was evident on the soccer field, playing right forward "where I could run down the sideline and get to the ball."

As it has turned out, soccer's loss has been track's gain. In just two seasons that Doane has run track for Campolindo, she set the school record for the 100 meters (12.05), 200 meters (24.66) and the 400 meters (55.52).

It was a slow but gradual process for Doane, says Campolindo head track coach Chuck Woolridge: "Maddy started her junior year being limited to running only three days a week. We were very tentative in her training so as to ease her back into athletic work after all the surgeries and it wasn't until she got into competition, where she felt comfortable going at full speed, that we realized what a talent she had."

Doane's success in track was something of a surprise for her as well: "I just wanted to start a new sport to stay active and in shape. I started track my junior year and ran cross country this fall. We have a great cross country team and it was a lot different from track. However, it kept me in shape and helped me with my endurance, particularly in the long sprints."

Woolridge was looking for more people to come out for the track team when he approached Doane, who was a student in his English class: "I did not know that she was fast but I knew that she was an athlete and I liked working with her. I would often encourage kids to come out for track and field if I knew that they were involved in athletics."

Woolridge explained how Doane had to learn the technique that went into being a top runner, but Doane took the training seriously. "Chuck told me I had only been running on talent and not strength," Doane said. "I took that to heart and I began training a lot harder in the offseason with my sprint coach, Joey Woolridge (Chuck's brother). I learned to run on the balls of my feet so that my entire foot would not hit the ground and how I should pull my leg instead of pushing and use my arm swing. The first season was overwhelming. This year we had three very fast freshmen (Emily Hatch, Sarah Tabibian and Krystin Wilson) and one sophomore (Terryal Bell) and I took it upon myself to lead by example and show them what they needed to do to be successful. I took the responsibility to teach them what I knew and more."

Woolridge attributes Doane's success to more than just her ability: "When the gun goes off, Maddy competes as hard as anyone I've ever coached. The other thing that she has going for her is that she is the most efficient mechanically proficient form that I have ever worked with for a sprinter. Her geometry and the strength that she has developed over the years she participated in sports, and the ability to coordinate that is rare, and she was that way when she started."

The 400-meter race is very taxing and women did not compete in this event in the Olympics until 1964. It is a very challenging race for anyone, says Woolridge: "A great 400-meter runner has to go into the race expecting discomfort and the person that will win the race is going to be the one that is able to maintain and deal with the discomfort more than the others. Run this race and you're signing yourself up for some excruciating pain."

Competing in this event was a learning experience for Doane: "At the beginning, it was a bit of a struggle and it would scare me a lot. I ran out of energy and fell on the track as a junior. The barrier I got over this season was knowing that I had the strength to take it out as hard as I could and to finish strong. I came to believe in myself mentally and became confident that I could finish the race."

Doane found a lot of support from her coaches: "I would not be where I am today without Chuck and Joey. Chuck puts up a tough personae but in the end, I knew he was proud of us and all that we accomplished. He assured me that I could persevere through the race, which was really meaningful and impactful to me. It helped a lot that he believed in me. Joey was there for me through the summer and winter. He taught me how if I put in the work, I would be successful."

Doane qualified for the state meet for the first time this year and finished 13th in the 200 meters and 11th in the 400 meters. Woolridge had nothing but praise for how well Doane performed at such a competitive venue: "We were very pleased at the way that Maddy handled it. It was her first time in a big meet like that. It's an incredibly intimidating environment, running against some of the top runners in the country and she handled it well. She ran a personal best in the 400 meters and tied her personal best in the 200 meters."

After such a successful senior season, Doane has made a verbal commitment to attend UCLA and run for their track team because "I wanted to get the best education and the best experience athletically."

Doane felt she was flying under the radar since she only started running as a junior, so she took it upon herself to get some exposure: "I contacted a number of coaches to put my name out there. My times were much better this year and coaches would start to contact me."

Unbeknownst to her, UCLA considered her a prospect when she began running her junior year, according to the Bruin's sprints and relay coach Curtis Allen: "One of our coaches, Danny Williams saw Maddy run and told us that she showed a lot of potential. I personally saw her run and came away impressed with her talent. I met with Maddy and found her to be a determined, hard-working, motivated young lady. Plus the fact that she comes from such a good school and had really good grades, made her a great fit for our program. Since Maddy has only run track for two years, she has a great deal of room for improvement. We're not going to limit Maddy at all in which event she will focus on. I think her best race is the 200 but she can run the 400 and run a relay leg. She can do it all, but we'll figure it out when she comes here."

In the end, despite so many hurdles to overcome, Doane comes away from it all with a positive and optimistic outlook: "I am not the same person when I started running track. I just wanted to run, stay in shape and have fun, with no goals in mind for the season. Being able to change my perspective and put in the hard work and be successful has made it a great experience. After falling down so often and getting held back due to the injuries, I was really glad at what I was able to accomplish after so much devastation in my life."



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[back](#)

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