

Pass It On®...

'Couldn't' was Never in his Vocabulary.

Kayleb Wagner is breaking football records and pushing beyond athletic barriers. Meet the young man with one arm who looks forward to a challenge.

For some people, there seems to be far more reason not to achieve than to try. It might seem simpler to give up, to say, "Life has not been fair to me; why try?" But for Kayleb Wagner, every setback has been a challenge to overcome, to step up and achieve.

Wagner came out of the womb without a left hand and without the family stability many kids are born into, but with a desire to overcome. Growing up in Florida, surrounded by sports and athletes, is a great way for a kid to socialize, find friends and discover the rituals that lead to success. Wagner threw himself into the culture. He loved competing: basketball, football, track. Without a left hand, Wagner learned to compete harder, to find ways to not only compensate but prove he could be among the best on the field.

As a high school running back, Wagner broke NFL running back Derrick Henry's high school career rushing record. The first time he carried the ball in a college game, he scored; a brilliant, spinning, deft move into the end zone that exploded the sideline in celebration.

His teammates love him. And he will do whatever it takes to help them win. More importantly, he does whatever he can to inspire others to win.

When Wagner was in high school, the medical engineer who made Wagner's prosthetic brought his own son to the game. The son was also missing part of his hand and kept his limb hidden in his jacket. "After he heard my name on the PA a couple of times, he rolled up his sleeve, and he wasn't scared to show his arm anymore," Wagner says. "That's the motivation for me to wake up and do it again tomorrow. No matter how bad my day is, I've got to keep doing it for the kids like that who are watching me. If I give up, what are those kids going to think?"

Being a multi-sport athlete is demanding. In Florida, spring football overlaps with track season. Wagner

would go to football practice, then head straight for the track. Double workouts every day would make any of us complain. Wagner was in his coach's ear about it, in a playful way. Finally, the coach said, "Fine, no more running today. Go do the shot put." Wagner responded by qualifying for state two years in a row.

As Wagner demonstrates, each challenge is a chance to prove to yourself that you can be more, despite limitations. When he scored that first college football touchdown, Wagner recalls, "I stuck my left arm up in the air and ran around. To me, that's who I am. I was embracing it. In a way, it was letting everybody know, 'Yeah, I have one arm, and I'm still out here doing things that most people thought I couldn't.'"

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