

From Jim Keller (XC and Track and Field Coach)

*I am Ryan's high school track & cross country coach, but have been observing and working with him since he was quite young. He comes from an athletic family and his older sister and brother were part of my middle school program. As a young boy, Ryan came to his sibling's practices/meets and could always be seen running alongside and urging them on.*

*This might seem like a common characteristic of a younger brother, but in this case, Ryan had to do it with a prosthetic leg. I was told that he had a condition as a baby and the family had to make the difficult decision of amputating his leg above the knee. By going above the knee, Ryan does not have the flexibility that you see in many paralympic stars, who run with a "blade" attachment, instead of an artificial leg.*

*This situation has never deterred Ryan, in fact he seems to relish the daily challenge. While we know that it can be uncomfortable and sometimes hurt him to run... he still does the workouts without complaint (other than the occasional joke, "But coach, I only have one leg!"). In fact, he is known for his sense of humor, which is often self-deprecating. He knows his situation, and can see the humor in situations that arise out of it.*

*He understands that he won't be a top runner at any time, but uses the training to get in shape for other sports, including swimming and his passion, wheelchair basketball. Still, he takes pride in running his personal best times and/or when he gets ahead of some of our two-legged competitors!*

*He is the self-proclaimed Captain of Junior Varsity, but nobody would argue that he deserves the moniker, since he is certainly someone who leads by example. Earlier this year, we saw a great sample of Ryan at his best when he was part of a national video that was aired as part of the Presidential Inauguration. I will quote here from my note to his mother:*

*"Denise and I were so excited and proud when we saw Ryan in the coverage of the Parade Across America. After such a crazy year and unbelievable lead-up to the inauguration, it was so encouraging and heartening to see a kid like that. He represents everything good about young people and I know you guys are very proud... so are we!"*

*Ryan is one of those guys you love to have as an athlete and a teammate and a friend. He is very deserving of the Spirit of Sport Award.*

Here was a post someone put on Facebook when they came to walk the track and saw Ryan at practice.

1h · New Fairfield, Connecticut · 

Feeling Blessed Today 🙏❤️🇺🇸

Not Only is it My 12year Wedding Anniversary, But I witnessed a Young Man on the Track Team running with a Artificial Leg and Staying right in there with the Rest of the Team. It gave Me the Motivation and Passion to Keep Going Forward and Don't Let anything Stop You For Achieving Your Best...

Always Be Kind ...❤️🙏💯👍🇺🇸

