

# Give Us Potential, Perseverance, and Personality

## We'll Give You Lindsay Grogan

Taking a cursory glance at a snapshot of University of Georgia student athlete Lindsay Grogan, 20, one might be tempted to focus only on that which readily meets the eye. Lindsay's prosthetic left leg and facial inconsistencies are perhaps among the most noticeable of her features, chronicling her lifelong experience with the effects of scleroderma. Yet to simplify Lindsay's appearance and story as a tragic culmination of unfortunate events would be as incomplete as it is inaccurate. Rather, Lindsay's image and story reveal the truisms of strength, fortitude, perseverance and success.

### Waves of Inspiration

It is true that Lindsay's physical stature never did quite match her abundant spirit and enthusiasm for life. From an early age, it was clear that Lindsay Grogan was a talented and driven girl, capable of recognizing her potential and achieving her goals. Despite being diagnosed with localized scleroderma at 2 years of age, Lindsay stayed involved in various sports throughout elementary school, such as softball, basketball, gymnastics, and swimming. Although the lack of mobility in Lindsay's left leg would make difficult the typical movements required of many athletic sports, Lindsay did not abandon her commitment to them. Her positive attitude and remarkable determination to succeed in athletics did not falter even when, at the age of 7, a scleroderma-related contracture prompted doctors at the Medical University of South Carolina to recommend the amputation of Lindsay's lower left leg. The amputation would be from the knee down, and would offer Lindsay the best chance of retaining some mobility in her later years through the use of a prosthetic leg. Despite the challenges Lindsay would undoubtedly face in her athletic career, however, she agreed to the procedure. Post surgery, Lindsay

embarked on six months of intensive physical therapy to re-learn how to walk with her new prosthetic leg.

Lindsay's determined spirit would soon gain public recognition amongst her teachers and peers three years later in the 6th grade, when Lindsay would come to find that she was selected as the recipient of the Nicholas Green Award for young promising youths. Having been awarded state-wide recognition for her attitude and aptitude, Lindsay was scheduled to be interviewed by a photojournalist for the local newspaper, *The Macon Telegraph*. Watching the photojournalist take pictures of her and her family, Lindsay immediately took an interest in the photographer's skill and craftsmanship. "I thought it was so cool," Lindsay recalls, describing how she marveled at each picture's ability to present its own sentimental story.

From that moment on, Lindsay would devote her time to both photography and swimming, with the enthusiast support of her family and friends.

### A Supportive Team

Growing up in Macon, Ga., Lindsay was fortunate enough to be surrounded by family, friends, and a community that accepted and

supported her throughout her younger years. Lindsay recalls the benefit of being raised in a supportive and close-knit community: "I never felt out of place," she says, "because I knew everyone, and they knew me." Lindsay was able to make close friends whom she would keep throughout high school and college. Best friend of eight years and counting, Gracie Lewis (who is also a sophomore at UGA), recalls first meeting Lindsay in middle school when both girls were enrolled in the Gifted Students Program. "Lindsay was such a hard worker," Gracie remembers, "but always a sweet person."

Lindsay's parents, Karen and Paul Grogan, helped support their daughter throughout her youth, advocating



for Lindsay to try out for sports despite her physical difficulties. Lindsay notes, “They [my parents] never told me I couldn’t do something,” and indeed such wisdom has enabled Lindsay never to limit her aspirations. “Paul and I always wanted her to try whatever she wanted to do,” adds Karen. Lindsay’s grandfather, Bob Cutler, also provided familial support as both a close advisor and vocal champion of Lindsay’s swimming endeavors. An avid biker and athlete himself, Bob connected with Lindsay’s athletic dreams and made great efforts to attend Lindsay’s away meets for swimming in Vancouver and Minneapolis. Lindsay’s friends and family undoubtedly formed a foundation of support for Lindsay’s goals and aspirations during her youth. It was only a short time before Lindsay would begin high school and acquire experiences that would start her on her way to achieving her goals.

## Turning of the Tide

During high school, Lindsay spent her days transitioning between two able-bodied swim team practices (Macon Waves Club and Central High School Swim Team) and photography sessions for her high school *Teen Board* newspaper. In addition to these activities, Lindsay joined her first disabled swim team, the Georgia Blazers under the direction of Coach Fred Lamback.

This was the first time Lindsay had joined a swim team for people with disabilities, and she found the special instruction from Lamback most helpful on perfecting her technique. “Lindsay always worked extremely hard,” says Lamback, of Lindsay’s swimming practices with him. Perhaps because of this acute observation, Mr. Lamback soon suggested that Lindsay pursue the Paraolympic Trials in college. It was then that Lindsay first began to envision herself trying out for the national and elite Paraolympic swim teams.

In the fall of 2006 Lindsay began this journey as she embarked upon her college career at the University of Georgia in Athens, Ga. Lindsay enrolled in the Athens Bulldogs Swim Club and began her studies in journalism with specific emphasis in photojournalism.

Coaching Lindsay since her start with the Athens Bulldogs in 2006 was Coach Jonathan Foggin. Foggin gives great praise and admiration to Lindsay’s athletic performance in the water. “Lindsay is very dedicated and very determined when it comes to her swimming practices. Typically we hold practices five afternoons a week for our swimmers, but Lindsay requested to practice an additional two times a week in preparation for the Paraolympic Trials,” Coach Foggin explains. Lindsay made clear to Foggin that she wanted to pursue the Paraolympics in Minneapolis, Minn. during her first year at UGA. Foggin supported Lindsay in her goal,

admitting that he “tried to help her get to where she wanted to go.” It was obviously to the credit of Coach Foggin’s accommodations to her practice schedule and Lindsay’s arduous efforts that gave her added momentum for the Paraolympic Trials ahead.

Competing in the Paraolympic Trials this past April, Lindsay consecutively dropped time from both her entry and preliminary swim times to ultimately place 4th in the finals. “I liked the experience because there were a lot of swimmers there with different disabilities, yet we all had to compete together and overcome our own challenges in the water.” Part of what Lindsay believes is the most rewarding part of her swimming endeavors is that she has to compete against herself.

Perhaps because Lindsay is her own ‘toughest competitor,’ the results of her Paraolympic meet were spectacular. “Lindsay had tremendous swims” says Coach Foggin, “she dropped time in each of her events.” Coach Lamback, who also followed Lindsay’s performance at the Paraolympic Trials concurs with Coach Foggin’s remarks, “It was an outstanding meet [for Lindsay] ... any coach would be proud of Lindsay’s performance.”

## Testing Uncharted Waters

Without taking much time to dwell on her current achievements, Lindsay’s next adventure will be to compete abroad in the Netherlands for the 2010 World Championships. Ever optimistic and thankful, Lindsay focuses on the positive, saying, “I appreciate how blessed I am.” Indeed, Lindsay has much to be grateful for. She has been publicly recognized for her positive spirit, and has won great acclaim for her athletic talents in swimming. Yet in response to such personal fame and notoriety, Lindsay keeps herself grounded with the hopes that her story can be of benefit to all, saying, “I’d like to be able to inspire people so they can appreciate life.”

Lindsay’s heartfelt intentions are a testament to her depth of wisdom and character. She is not only able to recognize the potential that lies within herself, but also that same potential that lies within others. Consequently, when one looks at Lindsay, one should focus not on what she has to endure, but rather, how far she has come. Much like a photojournalist, to understand the essence of a person one must first see beyond the surface. Though it would seem the physical manifestations of Lindsay’s scleroderma are the outward markings of weakness and strife, upon closer inspection, it is clear they reveal instead the inner markings of fortitude and perseverance. Lindsay’s image and story serve as a reminder to all that regardless of our challenges in life, we must endeavor to see the possible, the potential, the positive in ourselves—and “capture” it!

