Haley Scott DeMaria

In 1992, Haley Scott DeMaria was a freshman and a member of the Notre Dame women’s swim team when the bus carrying the team home from a meet overturned in a snow storm. The fatal accident left Haley paralyzed from the waist down. After two emergency surgeries, Haley was told she would never walk again. That was not acceptable to this athlete. Days later, drawing on the strength and training she learned as a swimmer, Haley began to wiggle her toes. Over the next several months, Haley endured hours of exhausting physical therapy, painful setbacks, and three additional life-threatening surgeries. Throughout her physical and emotional trials, her family, her teammates, Notre Dame and the swimming community were invaluable assets to her healing. In October 1993, Haley returned to Notre Dame’s swim team, competing again for the Fighting Irish and winning her first race back.

Haley Scott DeMaria was graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1995 with a bachelor's degree in History and returned to Xavier College Preparatory, her high school alma mater in Phoenix, Arizona, to teach and coach swimming. She later received her Masters in Teaching from the University of Southern California. Haley has received several national awards as a result of her inspiring recovery; including the inaugural Gene Autry Courage in Sport Award (1994), Women of Distinction (1994), National Institute for Sport Fellow (1995), and the Honda Award for Inspiration (1995). In June 2008, Haley published What Though the Odds – Haley Scott’s Journey of Faith and Triumph, which is currently being adapted to a major motion picture (only the third movie to be filmed on Notre Dame’s campus). Haley travels the country to speak to businesses, schools, churches, and civic organizations. In 2012, she served as the commencement speaker at the University of Notre Dame, and repeated this honor in 2013, at Seton Hill University, and 2015 at St. Ambrose University. In Haley's words:

*Tragedy is an unlikely event that changes your life forever. Until I realized this, I wasn't able to fully heal. If I was going to live a healthy and happy life, I had to stop waiting for my life to return to normal. After my comeback to collegiate competition, my physical healing was as complete as possible, but my emotional journey was just beginning. Athletics played an essential role in both. There are several stories woven together that complete my life today. It is the story of a young girl who fights for her life, and then for her dreams, and then for her life’s happiness. It is the story of family - both the one to whom I was born, and the one created around me as I faced my greatest life challenge. It is the story of my faith, which was not yet defined at the start, but that was shaped by the goodness of others. It is a story that has already touched the lives of those whom I have met, and a story that now needs to be shared with as many as possible.*

For more information or to contact Haley, please visit: [WWW.HALEYBOOK.COM](http://WWW.HALEYBOOK.COM)
A selection of comments about Ms. DeMaria’s presentation, based on her book
What Though the Odds - Haley Scott’s Journey of Faith and Triumph.

We invited our athletics staff to Haley’s presentation and everyone was so thankful they attended. We learn more about ourselves and others during the really tough times; the times when we are told we are not good enough, or when we are told we cannot do something. Haley taught us all about the values that we “preach” to our students every day—believe! set goals! work to the goals! support! trust! faith! expecting the unexpected! resiliency! hope! follow through! team! Love! There are so many more ways to describe it all but it is a true story that teaches us all so much about life!

~ George Kennedy, Head Swimming Coach, Johns Hopkins University

I don’t know of any story more heartwarming, encouraging or motivating than Haley’s story. She is a very special young lady and has had a positive influence on my life as well as many others.

~ Lou Holtz, Former Notre Dame Head Football Coach

As I’m reading your book I’m not only amazed about your strength and attitude about your journey, but what’s also really touching my heart is your description and relationship with your mother. Thanks for sharing your story, your strength, and your integrity with so many people, and especially those feelings that many of us either don’t recognize or share.

~ Letter to Haley from Lyn St. James, first female Indianapolis 500 driver

Haley shares her story of tragedy turned triumph by speaking honestly and openly about the struggles and lessons she has learned – and is still learning- on her road to recovery. Her message includes insight on how thoughts about herself, her faith and her relationships with family and friends had to change as she realized that her life would never return to “normal”. The impact her story has on young men and women who view themselves as invincible is profound as they comprehend the seemingly insurmountable odds Haley had to overcome to be able to speak about her experiences. The audience walks away with an appreciation for life and how important it is to believe in yourself as you face life regardless of the circumstances.

~ Jill Stephenson, Assistant Athletic Director, Salisbury University

Haley’s book was not only inspirational, motivational and a magnificent display of courage but should be required reading for all in the business world. Her never quit, never give up attitude is truly refreshing to all who read her book or hear her speak. Having met Haley, she is the “real deal.” She is a blessing to all that she comes in contact with.

~ John Brophy, Keller Williams Real Estate, Rosemont, CA

Haley’s book, What Though the Odds, has been part of my middle school literature program since it was first published four years ago. We were fortunate to have Haley visit our school to share her story on two separate occasions. It was as if she stepped out of the pages of her book and extended her heart and hand to each one of us. Haley speaks and inspires from a place deep in her soul. Her words are genuine and powerful. To be sure, Haley inspired my students to triumph over adversities in their own lives. I believe the imprint will last a lifetime.

~ Mary Korzan, Queen of Peace School, Mishawaka, IN

I heard you talk the other day at Westwood Hills School. I though your speech was so great and inspiring. Your speech made me think of my team/family the whole time. It is something that I know I would have loved to hear while I was younger, but still benefitted from now.

~ Email to Haley from Meghan Heil, senior, James Madison University