Athlete Ranks New Life Greater Than Olympic Gold

Suppose you had a chance to win a medal at the Athens Olympics. Could anything make you turn it down?

Olympic success can bring fame, lifetime honor and lucrative endorsement contracts. Olympic games usually bring many inspiring stories of victory through determination and achievement despite adversity. Stars are born and careers receive quantum boosts.

Consider British hurdler Tasha Danvers-Smith. She has been ranked sixth in the world in her event. Her Olympic prospects looked bright.

But her ticket to the Athens track was never punched. It wasn’t injury or defeat that kept her from competing in the games. It was her personal choice.

Tasha Danvers married her coach, Darrell Smith, in November 2003. In early 2004, she was in excellent physical shape and keenly focused on her training. Then, as she told the Telegraph newspaper, she felt tired all the time, feeling flat for no reason.

In the spring, a home pregnancy test showed positive and she learned she was nine weeks pregnant. “I was in shock, reports Danvers-Smith. I only took the test because I wanted to stop myself worrying about it. Not for one minute did I think it would be positive. The couple had not planned to start a family until after the Olympics.

Having a baby in December would eliminate her chances of competing in Athens in August. It would increase their expenses and mean lean times. They did not own a home and were living with her husband’s parents. She – through her athletic

competition – was the main source of income.

As she put it, When my body is my business, then if my body is not functioning, there is no business.

Feeling devastated, the couple considered an abortion. It would seem a simple solution to an inconvenient problem, a comparatively easy way to eliminate an obstacle to the success and recognition she sought.

The thought [of an abortion] did cross our minds as an option," recalls Danvers-Smith. But this line from the Scriptures kept coming into my head: 'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

She tried to convince herself that she should terminate her pregnancy but struggled through her tears with an alternative she could not accept: "For me, the whole wide world was the Olympics. At the same time, I felt I would be losing my soul. It just wouldn't fit well. It would be a forced decision . . . something that wasn't going to make me happy at all.

Aiming now for the 2008 games, she seems happy with her choice and philosophical about her mixed metaphor situation: Life throws you curve balls and you just have to roll with the punches."

Abortion is, of course, one of today's most controversial issues. But regardless of one's views on this emotionally explosive topic, it seems appropriate to admire the dedication of a woman who wrestled with an agonizing decision and made her choice to bear her child and postpone possible future glory and fortune.

Regardless of what success eventually comes her way, might that choice become Danvers-Smith's lifetime golden moment?

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