

Cheering the Swimmer

Eric Moussambani of Equatorial Guinea was an unlikely hero of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia.

The 22-year-old African had learned to swim only 9 months before the games, had only practiced in a 20-meter pool without lane markers, and had never raced more than 50 meters. Through a special program that permits poorer countries to participate, even though their athletes don't meet customary standards, Moussambani had been entered in the 100-meter men's freestyle.

When the other two swimmers in his heat were disqualified because of false starts,



Moussambani was forced to swim alone. He was reportedly "charmingly inept." He never put his head under the water's surface and flailed wildly to stay afloat.

With 10 meters left to the wall, he virtually came to a stop. Some spectators thought he might drown. Even though his time was more than a minute slower than what qualified for the next level of competition, the capacity crowd at the Olympic Aquatic Center stood up and cheered him on.

After what seemed like an eternity, the African reached the wall and hung on for dear life. When he had caught his breath and regained his composure, he said through an interpreter, "I want to send hugs and kisses to the crowd. It was their cheering that kept me going."

We, too, like Moussambani, are in a race. It's called life. The course is not always smooth and easy, and at times, we struggle.

The run is easier when those around cheer us on with their words of support and encouragement, with their prayers and with their empathy.

But the runners on either side also struggle from time to time, and they need the boost in confidence that we can provide – gifts that others have bestowed on us.

May we be alert to the opportunities.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter