

FROM TYING SHOES TO STARDOM

Roger Crawford was 16 years old before he could tie his shoes, and even then, only Velcro made it possible.

But he excelled in other areas, such as sports, becoming a star tennis player.

While he was in high school, he was a championship player, winning more than 95 percent of his matches. He continued at nearly the same pace in college and has succeeded as a pro.



You can look at Roger and see that he has a disability. As Crawford explains it, however, most people's disabilities cannot be seen, but they're just as real and in many cases more pronounced than his.

Crawford was born with one leg missing from the knee down. He doesn't have hands complete with four fingers and a thumb. As a matter of fact, he has only two extensions to accomplish some remarkable successes.

Crawford doesn't complain about what he does not have, but makes full use of what he does have. This attitude enabled him to become the first athlete with severe disabilities to compete in an NCAA Division 1 college sport. As a result of his accomplishments, he was inducted into the Loyola-Marymount University Athletic Hall of Fame. His compelling story of how he

became a tennis champion communicates and demonstrates the power of an *I Can* attitude to redefine the possible.

Sports Illustrated recognized Crawford as "one of the most accomplished physically challenged athletes in the world," and in 2013 he was selected as the winner of the ITA Achievement Award, presented by the International Tennis Hall of Fame. The award is the highest honor bestowed by the intercollegiate tennis association.

After achieving immense success as a Hall of Fame athlete, Crawford went on to inspire audiences worldwide, sharing the principles he has lived – perseverance, unshakable optimism and overcoming adversity. He teaches that "challenge is inevitable, defeat is optional." He has been inducted into the National Speakers Association Hall of Fame.

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Crawford's story should be motivating and inspiring for each of us, reminding that ...

- Life is what you make of it. Crawford doesn't pretend that life is easy, but then life is seldom easy for most of us.
- We are limited only by a lack of vision and determination.
- Our journey on this earth is short, whatever the allotted time may be, and we should value the days and the opportunities they bring.

This story illuminates some wisdom passed along to me by a gentleman, now deceased, whom I deeply respected: "Some people find fault as if there were a reward for it. Others see good in every difficulty."

But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter