

Elizabeth Ozorak - Figure Skating



Elizabeth Ozorak, 59, doesn't come from an athletic family. In fact, growing up, she spent more time reading books than playing sports. But when her son, Nick, was 10, she signed him up for basic skating lessons at the local rink where all the middle and high school kids gathered on Friday and Saturday nights. And since she knew he'd be reluctant to take lessons on his own, she enrolled right along with him.

In the beginning, Ozorak's goals were pretty minimal – she wanted to be able to skate forwards, skate backwards and stop. In time, though, the class started practicing turns and jumps. And then Ozorak got hooked.

Although Nick eventually lost interest in skating, Ozorak has carried on. But it hasn't been an easy journey. She discovered early on that some learn-to-skate coaches expected less of adult athletes than children, so they didn't correct her bad habits. In time, though, she found coaches who pushed her to refine her skills and other adult skaters whom she considers role models. Today, Ozorak competes in freestyle and dance through both the Ice Skating Institute (ISI) and U.S. Figure Skating (USFS).

Figure skating has become a major force in Ozorak's life. In addition to the friendships she has made at her local rink and across the country, the sport has helped her to be healthier. That's because Ozorak suffers from chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). Exercise in short bursts is important to maintaining strength with CFS, and success in skating requires practice. And practice she does, skating three to six times a week while also running, lifting weights and practicing yoga. As a result, Ozorak's CFS no longer interferes with the activities of her daily life.

But most of all, Ozorak is proud that she stepped outside her comfort zone to try mastering a new sport as an adult. The challenge has not only improved her body but also strengthened her mind. And that's why she likes sharing her story with other adults who may be contemplating a new physical activity, especially those facing a physical challenge. She firmly believes that you don't know your limits until you push them and that it's never too late to try.

Ozorak is living proof. And when she takes the ice in Greensboro, Nick – her No. 1 fan and the impetus for her skating career – will be right there by her side, cheering her on.