

https://greensboro.com/sports/other/olympics/aau-junior-olympics-osteomyelitis-track-greensboro-lyric-troy/article_b2777f0e-4a8a-11ef-ad7f-4feeb3deb6af.html

ALERT

EDITOR'S PICK

'It's a miracle': 12-year-old Greensboro sprinter beats illness, qualifies for AAU Junior Olympics

Caroline Wills

Jul 26, 2024



Cruz Troy at the High Point Athletic Complex's track in High Point, N.C., on Wednesday, July 24, 2024.

WOODY MARSHALL, NEWS & RECORD

Caroline Wills

HIGH POINT — Dressed in a pink and gray unicorn nightgown, pink bedroom shoes and a mask pulled up to the bridge of her nose, 8-year-old Lyric Troy took her first steps in days.

Gripping onto the gray handles of the metallic walker, her physical therapist behind her, she shuffled her right foot forward. Slowly. Unsteadily.

One step.

Then, she picked up her left foot.

Two steps.

Nine days into her stay in Winston-Salem's Brenner Children's Hospital, the long journey had reached this point. When she checked in, Lyric couldn't walk. She couldn't stand up. She couldn't leave the hospital bed on her own. She couldn't shower or use the bathroom by herself.

People are also reading...

- 1 **Kernersville Food Lion evacuated after report of possible shooting**
 - 2 **High Point University still under warning on accreditation, for second year**
 - 3 **Biden decision shifts Cooper VP talk into higher gear**
 - 4 **Greensboro police update details of head-on crash that killed 3 teens, injured officer**
-

Jump forward more than three years later: Lyric, now 12, stands on the High Point Athletic Complex track, waiting for her cue.

She positions the spikes of her dark blue running shoes onto the starting line and watches as her teammate races toward her, gold relay baton at the ready.

When it's the right moment, she holds out her hand behind her, waits for the metal to caress her grip and then takes off.

Long legs run as fast as they can around the final corner of the track. Lyric hands off the baton to the anchor. Her pace slows. She catches her breath, hands on her hips, and giggles about her "terrible handoff" with her friends.

Next week, she'll compete in the 400 meters and the high jump in the AAU Junior Olympics at N.C. A&T's Truist Stadium.

"It's a miracle," said Kayla McKoy, her mother.

'This is serious'

From slow, timid steps in the hospital with the aid of a walker to running and jumping her way to the biggest AAU track and field competition of the year, Lyric has come a long way since the infection that tested her.

Ask either of her parents or her sister, Kaydence Troy, about who Lyric is and they'll tell you the same thing: Creative. Extroverted. Bubbly.

And active.

She loves building with LEGOs. Lyric traverses through their Greensboro home to find bits and bobs for a homemade outfit design. Sometimes, she dreams of being a fashion designer or social media influencer.

She didn't play any organized sports as a little kid, but Lyric always spent days running around outside with her cousins. Playing games. Competing.

But in 2020, her parents noticed something was wrong.

Lyric started to complain about her back and hip. She stopped dashing and jumping around the house. It hurt to run.

Over the course of a month, the pain only hit periodically. Initially, her parents thought it might've been an excuse to get out of cleaning or getting up from the couch. Her primary doctor thought her muscles were just sore, but advised the family to monitor the pain.

Then, it escalated.

Lyric couldn't move at all. To get around the house, she had to scoot across the floor.

"I could barely put on my socks and shoes," Lyric explained. "It was kind of hard to put on clothes — well, pants. Just the lifting part."

Lyric was referred to an orthopedic specialist. The doctor met the family outside in the waiting room and watched her attempt to take a few steps. That's when he instructed McKoy to take Lyric to the emergency room at Brenner Children's Hospital.

Lyric had an infection.

"That's when it really got real to me," McKoy recalled. "I was like, 'Wow. I'm going over to the emergency room,' and the doctor that was at the orthopedic just looked very concerned. That's what really made me say, 'OK. This is serious.'"

On Jan. 7, 2021, Lyric was checked into the hospital and received her diagnosis: She was suffering from something called osteomyelitis, an infection in her spine that later spread to her hip.

"I wanted to go home because it was late when we got to the children's hospital, maybe 12 or something," Lyric said. "I was tired and I wanted to go home."

But she couldn't.

Not until the infection was completely out of her system.

“For it to be this big, it was just like a shock,” her father, Cruz Troy, said. “But when we realized, ‘Oh, OK, this is serious,’ it started to dawn on us a little more and start to get a little, I don’t like to say scary, but very concerning.”

In her father's footsteps

Track is in Lyric’s blood.

Both of her parents were on the track team at their high school. Her dad ran the 400 meters. Her mom specialized in the 100 meters and also competed in the long jump.

In March, Lyric finally decided to try out for her middle school track team — and she made it.

Naturally, her favorite event became the 400 meters — just like her dad. But not at first.

“In middle school, I didn’t really want to do it, but then my coach put me in,” she said. “I kept winning first place in all the games.”

Meanwhile, Troy was ecstatic from the start.

“It’s been exciting for me because track was my favorite sport and being that she’s taking on this sport and she’s excelled in it and she runs my event is exciting,” he said. “Even now at her age, she surpassed me.”

When the middle school track season ended, her parents searched for an AAU team for Lyric to join during the offseason. The boys coach for the school team approached them about the High Point Blaze Track Club, where his daughter is a member.

They met with the coaching staff, including Bennie Bradley, the head for the track club. While inquiring about the team, McKoy opened up about details surrounding Lyric’s past health issues.

Bradley, who also serves as a principal at Oak View Elementary in High Point, had some safety concerns.

“I was just kinda like, ‘Are you sure you want to do this because I know the standard that we have for our team,’” Bradley said. “And (McKoy) said, ‘Coach, she wants to do this.’ And I mean, I looked at (Lyric) and I said, ‘Lyric this is going to be incredibly difficult,’ and she was like, ‘I really want to do it.’”

Tough days in the hospital

The treatment options after Lyric’s diagnosis scared her family.

It could require surgery to ensure the infection didn’t spread to her heart or brain. Or another operation to take a piece of bone out of her back and replace it with metal, which would include recurring surgeries as she continued to grow and required replacements.

Lyric's parents wanted surgery to be a last resort. So, instead, the infection would be treated with antibiotics through an IV. Lyric’s blood would be drawn and tested every day to record progression.

It took 11 days for the infection to completely clear out of her system. But this meant getting her arm punctured with an IV everyday. Oftentimes, the nurses struggled to find a vein, prolonging the pain.

“It hurt, and then it felt weird,” Lyric said. “Because in the IV they put fluid, and it felt weird. It felt like when you squeeze your arm too much and your muscles start hurting.”

Lyric became impatient about going home. The bed was the worst part, she remembered. Plus, her sleep was constantly interrupted by nurses checking her heart rate and blood pressure in the middle of the night.

Because she was receiving treatment at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lyric couldn’t see many visitors outside of her parents. She couldn’t even see her sister.

On a particularly tough day, Lyric cried and screamed for her sister when the IV was inserted.

For Kaydence at home, it was just as difficult.

“It was really bad,” said Kaydence, 15. “I was scared. I would go to sleep without her.”

Even when her treatment started to show progress, Lyric had to relearn how to walk.

Throughout her stay, her parents had to help Lyric get in and out of the hospital bed. Her father carried her into the shower and washed her by hand. The pain was too much for Lyric to walk on her own.

“It was tough,” McKoy admitted. “She was smiling, but there were times when she was exhausted because even getting up to get to the bathroom was a chore.”

As the infection started to clear, Lyric worked closely with a physical therapist. McKoy said her daughter was really nervous about starting to walk again, and her initial steps were slow.

But as her health started to improve, her confidence in taking steps began to grow.

She started to look more like herself. Her spirits lifted. She completed school work that was brought, visited the hospital’s playroom and played basketball in a wheelchair with her dad. The Starbucks drinks and cake pops her parents brought helped, too.

Finally, Lyric was allowed to go home.

When she walked through the front door, the first thing she did was hug her sister.

'I can't believe she's running'

Less than a week away from Lyric’s first event at the AAU Junior Olympics, which her coach coins the “Super Bowl” of AAU track and field, she ties on her shoes and stretches out her legs.

Lyric's club had 49 athletes qualify for next week’s events. At the regional meet in June, she had to place within the top eight in the state to make the cut for her events.

Cruz Troy and McKoy stand outside the fence of High Point's track, watching their daughter warm up. In her black Tupac t-shirt tied at her waist and running shorts, she's easy to spot. They watch their daughter practice her running stance. She runs several relay races. She rehearses the 400-meter competition.

"There's just the picture in my mind that just won't go away of her with the walker because she is really running and jumping," McKoy said. "Even though it was three years ago, it's still new to me because I'm like, 'I can't believe she's running.'"

Lyric wants to be a pediatrician when she grows up, helping kids who also experience health issues at a young age. Now, track is also finding a place in her aspirations. She'll try out for the high school team in a few years, then she'll try to make the team at A&T — the same college her parents attended.

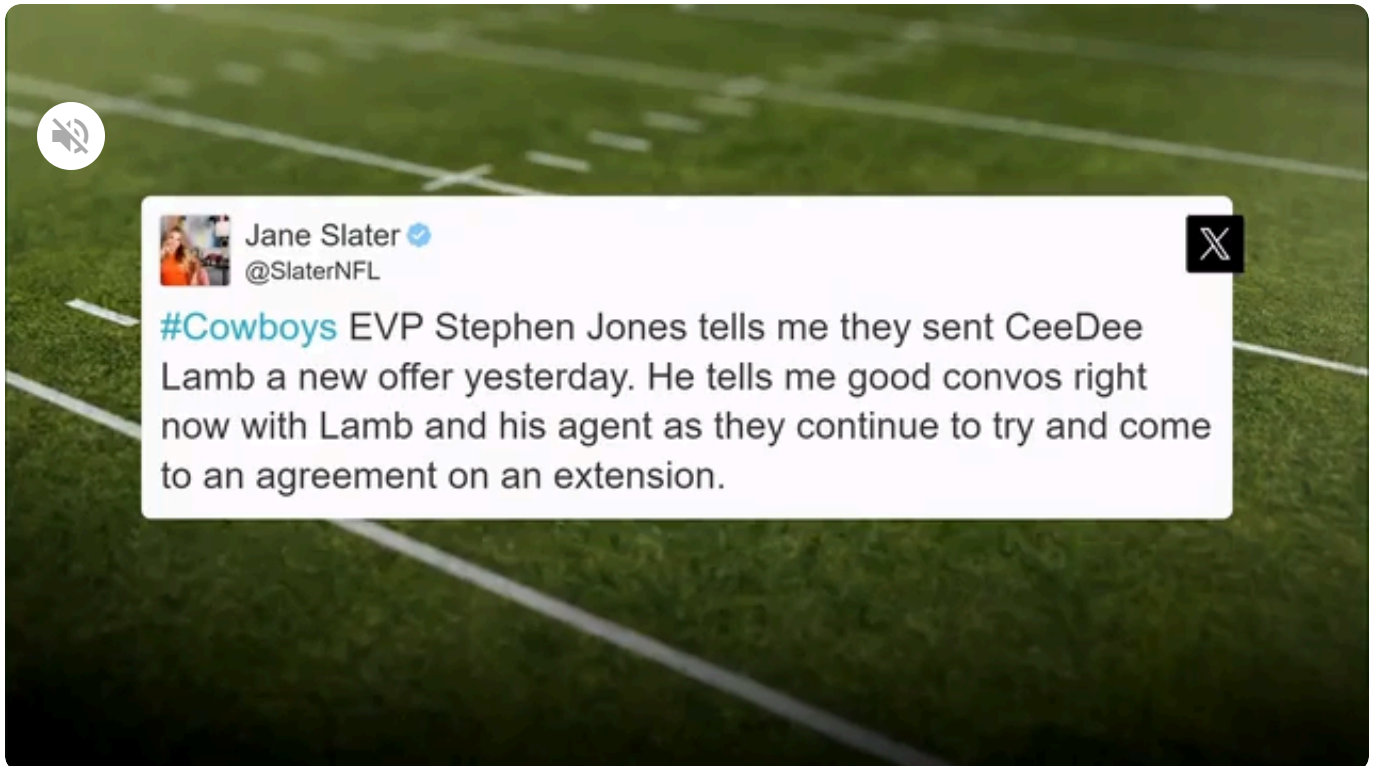
But for now, she's taking it day-by-day with the Blaze. When the team gets tired, Bradley points to her across the track as a reminder to not take anything for granted, to get back to the line and keep going.

"It has been a great reminder of how life is truly a blessing because to think that sometimes as a young person, you're invincible. Sometimes life deals you a blow that reminds you that you are not," he said. "For her to be a survivor, to come back and to want to re-fall in love with her passion of running is amazing."

For her final practice run of the year with the team, Lyric steps up to the starting line. She bounces on her feet and gets into position. A coach delivers the signal.

One step. Two steps.

Then she's gone.



cwills@wsjournal.com

By Caroline Wills

Staff Writer
