

Inside The Story: "Get up or give up?"

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(KUTV) A Utah college freshman makes a horrific mistake that cost her both legs, but this young woman has turned tragedy into possible Olympic triumph.

On any given day you can find Anna Beninati, 20, in the gym at the National Ability Center in Park City training for the 2018 Paralympic games.

Her goal is to make the U.S. national team and get her chance to compete in South Korea in 2018.

Beninati is a champion seated Alpine ski racer, "I never would of expected that I would be here," she said.

The day that changed it all was September 5, 2011. A date she actually tattooed on her left arm.

"It's there to remind me that was day one to start over from there," said Beninati to 2News' Dan Rascon while training in the gym.

Beninati lost her legs while train hopping while she was just two weeks into her freshman year at Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

"I got into train hopping," said Beninati. "I made a very stupid decision as a young college student with too much freedom."

Beninati says she picked up the idea from some friends she met.

"Train hopping is part of the culture in Fort Collins. CSU students do it for fun," she said.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon on a Sunday, Beninati and two other friends were in Longmont, Colorado trying to get back to school in Fort Collins by hopping a train.

"I was so afraid and I knew this was going to go wrong," said Beninati when remembering that day.

She tried to jump on a train that was going 18 miles an hour. "Ran up alongside of it as fast as I could," she said.

She slipped fell underneath the train wheels and had both legs cut off.

Beninati didn't pass out but remembers it in great detail including the severe pain.

"I witness it and I felt it," she said. "Laying there on my back watching this train pass over me, 'What do I do now?', 'What am I going to do for the rest of my life am I going to live through this?'"

After a month in the hospital Beninati hit rock bottom. "I was in a really dark place it was that realization of this is the rest of your life you are never going to get your legs back ever," she said.

But several weeks later something happened, "I don't know what brought it about but one night I was just sick of it and I sat down with myself, and said listen these are your options "give up or get up"."

Beninati chose to "get up" and "get out" and do something with her life - an inspired ski instructor told her to try for the Paralympics - another day that changed her life.

"She has become such a motivational speaker," said Jess Roising who is the competition program and events manager at the National Ability Center where Beninati trains.

"To see her go through that challenge and then really come out on top and know that she is a contender for that national team is huge," said Roising. "A courageous young athlete, who continues to "get up" no matter how many times she falls and believes losing her legs actually saved her life.

"If I hadn't been run over by that train I don't know if I would be alive today?" said Beninati. "I was in a very bad place. I had a really severe eating disorder I was struggling with. I wasn't a happy person. I couldn't find joy in life."

"So are you saying you are better off with no legs?" asked Rascon.

"I am. I am much better off with no legs," answered Beninati. "I have a lot of life ahead of me. I'm going to take what I have and make the most of it."

Last year Beninati was just one world ranking away from making that national team. During the summer months Beninati is trying to get to places where she can train in the snow.

By: Dan Rascon

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