News



Jackie Young, University of Notre Dame's 2018 national champion, is seen in action on the court Aug. 11, 2024, during the gold medal game in women's basketball at the Paris Olympics. Young and her teammates beat France 67-66. (OSV News/Brian Snyder, Reuters)

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Her final statistics seemed rather ordinary, but it provided an accurate metaphor — both for her country and college.

Among the contributors to the United States' intense 67-66 win over France in the women's basketball gold medal championship Aug. 11 that concluded the Summer Olympics in Paris, University of Notre Dame 2018 national champion Jackie Young accrued two points, four rebounds, three assists and two steals.

Not exactly eye-popping numbers. From a global sense, however, Young's ability to make her presence felt in virtually every basketball category symbolically reflected the 17 Notre Dame current or former athletes who represented the Olympics in six sports and six countries. Ultimately, eight of them collectively garnered a staggering 10 medals.

Another former Notre Dame basketball great — Jewell Loyd, the top pick in the 2015 WNBA draft — helped United States hoops seize its eighth consecutive gold medal. This allowed the United States to tie China for the most gold medals with 40, but the USA's 126 total medals far surpassed second-place China's 91.

Retired legendary Notre Dame coach Muffet McGraw shared her gratification with OSV News.

"So proud to see Jackie and Jewell win a gold medal," said McGraw. "It's great to see their hard work pay off. They are excellent representatives of our program and of Notre Dame. I am thrilled to watch them succeed at the highest level of our sport."

In addition to Young and Loyd's exploits, 2017 graduate Lee Kiefer, current senior Chris Guiliano, and former soccer standout Korbin Albert earned Notre Dame-

inspired gold medals.

Kiefer, a four-time Olympian and three-time gold medalist, took first place in both individual (foil event) and team fencing. Guiliano, whose emotional post-ceremony embrace with his mother, Cecilia, inspired the USA swimming Instagram handle "Family over everything," assisted the 4x100-meter freestyle swimming quad to a first-place finish. Albert, who turned professional after two years at Notre Dame, helped the United States defeat Brazil, 1-0, in the women's soccer final.

Guiliano, the first male swimmer in Notre Dame history to make the Olympics, also garnered a silver medal in the 4x200 relay.

In an interview with Swimming World magazine last year, Guiliano was asked what advice he would give to his younger self.

"Just take things day by day," he said. "Progress doesn't happen overnight. That's one thing I've started to realize — taking things just one practice at a time, or just one day at a time. And more of that is just outside of the pool, or in the classroom, or diet stuff, or in the weight room. You don't have to be perfect at every single moment of the day, either. Just be able to learn from mistakes, be able to learn from things, and just apply it to the future."

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Nick Itkin, a 2022 Notre Dame alum, placed third in fencing foil. Representing Hungary, current junior fencer Eszter Muhari performed likewise in the men's fencing epee event. Enjoying his second Olympics, Notre Dame 2021 graduate Yared Nuguse helped the men's track and field team's 1,500-meter relay finish third.

Notre Dame was not the only Catholic college to shine on an international stage.

In men's volleyball, Loyola University Chicago graduates Thomas Jaeschke (class of 2022) and Jeff Jendryk II (class of 2018) both left Paris with bronze medals.

Loyola athletic director Steve Watson lauded the entire program.

"The competitive success that we've had in this modern era of Loyola athletics," said Watson, via the school website, "really started with men's volleyball."

In cycling, Chloe Dygert's new motto is "third time's the charm." A former student at Indiana's Marian University who never cycled in college, Dygert entered the Paris games with a silver medal in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and a bronze medal in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Having persevered through a litany of serious injuries and medical scares throughout her athletic career, Dygert, 27, won the bronze in the individual time trials before finally realizing her lifetime goal of a gold medal among four teammate cyclists who finished first in the team pursuit event.