

WILEY BROS. AINTREE CAPITAL, LLC

40 BURTON HILLS BLVD. SUITE 350

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37215

July 19, 2021

The Olympics are here again! My family and I love watching the Games because it's a chance to marvel at superhuman feats of skill and athleticism. More importantly, I also find the Olympics to be a great source of inspiration due to the courage and perseverance shown by many of the competitors.

Every Olympics, we hear about athletes who had to overcome tremendous adversity just to get to the Games. Recently, I found one such story to be particularly inspiring. It's been making the rounds on social media lately, so you may have already heard it. But if you haven't, I thought it would be good to share it with you today.

Lifting as We Climb

It was 2018, and Jordan Chiles wanted to quit.

A gymnast since the age of six, Jordan had always known she had great potential. But *having* potential and *fulfilling* your potential are two entirely different things. The former was exciting, but the latter was proving to be soul-crushing – especially in the ultra-demanding world of professional gymnastics. For years, Jordan had trained for hours every day. She'd endured domineering coaches. She'd suffered diets so strict and lean they would have made a Spartan weak. She'd been told by more than one expert that she was “too muscular”, or that her hair was “too poufy”, or even that her neck was too short. She'd routinely skip parties and other social events to devote more time to training. All before she was even legally old enough to drive.

Jordan's dedication had certainly brought her victories. The year before, she'd won the silver medal at the U.S. national championships. But the constant pressure had worn her down. For every success, there were more frustrations. And the older she got, the more her results – and her confidence – began to slip.

“I guess this sport is coming to an end for me, because things just aren't working out for me at all,” she remembers thinking.¹

But one day, just as she was on the verge of quitting forever, the phone rang.

It was Simone.

You probably know which Simone I'm referring to. It is, of course, Simone Biles, the world's most decorated gymnast – and possibly the greatest of all time. Four years older than Jordan and dealing with the even headier demands that come from being the world's best, Simone had her hands full with training for the Olympics. And though gymnasts compete together on the same team at many events, they also compete *against* each other – for medals, opportunities, sponsorships, and more. No one would have blamed Simone if she had focused solely on her own career. If Jordan Chiles wanted to quit, well, that was one less competitor to worry about.

But that's not how Simone saw it.

Earlier in Simone's career, she'd had her own brushes with failure. When she was sixteen – just a little younger than Jordan – she'd endured a string of poor performances. She'd fallen in the middle of routines multiple times. She'd injured her ankle. Her results slipped and her momentum stalled. At one point, she decided to work with a sports psychologist to work through her own anxiety issues.

So, when Jordan picked up the phone, Simone didn't offer a few simple words of encouragement or commiseration. Instead, she asked a question: Did Jordan want to come live with Simone in Texas?

It was an amazing opportunity, but also a scary one. It meant relocating to a new state. It meant working with new coaches. It meant comparing herself, day after day, to the literal *best in the world*. All Simone could promise was to help Jordan as much as she could. But it had to be what Jordan *wanted*.

Jordan said yes.

With the Olympics just around the corner – this was before COVID-19 reared its ugly head – Jordan had a *lot* of ground to make up. So, for the next two years, Simone and Jordan lived and trained together. But more than that, they *played* together. They threw dinner parties together. They went to the beach together. They relaxed together. They laughed together. And suddenly, Jordan was no longer worrying so much about whether she was fulfilling her potential. She was too busy having fun.

“I discovered that gymnastics doesn't always have to be about strictness and being so hard on yourself and having so much doubt,” Jordan said in an interview. “I actually realized this when I saw Simone compete. She looks like she's having fun out there, laughing and giggling, and doesn't look stressed or tired. I was like, ‘You know, I'm going to try that and see how it turns out.’”¹

Here's how it turned out: When the U.S. Women's Gymnastics Team takes the floor in Tokyo, Jordan will be there with them. Three years after wanting to quit, Jordan Chiles is an Olympian.

Mary Church Terrell, the legendary civil rights advocate, once wrote,

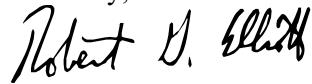
*“And so, **lifting as we climb**, onward and upward we go, struggling and striving, hoping that the buds and blossoms of our desires will burst into glorious fruition ere long.”*

Simone Biles is already at the top. She could have easily focused only on herself. No one would have blamed her. But she lifted as she climbed, so that someone like Jordan Chiles could join her on the mountaintop. And Jordan, exhausted from the endless pressure of competition, could have easily quit and done something else. Instead, she had the courage to take the hand Simone offered and keep climbing.

This, to me, is why the Olympics are so inspiring. Not all of us can win gold medals or perform feats of amazing athleticism. But we can *all* choose to keep striving in the face of adversity, working to make our desires come to fruition. And as we do, we can help others around us do the same.

We can lift as we climb.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Elliott, CFP
Vice President

¹ Juliet Mauer, “I Didn't Think the Sport Wanted Me Anymore,” *The NY Times*, June 24, 201.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/24/sports/olympics/jordan-chiles-simone-biles-gymnastics.html>