



## Up Close With Kyle Maynard

*Overcoming physical obstacles,  
Kyle wrestles with college life.*

BY JOSH DARNELL

Kyle Maynard's dorm room is typical, at least by the standard of most other college dorm rooms. "I just crashed out for two hours after class," says Maynard as he opens the door to his tidy, yet not overly neat, living space. Covers sit slightly disheveled on a university-issued bed frame. Walls are livened up by posters of "American History X" and the Ultimate Fighting Championship. In a position of prominence against the room's interior wall sits a modest television set connected to a sleek Xbox video game system.

Again, typical.

Except for the motorized wheelchair parked by the doorway.

"My whole life has been a pursuit of normalcy," says Maynard, who is relaxing in his room on the third floor of Reed Hall, happy to have survived his first college midterms.

Despite his efforts to the contrary, Kyle Maynard is decidedly atypical, at least in comparison to most college students. And, it isn't because the talkative freshman is a congenital quadruple amputee, meaning his arms end just above the elbows and his legs end above the knees. It's because, despite his physical limitations, Maynard has succeeded as a motivational voice for the Washington Speakers Bureau and as an all-state-level wrestler who studies three different martial arts. He has met each of life's challenges with an ebullience of spirit uncharacteristic of the typical, self-absorbed 18-year-old.

Maynard—who was offered wrestling scholarships by several schools—works out with University of Georgia's (UGA) club team.

"I don't really look at myself (as disabled)," says Maynard. "It sounds strange, but that's the way I've been raised."

Maynard's parents helped him overcome the challenges presented to him by his condition, rather than bow to them. As a child, he learned to easily negotiate the stairs in his two-story Suwannee home. He learned to traverse short distances without the aid of his wheelchair, moving across the floor in a motion far too fast and fluid to be considered "crawling." At age 11, Maynard fulfilled his goal of playing football, lining up at nose tackle for a local rec league team, and in high school, he again overcame the limitations of his body to become a successful wrestler.

"Since I was young, sports has allowed me to compete against able-bodied athletes and to do all the things I've dreamed of doing," says Maynard of his improbable athletic success. "It's been the biggest avenue to reach out to people."

Now, Maynard, whose story has been told on the pages of numerous publications such as *Sports Illustrated*



**Kyle's University of Georgia wrestling team.**

*For Kids* and on various television programs, is testing his mettle against an entirely different world of challenges—college.

The sprawling campus of UGA might not seem like the logical choice for someone like Maynard, but he considers the University a perfect fit.

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"I picked UGA, for one, because it's gotten to be a really prestigious university now academically, and I knew that if I wanted to wrestle somewhere on scholarship, I'd have to go pretty far out of state," says Maynard, a pre-business major. "I just loved the atmosphere. I love that it's a town completely devoted to the University."

Getting from class to class and then to wrestling practice isn't a problem for Maynard, who primarily uses his motorized wheelchair to get around campus. He makes only sparing use of the university's disability services.

"I feel bad using the 'handi-van,' because I don't think that I qualify," says Maynard of the University's disability transportation service, which picks up mobility-impaired students practically at their front doors. "It's just kind of ingrained in me."

The University also provides a note-taking service, which, like the "handi-van," Maynard politely eschews. His arms meet at a point in front of his chest, allowing him to hold a pen. It's a skill he developed not out of necessity, but out of typical teenage indolence.

"I started to use a tape recorder, but I was so lazy that I hated listening to



class twice," explains Maynard. "So instead of doing that, I just learned to take notes."

According to Maynard, the biggest challenge he's faced as a college freshman is learning the requisite art of time management—a sentiment that would ring true with almost any classmate.

"During the week, I'm pretty much focused on class and academics, then the weekends are pretty much all travel," says Maynard, whose public speaking docket has recently included trips to high schools and other venues in New York, Idaho, Cleveland and Chicago. "There's no time to hang out and party. You have to use (your time) wisely."

Despite his hectic schedule, Maynard has experienced the same excitement and awe that most freshmen feel during their first semester at UGA.

"There's unimaginable opportunity to stay involved, and then there's avenues to relax," says Maynard of his new college world. "It's just been so nuts. But it's been fun!" ■

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