

From This Corner
When the Victory is Grace
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As I write this column, it is the halfway mark of the Winter Olympics. For me, the Olympics are the best of the competitive sports. As much as I enjoy watching the competition, I especially enjoy the stories of individual Olympians. Never do I learn the personal stories of the athletes without being inspired. Someone overcomes injury and defeat to return to compete again. Another in childhood commits to being the best of the best. Now they are Olympians on the world stage and presented a chance to fulfill a dream.

Perhaps my favorite Olympic story is that of Dan Jansen. In Calgary 1988 his sister died from leukemia the day he was to race his best race, the 500. He fell and was out. He came back in 1992 in Albertville only to stumble and fail again. Returning one more time to race in 1994 in Norway he wavered yet again in the 500. He faltered just enough to drag his hand on the ice. It was enough to finish him in eighth place. It seemed like there would be no victory. Only the 1,000-meter race remained. He was no master of the 1,000.

We watched as the burdened racer took his spot at the starting line. Off he went. You had to admire him for his tenacity after so many defeats and disappointments. No one could blame him if he just gave up. Enough was enough. Yet to everyone's amazement, he was on a record setting pace at the 800 mark. Then it happened, Jansen staggered again. I remember being so wrapped up in the drama tears came to my eyes. Jansen, however, somehow buoyed by some unseen force, sped off not only to win gold, but set a new world record. It was a miracle if we had ever seen one. There he was taking a victory lap with his infant daughter Jane in his arms, named after his sister who had died the day of that first Olympic race. What a victory it was! It seemed as if everything before had been redeemed.

The apostle Paul likened the Christian life to a race. There is the memorable verse in Philippians 3 which says: “.. forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ‘I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.’” What I believe Paul is saying is that our part in salvation history is that of “pressing on.” It is a matter of staying in the race until grace accomplishes what would otherwise be impossible. Now is the time of Lent. It is the time for “pressing on.” Soon it will be Easter. Again we will know the victory in Jesus is grace.