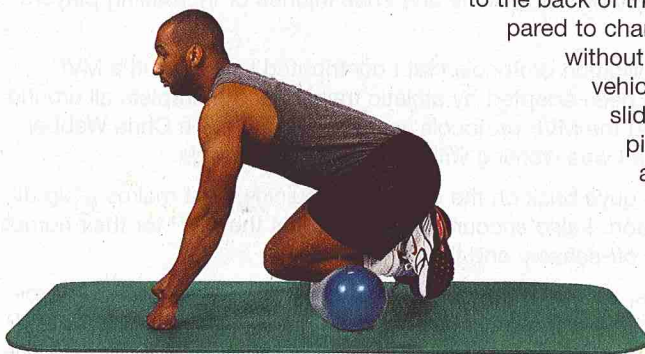


Overcoming Adversity: Nikko and Tyler's Story

By Caroline Creager

Caroline Creager, PT, is a successful physical therapist, award-winning author, and internationally recognized speaker.



Flashing lights, sirens, ambulances, flight for life: What happened? It was a dark, cold January evening when five students were driving home from a high school dance. A tire went flat, so they pulled over as far as they could on the snow-packed shoulder of a country road.

Two 17-year-old boys in the group, Tyler Carron and Nikko Landeros, both high school wrestlers, walked around to the back of the vehicle as they prepared to change the tire. Suddenly, without warning, another vehicle crested the hill and slid right into them—pinning their legs up against their SUV.

The boys' lives would change dramatically forever. Both would become amputees—bilateral transfemoral for Nikko, and knee disarticulation on one leg and transfemoral on the other for Tyler. Rehabilitation would soon become a necessity.

Less than two months after the accident, the boys were referred to my clinic, Executive Physical Therapy, to begin their long rehab journey. Nikko and Tyler's parents requested that they have the same physical therapy appointment times so they could work out together.

How could I prepare to work with not one double-amputee, but two? As young athletes, they were both accustomed to intense physical exercise regimens. How long would these boys stay interested in the standard amputee exercises of pressing their residual limbs into towel rolls? Not long at all, I surmised.

After reviewing books on amputee rehab and researching exercises for amputees, it was clear that the literature lacked updated core strengthening

exercises for amputees. As the owner of the Berthoud Athletic Club, I had access to expensive cardio and weight machines, but I instead decided to create a fun, unique, and challenging exercise program for Nikko and Tyler using inexpensive equipment—items found in most training facilities and clinics throughout the world.

I purchased two each of the following items from Orthopedic Physical Therapy Products (OPTP): Core Challenge Rollers, Soft Gym Overballs, Gymnic Exercise Balls, Power Medicine Balls, Thera-Bands®, BOSUs, and foam rollers.

I adapted exercises from several texts, including *Core Strength Training Using Inflatable and Foam Rollers*, *Therapeutic Exercises Using the Swiss Ball*, *Therapeutic Exercises Using Resistive Bands*, and *The Intrinsic Core: Using Soft Gym Overballs*. These items, too, are available for purchase from OPTP.

Improving core and leg strength and decreasing sensitivity in the residual limbs were top priorities, since this would enable Nikko and Tyler to progress to walking with prosthetics. The unique, dynamic nature of the Core Challenge Roller, Soft Gym Overball, BOSU, and Thera-Band allowed the boys to desensitize their residual limbs and improve their balance, strength, coordination, and endurance much more rapidly than they could have with a rolled up towel and traditional amputee exercises.

After two months of rehab, thanks to OPTP and its high-quality, innovative products, Tyler was able to walk down the aisle, wearing prosthetics, to receive his high school diploma. Nikko—a junior—stood close by, cheering on his friend. Nikko returned to wrestling in his senior year, and Tyler attended college—where he walks all over campus, of course!



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