**A Story of Athletic Perseverance**

In 1994 I attended Louisiana State University on a full track scholarship. During my freshman year, I had battled some injuries, was homesick and just didn’t perform well. So at the end of my freshman year, the head coach called me into his office and told me they were cutting my scholarship due to poor performance. We all know in Division 1 sports, if you don’t produce, you can say goodbye to your scholarship. This was a tough pill for a 19 year old kid to swallow.

So while all this was happening, I reached out to my old high school coach to tell her about the situation and see if she could help. She quickly called her friend who was the coach at Kent State univesity who connected us and after a few conversations, I was able to transfer to Kent State and started working towards the goals I didn’t achieve while at LSU. As soon as I arrived at Kent State, it just felt right. It became a home away from home and I settled in very quickly to the new environment and got to work.

After 7 months of being at Kent, I qualified for the NCAA championships which were being held at the RCA dome in Indianapolis. We stayed downtown at the Omni hotel and when I went to breakfast in the morning, who did I see sitting there? It was the LSU coach that cut my scholarship 7 months prior. I told my coach and the other athlete I was there with that I wanted to sit at the table next to him. When the LSU coach stood up and saw me, his face turned beet red. He was shocked to see me. I was the last person he thought he would ever see. I went on to become an All-American at that track meet and defeated the LSU jumper in the process.

Every young athlete will go through tough experiences like I did. Do you quit in these type of situations? Or, do you use it as motivation to keep moving forward? Don’t quit! This experience taught me how to persevere and to never stop trying and taught me that failure is the spark that ignites motivation to be successful. It was the LSU story that helped me reach the Olympic level.

Mike Caza is the founder and owner of Premier Fitness & Performance in Twinsburg, Ohio. Since 2004, Premier’s high quality athlete and adult programs have helped over 20,000 individuals from youth athletes that want to get faster and stronger for improved sports performance to moms and dads looking to get in better shape to get more out of life. Sign up for your free trial session at [www.premierfitnessoh.com](http://www.premierfitnessoh.com).