

Michael Norman Sets His Own Pace

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[Michael Norman](#) may be a sprinter, but the Team Toyota athlete plans to reach his Olympic goals by going at his own pace.

“I’m a very competitive person,” Norman says. “But it’s so important for me to just listen to my coaches. It takes a lot of practice and effort, obviously, but also patience.”

Norman decided that he wanted to be a professional athlete after watching Usain Bolt set the world record in the 100 meters at the Olympic Games Beijing 2008.

“I remember exactly when I was like, ‘I want to do that,’” he says. “I was watching Usain Bolt, with that side camera panning across the track as he ran the 100. And that moment really fueled my motivation and continued to inspire me to keep working over the years. Believe it or not, I hit a rough patch where track was just tough. I almost quit.”



Getting Back on Track

A natural athlete, Norman started running in the fifth grade and took to the sport quickly, placing second in his first race. While the early win sparked his interest in track, Norman didn't maintain his winning streak for very long. As the other young runners started having growth spurts, Norman fell behind.

“It's mentally just tough to go to practice knowing that people you used to beat are beating you,” he says. “You're trying to figure out why this is happening now.”

But Norman was patient — and kept running. By his junior year of high school, he hit his own growth spurt and that spark came back.

“It was a turning point for me,” he says. “I think that’s when I really realized that these dreams and aspirations that I have can become reality. Just knowing that made me focus in and dial up on my habits and styles.”

Norman credits much of his success to the mindset he developed with his coaches, which helped smooth the transition from life as an athlete in high school to college. Part of that means committing to long-term goals that sometimes mean short-term sacrifices.

Norman’s high school track coach prioritized the sprinter’s larger aspirations so, throughout his senior year, the coach trained him for the Olympic trials instead of the state championship.

“He knew what my ambitions were,” Norman says, adding the coach set a schedule in order for him to succeed.

Norman qualified to participate in the 2016 Olympic trials when he was just 18 years old. While he didn’t make the semifinals in the 400 meters, Norman did take fifth place in the 200 meters, just two spots short of making the Olympic team.

“It’s probably the most painful fifth place I’ve ever gotten,” he says. “But it was a great experience and a lot of fun. I think it was for the best that I didn’t qualify for 2016, because it gave me time to grow in college, both as a person and an athlete.”



Hitting His Stride

Norman still trains with his USC coaches, Caryl Gilbert and Quincy Watts, because he believes they understand him and have his best interests at heart. And now looking ahead to Tokyo 2020, their eyes are on the Olympics.

“I’m thankful to have Coach Caryl and Coach Watts to be so understanding because they easily could have thrown me in the 200 and the 400 last year,” he says. “But they only let me run one of them, because of what I want to achieve down the road.”

Now that Norman has graduated, he is excited to no longer be splitting his time between school and training.

“Running is my job,” Norman says. “The training schedule is pretty rigorous, but I love what I do. I enjoy every moment of it. Some of the stuff becomes tedious, but it’s what you need to do to become the greatest person you can be.”

To learn more about Michael Norman, [click here](#)