



Wilma Rudolph

Born: June 23, 1940

Place of birth: St. Bethlehem, Tennessee

Died: November 12, 1994

Wilma was born prematurely and was very sick as a baby. Her parents were Ed and Blanche Rudolph. She was the 20th of 22 children! At the age of four, she contracted polio and had to wear a brace to help her twisted leg until she was nine. She worked hard in physical therapy to be able to walk without the brace.

In high school, Wilma was able to play on the basketball team. She never ran track in high school but the Tennessee State University track coach recruited her to train with the college track team.

When Wilma was still in high school, she qualified for the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia. She won a bronze medal as a part of the sprint relay team. She then went on to college at Tennessee State University where she studied to become a teacher.

Wilma participated in her second Olympics in 1960 where she became the first African American woman to win three gold medals at one Olympic Games.

After the Olympics, she worked as a teacher and track coach.. She died of brain cancer in 1994.

Winning is great, sure, but if you are really going to do something in life, the secret is learning how to lose. Nobody goes undefeated all the time. If you can pick up after a crushing defeat, and go on to win again, you are going to be a champion someday.

~Wilma Rudolph

