

# ▶ spotlight

## Ice Skating: Feet Optional



Lily practicing at her home rink, ICE at The Parks in Arlington, Texas

Most of us have wondered at times how individuals with physical “handicaps” are able to function in everyday life. We have a hard time imagining doing all the things we do without all of our senses and body parts intact and in working order. But have you ever thought about how someone could ice skate without ... feet? Sounds impossible, right?

Try telling that to Lilyan (“Lily”) Narrow. “I’m all about

the challenge. You tell me I can’t do something, and I say, ‘Watch me!’” says the striking 16-year-old high school junior, who insists that the term “handicap” is merely a state of mind. “Your only obstacles are what you put in front of yourself.”

Lily was born missing the fibula in both of her legs. The fibula is the outer bone extending from the knee to the ankle, and without it our feet cannot support our bodies. When, as a curious and healthy baby, Lily began pulling herself up to take her first steps, doctors advised her parents to have her feet amputated below the knees as soon as possible so she could get used to prosthetics at an early age.

The surgery took place when she was just 8 months old, and she was fitted with her first pair of prosthetics a month later. With no memory of her natural feet, Lily learned to walk and play normally using her expensive manmade helpers, which must be replaced as she grows or as they wear out.

She even learned to ice skate in them. After exploring many sports and activities over the years — ballet, volleyball, basketball, trampoline and others — when she was in the seventh grade, Lily decided she wanted to try ice skating.

She enrolled in a *weSKATE* class at ICE at The Parks in Arlington, Texas, determined not to let anyone know, at first, that she wore prosthetics.

“I didn’t want to tell the coaches,” she remembers, “because I didn’t want to be treated differently. If people know, they don’t try to get you to your full potential. My prosthetics don’t define me; I define me.”

Lily was more than halfway through her first group lesson semester, progressing well in her class and mastering the basic learn-to-skate moves. Then one day, her Pre-Alpha coach, Jennifer Konen, suggested that Lily bend a bit more at the ankles to help her with her backward swizzle. At that point, Lily knew it was time to come clean.

“She said, ‘I can’t bend them, because I don’t have ankles,’” recalls Coach Jennifer. “I thought I had heard every excuse in the book from kids that age, but that was a new one.”

When Lily showed Jennifer the prosthetics under her pants, “you could have pushed me over with a feather,” Jennifer says. “I couldn’t believe she could even stand up on skates, much less do everything she had been doing. So much of what you do in skating involves balance, and you get so much feedback from your feet.”

Lily is now in low Freestyle classes with Coach Susann Arias, and recently performed in her rink’s summer show.

“She’s such an inspiration,” says Coach Susann. “I love teaching her; it’s just a joy to work with her and she’s so much fun to be around. She’s unbelievably positive. Her only limitation is not being able to move her ankles more freely; it would be like trying to skate on stilts. We have to improvise a lot, but we’ve made it work.”

In addition to ice skating, Lily loves to sing, write and help others, whether it’s the tots at the rink, the friends she’s met at Texas Lions Camp for children with medical conditions, or her classmates. She hopes to become a physical therapist and work with others who must learn to adapt to prosthetics following accidents and operations.

“I like to use my prosthetics to educate people to make the most of what they have,” Lily says, “because it’s not what you have or don’t have; it’s what you make of it.”

—Lori Fairchild



Lily and her coach, Susann Arias



Lily on her dad’s lap after being fitted for her first pair of prosthetics at age 9 months