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# Dominique Gummelt

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My parents had unanimously decided on my name before I was even an idea: Dominique. It means “belonging to God.” Then they were told they could not have children. Eleven years later, I found my way into this world anyway. My parents thought I was a miracle. A miracle, they realized quickly, was going to be a handful of work!

I was never tired, had massive amounts of energy, was always excited about everything and decided to never waste time. I started walking when I was nine months old and climbed on everything. I was always happy, loved to laugh, enjoyed mischief and would turn everything into a loud song accompanied by a choreographed dance (including spontaneously at church). It became clear: I was hyperactive. I did not want to sleep at night or take naps—I wanted to play, enjoy life and experience adventures!

And truly, this is what my life journey has been: an exciting adventure including built-in obstacle courses! I have moved at least 26 times; I survived an avalanche and a big earthquake; my family fell apart when I was 10, and I left home at age 16; I have had jobs cutting onions, cleaning toilets, sorting books, serving French fries and teaching ballet to 3-year-olds; I have crossed the Atlantic at least 50 times; I am a chocoholic; I lost 0-6 0-6 to the number one player in Poland; I love tennis and soccer; I almost died in a horseback-riding accident; I gained over 50 pounds at one point (and lost it again); I love music and singing; I miraculously learned how to walk again after a back injury; I have two citizenships; I am a survivor of long-term abuse in my childhood and adulthood; I have the best mother and people in the world in my life. But most importantly, I decided that belonging to God required action and not just a name.

Tennis has taught me important life lessons. My favorite one is “always get balls back”—meaning that no matter what ball comes at you, no matter how fast, no matter with what spin, no matter how short or how long or how high...you hustle, focus, listen to your coach, make every moment count; you position yourself and hit that ball back with aim, with precision, with purpose and get yourself back into an offensive advantageous position. You cannot control what types of balls come flying at you, but you can choose how you react and return them.

I have learned that living life to the fullest potential is a daily choice to get balls back with passion, joy, enthusiasm, discipline, determination, love, compassion, teamwork and a fighting spirit. Some days it will be hard, some days it will be easy, some days you want to give up and some days you will dominate the ball; but no matter what, you will always play on the winning team if you choose to belong to God’s team.



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