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**Story**

# Judo triumph after trauma

## American golden girls' amazing paths to Summer Games glory

By MARK CANNIZZARO in London and DON KAPLAN in New York  
With AP  
Last Updated: 8:09 AM, August 3, 2012  
Posted: 1:52 AM, August 3, 2012

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She's spun the deepest pain imaginable into Olympic gold.

Kayla Harrison overcame injury and thoughts of suicide brought on by four years of sex abuse by her coach to become the first American to win gold in judo yesterday.

"I did it," the Ohio native, 22, said after she defeated the UK's Gemma Gibbons.

### POST'S OLYMPIC COVERAGE

"This is the happiest I'll ever feel in my life. I'm walking on clouds right now. My feet haven't touched the ground yet. As far as the rest of my life goes, it was all about this moment. Everything that was sacrificed by myself, by my family, it was all for that, and it was worth it."



DAVID A. MOODIE

As a teen, she had been sexually abused by her coach Daniel Doyle (above).

Before her triumph, Harrison spent a few moments recalling her tortured past.

"I feel incredibly sad for that little girl," she told London's Telegraph, referring to her younger self.

"I can still see her. I can still see her crying her eyes out and not knowing how to escape. But I'm happy for her because I know she had the courage to say, 'I won't be a victim of sexual abuse.'"

Harrison was just 6 when her mom, Jeannie Yazell, a black belt, introduced her to judo. Two years later, it was clear the girl could be a star, and she began training with world-class expert Daniel Doyle, then 24.

For years, he took advantage of his relationship with Harrison and her family. He coached her to two national titles before she was 15, attended family barbecues and even baby-sat for her and her siblings — all while he was sexually molesting the girl.

"I was an emotional wreck, severely depressed, suicidal. I hated my life.

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**FLYING COLORS:** Kayla Harrison of Ohio celebrates after winning her final match yesterday.

Finally, it got to the point where I couldn't take it anymore," she told the paper.

Finally, she revealed her secret to another judo student, future fiancé Aaron Hardy, and he told her mother.

"It was devastating," Harrison said. "When I was young, he [Doyle] would say, 'We have to keep this between us or we will get into trouble,' and, honestly, as I got older, I was pretty brainwashed. I knew it was wrong, but I thought I loved him and he loved me . . . My world revolved around Daniel. He was my sun. All I wanted to do was please him."

Doyle pleaded guilty in 2007 to illicit sexual conduct for abusing Harrison at matches in Venezuela, Estonia and Russia beginning when she was 12. But she thinks the abuse may have started earlier.

He's serving a 10-year prison sentence and has been expelled for life from USA Judo, the sport's national governing body.

After Doyle was arrested, a traumatized Harrison reinvented herself at a training facility in Wakefield, Mass.

"To say that she's a different person today — I don't want to say that she's done a 180, because Kayla was a strong-willed person and she was goal oriented," said legendary judo coach Jimmy Pedro, who was at her side yesterday.

Two years ago, Harrison faced off against her molester at his sentencing.

"I was so scared," she told the Telegraph. "I forgive him. I almost pity him . . . But I said my piece, told the judge the truth . . . It's closure."

She became world judo champ in 2010 and won bronze in the competition last year.

Four months ago, her Olympic dreams were suddenly in jeopardy after she suffered a knee injury while training in Japan. But she never doubted she would recover.



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suffered a knee injury while training in Japan. But she never doubted she would recover.

"I feel accomplished," Harrison said after her gold-medal win yesterday. "I'm at peace with myself."

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