

Lumen's Olympic "team" - supporting a colleague and dad



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There are more than 6,000 miles between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Tokyo, Japan, where this summer's Olympic Games were held. But for Thomas Gilman, the son of Lumen network implementation program manager Patrick Gilman, it was a family journey more than 20 years in the making. Thomas



recently represented Team USA and took home a bronze medal for freestyle wrestling. And like all other Olympians, he had to make the trip solo.

Families couldn't attend the games due to pandemic restrictions, but dad Patrick logged on from across the Pacific to celebrate and watch his son compete. "The pandemic kept everyone fairly isolated, but people still managed to get very excited about the competition," he said.

Lumen people become wrestling fans

With the time difference, most Olympic competitions took place before sunrise here at home. But having a hometown athlete compete on the world's largest stage brought people together despite the early morning hours. The excitement carried over into work, as he discovered that Lumen colleagues and contractors were also logging on and tuning in to watch Thomas. "We had watch parties in Council Bluffs and Denver," said Patrick, who took time off work to tune in and focus on competitions. "Even if people didn't know Thomas, they were excited to celebrate the community connection. It was a few very fun weeks with all the extra attention on the sport and

his win.”

Sacrifice and effort build ambition

Wrestling has been a life-long interest for his son, who came home from kindergarten with a flyer advertising the sport. “His mom wasn’t keen on it,” said Patrick, who also has a background in wrestling. Over the years, his son’s interest flourished and soon family vacations were spent traveling for competitions.

“Thomas has always had Olympic ambitions,” he said. In high school, his son was a four-time state wrestling champion, and a three-time Division I All-American at the University of Iowa. After college, most competitions were in Europe and in 2017, he took home a silver medal in the Men’s Freestyle World Wrestling Championship in Paris. Patrick is justifiably proud of Thomas’s discipline and effort, noting, “Training and competition is year-round—he’s sacrificed a lot.”

What comes after the medal?

As a parent of an Olympian, Patrick has had a front-row seat to his son’s journey. “Just to give Thomas the opportunity to see how far he could go; it’s been easy. And fun,” he said. While his son is already focused on his next wrestling match in Oslo, Norway, this October, Tokyo will remain a memorable experience for several reasons. While he was competing in the Olympics, Thomas found out he and his wife were expecting their first baby. When Thomas shared the happy news with his dad, Patrick said, “I appreciate that more than the medal.”

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