

# OBSTACLES ARE WHAT YOU SEE WHEN YOU TAKE YOUR EYES OFF YOUR GOAL

Jessica Long  
*Baltimore, Md.*

How charmed was this 15-year-old's season? After breaking five world records and winning nine gold medals at the paralympic world championships in December 2006, Long went on to beat, among others, a decorated Olympian (Michael Phelps), an NCAA basketball champion (Joakim Noah) and a Heisman Trophy winner (Troy Smith) for the Sullivan Award, given to the nation's best amateur athlete. Adopted by American parents from a Russian orphanage when she was 13 months old, Long was born without fibulas, ankles and heels, and had her legs amputated before she was two. Growing up, she used sports as physical therapy, pursuing basketball, gymnastics and rock climbing. But it was in the pool where she found the most success. Long, who began swimming competitively in 2002, won three gold medals at the '04 Paralympic Games and will be looking for more in Beijing. —B.C.

