

[2004 UTC article on Dan Beery following the 2004 Olympics in Athens]

UTC alum wins gold in Athens

by Cindy Carroll and Rebekah Bonney, University Relations Intern

For the first time in 40 years, the USA Men's Eight Rowing Division has won the gold medal with the help of six seat rower and alumnus of The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Dan Beery, class of 2000.

"What a race, the US team was ahead the whole time. We are ecstatic that our son is an Olympic Gold Medalist!" said Merry Beery, mother of Beery. She adds that the team is scheduled to be on the *Today Show*.

The USA Men's Eight time was 5:42.48 in the 1,500-meter race. [See how the team looked against the competition.](#)

Earlier, Beery and the USA Men's Eight won their opening heat with a World Record time of 5:19.85, beating the Canadian team, the defending World Champions and the Gold Medal favorite.

Beery, 29, has had a long and arduous journey to Athens, but he was well prepared for the ultimate test of his skills.

While earning his degree in Exercise Science, Beery trained, held a job, and attended class full time at UTC for four years. Having grown up in Indiana, a nearly landlocked state, Beery did not begin rowing until he attended UTC. In fact, it was in Beery's first year that Coach Robert Espeseth, Rowing Coordinator at UTC, Olympic medalist and 1986 world rowing champion, introduced Beery to rowing.

Considering how Beery got his start, it is amazing how far he has come in the sport. In the early fall of 1996, coach Espeseth saw Beery playing basketball and decided to ask if he might be interested in rowing. As Espeseth tells it, "I almost passed him by, thinking that he must already be in some sort of sport since he was playing basketball, but I went and asked him if he wanted to try rowing anyway."

Beery had not yet joined any sports clubs at UTC, so he decided to accept Espeseth's invitation. Not only did Beery enjoy rowing, over time he excelled at it. Most rowers take seven to nine years to become physically fit enough to compete on a world-class level. It took Beery just under six years.

"Dan's an incredible athlete," Espeseth said. "Here's a guy who gets the luck to be pulled off the basketball court, and now he's on the United States Olympic rowing team!"

In 2003, Beery won first place in the pair with coxswain event at the 2003 World Championship in Milan, Italy. Soon after that he was selected from a group of candidates in Princeton, New Jersey, and went to California for training and a chance at being on the

U.S. Olympic team. Beery's next victory took place in Lucerne, Switzerland, where he and his teammates took gold in the men's four without coxswain in an upset against Canada, Great Britain and Germany.

Beery's accomplishments in rowing helped him gain a spot on the Olympic team and prepared him for the Olympics in Athens. Beery is competing as one of the best in a close-knit team of eight professional rowers. Other members of the eight-oared boat's team include Pete Cipollone, Bryan Volpenhein, Beau Hoopman, Matt Deakin, Joseph Hansen, Chris Ahrens, Wyatt Allen and Jason Read.

The training process for the Olympic rowing team is rigorous. According to Beery, the men spent several hours each day practicing and honing their skills. In his spare time, Beery enjoys keeping up with current events and world politics, but most of his free time is spent resting and eating. "Basically they eat, sleep, practice, practice, eat, sleep, and practice," according to Espeseth, who has kept in touch with Beery.

According to Espeseth, the course the team is racing in Athens has experienced unusually poor wind conditions in the past. In previous years it has been so bad that sometimes the boats would get swamped in the middle of a race. But Espeseth isn't too worried about the team. "They're good," he said. "Dan's proving he can race in this level and that he can perform."

Beery is happy he has a chance to be on the United States Olympic Rowing Team. He attributes much of his success to his training regimen, his trust in his coach and teammates, and other factors.

"First, I thank God," Beery said. "Second, I must thank the wonderful folks in the Exercise, Health and Leisure Studies department at UTC who put up with me. They are an amazing group of professionals."

"Dan knew how hard he had to perform and how hard he had to work and when he got his chance he seized the moment, and now he's in the big time," Espeseth said. "I am just proud that I had the chance to work with him while he was here at UTC."