

## Olympic team jumper launched his leaping in Union County

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M-Jul. 6, 92

Waxhaw native John Tillman says a leap of faith — in God, his family and himself — landed him on the U.S. Olympic triple jump team.

A former track star at Parkwood High School in southern Union County, Tillman took the leap 11 days ago — his best jump ever — and now looks confidently toward the Olympic Games in Spain this month.

Tillman came close to giving up on his Olympic dream many times. It was Gal-asher Tillman who helped her son decide to compete this year.

"I was in a flux a few months back. I just couldn't decide whether to start the training again. I had a wife, and a baby on the way, and responsibilities at home and work," Tillman, 27, says.

"I talked to my mother about it and she said, 'John, this may be one of the last

### IN THE NEWS Profile: John Tillman

things we share.' "

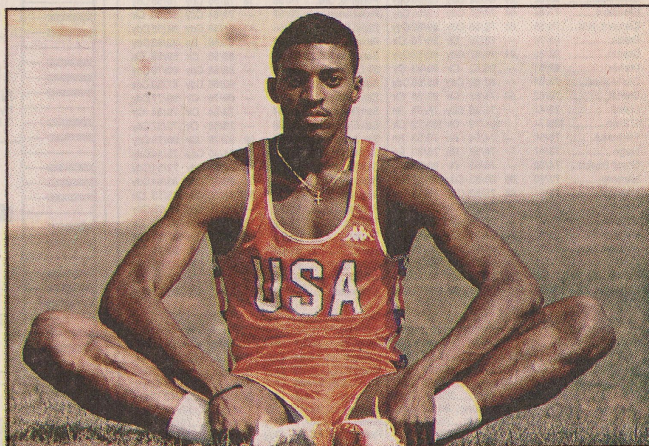
"When I heard that, I lost it. I knew she wouldn't be around forever and I decided then I would try."

Tillman's wife, Dawn, also encouraged him.

"There were times when I would love to have quit or sleep longer or go home to my family," said Tillman, who trains before and after he goes to work.

"But she had faith in me and whenever I felt down or tired, she would say, 'John, you've got to focus everything you have on

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**Olympic leap:** Faith, determination and the support of his family recently landed John Tillman on the U.S. Olympic triple jump team.