

Michelle DesJarlais

Junior



Like many of her peers, Michelle DesJarlais snow skis, swims, and plays tennis to keep in shape and "have a good time." What sets her apart is the fact that she is an amputee.

"I feel very good about myself," Michelle says. "Most of the people I meet don't have a problem with my disability because I don't."

When Michelle was beginning high school, her doctors discovered bone cancer in her right leg. "They told me that if they didn't amputate, there was a

very good chance that I would die by Christmas . . . that was less than six months away," she recalls. "I felt no hesitation. I said, 'Let's do it tomorrow.'"

After that "major interruption" in her life, Michelle said her family and friends helped her adjust to her circumstances. "My friends were particularly supportive. They stuck by me and made me feel accepted, no matter what."

In the past five years since her surgery, Michelle has been determined to remain active. Her enthusiasm for getting

involved prompted her to start playing wheel chair tennis last year and within a few months, she advanced to the national U.S. semi-finals. She maintains a 3.9 grade point average and although she hasn't declared a major yet, her attitude towards the future is optimistic.

"During my three years at CSU, Fresno, I've developed an interest in physical therapy and am considering it as a major," she says. "I think the most important thing is to realize that you are capable of accomplishing any goal that you set for yourself."