

# 'I'm living my best second life': This 51-year-old amputee swings for the fences in college baseball

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WORCESTER — Paul Landry is living his best “second” life.

Just two years removed from having the lower part of his right leg amputated following a freak accident, the 51-year-old from Auburn is suiting up for the Quinsigamond Community College baseball team.

And Tuesday, Landry recorded his first plate appearance in college baseball — four months shy of his 52nd birthday.

“It’s a dream I never had until about a few months ago,” Landry said.

The past five years and three months have been a whirlwind for the Quinsigamond baseball player with a black and gray beard — and one prosthetic leg.

But Landry is living his life to the fullest, both on and off the diamond.

“Opportunities are around every corner and you don’t know they’re there until you turn that corner,” he said. “Life is very different now than it was for me (when I had the accident), and it’s given me a lot of opportunities that I never would’ve had (if I didn’t have) the injury, and I don’t look at in any way, shape or form as negative.

“It’s just a part of a life I’m living and I’m going to continue to live.”

## Looking on the bright side

Originally from Grafton Hill, Landry grew up playing lots of baseball — Little League, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig. You name it, Landry played it.

“It was a great experience,” he said.

Landry went on to serve in the U.S. Navy in his early 20s before returning to Worcester in 1996. A little time later, he joined legendary coach Ron Silvestri as an assistant on the then Worcester Vocational baseball team — which featured Tim Collins, who went on to pitch in the major leagues.

“I was always a better coach than I was a player,” Landry said. “Ron is a great mentor.”

Over the years, Landry stayed close to the game in one way or another, either through coaching, playing or umpiring — baseball was never far from his mind.

“His veins bleed baseball,” said his wife, Melissa.

In October 2019, Landry was volunteering with kids when his right leg was run over by a tractor. He sustained three dislocated and seven broken bones.

The injuries were so traumatic he underwent emergency surgery.

“When I got the cast off, everything rebroke all over again,” he said.

With another operation scheduled for 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and postponed his second surgery. His foot then became deformed and couldn't be fixed.

“So we had to lose it,” Landry said.

Despite the traumatic event, Landry never lost his spirit. Through the help of family and friends, he got back on his feet.

“It would've broken a lot of people,” Landry said. “But with the support that I have and had back then, for me, it was special.”

“He’s never really upset about much,” his wife said. “He looks on the bright side. He kind of just looks forward.”

## **Planting the seed**

After working as a truck driver for 25 years, Landry needed to find a new line of work following the amputation of his lower right leg.

So he decided to go back to school.

Landry enrolled in three classes at Quinsigamond Community College in the fall of 2022 and two more classes the following spring. Last fall, he took on a full course load of five classes and was even approached by the honor roll society thanks to a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

“I’m a much better student now at 51 than I was when I was younger,” Landry said.

This spring, Landry is taking five classes: two math, one criminal justice, one college experience and one theater.

He recently helped his theater class finish a production of “Romeo and Juliet.”

“I’m really stepping out of my comfort zone,” Landry said.

A baseball coach for the Junior WooSox, Landry welcomed the Quinsigamond baseball team to the AAU program’s indoor facility in January for the Wyverns’ first team practice of the season.

That’s when Landry ran into one of his “rival” coaches in Kyle Paganelli, who along with Landry is a member of the Central Mass. Baseball Umpires Association.

Paganelli, an assistant coach at Quinsigamond, proceeded to plant a seed in Landry’s head: Why not join its college baseball team?

“He didn’t have any interest,” Paganelli, 33, said. “He was joking about it and said, ‘No way,’ and then I saw him again and I brought it up again and I just kept pestering him.”

Finally, Landry gave in.

“I said no to him twice,” Landry said. “I then talked to my wife and son, and they gave me the big thumbs-up, and I said, ‘I’ll do it.’”

## **Swinging for the fences**

Heading into Tuesday’s game with Holyoke Community College, Quinsigamond first-year coach Corey Coleman originally wanted to use Landry as a pinch hitter in the fifth or sixth inning.

But in the bottom of the third, Coleman called on Landry for his first college at-bat.

With runners on first and third and two out, the burly and bearded Landry — wearing a black No. 20 jersey with blue pinstripes — walked from the on-deck circle to the batter’s box. Following a mound visit from the opposing team, the left-handed hitter faked a bunt attempt and took the first pitch for a ball.

As the Holyoke catcher failed to throw out the Quinsigamond runner at second base, the other sauntered across home plate for a run and received a pat on the back from Landry.

So does that count as a RBI? “That’s an assist,” Landry said.

After a strike, foul tip and ball low, Landry looped a foul ball beyond the third base bag on the fifth pitch he saw. The contact elicited a large roar from his teammates.

“Expectations weren’t high,” Landry said.

With cheers of “Let’s go, Landry” coming from the bench, Landry swung at his sixth and final pitch: Strike three.

No matter the result, it was a memorable day for Landry and the Quinsigamond Community College baseball team.

“He took a good couple solid hacks out there. I’m glad he didn’t go down looking,” Paganelli said. “It’s something he’ll never forget and it’s something we’ll never forget.”

“Unfortunately, he lost his leg, but he still has a chance to play baseball, the sport that he loves,” Coleman said. “I always tell my players to keep playing until they take the cleats away from you and fortunately they haven’t taken them away from Paul yet.”

Over the past few years, Paul Landry has gained a new lease on life. And this spring, the 51-year-old is swinging for the fences. He’s grateful for the opportunity.

“I’m living my best second life,” Landry said. “I wouldn’t want it any other way.”

“He’s never down and out,” his wife said. “I’m just excited for him to see him living his second life and all the things he’s ever dreamed about that he’s doing now at 51. It’s amazing.”