

Cancer Story-

Cancer, one of the harshest words in the English language. It's incredibly difficult to understand the meaning and implications of cancer. The fall of 2021, a wonderful doctor had to tell me "You have cancer". My life came to a screeching halt when I heard those words. How is it possible someone who is young and healthy has testicular cancer? I was 25 years old and was on my way to conquering the world. I just graduated college, was accepted into the MBA program at Queens University of Charlotte, where I could also pursue my athletic career in triathlon, I had proven I could compete with the best triathletes in the world, and I was engaged to the love of my life.

At the time of diagnosis, I was living in Austin, Texas, fully packed and ready to move to Charlotte, North Carolina. Our first challenge was whether to stay in Texas and battle cancer with a team at the University of Texas, or drive across the country, and begin a new chapter of our life while fighting cancer in Charlotte. I had 24 hours to make one of the most significant choices of my life. I decided that moving to North Carolina was the best for my fiancé and I and take on the cancer battle there.

After spending the weekend, driving across the country and moving into a new apartment, on Monday morning, we met the doctor who was going to perform the surgery to remove my testicle on Tuesday.

In testicular cancer there is no option to do a biopsy it as it causes a spread of the cancer to other parts of the body. The only way to confirm the type and severity of cancer is to remove the body part and send to pathology to confirm the cancer.

I went into surgery that Tuesday at 5:00am and my testicle removed. It took until the following Friday to hear back from pathology on what cancer I had and the condition I was in.

When we heard from the doctor, it nearly took the life out of fiancé and I; The doctor called and told me I had two very aggressive cancers and that I was in stage three. Stage three is the same stage as Lance Armstrong and it correlates with an almost certain death sentence. I was facing death.

I had to act fast and I spent the rest of the day scheduling an appointment with the next specialist who would perform the next surgery. I spent the whole day on the phone begging to see the doctor as fast as possible. Later that Friday, I found out I could see the doctor on Monday. That was the longest three days of my life wondering where is the cancer? Is this the last month of my life? I am going to leave my fiancé? How do I set her up for the rest of her life?

That Monday I met the doctor and found out there had been a miscommunication and the cancer in my testicle was not in stage three but rather stage 1 or stage 2, however, they still do not have evidence to confirm either stage. The next life changing decision was whether to have a very invasive surgery or go through chemotherapy. I decided to go through chemotherapy, met with my oncologist who told me that I would have to go through one round of a very aggressive treatment which included three different chemotherapies.

The first five days would be 5-6 hours a day, with each of the following Mondays shortening in duration. I decided that this was the proper route for me and started my treatment at the Novant Health center in Charlotte. Going through chemotherapy was not smooth sailing; one of the Mondays, I had a bad reaction to the treatment, causing hours of throwing up and a 102-degree fever, putting me in the emergency room more than six hours. Not only did I have a bad reaction to the therapy, but I was also

forced to spend time in the ER while Covid-19 was at its peak. Luckily, I came back from the ER with no long-term issues.

After an intense, life-changing battle, I finished my Chemotherapy and was able to ring the bell on September 21, 2021.

The next steps were to monitor the cancer with CT scans and blood work. At the end of October, the tests showed that I had enlarged lymph nodes that was possible cancer. I had a biopsy done and to my relief, it came back negative.

Since then, my numbers have returned to normal and I am cancer free. It's difficult to look in the mirror as it's hard to recognize myself. As a top athlete, it was hard to see my body 20 pounds heavier, have a massive scar, a bald head, and a missing body part.

With all that said, I am incredibly grateful to be alive. I promised myself that if I made it out alive; I would never waste another moment of this precious life we are gifted. I am now pursuing my MBA at Queens University of Charlotte, I am back competing against the best in the nation, I am getting married this year, and I am a Cancer Survivor.

This story isn't for sympathy but for purpose. Testicular Cancer, when found early, has a 98% survival rate. The path is rough, but living is most likely the reality. Saving people's lives is only possible through cancer research and the people who dedicate their lives to creating solutions to this horrible disease. This research is only done through this medium. I would love more than anything in this world that all types of cancers reach a 98% survival rate, but right now, we are far from it.

Some cancers are death sentences and with your donation we can help the researchers who enable the survival rates to increase for all cancer patients. Please donate what you can, so people like me can continue to contribute to humanity and enrich the world we live in.

Thank you for your time and don't waste a second of your life. It is honestly too short and you never know much time you have left.