Rob Harvey — Guinness World Record Run Attempt

April 16, 2018 By Justin Birckbichler

Welcome to the Band of Ballers! In this series on ABSOT, I'm turning over control to some other ballsy testicular cancer survivors and patients who have inspired me with their work in advocacy and awareness during and after their diagnosis. This month's feature is all about Rob Harvey, who is raising awareness for testicular cancer by attempting to break the world record for Fastest journey from Land's End to John o'Groats on foot, which covers 874 miles. Enjoy!

The beginning of my testicular cancer journey

Like most cancer patients, I never thought I would have to go through what I have over the last 12 months. Up until around 12 months ago, I was 27 and worked as a personal trainer, who was in good shape. I hadn't had to see a doctor in close to 10 years. I pretty much had the mindset that I was immune to illness and my body was a machine.

I thought I knew my body in great depth, so I figured I would instantly know if something wasn't right. Turns out that this assumption was VERY wrong.

My testicular cancer journey began one night after a shower in July 2017. My girlfriend, who was getting ready in the same room, pointed out that my right testicle was significantly larger than the left. One look down and a quick feel and it was obvious to me that I had not picked up that something was going on down there! The testicle was almost completely solid and visibly larger than the other.

My first thoughts

I thought about all the things I had done recently which could have been the reason for this abnormality. A few weeks before, I had completed a skydive so one thought I had was that the harness had bruised me and caused the swelling. I remembered that my dog enjoys climbing on me and several times had stood somewhere you don't want a dog standing. All these reasons went through my mind and gave me excuses not to go to the doctor.

"I will see what it is like in a week, and then see my doctor if things haven't changed" — that was

my attitude to it. It was probably nothing; it just looked (and felt) worse than it actually was.

Luckily, my girlfriend managed to make me see sense and realize that I wasn't being reasonable, so the next day, she drove me to the doctor's surgery to get checked out.

"I can't have testicular cancer"

My doctor examined me and told me he was referring me to the hospital. He said that I should expect an appointment within the next 2 weeks. He made it very clear what he thought it might be, but I was still in denial. I was confident the hospital would confirm it was nothing to worry about.

However, within 2 weeks, I was being prepped for surgery to remove my testicle and was told I may need chemotherapy afterwards if, after removal, they confirm it is indeed testicular cancer.

All the way through the build up to surgery and waiting for results of various blood tests, CT scans, organ functions test, and various other health assessments, I kept saying to myself, "I can't have testicular cancer. I'm fit and healthy. Cancer doesn't run in my family history. It can't happen to me."

The diagnosis

A week or so after my surgery, I was told that the test results were back and I had testicular cancer. My consultant informed me the tumour was fairly substantial in size and had "additional structures" growing on it so he was continuing my treatment in the form of chemotherapy.

This was the moment I think it actually hit me — I had cancer!

Amazingly, all other test results showed no spread of the cancer, and one dose of chemotherapy was enough to put me on the road to recovery. In the midst of the worst news I had ever been given, there was a silver lining. As of April 2018, I am in active surveillance.

The impact of testicular cancer

Testicular cancer changed my life in a number of ways. Physically, part of my body has been removed. This is still taking me some time to get used to.

The biggest impact of testicular cancer for me though is the weakening of my mental strength. I always considered myself to be mentally strong. Through my fitness training and various challenges undertaken in the past, I had the mental strength to push myself further than most.

Now though, I feel a lot weaker mentally, and I struggle with motivation. I am hoping this improves

with time. I have a good support network around me, so I am confident it will.

The impact of testicular cancer on my family can't be overlooked either. My girlfriend and my parents watched me go through the surgery and chemotherapy. While I was as upbeat as possible, I think they knew I was finding it hard at certain points. That is something they have to live with now too.

What's next?

On September 30th, 2018, I will start running from Land's End to John o'Groats in Scotland. One end of the UK to the other! (874 miles)

If this wasn't intimidating enough, I have decided to make it even harder for myself. My run will be a world record attempt! I will be attempting to break the Guinness World Record for fastest journey from Land's End to John o'Groats on foot. To be successful I will have to run from one sign to the other in less than 9 days, 2 hours and 26 minutes. [Editor's Note: Man, he's ballsy. I was excited about breaking a 7-minute mile.]

I have decided to take on this stupidly large challenge to get people talking about testicular cancer. Raising awareness is so important so testicular cancer can be noticed and treated as early as possible.

If you want to support me in my world record attempt and awareness raising, check out this blog I write for Ballboys, a testicular cancer charity here in the UK.

To donate to my cause, visit my JustGiving Page. [Editor's Note (Again): Rob is far too humble to make a big deal out of it, but training for a giant race is practically a full time job. Please consider donating to him so we can all help him focus on this amazing goal! Any amount will help him.]

Testicular cancer is such a treatable form of cancer. It seems so silly that one of the main reasons it turns into a big deal is because we guys don't like talking about it and are willing to let it grow and develop into something more difficult to treat.

98 percent of men who are diagnosed with testicular cancer survive for 10 or more years if it is detected early. We guys have a competitive advantage over testicular cancer, so why give that up by failing to check yourself and telling someone if something is wrong? I plan on being in that 98 percent who survive many years after diagnosis, and I have no reason why that won't happen.

I got so lucky because my testicular cancer was caught early! I know I keep repeating myself on this, but I cannot stress enough how important it is to catch this stupid disease as early as possible. Do not give up the chance of being in that 98 percent if the worst happens. Check yourself regularly and speak out as soon as you notice anything that doesn't seem right.

Be sure to connect with Rob Harvey by visiting him on Twitter (@RobHarvey89), Instagram

(@RobHarvey89), Facebook (Rob.Harvey.89), or via email robharvey1989@googlemail.com. Until next time, Carpe Scrotiem!

Know someone (or even yourself!) who is supporting TC awareness and would be willing to share their story? Drop their name, contact, and why they should be featured into this Google Form and I'll reach out to them and/or you!

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