

March 2013

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NEVER GIVE UP

KEVIN MATHER AND BETHANN TELFORD
CONQUER MORE THAN KONA

COLD WEATHER TRAINING:
HOW TO GET THROUGH THE WINTER

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March 2013 Videos



BethAnn Telford was one of two winners of the Kona Inspired Ironman Hawaii video contest. See her winning entry produced by Jenna von Elling of von Elling Imageworks here. To read more about BethAnn, head to page 20 of this month's issue of tri.



Kevin Mather was hit from a truck during a training ride in 2009. Watch his journey racing in Kona here and read his story on page 32 of this issue.



Tim Don is just one of many athletes making the jump from short course to 70.3 and Ironman racing. Here is a video about Don making the switch from ITU to 70.3 racing.

LIVING ON HOPE

By: Courtney Johnson Photos: Paul Phillips/Competitive Image



Hope was the prominent word written on the flag that BethAnn Telford carried across the finish line at the 2012 Ironman World Championships. The font was the same font used on the tattoo of the very same word she has on her left wrist. Across the flag were the names of children that have lost the battle to brain cancer or are still fighting.

Living on hope became Telford's motto when in the winter of 2005 she was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Her doctors gave her a grim diagnosis of two to three years to live.

A passionate runner, she was running in the Marine Corp Marathon when she heard a loud pop behind her left ear at mile 19. Brushing it off, she finished the race. A few days later, she started to have dizzy spells and began running into objects. Several tests showed nothing until her MRI results came back. "The pop was a blessing in disguise," she said. "I was totally healthy and symptom free up until that point. I was never sick except for the common cold. It was one of the hottest marathons in years, the hottest I had ever run. This may have aided in the symptoms. If I had a major seizure instead, it probably would have been too late."

The MRI showed a large frontal lobe brain tumor behind her left eye. The first four oncologists she sought opinions from refused to operate stating that it was too risky since the tumor was wrapped around the major blood vessels to the brain.

Then she met with Dr. Henry Brem, the last oncologist she was set to visit after going around the country. Based at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Brem wasn't sure if he could remove the whole tumor, but he would help her have the best fighting chance she could. As Telford went through surgery, her father Bob suffered from an anxiety-induced heart attack. Both BethAnn and her father would go on to recover although BethAnn would need to learn basic skills again including learning to stand and walk. Running was something that the doctors didn't think she would be able to do again.

Shortly after her diagnosis and surgery, Telford made up a bucket list full of some simple and not so simple items based on the limited time she had. Things like running a 5k were on the start of her list as she continued to recover. About four months post surgery, she crossed the line at a 5k in her hometown of Camp Hill, PA., walking part and running the other part.

Although she proved doctors wrong, she was back in for surgery 14 months after her initial surgery. Part of the tumor would be removed just for it to come back again, a scenario that would continue to play out time after time. Two years ago the tumors spread to her stomach, making digestion and swallowing food

difficult and painful. Her bladder continues to shut down, so much so that it can only hold as much liquid as a shot glass. She uses a pacemaker to help regulate her bladder and has to carry disposable catheters with her.

But despite the pain and setbacks, she added additional items to her list including the Boston Marathon (which she has now finished three times) and some non-athletic achievements like making amends with some people from her life in the past.

On top of her list was buying her father a car because he had never bought himself a new car. Finishing an Ironman and making it across the line at the Ironman Hawaii were also goals of her. The overall goal of her bucket list was to raise awareness to those fighting that you can still achieve so much even when you have cancer or a disability. With that goal, she created Team BT (Team BethAnn Telford), raising over \$250,000 for brain cancer research.

After racing Ironman Lake Placid in 2008, Telford came to the harsh realization that the lottery might be the only means to make it to Kona. "I entered the lottery for eight straight years with my story but was never selected," she said. "After racing in Placid, I knew the lottery was my only chance." She was about to throw in the towel when a training partner heard about the Be Inspired contest through Ironman. Working with friends and a videographer, she submitted a tape, pitting her story up against 100 other entries.

When the selection was whittled down to 45, Telford was still in the running. On July 23, a friend called and said, "Miss Beth you won." Thinking that it couldn't be true, she called a friend as she sat in a computer free room. Another friend confirmed the story. Telford was one of two athletes selected to race in Kona.

The first thing BethAnn did after she was done screaming with excitement was to call her father. "He is the first person I thought of," she said. "My father is my hero. Heroes don't have to be based on the amount of money you make or the awards you win. My father was a blue-collar man who worked hard never asking for much or wanting much. He brought me up right."

When the phone rang, Telford's mother picked up. Not saying anything about winning, BethAnn quickly asked for her father. "I said 'Dad we won.' He asked me to repeat myself. I then asked if he was proud and he said of course he was. He then asked if I was planning to take him." Both of BethAnn's parents made the journey with her to Kona.

Having only a short amount of time to get ready, Telford worked alongside triathlon coach Alyssa Morrison to create a weekly workout schedule. Former CEO of the Columbia Triathlon Association Robert Vigorito and Chrissie Wellington were both



instrumental in helping BethAnn prepare as well.

When she arrived in Kona, she had the opportunity to have some professionals sign her flag- the idea for both the flag and signatures was spearheaded by Wellington. One of the most meaningful signatures was from Rebekah Keat, whose mother also has a brain tumor. Coincidentally, Keat and Telford have become close corresponding through emails.

All throughout the days leading up to race day, the waves battered the sea walls, worrying Telford and other competitors about the race day conditions. Issues with balance and vertigo are two symptoms

LIVING ON HOPE

she battles that are by the conditions of the water. Feeling overly anxious race morning, Telford was calmed when Wellington found her before she entered the water and said a few special words to her to calm her fears. “People were looking at me like, ‘Who is this person that Chrissie is talking to?’ she said. “I spoke up saying that Chrissie was out here encouraging everyone. Chrissie gave me a personal wink as she walked away. For some reason, I knew then that I would be OK.”

Having no vision in her left eye, Telford found a set of feet to follow the entire swim. “When he kicked, I kicked,” she said. Onto the bike, Telford struggled with being sick from the salt water she ingested. Digestion was near impossible, and she couldn’t keep anything down. Even taking the small bites she has to take due to the cancer weren’t working in the beginning.

Living on hope, Telford began looking around remembering what people told her. The wind, the rain, the lack of calories and water in her system- nothing was more powerful than the hope that has helped her live well past doctor predictions. The catch phrase for Team BT meant more than anything to her at this point. “Never, never, never give up,” she said. “Running is my forte and I knew all I had to do was just make it to the run.”

Slowly she began to digest water and was able to take in a few calories. Having sight in only one eye made navigating the course especially hard coupled with the vertigo she felt after the large swells in the water. She had to carry a disposable catheter with her as well.

Onto the run, she took the time to take it all in. “I wasn’t out there for a specific time,” she said. “I was out there to have fun.” Walking a bit of the run, she talked to people along the way hoping she could get some other people onto the NBC footage.

Telford crossed the line in 15:14:32. “My father asked me if I had stopped and took a shower because I looked so good,” she said. “That was the thing, I wasn’t in pain. I was just so overexcited because I made it. I couldn’t believe it; it was a dream come true!” But finishing the race was so much more than just a dream come true for BethAnn. “Finishing wasn’t about me but many people fighting the fight.”

For now, there are no new bucket list items on Telford’s list. She is preparing for bladder removal surgery the first week of February. She will be in the hospital for three to four weeks post surgery and recovery will last up to six months. On May 5th, Team BT will once again run in the 16th Annual Race for Hope raising awareness and money for both research and patients.

To find out more about Team BT, head to <http://www.teambt.org/>.





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