

The Tristan Knowles Story

"a chance to achieve"

The relationship between a grandfather and a grandson is a special one as any parent will tell you, and so it was between Tristan and his grandfather, who he called Pa.

In 1993 when Tristan was just 8 years old he learnt a new word. That word was cancer. His Pa had just been diagnosed with stomach cancer, thought to have originated nearly 50 years earlier during his time with the Australian Army Occupational Forces in the post war apocalypse of the world's first atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan in 1945.

Nanna and Pa moved into the family home so Tristan's mother, a nurse, could care for her father. Tristan was so excited that his Nanna and Pa were going to live with them, because, at the time, he had no concept of what cancer meant.

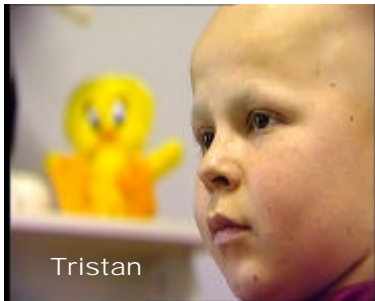
It ended up being a very painful time for everyone as this vibrant man deteriorated before everyone's eyes. It was especially difficult for Tristan, after all, he was just a kid, as he watched his best friend in the whole world succumb, day by day, to this insidious disease.

Within a year Pa had died.

6 months later Tristan himself was diagnosed with cancer, osteogenic sarcoma, a particularly aggressive form of bone cancer.

3 months later, and just before his 10th birthday, Tristan's left leg was amputated.

Worse was to follow.



Chemotherapy is a necessary poison that attacks the cancer producing cells, it also attacks the body's immune system, and it was during this tug of war that Tristan contracted chicken pox. With no immune system to fight off the chicken pox, Tristan's life hung in the balance.

Tristan survived and spent the next two years on two monthly checkups. It was with much anticipation and relief that Tristan was making his last trip to the Westmead Children's Hospital for his last check up. The day was a Friday and a weekend of celebration was being planned. It proved to be premature.

Tristan's oncologist, Dr Luciano Dalla Pozza, phoned on the Monday. "There's a problem, can you come up straight away".

Tristan's cancer had returned.

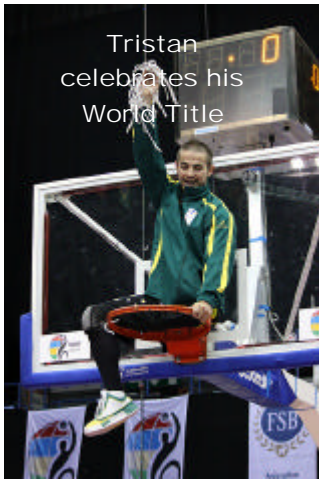
This time the cancer was now in his lungs where bone fragments were now growing. It meant the chemotherapy had not worked. It meant that Tristan would have to have parts of his lung removed. It meant that his chances of survival was a paltry 10%. Tristan was told 50%. His parents had been told to prepare for the worse. They did not. While there was hope they would not give up and they wanted Tristan to know it.

Tristan survived the lung surgery and was immediately put on even higher dosages of chemotherapy. Levels so high, that if administered to an adult, it would have killed them. Tristan had no choice, but he did not know he had no choice, that choice had been made for him by his parents.

After his five year battle with cancer Tristan not only survived but thrived.

Sport was very important to Tristan and while he dreamed of being the first amputee to play in the AFL he realised that his dreams of playing for Hawthorn was over. He was determined to find another sport. He tried table tennis, water polo, athletics and swimming, but none quite hit the spot. What did hit the spot was wheelchair basketball and within 2 years he was selected in the Australian Junior Development Squad.





Tristan celebrates his World Title

Three years after that he made the senior side which competed in the 2004 Athens Paralympics where they won silver. 4 years on he was a member of the Gold Medal team at the 2008 Beijing Paralympics. Then followed a World Championship Gold in 2010, the first time Australia had won it.

Tristan racked up season MVPs playing for teams in Australia, Italy and Spain. Tristan joined Spanish club BSR Valladolid in 2010. In 2011 they won their first ever domestic title after 16 years of trying. In 2011 Tristan lead his Australian club, the Wollongong Roller Hawks to a premiership, their second in their short ten year history. He joined Turkish powerhouse Gallatasaray, also in 2011, and won the World Club titles in Japan.

Amongst all that basketball Tristan made time to complete a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Wollongong where he made the Dean's Merit List three years running.



Tristan celebrates Paralympic Gold



Tristan muscles up on game day

Tristan has been a prolific fund-raiser for various kids cancer charities raising hundreds of thousands of dollars through his motivational speeches.

Tristan's message is that he has achieved so much in life because people gave him the opportunity to achieve, and it is with that background that he has started the Tristan Knowles Kids Cancer Foundation. The Foundation's goal is "giving kids with cancer the chance to achieve".

Tristan has shown by example what can be achieved with a little help from others and that is all he asks from you. If you want to help a kid with cancer achieve then please call 0411 265 603. Alternatively, you can post your donation to the Tristan Knowles Kids Cancer Foundation, PO Box 198, Balgowlah, NSW, 2093.



giving kids with cancer the chance to achieve