

23rd November 2011

Life changes in a blink of an eye....

How true these words became for me! Two weeks out from Noosa Triathlon I ended up in hospital having a protruding disc cut away from the sciatic nerve (L5,S1).

I remember that Monday so clearly, standing there in the surgeon's office for my consultation. The car ride out to Chermside, I was in pain, extreme pain I can't begin to describe, it was so intense it brought tears to my eyes. The sciatic nerve running through the glute, hammy and calf had been contracted permanently for the week prior, and the seated position made it 1000 times worse.

At the consultation my main questions for the surgeon were:

1. How long will recovery be?
2. When can I swim/ride/run again?
3. What if I don't go ahead with it/other options?

Well the answers were clear however I really only caught key words as I was starting to see stars, my hearing was going and I eventually passed out in his office due to the pain. In short his response:

1. Will all depend how much nerve damage has been caused in the past week
2. You will never run again! Once things settle down you can kick, then swim and get back on the bike, but this would be months down the track
3. 'Well...the writing is on the wall, you don't have much choice' was all I heard laying on the table – OH and 'Do you have private health insurance'!!

Before my back problems I was training well for Noosa and was looking forward to trying to qualify for World Champs. Now I found myself at the hospital repeating the Surgeons words over and over - 'you will never run again'. How fast the world had flipped around.

My operation was two days later (19 Oct), which proved to give me immediate relief of the nerve pain, and also a drastic loss of muscle/strength in my right leg. Complications had me in hospital for two weeks which included treatment with the physio every second day though I was not responding to his treatment as well as expected.

After the operations I was home for about two weeks, being cared for by Mumma ☺ then started getting really bad headaches, ended up back in hospital again with toxicity in my blood. I was lucky that was all I had (MIR and CT cleared anything else). Well it had been nearly four weeks later and my GP or surgeon hadn't really reduced my medication that much, so I was unaware, just taking the meds as I was told to. The specialist I saw that weekend told me the quantity of meds I was given, they would give a body builder more than twice my size. He said imagine a massive bowl and pouring, red and white wine, rum and vodka – you've got a massive hang –over, that's causing the headaches and other side effects. SO for the next three days I was placed on a drip, off the meds completely and that haze started to clear.

I have to laugh; both discharges from hospital fell on Noosa and Robina Tri – so ironic!

The surgeons statement '*you'll never run again*' goes through my mind every day, and more than once I can tell you. He made it very clear (with my mum in the room) that I will destroy his work, the constant jarring would end me back on the operating table again. I put to him the concept of water running then only running for races – he didn't know what water running was! It was that point that I decided, Kel, don't worry about running for now, you need to get the strength back in your right leg then get swimming, then get on the bike – who knows what will happen after that.

Currently my days consist of gentle stretching, exercises and walking (in and out of the pool). It will take 6-8 weeks to heal, then I can increase the intensity of the exercises and start some strength work. This is week 5 and I have only now realised that I need to chill, this is going to take time, rest, heal and then start over. At this stage I still can't drive, still have numbness in my right leg and foot. But as the calf gets stronger the limp has just about faded away, even my walking pace has gotten a little quicker.

Oh and can't forget the calf raises, the simple things in life – I just want to do a right calf raise. Hey, if Ness can do 10 boy push-ups, I can get that calf back.

I saw Angie one week out of hospital, lost 3kg of muscle. But on the bright side, I would of been at race weight the by time Noosa came around 😊 - just for us number freaks (Yas) 😊

Beginning of 2012 will click over two years of being a member with BTS. I joined with Marina, we attacked a new challenge head on (after running for a few yrs prior in our local Hood Vin run group) we signed up for the beginner Tri course. Little did we know we would find a passion for the sport and more importantly become part of a great community, full of like minded, caring and encouraging friends.

2011 has really been a year I will never forget – for once I hadn't made a New Year's resolution. As 2010 saw me doing everything I wanted out of life, fit and active, adopted a healthier lifestyle, dropped 14kg, completed my first OD Tri at Noosa and made some lifelong friends. Didn't want to change a thing for 2011, just keep enjoying myself.

End of 2010 I decided I wanted to try my first attempt at a longer distance tri. I mentioned this to Mark, thought Hell of the West would be ideal, early Jan – yeah just what I needed to keep the training going from Noosa. I know most of you would have heard this before – 'No, you're not ready, need more base training'. I know Mark was looking after my best interest, but I was hooked on this sport and wanted more...so I entered, on one condition, I followed Mark's advice - I stick to the HR zones. However as our relationship is, it's negotiable (I know he would say otherwise), I would swim as I do – plod; I'd ride in the HR zone's, and loved every second of the ride, even with people over taking me; but for the run, I'd push things a little, see what I had left – well they don't call it HOTW for nothing, bloody hot and yes, I maybe should of listened to the Coach and stuck to the HR zones. END RESULT – had the best time ever and did it for fun!

One week later, my 'high' crashed quickly with a superman stack off the bike at Caloundra. Which took the shoulder a solid 6 months until the intensity of my training could get back to normal, then, well now, the back operation (and I can't leave out the attack of the shingles that stopped me from going to bike camp this year!). So 2011 is a year about me after all, a year about rehab and ensuring I 'get fixed' and come back stronger for the next challenge – to be one of the fastest swimmers in the squad! Now I've put that out there, I have to ensure it happens 😊

It is really touching to know you have people there for you, phone, in person, face book or texting – always someone to lean on! Thanks for the catch-up's and touching base with me, much appreciated. I am so very fortunate to have a great network of friends from BTS and in my Hood Vin, and a great family, to all of you I am internally grateful for your support, love, kind words, smiles, encouragement, laughing at my silly drugged up talk 😊 oh and can't forget that black box – you all know who you are.

I keep telling myself - when you're down and think you're out, someone else has it worse than you out there. So get back up and push harder at your next training session/work or personal life. Don't forget you're doing what you love, we all have choices and we live by them.

I am reminded of that daily, as my little sister is an amputee due to cancer in her right leg. I'm not complaining about my current situation, I'm just adjusting – we all need time.

Thanks for reading this, I did find it hard to write about myself and really not sure why someone would want to read it. But Suz put the idea to me, I think to keep me off the streets or at least get me out of bed on the bad days - well it's worked. So till next month's update...

Kel