

And they say a canter cures everything.....

In July 2014, in the week of my 49th Birthday, I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer.

If someone had told me 6 months ago that I would be driving myself and my pony across the country to St Albans and attempting my first Shahzada 400 for 2015 I would have smiled at them sadly and said "not in my wildest dreams....." Yet here I am pinching myself having not only manage to be on the start line but to be standing in the row of successful completers at the end of the ride. It brings a tear to my eye every time I stop and think about my little grey mare and our week together. What an amazing experience this ride is. Abbey aka Lindall Alabaska and I had a fabulous week. We built a greater trust in each other that you dream of having with your best 4 legged friend. She was far more confident about holding up her end of the bargain than I was about mine for the week that's for sure!

It has been a tough 12 months filled with fear, pain, insecurity and what seemed like endless Doctor's appointments and treatments that completely ruled my day to day life whilst I battled with Breast Cancer. To say that I was overwhelmed with the support I received from my family and closest friends is a major understatement. I find it really hard to let people DO things for me. I'm not used to asking for help...I'm usually the person offering it! I took on the attitude of trying hard not to feel sorry for myself and being pulled down by the 'why mes' and just getting on with whatever I was told to do by my Doctors. I focused on doing my best to beat the God awful disease and the treatment which truly is harder to deal with than the cancer itself.

For those of you who know my husband Andrew you will also know that being home for him is a rarity. I always joke that this is the reason why we have been together for 20 years, because he's never home and so we never fight! The reason I digress is because Andrew's commitment to his job has always relied on me being at my best so that he can do what he needs to do! We have 4 kids and a 105 acre, Arabian Stud to run and up until I got sick, I have pretty much done it all on my own. I am a determined -some may say pig-headed but I don't believe that, person. I have never been able to sit down and do nothing. So suddenly being struck down with this disease and the toll it took on my body and mind meant that Andrew had to become mother, wife and stud manager as well as his usual commitments with his busy career. I truly don't know how he did it. My memory whilst I was going through chemotherapy is vague at best, but along with our amazing children and help from my parents and besties everything continued to happen. I will be FOREVER indebted to the kindness that was shown to me. Support came from my endurance friends all over Australia. From donations to anti-cancer research to having meals cooked for us, getting kids to school and sporting commitments to the massive job of keeping the stud ticking over. To ALL of you- THANKYOU from the very bottom of my heart.

So July 2015 was the first Anniversary of my diagnosis. As I rode each day at Shahzada I found myself reflecting on last year and that this same week in August 2014 I was recovering from my first round of Chemotherapy. I have never been more ill. I am still not quite at my best and I get frustrated because I get tired so easily, one of the more annoying symptoms of the continual drug therapy that I need to beat Breast cancer .

Every year for the next 4 years I will hold my breath when I go in to have my MRI and hope like Hell that I have beaten this disease. I didn't fit any of the risk criteria for Breast cancer by the way. If anything I have done ALL the things as a woman that you can do to prevent it. Still, Breast cancer effects 1 in every 8 women, so I just drew a short straw. We caught mine early. I acted on an abnormality that wasn't even a lump just a change. I had a Grade 3 tumour which was nasty and aggressive unfortunately. I don't like to think about the outcome had I not acted immediately. So please, if you have any question about something you find in your breast tissue and this includes under your arms, GET IT CHECKED IMMEDIATELY!!!

So what now? I choose to grab and live my life very differently to how I did before. I don't sweat the small stuff anymore. I don't worry about what other people think. My kids have grown up faster and I notice a maturity in their outlook that perhaps was a few years off coming. As a family we appreciate each other more. We look for the good in our lives and the people we share it with. I live in a stunning part of the world, in a free country, surrounded by my wonderful horses who give me so much pleasure. I am blessed with the most amazing family and friends. Instead of worrying about the lines on my face and the grey in my hair and another birthday approaching, I relish them. Because it means I am getting older, which means I am still here and so I consider myself one of the lucky ones. When you see me at a ride, in camp or out on track and I have a stupid grinning smile on my face, know that I am appreciating every moment of doing what I love best.

Look out Shahzada, I will be back for more!!!

Jodie Luck



