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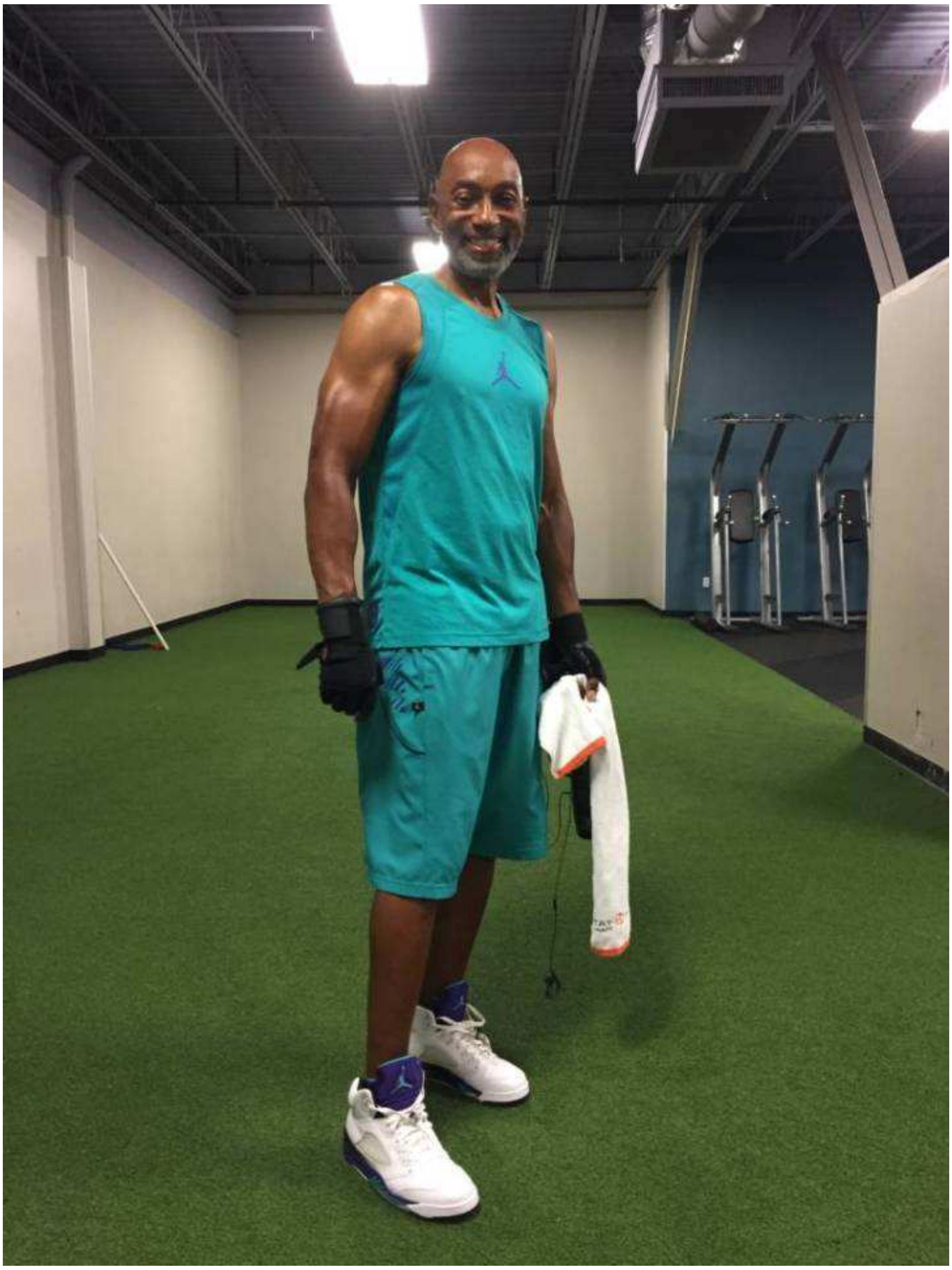
AWARD-WINNING ATHLETE CHANNELS HIS CHAMPION'S SPIRIT TO WIN AGAINST MULTIPLE MYELOMA



Greg Foster 1 year from bone marrow transplant

In 2012, Greg Foster woke up expecting to do his usual morning workout routine that consisted of running three to six miles on a treadmill, which he normally did three days a week. On this day in particular, however, he wasn't able to go past a minute and a half without noticing that he was extremely tired, which is unusual for a person with his background. Foster, an Olympic silver medalist inducted into the USA Track and Field Hall of Fame, worked out five days a week, running anywhere from nine to 18 miles on the treadmill weekly and also rowed on a row machine two days out of the week as well.

"I didn't think nothing [sic] of it…I thought I was getting old so I changed around my cardio, still doing [sic] weights, but wasn't doing as much cardio," says Foster.

As a few years went by, however, Foster noticed himself getting weaker. While volunteering at local schools, he wasn't able to stand for a long period of time, as he once was able to do, without his ankles swelling. Although he continuously lifted weights, the amount of weight in which he was once able to lift decreased. After not being able to put on his shoes due to being severely swollen on his lower legs and ankles, he decided to go to a doctor.

"They could never find anything wrong. I went to cardiologist after cardiologist. I had a heart MRI and chest x-rays, but they kept talking it up to me being an athlete and said I had Athlete's Heart," Foster said.

It wasn't until 2016 when Foster was no longer able to walk up a single stair in his house when he decided to go back to one of his doctors who went over his results one more time. They did three different biopsies before the doctor was able to diagnose Foster with the blood cancer multiple myeloma and AL amyloidosis. Having never heard of these conditions before, Foster began to research and came across an older article that mentioned AL amyloidosis was a rather rare disease that, unfortunately, many doctors weren't too familiar with so there wasn't a cure for it yet.

Greg Foster at his athletic peak.

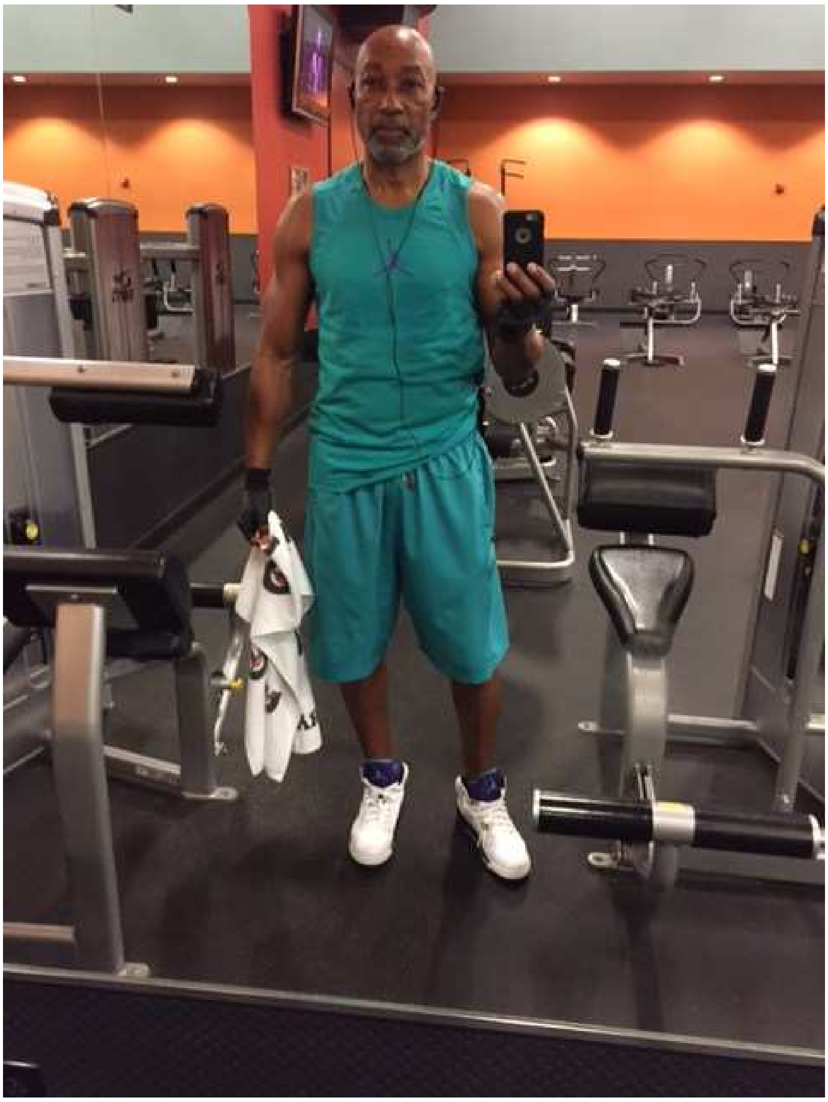
“The very first thing I read was AL amyloidosis was a death penalty.” However, after reaching out and speaking to the president of the AL Amyloidosis Foundation, she shared her own story with Foster and was able to help put his mind at ease and place him in touch with some doctors more familiar with AL amyloidosis. After being referred to an AL amyloidosis specialist, Foster began a bone marrow transplant and completed one round of chemotherapy in June 2016.

Both multiple myeloma and AL amyloidosis affect the plasma cells inside the bone marrow, however, there are so many plasma cells in myeloma the it clearly is considered a bone marrow cancer while AL amyloidosis is not. Approximately 15% of those diagnosed with multiple myeloma will also acquire AL amyloidosis since AL is a related disease and because of this, the treatments for AL amyloidosis are similar to those for myeloma. Symptoms for both conditions vary according to each patient and depends on each organ the may be affected.

The process of chemotherapy, surgeries and medications used to treat both conditions can be physically and psychologically devastating for some patients. It’s important to stay in communication with your doctor, seek a support system and possibly change your eating habits to include a well-balanced and nutritious diet that's low in sodium when the kidneys or heart are involved.

Living with Multiple Myeloma

After undergoing treatment, Foster says he sees his doctor every four months and gets lab work done every two months. Additionally, he continues to workout five days a week and has also decreased his sodium intake. "My lab work results show my heart is getting better…as long as I watch what I eat and keep my sodium intake down, I feel fine," he says. "I feel like my normal self, I look like my normal self."…



Although Foster’s health has improved after treatment and he’s able to still do his favorite physical activities weekly, he says if he’d been persistent with seeking professional help earlier, he may not have the heart damage he now has.

“I tell people now, the minute you get to the point where you’re not able to do what you’ve been able to do for the last however many years..go to a doctor…you don’t have to be an athlete to know [the changes that occur to] your own body.”

Having been diagnosed with multiple myeloma and AL amyloidosis after he was done competing, his experience as an athlete helped him physically and mentally cope with both conditions. “A good athlete is one who is always both physically and mentally prepared,” he says. “Prayer and being consistent with the workouts, starting off slow and watching what I eat [helps].”

If you believe you may have symptoms of AL amyloidosis or multiple myeloma, contact your doctor or specialist as soon as possible. It’s vital to ask questions to make sure you get an accurate and timely diagnosis to help start treatment.

Foster continues to share his experience in hopes of being able to support others and has become a source of inspiration to those around him who’ve witnessed how he’s handled this particular journey of his.

“Don’t give up; be willing to do whatever you think you need to do in order to make yourself better,” says Foster. You have to believe and you have to trust in yourself, your doctor, your medical team and God.”

“It’s a long road, it’s a tough road but if nothing else, keep your spirits up.”

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