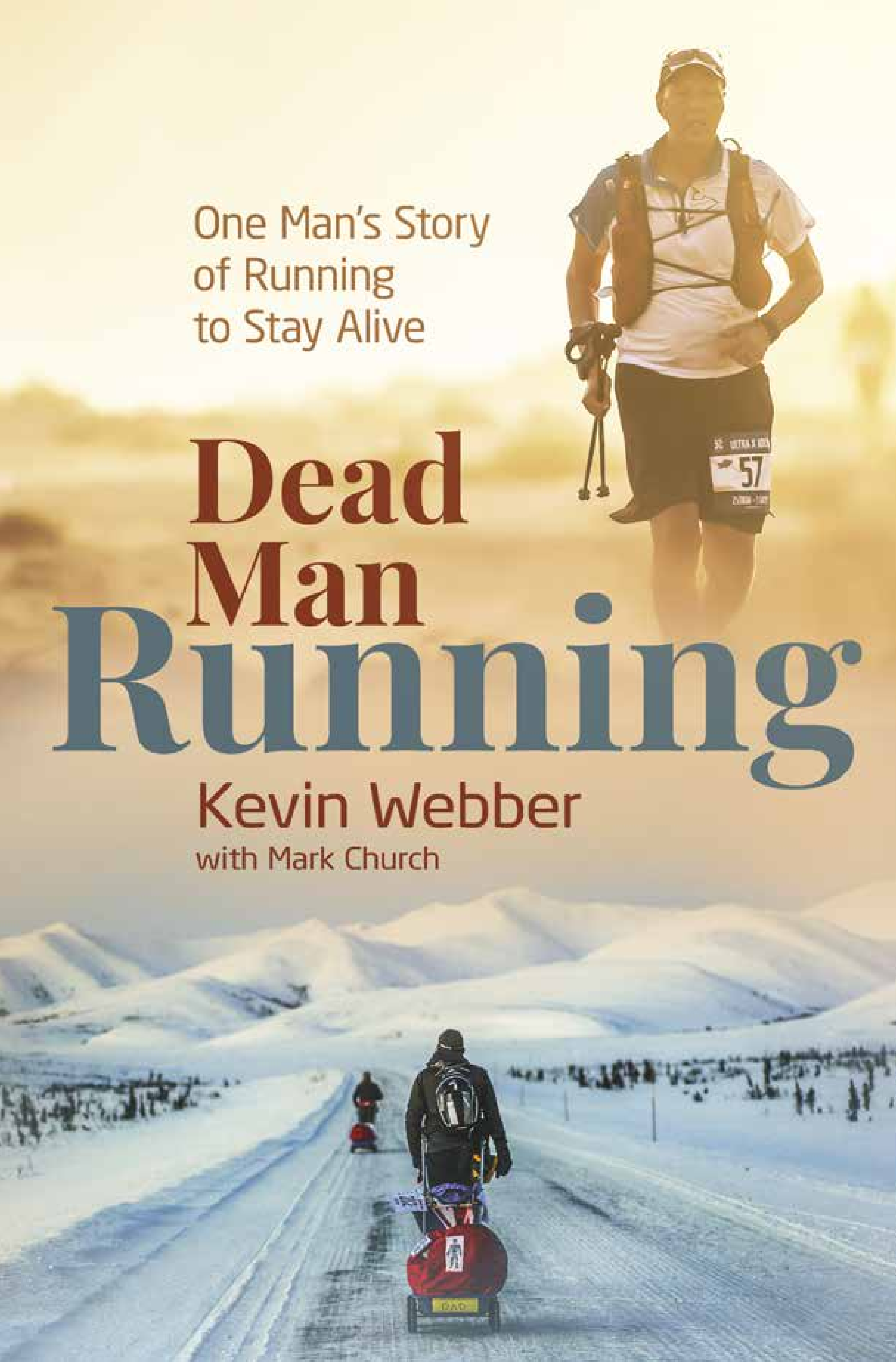

One Man's Story
of Running
to Stay Alive

Dead
Man
Running

Kevin Webber

with Mark Church

Dead Man Running

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pitch

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As you read through my six-year journey you may feel that you, like me, want to support Prostate Cancer UK. If you are able and want to help keep families together for longer, please do sponsor me as it all goes to the charity, at

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/kevin-webber9

Thank you

Chapter 1

When life changed

MY NAME is Kevin Webber. I am an ordinary 56-year-old guy who loves his family, loves his job, loves his friends and loves a pint. I also love running.

My life changed seven years ago. Everything was going great. I was working hard and doing well in my job at NatWest Bank. I had no financial worries, all my family were healthy and life was good. I was living my life the best way I could. That involved a bit of running, the odd marathon here and there but nothing too serious.

Then, in the summer of 2014 we took a family holiday to America. My kids were 16, 14 and nine and I thought it might be the last chance we would get to have a holiday together. I can remember not wanting to go away with my mum and dad after I was 16, so this was going to be a special family holiday.

We decided to go to America and stayed at my brother-in-law's in South Carolina, then drove to Florida to spend a week at Disney World and Universal Studios. No matter what people say, you cannot help getting wrapped up in the magic of Disney and I was no exception, having my photo taken with Tigger and Winnie the Pooh and enjoying having time with the kids and my wife Sarah.

Whilst we were staying in Florida, I started to notice that I was waking up in the night, desperate for a wee. I would suddenly be wide awake, having to rush to the toilet but would only urinate for a couple of seconds and that would be it. An hour later the same thing would happen. I would wake up bursting for the toilet, rush to the bathroom and only go for a couple of seconds. This was happening two or three times a night and, in my mind, there was no reason for it because I wasn't really drinking alcohol in the evenings as I was the one that was doing all the driving.

I didn't think too much about it because we were having a fantastic time and I thought it might just be the heat or the water and it wasn't uncomfortable. I just put it to the back of my mind. We left Florida, had another week in South Carolina and came home having had the wonderful family holiday that I had desired.

The following week I returned to work and after a couple of days I noticed that when I sat down it felt like I was sitting on a golf ball. I would have this uncomfortable feeling for a couple of minutes but it disappeared when I got up and had a walk around the office. My job with NatWest was to look after a portfolio of commercial banking clients and I had to give them my full attention during meetings. But the feeling of sitting on a golf ball was starting to niggle and I was not able to concentrate. Some days the feeling wasn't there, but on others it would last for an hour and I was really starting to notice it.

I was still being woken up two or three times a night desperately needing to urinate then finding nothing really happened and, in the words of Bill Clinton, it was much the same when I had 'relations' with my wife. So now I had three noticeable problems all in the same area and I had no idea what any of them meant.

I then did what most men never do and booked an appointment with the doctor. I honestly thought he would tell me that I was being silly and there was nothing to worry about. I hadn't really mentioned how I was feeling to my wife Sarah and I thought it was better to be on the safe side. A week later, I was off to the surgery and the only thing I was nervous about was wasting my doctor's time.

I told the doctor the three symptoms I was experiencing, and he told me that he wanted to do a prostate test. Suddenly, I had gone from worrying I was wasting his time, to having the doctor's finger up my bottom doing an examination of my prostate. It wasn't the most comfortable experience of my life and a couple of days later I had to go back and have a whole range of blood tests. They told me they would have the results in a week, and I went back to work and got on with my life.

A week later I went back to the surgery to get my results. I wasn't nervous because, like most people, I believed you told the doctor your problem and they sorted it out because they always knew the answer.

I sat down with the doctor and he looked at his computer and said, ‘Mr Webber. Your PSA, or prostate specific antigen, score is 341 and we will have to do a range of other tests.’ Alarm bells started ringing in my head. My dad had had prostate cancer a decade earlier and even though he never really discussed it, the one thing he did mention was his maximum PSA score, which was 12. His prostate cancer was curable, and he needed radiotherapy to sort it. I had just been told my PSA score was 341! The doctor gave me a form and told me to take it to reception and an appointment at Epsom Hospital would be made for me in two weeks’ time. As I got up to leave my doctor said, ‘I recall your father had prostate cancer too,’ and as I was walking out the door his final words were, ‘Good luck.’ I walked to reception to hand in my form thinking to myself, ‘is this down to luck now?’ and I had the words prostate cancer firmly in my mind.

I made the journey home and the alarm bells were still ringing loudly. I went straight to my computer and searched ‘prostate cancer’. The first thing that came onto my screen was a link to the Prostate Cancer UK website. I discovered they had a forum and even though I hadn’t been officially diagnosed, I decided to post on the forum and see what advice I might get. So, I wrote, ‘I am a reluctant newbie,’ and stated that my PSA score was 341 and asked what happened now. Almost immediately I got some lovely responses from a range of people saying it was treatable and most people get cured and continue to live their lives. All the responses were very positive, but I was still worried.

All I said to my wife at this stage was the doctor thought there might be a problem with my prostate, and I was having another appointment in a couple of weeks. The date for that appointment arrived in the post and I was booked to see a urologist at Epsom Hospital. From my research, I knew a urologist dealt with bladder problems but also dealt with prostate cancer and now I was extremely nervous and worried.

Two weeks after being told my PSA score by my doctor, Sarah and I were making our way to Epsom Hospital for my appointment with the urologist. This was the first appointment Sarah had been to with me and when we met the urologist my first thought was, 'He has got chubby fingers'. I was right to be worried because five minutes later he was using those fingers to do a proper examination of my prostate, which was very uncomfortable, and he then consulted his notes which included my PSA score. He looked at me and said, 'I wouldn't normally diagnose anything from the examination I have just done and your PSA score, but in your case Mr Webber I am sorry to tell you that you do have prostate cancer.'

The fact he was telling me at this point meant I knew it was bad. He gave me some tablets and told me I would need to have several scans and a biopsy in the coming weeks. Sarah and I went home, and I immediately went back on the Prostate Cancer UK forum and explained what my diagnosis had been.

Again, the responses were all very positive, telling me it was curable. I also spoke to Hugh, a colleague at work who been diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2013 but had been treated and was now fine. Hugh told me what happened to him and suggested I would have six months of uncomfortable treatment, but then life would get back to normal. Everyone was telling me it was curable, but I was now facing the prospect of more scans and a biopsy in October. Even though I was worried, I didn't want to burden Sarah with how I was feeling because I didn't think that was fair on her, plus I was being told by everybody it could be treated.

The biopsy was a horrible and undignified experience. From the moment I walked into the room I just felt embarrassed; I know that may be a strange word to use but just the thought of me face down with something being put where the sun don't shine was bad enough. What was even worse was that this was to be done by two female nurses in their late 20s. Then from what I understood I was going to have 18 needles individually fired through my bowel and then have the needles pulled back, ripping out a sample of my prostate. And this was going to be done through my backside via what looked like a policeman's truncheon. They were shooting 18 needles because it was difficult to be precise with each one even though they use a basic scanner and they wanted to conduct an overall inspection of my prostate to see where the cancer was.

The first six needles were fired into me by the specialist, pulled back out and each one was more painful than the last.

It felt like an elastic band was being flicked hard against my testicles (not that I actually knew what that felt like but you get my drift). After six needles the specialist stopped. My first reaction was relief, but then I asked the specialist why he had stopped firing. He replied, 'Mr Webber, to be honest with you I couldn't miss.' As I was getting dressed, I started to realise that the reason he had stopped firing the needles was that everything in my prostate was cancerous.

The specialist told me I would be given another appointment to get the results of the biopsy and the scans. I was beginning to realise this was serious. My backside was now bleeding too and continued to do so for the next few days.

Next, I had to have an MRI and bone scan, but I was still going to work. I told a few people at the bank that I had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. As well as Hugh, who had been diagnosed the year before, I also told my boss Stuart and his boss Neal, who were both incredibly supportive. I guess in some ways they thought, 'There but for the grace of God go I'. At that stage, I hadn't told anybody else, including my kids and wider family, because I didn't want to be asked questions that I didn't know the answers to and I didn't want them to treat me differently.

On 23 October I picked up the paper and read that Alvin Stardust had died from prostate cancer. When I was a kid Alvin Stardust was the 'glam rock' star and seemed indestructible. I hadn't thought about people dying from prostate cancer and here it was staring me in the face, making me realise this was potentially more serious than just getting diagnosed, getting treated, getting cured and getting on with my life. I was now really scared and was no longer sleeping at night.

A letter arrived saying I would get the results of my biopsy and scans at an appointment on 6 November back at Epsom Hospital. By a quirk of fate, the urologist I was seeing this time was the specialist who had treated Hugh. When I told Hugh who I was seeing, he said he was a brilliant doctor and that filled me with confidence.

The day of my appointment to get my test results arrived and Sarah and I made our way to Epsom Hospital and the MacMillan Butterfly Centre. We arrived and sat in the waiting room. I was nervous and scared. My name was called, and Sarah and I were told which room to go to. I opened the door and the first person we were introduced to was a MacMillan nurse and a man who said he was doing some research, and would it be ok if he sat in on the meeting. I had no problem with that, but as we sat down the alarm bells were ringing in my head because I was wondering why there was a MacMillan nurse there.

Before the appointment I had done some research and I knew the specialist was going to give me a Gleason score based on my biopsy. The score would fall somewhere between six and ten with six being the lowest form of cancer. The specialist looked at me and said, ‘Good morning, Mr Webber. I am looking at your test results and your Gleason score is between nine and ten, but let’s say it is a nine.’

I sat there trying to make sense of what he had just told me. With a score of nine we had just moved, in one sentence, from bad to dreadful news. I immediately asked him for a prognosis, hoping he would say I could be cured. He looked at me and said, 'Mr Webber, you have between two to ten years, but you should realistically think you have between three to four years to live. Definitely don't think ten.'

When you get told news like that you immediately just hear the words 'two years' and Sarah and I burst into tears. In the space of a minute my world had come crashing down and I just clung on to Sarah. The MacMillan nurse came and put an arm around us both and I realised why she was in the room. She was there because she knew I was going to be given the worst possible news.

The specialist then said, 'Mr Webber, I am so sorry, but we are going to get you an appointment with an oncologist who will form a plan for your treatment. (I now know only 30 per cent of men with my diagnosis live past five years and some only live a few months.)

Sarah and I were taken to a small waiting room where we just held each other and cried. I think we were both in shock because this was a diagnosis we had never considered. We were then taken to see Professor Chris Parker, an oncologist who sat with us and told us that even though the prognosis was very serious there were still things that could be done. He told us he would come up with a plan of action and book us an appointment to see him again.

And that was it. Sarah and I went home and tried to take in what we had been told. We did a lot of crying and I decided to write and send the following email to work:

> Hi Guys
>
> I am afraid it could not have been much worse.
>
> I have Metastatic Prostate Cancer (I am in esteemed company as that is what Alvin Stardust had), I will leave you to Google it but there is no cure and they can only try to stop it for a while or slow it down, bit of a bummer.
>
> Needless to say, I won't be in tomorrow as I have to sort out loads of stuff and arrange bits with the quacks and I also have another scan on Monday just to see how far it has gone round my other lymph nodes plus another session on Tuesday as they need the results of Monday's scan and are talking about putting me on some experimental trial drug.
>
> As you can imagine I have to get the courage to tell my family and I am not looking forward to that much, as it's hard enough to cope with my emotions right now let alone someone else's, although Sarah has been great.
>
> I would be grateful if you could keep this to yourselves until Monday as there are people I need to tell over the weekend who have to hear it from me first rather than third hand, I am sure I can trust you in that regard but between the six of you say what you like!
>
> Finally, you have all been so supportive since I first told you, thank you so much, sorry to bring bad thoughts

> to your day. When you see me next don't ask how I am though, as I will just burst into tears.
>
> Kev

I also knew I had to tell my brother and my dad. We had a light that needed fixing in our hall and my brother is a bit of an expert handyman, so I asked him to come around the next day to look at the light. When he came, I didn't say anything to him, but I suggested we both go and see Dad who lived ten minutes away. We went to Dad's and I sat them down and told them my prognosis, which was bloody difficult. My dad was very upset because one of the deals when you are a father is you die before your kids and now that might have changed.

So, I had told my dad, told my brother and told work. And now the worst bit. I had to tell my kids. Sunday was Remembrance Sunday and Ollie, my youngest, was in the cubs who were part of our local Service of Remembrance. My other two children from my previous marriage, Hayley and Ben, would be with us, so I decided to tell them all together after the service. Saturday was tough, not being able to tell Ollie, but I wanted to tell them all together. I had read that telling them all together is important because that way they hear the same news, the same way, can hear each other's questions, don't feel that there is any favouritism and finally can start to be that support network for each other, as sadly they will need it in time to come.

Telling my children was one of the hardest things I have ever done, but I didn't say anything about only having two years left to live. I just told them I had incurable cancer. Hayley, my eldest, cried, Ben had tears in his eyes, and I think my youngest Ollie cried because everyone else was crying and he didn't understand. And then we went to the park and played football, which might seem a strange thing to do after telling your children that you are dying. But in my mind, it was important that they saw I felt fine that day. I didn't want my children to see me as a victim and treat me differently.

The following day, Sarah and I went back to Epsom Hospital and saw Professor Chris Parker who was now officially my oncologist. He told us that I was going to be given a course of chemotherapy followed by a course of radiotherapy. The treatment would start on 13 January, had asked if it would matter if it was delayed so I could perhaps have one last good Christmas before the chemotherapy started, and maybe worse. Professor Parker was absolutely fine with that and understood the reasons.

I went back to work and effectively made sure everything was in place before I started my chemotherapy and the bank were fantastically supportive. I managed to get through the work Christmas festivities, but in my head, I was thinking that I didn't really have two years to live. I had been told that I was going to have around a year of treatment so realistically I only had a year left and I had no idea how I would be feeling by then. I felt as if all my dreams had been taken away from me and I was incredibly sad. But Christmas was coming, I had my family to think of and I was determined to try and enjoy myself.

The other person it was important for me to tell was my best mate, Jim. Jim and I were drinking and occasionally running buddies and we had run 100k from London to Brighton together earlier in 2014. I arranged to go for a run with Jim one evening and told him my prognosis. I think we both spent the next mile or so running in the dark with tears rolling down our cheeks.

When you get a prognosis like mine it takes away your ability to dream. No kids' 18th or 21st birthday parties, no graduations, no first cars, no weddings, no grandchildren, no driving round Europe with Sarah in a camper van when I retired. All these dreams had been taken away from me forever.

Sarah and I have always loved Woolacombe Bay in Devon, so we decided to hire a house there for New Year. I paid for 11 of us, including my children and our best friends, to go to Devon after our Christmas at home and we had a wonderful New Year celebration. I somehow managed to put everything to the back of my mind for a few days, but then it was time to go home and face the reality of starting my chemotherapy.

On 12 January I had my last day at work. The bank had been brilliant, and I worked hard to try to be in the frame of mind that I was going on holiday and needed to get everything tidied up and finalised before I left. I wasn't thinking about starting chemotherapy the next day, but I knew my clients would have noticed that I hadn't been myself since my diagnosis. I hadn't told them that I had prostate cancer, so the last thing I did before I left the office was to send an email to my clients, some of whom I was very close to. This is what some of that email said:

> Dear All,
>
> I just wanted to say thank you for your compassion and understanding of my personal situation. As you can imagine at a healthy 49 the last thing I expected after some minor symptoms was to be told that I may only have a few years to live, so it has been a bit of a struggle to be honest to hold it together some days.
>
> I have no idea how long I will be off for; I may be back briefly in a couple of weeks or you may not see me for six to nine months it just depends on how 18 weeks of chemotherapy and six weeks of radiotherapy does me in and how long I need to recover.
>
> Have a healthy and successful 2015
>
> Kevin

Sending that email made me sad because it made what was happening to me very real after a day when I was too busy to think about the reasons why I was going. The fact that I was leaving my clients and work colleagues and I didn't know when I would see them again really made it hit home.

Although I had not left the office until after 6pm, clearly some customers were still at work too and as my train pulled into my home station I had already received a few supportive and shocked emails from them and it had me in tears. As I walked from the train to my home, all I was thinking was how much I was going to miss work and whether I would ever go back. I went for a long run and felt very sad. I thought I might never run again after the chemotherapy started and that would mean the end of my favourite hobby and something I loved doing.

The next morning, I woke up with a knot in my stomach. Today was the start of my chemotherapy. Six courses over 18 weeks and I was very nervous. I was most worried about having a canula put into my vein because this was one of my biggest phobias. Bizarrely, I was more scared about that than the chemotherapy. Sarah drove me up to the Royal Marsden Hospital in Sutton. I had decided to have my treatment done privately because I would see the same oncologist on every hospital visit and this is what I wanted. I had been told that by going privately, it would be a much nicer 'waiting experience' for chemotherapy. There was mention of a coffee machine, comfy chairs and carpeted floors and that was good enough for me. But most importantly I learnt that the Royal Marsden only survives through donations and private patients and I was happy for them to make money through me and my treatment to help others.

We arrived at the Royal Marsden, I had a blood test and we were taken to a very nice waiting room (they weren't lying). I was then taken to what is known as the ‘chemo room’. There were already five people in the room all receiving their course of chemotherapy. I was immediately overwhelmed by a feeling of doom. I was entering a joyless, airless place and it felt like the life was being sucked out of me. There was no hope in that room, and I was terrified. I sat down and a canula was inserted into my arm. I just wanted to rip it out as a cold saline solution was injected into me and I could feel the freezing liquid going into my veins. The nurses brought out my ‘bag of chemo’ which I looked at and realised that bag of poison was going into me. It was the most horrendous feeling. The chemotherapy started and Sarah sat with me as I tried to distract myself. My iPad was on my lap, but all I kept doing was looking at the bag and praying it would be over soon. After 90 minutes it was over, and Sarah drove me home.

Sarah parked the car and I shuffled up the driveway towards our front door. I didn’t feel any worse than I had before the chemotherapy, but I was behaving how I thought I should behave after having chemo. I slumped in a chair and Sarah made me dinner and I went straight to bed. I was sad about everything and it felt like the beginning of the end. I desperately wanted to go to sleep and forget it all for a few hours, but I was wide awake. I had been given a ton of steroids during the chemotherapy and they are like having double espressos. It was a horrible night as I lay there thinking my life was over and all my dreams had been taken away. It had been a horrific day and I had another five courses of chemotherapy ahead of me and I honestly couldn't face it. I eventually cried myself to sleep for an hour or so.

The next morning, I woke up and everything hit me again. I shuffled over to our bedroom window. A typical cold, grey, miserable January morning greeted me. I stood there feeling like my world had come to an end. And then I suddenly thought, 'I'm going to go for a run.' I dressed in layers of running gear to keep out the cold, went downstairs and put on my trainers. Sarah saw me at the front door and asked me what I was doing. I told her and she said I couldn't because of the chemotherapy. I told her that the doctor hadn't said I couldn't go for a run and she quite rightly told me that I hadn't asked him!

I decided I was going to run to the park which was half a mile from our house and come straight back. I set off and it was bitterly cold, and I was slow. My legs felt like they didn't want to move, but I was telling myself to keep lifting them and move forwards. I felt sick and tired, but I managed to get to the park, do a couple of laps, turn around and run home. I managed three miles and collapsed in a chair feeling nothing but pure elation. I had done it. Everything hurt, I felt sick and I was exhausted. The thing is, you see, I had proved that I could still run; a slow, shorter, different run, yes, but run none the less, and for the first time since my diagnosis I had a bit of hope and joy about the short term.

I decided that I was going to run every other day and I now had something to focus on other than having cancer and feeling ill. I had a purpose which was good, but four or five days after my first course of chemotherapy I started to notice its effects. Over the next few weeks, my tongue turned black, my hair started falling out, my nails cracked and I was sore all over my body. But I kept running every other day to the park for a few laps and back.

Now, I should explain how a three-week cycle of chemotherapy works. You have your course at the hospital and then feel awful for a few days. You then have a week where your immunity is extremely low, and you feel tired and lethargic. And you have a final week when you start to feel a bit better. And then you have your next course of chemotherapy and start the cycle again. During that first cycle, I kept running and I was starting to feel fitter. Three miles had turned into five miles and I was running with a backpack that contained all my details, extra clothing and water in case I collapsed. By week three, I was doing loops near my house but making sure I was never more than a mile away in case anything went wrong.

It was time for my second course of chemotherapy, but I was feeling more positive. I saw Professor Parker for a blood test and told him that I had started running. I also explained to him that I had entered the Brighton marathon before I got ill, and I now wanted to run it in eight weeks' time. I had run it the year before and had immediately entered for 2015. As I said at the start of the book, I had always been a keen runner and had done quite a few marathons, including London twice. If I'm honest I don't think I would have been considering running the Brighton marathon if I hadn't already entered but it had now become my goal and was giving me something to aim for.

Professor Parker told me that nobody with my cancer could run a marathon on my kind of chemotherapy, but he could tell I was serious. He suggested I try and find someone else who had run a marathon on chemotherapy. I searched and searched but couldn't find anyone. I told Professor Parker and despite that he said it was my choice if I wanted to run the Brighton marathon and he would be slightly happier if I could train properly for it to prove it to myself and, I guess, for his peace of mind. This was the news I wanted to hear and now all my focus was on training and running the Brighton marathon. I had less than two months to train properly and be ready whilst still having my chemotherapy.

Every time I went out for a run it felt like jeopardy. I was always scared that this would be the time I was going to collapse and not be able to get home. Anyone who has ever trained for a marathon will tell you that once you are running over ten miles it gets hard. You are out there for a long time, but I stayed local so I was never too far from home. I was training by doing six-mile laps from our house and I was now trying to run almost every day. I was feeling fitter, but one day I stopped under a railway bridge and burst into tears. I felt weak, tired and I was worrying about my family and how they might cope without me, but I turned that sadness around by visualising what it would actually be like to finish the Brighton marathon and I saw myself, arms in the air, going across the finish line. That was enough right then to get me running again. Overall, I didn't feel too bad; training was going ok and I had got through three courses of chemotherapy. I had somehow managed to run 18 miles during a training session, so I felt I could finish the marathon. I was also taking my diet seriously, reading loads of running magazines and buying lots of expensive running gear. I had a focus, a goal, all the gear and no idea, but right then that was enough.

The first chemo sessions had really bashed my body and my blood was in a bit of a mess, so they decided I needed to do daily self-administered injections in my stomach to increase the platelets. Now I know some people have to do this every day forever with some conditions, but for me it just added to the misery of life on a short prognosis and I remember sitting on my bed at home looking at the needle wishing I was dead, so I didn't have to go through all this rubbish that I could only see getting worse.

With a few weeks until the Brighton marathon, Sarah and I went to my brother's for dinner. I suddenly started to get shooting pains down my spine and when we got home, I decided to have a bath to try and take the pressure off, but the pain was getting worse. I was in agony. The pain in my lower back was unbearable and we took my temperature. When you start chemotherapy, they tell you that if your temperature ever gets over 39 degrees Centigrade you must go straight to hospital. My temperature was well over that and Sarah immediately drove me to Epsom Hospital after calling them and saying I was on my way.

The pain was now so bad I couldn't sit down, so I had to prop myself up in the car for the journey. They rushed me in for a scan because they wanted to make sure I wasn't infected in some way or having a spinal cord compression, which is common for those suffering from prostate cancer. The cancer can cause your spine to contract and can lead to paralysis, but it is preventable if they catch it quickly. They pumped me full of antibiotics and morphine during the scan, but I was still in agony and I felt terrified that I was going to be left paralysed. I was still in great pain but I suddenly fell asleep and when I woke up, a few hours later, I felt alright. The hospital did some more checks and then let me go home. It had been an awful experience, but I felt ok, so we decided to go and do some shopping. Sarah and I were in Waitrose when my phone started ringing. It was the Royal Marsden to check how I was feeling. They then asked me where I was, and I told them. They immediately told me to go straight back to hospital because I shouldn't have been sent home.

Back to the Marsden we went, and I ended up spending a further three days there, being pumped full of drugs. I was in a room on my own, lying in bed and worrying that I might not be able to run the Brighton marathon. Being on my own there was nothing to distract me so my head was full of worst-case scenario thoughts. I was missing training and felt awful but did not mention to any of the doctors or nurses that I was planning to run the marathon. I didn't want them to tell me I couldn't, and I hadn't seen Professor Parker, so I said nothing. One thing that they decided, though, was that I should not self-inject anymore as they concluded that those injections were what had caused my bad reaction as they were effectively forcing my bone marrow to make more of a type of cell that clearly my body did not like. I just had to hope that without the injections and only a couple more rounds of chemo my blood would self-repair, so to speak.

I was discharged from the hospital ten days before the Brighton marathon. I felt tired and weak, but I immediately started training again. Having already run 18 miles in a session before going into hospital, I took it gently, but I was determined to be on that start line. Getting there had been the goal that had kept me going over the last few weeks and now it was just around the corner.

I had been in touch with Prostate Cancer UK to tell them I was running the marathon on chemotherapy. I wanted to support them because their forum had been so important to me and I wanted to raise awareness that one in eight men will get prostate cancer during their lives. I spoke to Gary at the charity, who was really encouraging and sent me a t-shirt to run in. I set up my Just Giving Page and nearly £15,000 had already been raised for Prostate Cancer UK before I set foot on the start line of the Brighton marathon. This included an incredible donation of £5,000 from one of my customers. I remember looking at the donation and feeling guilty. I knew the customer well, but this was an enormous amount of money to be donating. I decided to ring him to make sure he had put the decimal point in the right place. And he said, ‘Kevin, you are one of the nicest people I have met, and you don’t deserve to have cancer.’ This gave me a massive boost because it made me realise that I was touching people and making them think about prostate cancer and possibly their own lives.

The night before the marathon I was in race mode. Before any long race you are wondering if you will finish, worrying you will get an injury and realising you have got to run 26.2 miles. I had got through the training on chemotherapy, I felt ok and I was ready to run the Brighton marathon.