



Today's paper | eEdition | Subscribe | The Truth-O-Meter

Classifieds | Jobs

Home | News | Politics | Opinion | Sports | Things to Do | Money | Features

Search [input] Site Web Archives - back to 1987 Google Newspaper A



Most emailed

- Two Tampa police officers shot, killed during traffic stop
Tampa Bay Rays' B.J. Upton needs to show more effort
Experts come up with risky plan to save sea turtle hatchlings from gulf oil spill
Boyfriend goes on trial in murder of University of Tampa student
Rapid turnover of Afghan, Iraq generals a cause for concern

Soccer

- Even in remission, cancer still touches all parts of Rowdies fullback Graham Tatters' life
Tampa Bay Rowdies lose 1-0 to Portland, skid hits four games
Soccer: Tampa Bay Rowdies at Portland Timbers

Even in remission, cancer still touches all of Rowdies fullback Graham Tatters' life

Eduardo A. Encina, Times Staff Writer
Posted: Jun 29, 2010 11:03 AM

TAMPA — Rowdies fullback Graham Tatters doesn't sweat the small stuff anymore.

The Scottish-born soccer player just turned 25 Monday, but has seen the fragility of life, including his own. He has learned the value of perseverance. And he has seen too many close friends come and go.

"I know a lot of people who have died," Tatters said. "I have to look at things at times, like all this I have could be gone. I have to look at what I would do if I only had a year to live. If someone told me that, I know I would be doing the exact same thing. It's a nice feeling to be in that place."

It has been four years since Tatters beat cancer, but his two-year ordeal with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma follows him every minute. It's not the twice-a-year checkups that bring it back. Memories of five rounds of grueling chemotherapy to eradicate a 9-pound tumor lodged between his lungs that nearly killed him remain vivid. But it's the people he has met along the way that make it all important.

Print Email Post Reput

Story Tools

- Comment on this story
Email Newsletters

Social Bookmarking

ADVERTISEMENT



Eat For Less In A
Just enter your em and get up to 85% restaurants... Lea



Texas Health Ins
Family affordable insurance. Nation: at \$135 with a \$2C deductible... Lear

Add Y

The Tampa Bay Rowdies add ex-Tampa Bay Buccaneers PR director Jeff Kamis to executive staff
Tampa Bay Rowdies file official protest regarding poor playing conditions in Puerto Rico

"I would say that about 80 percent of his life has to do with cancer," said Dana, his wife.

• • •

Tatters was diagnosed at age 19, while a sophomore walk-on at UNC-Charlotte. On the field, his greatest strength was his fitness. He was always able to outrun opponents and teammates. One day, when Tatters was unable to walk to class because everything was spinning — and his left arm hurt — he went to the campus clinic, where they told him he probably strained a muscle lifting weights.

The dizziness remained, and he developed a bad cough. Doctors said he had pneumonia. A nurse noticed a bump on his chest, but even Tatters brushed it off as a result of getting elbowed during a game. But it prompted an X-ray, which revealed one of his lungs was entirely full of fluid, the other two-thirds full.

A closer look revealed the tumor.

Tatters found himself in the pediatric cancer treatment ward of Presbyterian Hospital in Charlotte. Doctors told him he likely wouldn't run again, let alone play soccer.

He was determined to return to the field.

"I describe it as my light at the end of the tunnel," Tatters said. "When you're sitting there and you don't know what you're doing, you're miserable and you're tired and you can't see your friends, that's what I looked forward to."

Chemotherapy left him weak. Steroids led to a 50-pound weight gain. Another day he woke up in the middle of the morning crying.

Tatters made his presence known at the hospital. He loved playing Xbox with you and befriended everyone who crossed his path.

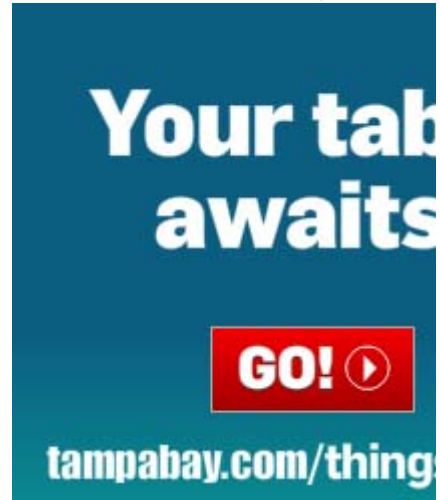
"His treatment was very aggressive," said his doctor, Mark Mogul. "He had chemotherapy, blood transfusions, spinal taps. But Graham was so outgoing and he has such a bright outlook."

Said Tatters: "To me, it was great. I'm challenging 8 year olds to Tetris."

Tatters made countless friends. He attended Dream Street, a camp in Arizona for kids with life-threatening diseases.

"An English teacher once said to me that the reason you read books is to find out how everyone is kind of similar," he said. "It's the same when you're going through cancer. You don't know what's going wrong because no one can relate to you. No one can say what that's like, because they don't."

ADVERTISEMENT



Sports (General)



Henrik Sedin Wins NHL MVP Award



Marlins Fire Their Manager



Ni Fa La Te

• • •

After missing his sophomore season, he returned to the pitch as a junior, playing protective plate that guarded a port connected to his heart used for treatment.

He had to re-learn the game. One of the drugs he took for spinal taps took away his fingers and toes.

"I used to run all day," Tatters said. "I'd try to outrun everybody. When you can you've got to think of other ways. You've got to disguise things a little bit better idiot. I just ran everywhere."

Now Tatters is involved in the Livestrong Global Envoy Program — in which publ as athletes and actors become cancer activists — and hopes to become more in visiting hospital patients and serving as a spokesman. When the Rowdies played visited the Livestrong headquarters. In this young season, he has befriended a t Rowdies fan whose girlfriend is undergoing the same treatment he had.

"He's met so many people through cancer and those people were like family to h Tatters said. "Graham just touches a lot of people's lives and that's something h

In one way, Tatters feels like it's his duty. He lost his best friend to cancer a yea aunt just weeks ago. His mother just recently beat breast cancer.


He looks at the photos from his trip to the Dreamstreet camp, and he is the only There is a quilt in Presbyterian Hospital with the names of all the kids who were at the same time. Of the 40-something names, he is the sole survivor.

"Every now and again, you think about it and you don't complain about many th that," Tatters said. "If your plane's late or your legs are hurting, you're like, 'Jes alive.'

"Those are the things that really hit me. Most of the time, I can blow it off and s deal. But when you see and remember your arms around this person or that per think, 'They died six months ago. They died a year ago,' it really hits you hard."

Up next
Rowdies vs. Miami
7 p.m. Sunday, Steinbrenner Field, Tampa
TV: BHSN

[Last modified: Jun 29, 2010 11:03 AM]

 [Click here for reuse options!](#)
Copyright 2010 St. Petersburg Times

 [Click here to post a comment](#)

There are 0 comments

Have your say...