



The Cancer Survivor's Champion

A carefully progressed plan based on knowledge and exercise produces solid results.

Client: Alan

Personal Trainer: Laura Rosencrantz, owner, Inpower™

Location: Portland, Oregon

Experience and Knowledge. Laura Rosencrantz is a perfect example of how niche training can elevate a career. She has made a successful living out of working with cancer survivors. She received her education through the University of Northern Colorado's Rocky Mountain Cancer Rehabilitation Institute. "I have trained and worked with more than 300 cancer patients from the time of diagnosis on through survivorship," Rosencrantz says.

It was this experience and reputation that led then 54-year-old athlete—and non-Hodgkins lymphoma patient—Alan to seek out Rosencrantz's services.

Facts. "What many personal trainers might not realize is that cancer treatment has lingering side effects that may last many years," Rosencrantz notes. Two primary side effects that can negatively impact physical performance are severe weakness and fatigue, she adds. "Cancer patients commonly lose as much as 35% of their overall physical ability within the first few months of treatment. Muscle wasting and weakness continue to worsen as treatment progresses, making it very difficult to [perform] even simple everyday tasks."

For Alan, a competitive cyclist accustomed to pushing to his limits, the fatigue and weakness were frustrating. He was not used to the limitations produced by his treatment, which became a challenge in itself.

Honesty. Prior to working with Rosencrantz, Alan had attempted his own postrehabilitation training program and failed. "He was at a point where he was ready to try something new because his approach wasn't working," she says. The initial challenge came when Alan insisted on pushing himself, despite her insistence on a more progressive plan.

"I knew educating Alan was key. He is a competitive, type-A personality and keeps track of every mile he rides. I explained to him how people with cancer, and those who have survived it, may have disease- or treatment-specific limitations that pose challenges to exercise. Eventually he began to understand why he was having certain reactions to exercise and how exercise could be a benefit or a hinderance. He then gained a sense of control and hope."

Training Protocols. Once Alan fully understood the benefits of taking a progressive approach, the real training began. He started slowly, exercising for 10 minutes at low to moderate intensity on an indoor cycling bike twice per week. "I began to exercise at the recommended moderate intensity and soon found out how difficult it really was," Alan recalls. As he gained strength and stamina, Alan progressed to 30 minutes for up to five times per week.

He also performed a strength program that consisted of light-resistance, high-repetition exercises such as Thera-Band® chest presses and rows, stability ball wall squats and side raises. "He progressed to push-ups on the BOSU® Balance Trainer,

Smith rack rows, and various other exercises such as overhead presses while standing on the BOSU ball. "Because of the location of his surgery (stomach), it was important to incorporate gentle exercises to help him relearn how to use his abdominals correctly and regain core strength," Rosencrantz points out. "We did pelvic tilts, supine toe-tapping, modified roll-ups and more."

New Records. "In 5 months of training with me, Alan's fatigue decreased by 94% and his strength increased by 217%!" Rosencrantz enthuses. "He was also able to compete in his first time trial and beat his precancer time."

"I mostly have fun in noncompetitive long-distance events with 100-mile centuries as the sweet spot," Alan adds. "I have done three weeklong Cycle Oregon events since cancer and have a bucket list of other endurance events scheduled." Despite his battle, Alan logs about 7,000–8,000 miles per year—mostly due to a 45-mile commute. "I usually round that out with a long-distance ride on weekends."

Alan, now 59, also works for the U.S. Forest Service and lends a hand fighting fires during the summer. His training has helped keep him on the frontlines with others one-third his age. "There are very few men my age who are still fireline-qualified for 'arduous duty,' which requires a fitness test that involves hauling a 45-pound pack for 3 miles in under 45 minutes. "I often finish in about 38 minutes—well ahead of the 20-year-olds!" he boasts. ■

Calling All Trainers

Do you have a client who has overcome the odds to achieve new heights in health and fitness? Send your story to rhalvorson@ideafit.com and you and your client may be featured in an upcoming issue of *IDEA Fitness Journal*.

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