

About K.C. Fontes

Sixteen-year-old K.C. Fontes has been a member of the Salinas High Mountain Bike team his freshman and sophomore years. In June of 2014, K.C. underwent an experimental radiation procedure at Stanford Medical Center to stop the growth of a recurring fibrous desmoid tumor. This was the second time in 12 months that doctors have applied this treatment. His recovery is going well. There was much less swelling following the second procedure and K.C. was able to wear his prosthetic bike leg 2 weeks later and is back riding a local pump track.

K.C. will be a junior in the fall of 2014. A “K.C. Fontes Medical Fund” account has been established at Wells Fargo bank. Donations received will be used to offset future medical expenses like the new prosthetic devices that will be necessary as he continues to grow.



More About K.C. Fontes

From the article: Salinas High School Mountain Biker Competes with Prosthetic Leg

By Dennis Taylor, Monterey Herald, June 8, 2013

Video portrait: http://www.montereyherald.com/golf/ci_23420250/salinas-high-school-mountain-biker-competes-prosthetic-leg

K.C. was 3 years old when his parents bought him his first bike, and he spent most of his time on two wheels until a painful lump showed up on the back of his right leg when he was in the sixth grade. "My leg became all swollen and I couldn't ride anymore. It hurt," he said.

His doctors found a tumor, which they attempted to remove surgically. "The tumor was basically like a form of scar tissue that had wrapped around the arterial veins, so they also had to cut open my left leg and transplant a vein so I'd have some blood supply," he said. "When they did that, I lost more than 60 percent of my blood."

But his trials were only beginning. Doctors at Stanford Hospital determined that he had a fibrous desmoid tumor, one of the rarest known to science. And an MRI revealed the growth was coming back fast.

Because the tumor wraps around veins and arteries and feeds off blood, further surgery was ruled out. Instead, doctors put him on chemotherapy once a week for 18 months, which made him so sick he missed his entire seventh-grade year of school.

"I just felt miserable. I didn't want to eat anything. I lost a lot of weight and couldn't gain it back. And my leg was stuck at a 90-degree angle, so I couldn't use it," he said. "At that point, I felt like there was no point even having the leg, and two months into the chemo I was telling my parents, 'I'm done. I'm ready to have it amputated.'"

His parents, Dave and Corrine, weren't ready to throw in the towel, but after a year and a half of chemotherapy, the doctors saw few alternatives. While the tumor no longer was growing, it also wasn't going away.

"My parents included me in every meeting, every decision, throughout the whole process, but when it was time to make a decision about the amputation, I wasn't allowed in," he said. "I sat outside in the waiting room with my grandmother, and my parents and my aunt went in to talk to the doctor."

The leg was cut off a month later. Surgeons moved his kneecap and part of his ankle to the bottom of the stump, hoping to allow him to walk on his knees. Eight pins and more than 200 staples were needed to hold it all in place.

"Unfortunately, it never healed. The skin graft failed. I couldn't get a prosthesis. I was upset. They were upset. It was seventh-grade summer, I was 13, and I felt myself giving up," K.C. said. "There were times when I was just tired of fighting and felt like I didn't want to be here anymore. I'd have to say family support is what got me through." Another surgery was scheduled, during which doctors cut off another inch of his leg and grafted more skin. The results were much better.

He healed well enough to be fitted for a prosthetic leg, but that, too, was a frustrating process. But another prosthetic — designed by amputee Brian Bartlett, a professional downhill mountain-bike racer — has helped him get back on his bike. The prosthetic's unique design, with sockets, rubber bands and an actual bicycle shock absorber, makes it possible for K.C. to push the pedal 360 degrees — something he was not able to do before. He also discovered he could stand in the pedals and sprint, another first.

His prognosis remains unknown. In May, doctors found yet another growth — this one in his buttocks — that was treated with surgery and chemotherapy.