

Fawcett Con't

For Fawcett and her husband, Capt Curtis Smith, the loss of Keiran was devastating. But Fawcett, who had always taken great pride in her level of physical fitness, also faced another challenge – learning to be active again with just one leg.

Fawcett learned to walk on her prosthetic leg with the help of amputee rehabilitation experts at St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital. But when the facility closed, she was left to take the rest of her recovery into her own hands. Always active before the accident, Fawcett, whose leg was amputated above the knee, called other physiotherapy clinics and consulted the Internet to find out how she might one day be able to run again with her prosthetic leg.

"I got fed up with hearing rejection so I just got on a treadmill and taught myself how to run", she says.

And now, Fawcett is adding swimming and cycling to her training regimen so that she can compete in the Limestone Charity Triathlon on May 27.

"I used to do triathlons before my accident and I fell in love with the sport", says Fawcett. "It's something I've always wanted to do, or at least try to do."

The Limestone Triathlon consists of a 500-metre swim, a 20-km bike, and a 5-km run. Determined to do all three, Fawcett has sought out the advice of some very credible experts.

"I've been working with Penguins Can Fly and Vicki Keith", says Fawcett of getting back in the water. "You can easily go around in a circle endlessly until you figure out how to coordinate your arms and your legs and the push and the breathing."

For the cycling portion of the event, Fawcett hopes to use a tandem bicycle with her younger brother Scott, who recently returned from a tour in Afghanistan.

And though she may have already taught herself to run with her current prosthetic, plans are underway to get Fawcett a leg designed especially for runners.

"The Colonel is helping me gain access to somebody that can help build a leg for me", says Fawcett of Base Commander Col Spike Hazleton. The running leg would be curved at the foot and have energy return capability, unlike Fawcett's current prosthesis which can be stiff and heavy.

Fawcett is grateful for the logistical and financial help; running legs can cost as much as \$10,000.

"I will travel anywhere in Canada that I need to go to gain access to the services I need to run", says a determined Fawcett. "It's a spirit of a soldier to keep soldiering on and to keep going despite the tragedy, despite the calamity, despite the loss."

And it's keeping her job as a soldier in the Canadian Forces that drives Fawcett, who currently serves as the College Administration Officer at RMC. This fall, she will have to complete a physical fitness test just like her colleagues.

“If I don’t meet the standards, I will be released”, explains Fawcett, who plans on working to have new policies created within the CF regarding the retention of injured soldiers.

In the meantime, she hopes to raise money and awareness for Soldier On, a new foundation created for CF members and veterans to help them recover from injury through sport.

“It’s to raise awareness that there are injured soldiers in the community and we need equipment and we need the expertise to help us”, says Fawcett. “It may be that I will be the first above-knee amputee asking the CF to keep me.”

But Fawcett wants more than to be retained; an experienced soldier who served in Afghanistan in 2002 as a Material Management and Movement Control Officer, she hopes to attain an exemplary level of fitness that will allow her to be deployable again.

“I’m going to do that triathlon, I’m going to keep running, and I’m going to volunteer to get myself on parade”, says Fawcett. “I’m going to do everything possible to prove that I can continue to do my job as a Movements Officer.”

And wherever she goes, her husband will be right by her side. “I have been so blessed and so fortunate to have such an incredible partner”, says Fawcett of Smith, who is himself training for the Lake Placid Ironman in July. “As painful as it was for him to lose Keiran, we have been each other’s pillars.”

Fawcett doesn’t plan on stopping at triathlons, either; other goals include downhill skiing, martial arts and rock climbing.

“I’m always thinking of ways that you can achieve what people think is the impossible”, she says. “I still have my spirit; I still have my commitment and drive.”

And she still has her memories of the son who changed her life, for the better, in an instant. “He was our angel. To lose him was very tough but I’m so thankful for the time that I had”, says Fawcett.

May 27 will no doubt be a challenging day for Fawcett, both emotionally and physically. “I’m going to be there no matter what”, she says of the triathlon. “I need to do it for myself. I need to prove to myself that I can still move mountains and make carpets fly.”