

Healthy Harmonious Bodies

Australia's Strongest Man has a 'Ripple Effect'

by Maggie Wilde

What does a man saved by a five year old girl, a Fijian Islander, an insulin dependant diabetic & a devoted father of two have in common with Australia's Strongest Man?

It's not a trick question... they're one and the same people.

If there is one burning question that most of us have been asked at a very early age it would have to be... "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

For most people finding the answer to that innocent question becomes a lifelong quest... but for 36 year old Derek Boyer the quest was not to find the answer because he always knew it... the quest was to fulfill the dream with every waking breath.

Derek's quest was to become The World's Strongest Man and now there are only a handful of people in the world that separate him from that title.

"When I am at my peak I am most alive... it is the ultimate feeling for me" replied Derek when asked what it is that motivates him to keep training... and training. "It's a mental, emotional and physical euphoria, a feeling of being the best you can possibly be. Most people can relate to that in some way... feeling the euphoria of just being alive... filled with life-force."

In 1995 Derek was dealt a tremendous setback. He was diagnosed with Type 1 insulin dependant diabetes. Initially he felt an incredible sense of loss. He was an elite athlete who was ranked No.1 in Australian power lifting. In the space of two weeks he had lost 20 kilos and was seriously ill.

"I was going blind and I literally thought I was going to die" he said.

After being diagnosed Derek's first pressing thought sent him into a spin. 'Could he be an elite athlete and be diabetic, would this mean the end of his dream?'

Soon after Derek read an article about NRL

Bronco player Steve Renouf. Steve was an elite athlete and diabetic. "I read the article over and over again," he said. "It became my inspiration; I knew it could be done."

Within a year Derek had rebuilt himself



Just practicing, pulling a 20 tonne REX Plane at Albury Airport. Derek says "I'm looking for something much bigger!"

mentally and physically, he was bigger and stronger than he had ever been before.

"That year was hard, it showed me that life is a precious gift" he said. "I love hearing stories about people that stand up and try against the

odds. I didn't give up and look at me now. I won the Australian title as a diabetic and I compete internationally to be The World's Strongest Man as a diabetic."

Derek believes we are designed to do different things. It's just a matter of working out what gifts we're designed for. "An elephant can never criticize a mouse for not being able to do what the elephant can do" Derek says. "The mouse is simply different, that's all. There are people who handle money better than me, people who cut hair better than me; I am simply stronger than other people. I think if you work out where your gifts lie then you can praise God by using those gifts to help and inspire your fellow man in any way you can."

To Derek the concept of God is all encompassing; beyond all our perceptions of what IS.

"Whether you call God Allah, Buddha or Yahweh, I think they're one and the same. To me there is a common thread of good in all people and if you are true to that goodness then you will always find enlightenment."

Derek's advice to anyone with a dream is simple. "Life is short, so play hard! Be passionate about the world... work out what your gifts are and embrace them... explore all your possibilities."

With his life and dreams no longer focused solely on being the world's strongest man, Derek is ready for more. "I am ready to do much more with my gifts and use them to help my fellow man" he said. His work with charitable endeavours including Diabetes Australia has blessed him with some of the best feelings he has ever experienced. He wants to become even more involved and to raise awareness about other issues such as obesity.

“If I can inspire others the way Steve Renouf inspired me, I would be honoured” he says. “I believe that what we do with our life has a ripple effect, like throwing stones in a pond. We affect others in ways we aren’t even aware of.”

Some years ago Derek taught his youngest daughter Paris to dial emergency services. At the time he was unaware of the impact it would have on his life or the ripple effect it would have on the lives of others.



Derek and his mates, the Viking Giants, strut their stuff!

“Paris was only five years old at the time” he said. “I had been out all day doing a profile for Channel 7 on Today Tonight. It was such a long day and I was exhausted when I got home. I passed out and, as a diabetic, I would have slipped into a coma and died.” Alone and scared, Paris remembered how to dial 000. The paramedics traced the call and she led them to her Dad.

The incident found its way onto the front page of newspapers. ‘5-year-old girl saves Australia’s Strongest Man.’ People began approaching him in the street to let him know that the story had inspired them to teach their own children how to deal with emergencies.

We can never really be sure what impact our ripples will have on the world, but the message is simple. If we strive for our best with good intent we can be assured those ripples will be positive.

I asked Derek one final question... if he could give any gift to the world what would it be?

“The gift of understanding” he smiled. “There are far too many misunderstandings in the world. If we learn to understand and respect our fellow man, respect his beliefs and how he thinks there would be far less fear and far more compassion in the world!”

If you would like to be involved in Derek’s quest to inform and inspire about health and diabetes he is currently collating material for his website.

You too can be part of the ripple...

Email Derek direct: dboyer@derekboyer.com
or visit www.derekboyer.com