



ETDG 2008 Competitor Story: Tomas Drevikovsky

How does someone look like who is transplanted five times? My suggestion was a suffering person who has resigned and struggles with fate. At the first moment it appears to be like that. Tomas Drevikovsky, Czech, 58 years old is of a middle stature, has less hair on his head and deep wrinkles are signing his face. You can see that he had experienced a lot of pain and hard times. His gaze reaches from melancholic to sad but is surprisingly steady and determined.

At the age of 29 his kidneys stopped working efficiently. In those days everything worked out fine for him, he did a lot of sport – and from one day to another, doctors told him that everything was over. His body was so weakened by the dialysis that he was unable to exercise. It took a few months before he recovered. Then Drevikovsky realised that he is able to exercise – not on the same level as before – however it made him feel better. Swimming, cycling and skiing, all that helped him to find the balance in his life again.

In 1981, after two years on the dialysis, the first transplantation followed. The surgery failed. The results were scars – on body and soul. Another two years later the transplantation succeeded and for the first time it looked like everything might get better from then. However, in 1985 a rejection destroyed even that hope. Drevikovsky had to be dialysed again. In 1988 the third transplantation was finally a success and his performance re-improved.

With the new kidney, everything changed. He discovered his new possibilities and got involved in the recently founded Czech Association of Dialysed and Transplant Patients (SDaT) and became responsible for the sport section. The passionate athlete organised the appearance of the Czech team at international competitions. In 1991, he and his national team participated for the first time in the World Championships in Hungarian. Several medals were the evidence for their success.

Then, in 2001, there was the setback. The kidney had to be removed from the body. One year later he was offered a new chance and got transplanted for the fourth time. In 2005 at the World Championships in Canada Drevikovsky is back in the game. “My old strength was completely back.” Suddenly, everything looked like it was all over again. Due to the diversity of drugs his liver was in danger to malfunction. There is no alternative therapy. From that moment he was in a state between death and life. However Drevikovsky was lucky and in 2007, a new liver and a new kidney were transplanted.

Tomas Drevikovsky is looking forward to the 5. European Championships in Wuerzburg in September. It's for sure that he will join his team “when the doctors give their okay.” After all sport is – beside his family – his “light at the end of the tunnel”. It's all not about throwing an opponent; it's about joining the competition and beating the illness and the limitations which come along with.

Community and solidarity convey a great deal to Drevikovsky. “All athletes have the same fate” that connects. Especially important is the final ceremony: “We always promise each other to rejoin the Championships, knowing that our illnesses can set up our plans anytime.

What does someone like Drevikovsky think about doping and other excesses of modern sports?

“Those athletes respect neither the lives of their colleagues nor their own lives. They are just focused on winning, becoming famous and earning money.” 59-year-old Drevikovsky knows about the weakness of his body and would never have the idea to push his achievements artificially. The Olympic idea is what counts.

(Author: Peik Bremer / Photo: ETDG)