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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BCSSA has been informed about a man who has been a BCSSA swimmer, coach and a mentor in the past and we thought we should share this story with you.

Colwood extreme athlete takes on fight against cancer

Rob Dyke has done it all, from swimming around Vancouver Island, to mountain climbing to competing professionally in triathlon. And now he's facing his hardest challenge of all — cancer.

A force to be reckoned with, Dyke's list of accomplishments is long, and he's travelled the world conquering one goal at a time. With successes, he has also had his fair share of setbacks. But that has never stopped him.

The first time the Colwood-based father of one jumped in the ocean in Vancouver in 1995 and attempted to swim to Victoria, he came just 400 metres short of the Island. Dyke had to call it quits as he was suffering from severe hypothermia. But on his second attempt one year later he successfully swam the 52 kilometre crossing in 10-1/2 hours. With taste for the extreme, in 2003, he decided he was going to swim around Vancouver Island. "The first time you try something you are just learning about it," Dyke said. "The first time I tried to swim around the Island I got farther than I thought I would."

After 56 days, Dyke dislocated his shoulder swimming through four-metre waves near Brooks Peninsula park on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island. While he didn't finish that time, Dyke reattempted the swim in 2005 and successfully completed the 1,400 kilometre trip after 94 days.

Conquering the goal of swimming around the Island is large feat for anyone, but only a few years earlier doctors had predicted Dyke would not be able to swim again. In 1997 he was in a catastrophic cycling crash while training for an Ironman triathlon to take place in Japan.

Dyke suffered numerous injuries including a fractured skull, fractured knee cap, broken nose, dislocated shoulder and knocking some teeth out.

At that point Dyke had competed in triathlons professionally for three years, but was forced to walk away after competing in more than 50 triathlons, including seven Ironman competitions.

"I've competed in triathlons in just about every continent," Dyke said.

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The first mountain Dyke set to climb was Mount Baker with his best friend Ian Scanlan. "We didn't get anywhere near the top," he laughed adding three years later the two were climbing Mount Everest.

It had been Scanlan's dream to climb Everest starting from sea level, Dyke agreed to be his cook and support climber. The pair embarked on the journey from sea to sky. "We walked from the Bay of Bengal (in India) and Ian got within 400 metres from the top without oxygen," Dyke said adding the pair figured at that time it was the farthest a Canadian had made it without the use of additional oxygen.

While Dyke has accomplished many goals, he knows it's the support of others that makes that it possible.

"Whether it's mountain climbing or marathon swimming, there are a whole bunch of people helping me," Dyke said. "You just need to set a goal and get support networks in place."

Although Dyke has many magnificent feats under his belt, he has now embarked on a different type of journey, battling a rare form of incurable leukemia.

"Only one in three million people get it. It's a matter of not what but when," he said. "I've got a fantastic team at the B.C. Cancer Centre. We are learning to cope with the condition."

Now Dyke can be found at the gym everyday in the fitness centre at West Shore Parks and Recreation. He works out, walks and swims as part of keeping up with his healthy lifestyle.

Dyke has been all over the world pursuing many dreams, but humbly he said WSPR has helped set a solid foundation for his success.

"The most valuable things I've learned, I've learned here. This place has given me the foundation to go out and do these things," Dyke said. "In the early days I learned the harder you work, the better you do. It's all about hard work and commitment."

WSPR has been a second home for Dyke, who has been coming to the facility since he was four years old. Now 42, Dyke brings his two-year-old son Hudson.

"I don't want to give my son things; I want to give him experiences," Dyke said. Dyke is holding a presentation called "Just Say Yes" at WSPR, JDF Spinnaker Room March 10, 7 to 8:30 p.m. Free, but pre-register at 250-478-8384.

Dyke is also participating in Ride for the Cure, a cancer fundraiser. To donate, see www.conquercancer.ca/goto/robd.