

Derrick Hall and Rep. Fred Allen turn their prostate cancer diagnoses into an opportunity for public advocacy.

PULLING OUT A WIN

BY ERIN BRERETON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARLES HUEBSCH AND JACOB SLATON

The timing couldn't have been worse for Derrick Hall, president and CEO of the Arizona Diamondbacks, to be diagnosed with prostate cancer.

It was 2011 and the Diamondbacks were poised to make the Major League Baseball playoffs a month later—which Hall was determined not to miss. The call from Hall's urologist, informing him that he had cancer, came when he was away from home, in San Diego, California, with the team for a game. Even worse, his dad was already battling pancreatic cancer.

Stunned, Hall immediately called his wife, Amy. Within a few days, he had told everybody—he emailed his staff, called his children and issued a press release.

Hall's decision to publicly share the news that he had cancer may seem surprising. But he knew that, for him, it was the right call. "I felt like I could take advantage of having a public position and hopefully educate others and drive awareness," Hall says. "I wanted to share my story."

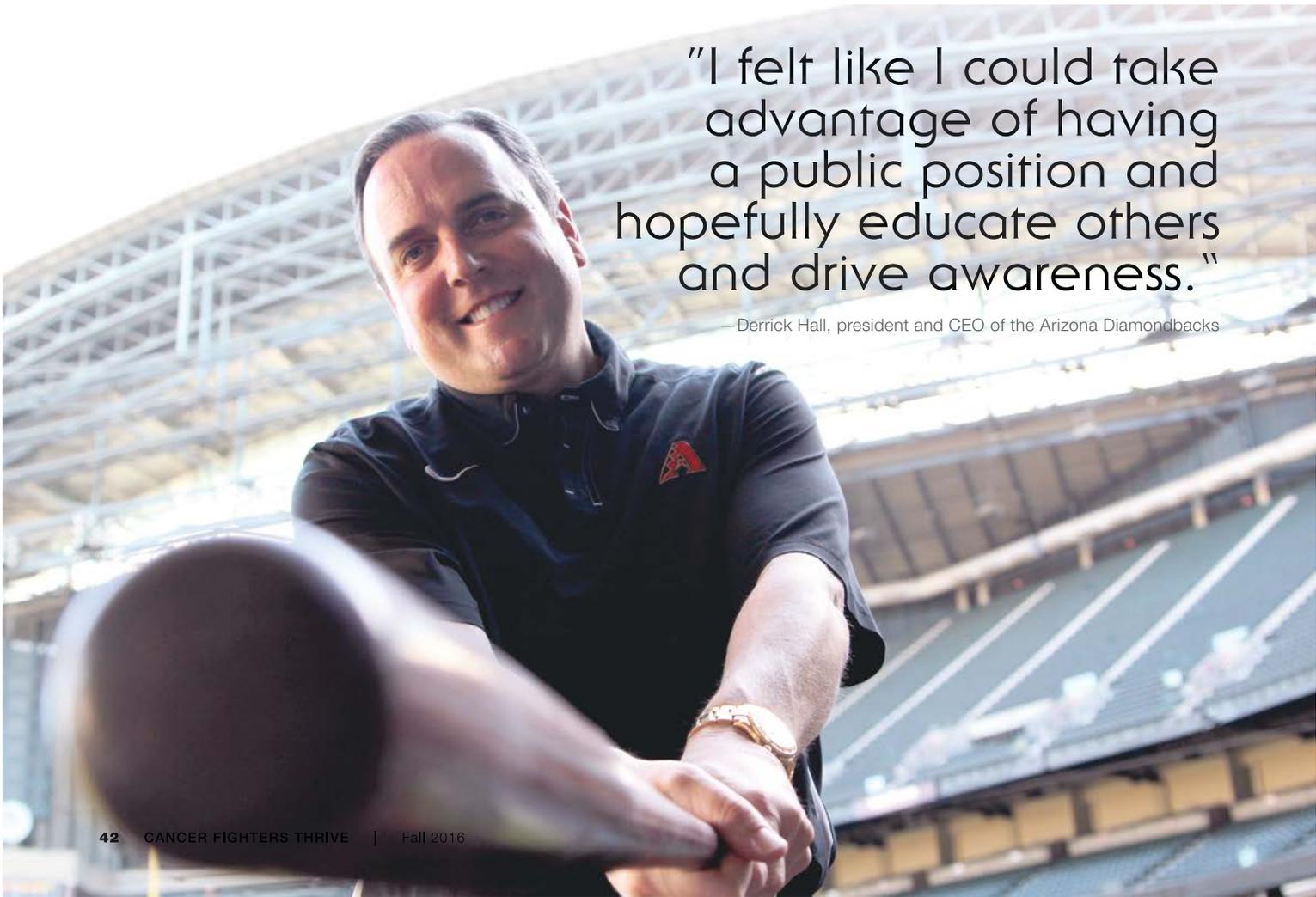
A CALL TO ACTION

Hall's diagnosis was a surprise. A cardiologist who was monitoring his blood pressure and cholesterol included a PSA test in a round of lab work, and after discovering elevated levels, advised Hall, then 42, to meet with a urologist, who discovered the cancer.

Before deciding to move forward with surgery, Hall and his wife spent nights researching treatment options. Additional advice also poured in from some unexpected sources.

"That was one result of being so public—I got a number of phone calls from old acquaintances I didn't even know had had cancer," Hall says. "Most men out there don't have that network. That's one reason I started my foundation."

After recovering from a successful surgery—Hall's PSA level today is virtually undetectable—he launched the Derrick Hall Pro-State Foundation in 2013 to provide support for prostate cancer patients. Its website, Pro-State.org,



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offers objective information about testing, diagnosis and treatment.

Two years ago, Hall also joined the board of directors at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America® (CTCA) in Phoenix, Arizona. "CTCA® is an unbelievably inspiring place, and I believe in it and its mission," Hall says.

Public figures like Hall who share their story can help present treatment in a positive light, says Dr. Walter Quan, Chief of Medical Oncology and Director of Immunotherapy at CTCA in Phoenix, Arizona.

But Dr. Quan also recognizes that going public with a diagnosis is a risk. "On one hand, there is some worry a public figure is going to be perceived as too weak to do his or her job; but now, we have examples that are the opposite," says Dr. Quan, who did not treat Hall but has treated more than a dozen high-profile patients. "I see a lot of cancer patients in the spotlight now looking at advocacy as a way to give back and help others, which is very much a plus."

AN UNSETTLING RESULT

Like Hall, Arkansas state Rep. Fred Allen wasn't expecting a prostate cancer

diagnosis when he agreed to be tested to help promote a church health fair. His doctor had checked his PSA level just six months earlier.

However, after being told his PSA level was suspicious, Allen, 54, had a biopsy and learned he had cancer. "I was totally shocked," Allen says. "I thought everything was normal."

At first, he only told his daughter, Camille. After choosing a treatment method—robotic surgery—Allen decided to share his diagnosis with more people. "I made it public," he says. "At the same time I told my family, I called up all my legislative friends and told them."

Allen was midway between elections, so he wasn't worried about opponents targeting his illness or negative press. "What I was really concerned about was making sure the cancer wouldn't recur," he says.

Allen completed roughly a year of treatment. But two years later, his PSA levels began increasing, even after 40 radiation treatments. When his doctor told him he likely had six to nine months to live, Allen reached out to CTCA.

CTCA and NFL Alumni Against Prostate Cancer

Earlier this year, CTCA enhanced its support for prostate cancer screening, diagnosis and treatment by launching a program with the National Football League Alumni Association to raise awareness among league alumni and football fans.

For more information, visit cancercenter.com/nfl-partnership



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Rep. Fred Allen, left, of Arkansas, now serves on the Arkansas Prostate Cancer Foundation and promotes awareness by sharing his cancer journey.

Because he had a unique circumstance—being a politician, at that point, in the middle of an election—his CTCA doctor gave him a month off during treatment to campaign, on one condition: Allen had to promise to return to treatment at Southeastern Regional Medical Center (Southeastern) in Newnan, Georgia, immediately after.

“The election was March 1, 2016,” he says. “I think I was right back at Southeastern on March 2.” Allen’s PSA level was 59 when he arrived at CTCA. Today it is at a level of 0.06.

“My team of oncologists headed by Dr. John McKnight put together a regimen for me, and it worked,” Allen says. “When I got there, I was stage 4, metastasized cancer. They never said how much time I had; they just said, ‘Keep a positive attitude and don’t give up. Keep fighting.’”

Allen says with the help of God, he went from stage 4 cancer back to the state house.

THE NOT-SO-SILENT MAJORITY

Since his initial diagnosis, Allen has spoken at seminars, served on the Arkansas Prostate Cancer Foundation board and appeared on billboards promoting prostate cancer detection—all with the intent of furthering awareness and education.

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—Fred Allen, Arkansas state representative

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As part of his ongoing effort to encourage an open dialogue, Allen still works to promote the annual church screening that first revealed his cancer—which he hopes will encourage more men to get tested.

“The problem is there’s somewhat of a stigma that if you have prostate cancer, your life is over,” he says. “That’s not true. You can continue to do things you were doing before you were diagnosed—life goes on.” ●

No case is typical. You should not expect to experience these results.

Star Startups

Famous faces who have launched organizations to educate and advocate for cancer patients.



Lance Armstrong: The famed cyclist who went public about his testicular cancer founded the Livestrong Foundation, which provides cancer patient advocacy and services.¹



Katie Couric: The award-winning journalist, whose husband, Jay Monahan, died of colon cancer in 1998, is a co-founder of the National Colorectal Cancer Research Alliance and the research-based Stand Up to Cancer program.^{2,3}



Joe Biden: The vice president’s National Cancer Moonshot Initiative, designed to make more therapies available and improve early detection methods, was announced during President Barack Obama’s 2016 State of the Union address. Biden’s son, Beau, died of brain cancer at age 46.⁴

¹ <https://www.livestrong.org/>

² <http://origin.eifoundation.org/programs/cifs-national-colorectal-cancer-research-alliance/>

³ <http://www.standup2cancer.org/>

⁴ <http://www.cancer.gov/research/key-initiatives/moonshot-cancer-initiative>