

# YOUTH NEWS

## Successful management of haemophilia is key to playing competition sport, but for Pat it wasn't always that easy.

*Patrick Kitschke, from South Australia, is 22 years old and has mild haemophilia. Successful management of his haemophilia has meant that Pat has been able to train for and compete in triathlons. In 2019 he completed a triathlon in Cairns, which he dedicated to raising awareness about haemophilia and fundraising for Haemophilia Foundation Australia.*

As a child, Pat didn't want to think about his haemophilia. In his words, he refused to acknowledge he had a 'problem which I didn't want to get sorted out'. He didn't want to receive treatment, resulting in missed school, and a spontaneous joint bleed which put him 'out for three years'.

Playing football as a young child, Pat recalls hiding his football-related injuries from his mother to avoid visiting the hospital for treatment.

*'I was a terrible patient to the many health practitioners who tried their best to help me when I was little. I not once completed a physiotherapy rehabilitation program correctly. That's where I came in trouble, because I didn't really manage my haemophilia well'.*

He can remember waiting more than 24 hours to treat a bleed, increasing the risk of more complications.

Receiving treatment when he was younger was difficult. *'I was terrified of needles, terrified of the people in the hospital, but that's where most of the problems started in my lack of treatment'.* Eventually, he managed to tackle this problem

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and overcome it. After trialling several treatment options with his haematologist, Pat learnt to do intravenous injections himself, and this is his current treatment.

As an adult, it has been particularly important for Pat firstly to acknowledge when he has an injury and then obtain treatment as early as possible to reduce the severity of his injuries and recover as quickly as possible.

Despite being told numerous times to 'stop playing football and take care with cricket' throughout his junior years, Pat stubbornly continued to play the games he loved. Unfortunately, mistreatment of bleeding and years of playing football has left him with severe arthritis in his knee. Eventually he became fed up with continually being injured, and as

a result having to go a week on and a week off from sport. He decided to make a change. Pat has now chosen to participate in a sport where he can manage his body on his own schedule. For Pat this is triathlons: running, swimming and riding.

The most difficult challenge for Pat has been moderating the intensity of his sport. *'It has been hard to know when not to go flat out. Knowing when it may actually be time for a rest day, as hard as it may be, actually becomes so beneficial'.* For Pat access to safe and effective haemophilia treatment has also ensured that his injuries have not progressed to more severe problems as he grows older.

In 2019, with the assistance of his haematologist and a training plan, Pat trained and competed in the Ironman triathlon.

# PAT'S STORY



Pat at the Cairns 70.3 Ironman 2019.

*'By competing in this event and raising money for HFA, I can bring recognition and say thank you to those people who are there helping little kids like me who never wanted to listen,' explained Pat. 'I also hope to show other people with haemophilia who may not be so active potentially due to fear of injury, that it is indeed possible to get out and about and do things you love.'*

Acknowledging that he has haemophilia and being able to manage it – and, importantly for Pat, **wanting** to manage it – has been instrumental to the successes Pat has made with sport over his lifetime. The key to this, says Pat, is to understand where treatment sits within your life and how important it is to balance your treatment and your lifestyle. **H**

Read Pat's story about preparing for the Cairns 70.3 Ironman in 2019 on Factored In - <https://tinyurl.com/FI-ironman>