

"7-2 Off Suit"

Shane Varga Update, 9-17-09

It has been a while since my last update. To be honest, I have just been focusing on getting through my days. So, what does 5 months worth of Chemo feel like? It is certainly a world of difference compared to even a month ago. Some major differences are a loss of energy rather than a lack of energy, numbness in my feet, a body pain so severe I have a prescription for pain killers (which I refuse to take), getting extremely sick at treatments, and extreme nausea for an extended period of time after treatments. There are two private rooms where I get chemo. Other than that, it is a big open room and everyone gets their chemo right in front of everyone else. I am the only one who requires a room due to how sick I get. It is the most awful, disgusting feeling you could imagine. Even thinking about it just now, gives me goose bumps all over and makes me wince. I certainly don't look forward to treatments, but I am thankful for them and will not complain about them. You see, it is what is allowing me to live an extended time on this Earth.

One of my favorite things to do is get together with the guys and play some poker. We almost always play Texas Hold-Em as it is the most popular form of cards these days. You get two cards to start with and you have to decide if you want to stay in or not to see the rest of the cards. The worst two cards you can be dealt are a 7 and a 2 of different suits. The dreaded 7-2 off-suit pretty much guarantees a losing hand. We are all dealt what we might consider a 7-2 off-suit of life at some point in our existence. Someone's 7-2 may be far worse than someone else's, but to that person at that time, nothing could be worse. This is my 7-2 off-suit. However, the great thing about poker and about life is that it is not the cards you are dealt, it's how you play them. As long as no one else knows you have 7-2, as far as they know you are holding a pair of Aces (the best starting hand). When your holding 7-2 and you want people to believe you have Aces, you have to change your way of thinking. You have to make yourself believe that rather than holding the worst possible hand, you have the best hand.

I have really tried to accomplish this through my cancer. Yeah I am going through cancer, yes it sucks, but I don't have to throw my cards away. I am a competitor and even in my weakest times I still believe I am holding a strong hand. It frustrates me to not be able to do things because in my mind I have made myself believe it shouldn't keep me down. Even though I am going through this, I picture myself as normal. I won't allow myself to pity myself and accept I am sickly. Many days I get a reality check and slap in the face that "hey you are sick and you're just not doing much besides being awake today." Trust me, I have a lot of those days, but the next day I wake up I expect it to be different. If it is not, I get fired up again and keep going until I do feel better. If I thought any different it would snowball and I would be miserable. I will not let that happen. My faith is too strong and my support is too much!

The other day I came out to play softball after a few months of not playing and went 0-6. I mainly came out because I wanted to see my friends, show people I am still alive, and most of all because that competitive fire in me needed to be let out. Even if I was in a wheelchair I would have come out to play and you can take that to the bank! Anyways, I haven't played in months, extremely physically exhausted, and all together rusty. However, I expected to get a hit every time up. No different than any other time. After all, it is a ball being pitched underhand, slowly. Each out I made I got more and more pissed off. My adrenaline was the highest it has been in many months and it felt great. At that moment I felt "normal." I could have ran a mile and not gotten winded I think. Probably would have been in the ER the next day, but I could have done it.

My point is, I didn't allow my situation to hamper my focus. It obviously had an effect on my performance, but in my mind it was not a factor. In life, we will be in situations where we have to make a choice. Find strength and power through it, not being afraid to give it your all even if it is not good enough, or fail in your mind before you even set out to accomplish whatever it may be and not even have a chance to succeed. Support is very important in this, but ultimately support makes no difference if you're not willing to be motivated.

There are so many situations out there that are far more miserable than what I am going through. All types of abuse, loss, etc. that I am sure people would trade me lives in a second. Things that are much more than just change your mindset and you will get through it. It does start with the mind though. The decision to take the next step or a different step may just be more difficult than my 5 months so far. To those people, those are my heroes and what allows me to dig deep. It allows me to realize that what I am going through could be a lot worse and that I should be very thankful that I have the strength to make it through this and go back to normal. That my life is what it is and I am blessed. That my 7-2 off-suit, even though the worst hand to start, doesn't mean I automatically lose just because the odds are against me.