Firefighter Battling Cancer Completes Course

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Staff Writer

The crowd stood up, chanting his name as he ran the course with his fellow firefighting teammates with him every step of the way. "Kip, Kip, Kip," the crowd chanted in unison as his tall, muscular body made its way through the obstacle course as the first competitor of the evening after a rain delay.

With his incredible determination, El Paso firefighter Kip Hall inspired a crowd of hundreds gathered to watch the second annual Brookshire's Firefighter's Combat Challenge at the Broadway Square Mall on Friday evening.

The reason he captured everyone's attention?

Hall is battling back from having brain surgery, where a cancerous tumor was removed from his cerebellum in June. He is still undergoing chemotherapy.

"I feel like I do every day since I got sick," he said after running the course. "I feel like crap, but I am glad to be able to do what I just did, and the crowd, well, that was just awesome."

Hall told the Tyler Morning Telegraph he was at home with his wife in June when he suddenly felt strange.

"I told my wife, 'I think I am having a stroke,'" he said. "She got me to the hospital, and after running tests, they found the tumor."

The event draws firefighters from all over the nation to compete in the regional event on the way to the World Championship held in Las Vegas in November.

In full gear, firefighters participate in individual and team competition in five events: high-rise hose carry, hose hoist, forcible entry, hose advance and victim rescue.
Hall and the other competitors had to wait out an intense thunderstorm that dumped heavy rain. Small children, seemingly uncaring of the driving rain, ran and played as adults huddled under tents attempting to stay dry.

Finally, 45 minutes later, the clouds parted and the rain stopped, allowing the competition to finally get under way.

With all of his teammates surrounding him, Hall stepped up to the starting point as the first firefighter to run the course.

Two of his teammates walked with him up the four-story tower, others surrounded him when he used a sledge-hammer to simulate forced entry, but his entire team was at the finish line.

Hall's time may not have been a record-breaker, but his courage had firefighters from all over walking up to the man whose bald head bears scars indicating the recent invasive surgery, and hugging his neck and patting him on the back.

"That was just absolutely amazing," one firefighter said. "He just inspired a lot of people with what he just accomplished."

The announcer of the program, Rex Nimrod, said Hall's ability to complete the course after such a recent battle with cancer was nothing short of a miracle.

"Everybody needs to give this guy a big hand. When I found out he had cancer I was saddened, and then I heard he was going to be here today," Nimrod said. "I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it."

Hall, who has competed every year since 1998, flashed a big grin and said, "I am nothing special. I just wanted to know if I could do it, and this makes me feel alive."

Tyler firefighters are competing in the event, as are firefighters from Seattle, Wash., to Boston, Mass.

The members of the Tyler team include firefighters Brent Hail, Glynn Ray, Brandon Davis, Patrick Mayo, Don Williams, Stuart Weatherford, Casey Cabiniss, Joey Hooten, Terry Hawkins, Zack "Toolbox" Houston and District Chief Tom Mooney. The events are scheduled to continue Saturday beginning at 10:30 a.m. in the mall parking lot in front of J.C. Penny's.
Nominations - 09/01/2007 11:00 PM
Parent Services Classes Offered - 09/01/2007 10:56 PM
Citizen Police Academy Graduates 22 - 08/31/2007 11:45 PM