



Todd Crandell's road to St. Jude Ironman 70.3 is paved with resilience

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During the darkest hours of his 13-year bout against drug and substance addiction, Todd Crandell never thought he'd see the light of day as life closed in on him at deafening speed.

"I didn't want to wake up," Crandell recalled. "And when I did wake up, I was mad that I woke up and the rest of my day revolved around putting more stuff in my system so I wouldn't wake up."

Crandell's journey to being a 100-plus-time Ironman athlete was a road less traveled. It was a path filled with alcohol and cocaine usage, family loss and personal trial and error that tested his patience, tolerance and self-worth when the writing on the wall all but left him for dead.

The first fallen domino was when Crandell's mother died by suicide when he was just three years old. The Toledo, Ohio, native was left to figure out his emotional turmoil alone.

"Emotionally, I felt at three what I felt at 13 when I made my choice to drink for the first time," Crandell said. "If I could've drunk at three years old or could've done cocaine at three years old, I would've done that too. Kids just aren't equipped to do that, but they feel the pain of that trauma." While the page on Crandell's traumatic life story eventually took a turn for the better after his third arrest, it was during his gloomiest periods of substance abuse that he began gravitating toward becoming an Ironman competitor.

"So after I was sober for about six years, I decided I wanted to do the Ironman." The work toward being an Ironman contestant was tough for Crandell. He had never learned



While the page on Todd Crandell's traumatic life story eventually took a turn for the better after his third arrest, it was during his gloomiest periods of substance abuse that he began gravitating toward becoming an Ironman competitor. (Courtesy Chris Kipcakli)

how to swim, didn't own a bike and disliked running, considering his hockey background growing up.

Instead, he applied his traumatic past as a unique motivator to pursue his newfound dream. "The tenacity that I put into destroying myself with drugs and alcohol, I put it into the Ironman Triathlon," Crandell said.

Crandell will compete in his 112th Ironman race Saturday, Oct. 7, at the St. Jude Ironman 70.3 Memphis event at Shelby Farms Park. This will be Crandell's first visit to the Memphis race. "It's a race

that I've heard great things about," Crandell said. "I've loved what I've seen so far. I love the weather down here, I love the hospitality, and the people are very kind."

Crandell also shared what else has piqued his interest that led him to visit Memphis for the first time.

"This is the home of Elvis," Crandell said. "So I'm very interested in going to check out the Elvis museum (Graceland) on a personal level."

Crandell's last race was Sept. 23 at Jones Beach Island in New York, which was also the 53rd anniversary of his mother's death.

As someone who has experienced suicidal thoughts, Crandell honors his and his mother's life through athletic competitions and his own personal foundation, Racing for Recovery.

"I have chosen to stay alive to fulfill my life's purpose and that suicide is not the answer," Crandell said. "We constantly can overcome thoughts of suicidal ideation or a choice to use drugs. We can constantly overcome them to live another day and prosper for the betterment of ourselves, our families and our communities."