

An Olympic Athlete Facing Breast Cancer

Section: Health and welfare

written by Marta Pen Freitas | October 16, 2024



[Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#)

As an Olympic athlete, I've always been diligent about my health—perfecting my sleep, nutrition, and exercise routines. During altitude camp, preparing for my third Olympic qualification, I found a lump on my breast. Despite having perfect bloodwork and no genetic risk factors, my only risks were birth control and being childless by 30. The diagnosis was breast cancer, and although it was a shock, early detection was key, as highlighted by [scientific research](#).

I kept competing while undergoing exams for surgery, and fortunately, the surgery was successful. I'm now receiving adjuvant treatment as I start preparing for the 2025 World Championships and working on community projects in Seattle.

Throughout this journey, I've learned that neither my victories nor my challenges define me. Life has taught me that no good moment lasts forever, but neither do the bad ones. Often, people tell us to embrace the good times, but it's equally important to face the tough moments. When things get hard, it's an opportunity to slow down, reflect, and listen to what life is teaching us.

It's essential to know your body. Be in tune with how you feel, and if something seems off, don't panic and don't rush

to Google—talk to your doctor. Early diagnosis saves lives. [We know that there are social, economic, geographic, and other barriers](#) to accessing primary healthcare centers for early breast cancer detection, but we can still take control by [performing monthly self-exams](#). When something good happens—whether small or significant—I hope you can be fully present and appreciate it. You are more than any diagnosis, challenge, or victory. You are everything life brings, and it's crucial to embrace every part of it.

[Image by [Susan G. Komen 3-Day](#) on [Unsplash](#)]