

Mayo Clinic Medical Edge

O14 Tennis Coach Aces Cancer

Intro: This is a story about getting it right. It’s about a well-loved tennis coach, who, in spite of having terminal cancer, is outliving the statistics. He spent his career on the courts, not just teaching tennis, but helping players of all levels learn what’s really important in life.

Video

Audio

TRT 3:03 Steve Wilkinson Tennis coach and cancer patient	“Tennis is the perfect sport for illustrating the values that are most important.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	Meet tennis coach Steve Wilkinson.
Steve Wilkinson Tennis coach and cancer patient	“I was interested in teaching values. Teaching people who they were and what gives meaning to life.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	Steve has stage four kidney cancer that’s spread to various bones in his body.
Steve Wilkinson	“My life expectancy was 9 months.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	That was six years ago. Steve continues to coach young athletes on the Gustavus Adolphus college tennis team and participates in the summer Tennis and Life camps he founded decades ago.
Thomas Shives, M.D. Mayo Clinic orthopedic surgeon	“I call him Steve. Most patients I would never call by their first name, but I knew Steve as a friend and as a tennis coach before I ever knew him as a patient.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	Dr. Thomas Shives is an orthopedic surgeon who replaced part of Steve’s thighbone with a prosthesis because the cancer had caused significant damage.
Thomas Shives, M.D. Mayo Clinic orthopedic surgeon	“He talks about the three crowns in his tennis and life camp and the first is to be positive. Control what you can control and that’s the way he lives his life.”
Steve Wilkinson Tennis coach and cancer patient	“Inherent in tennis also are a set of sportsman like values.”
Voice of Vivien Williams	Sportsmanship is the second crown, and the third...
Thomas Shives, M.D.	“Give a full effort, which obviously he does day in and day out. “

Voice of Vivien Williams	Steve, who was inducted into the US Professional Tennis Association's Hall of Fame, writes of these values in his new book which is endorsed by tennis great Billie Jean King.
Steve Wilkinson Tennis coach and cancer patient	"The Title is <i>Let Love Serve</i> . The more we focus on other people, the more fulfilled our lives will be."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Cancer has made it necessary for Steve to focus on various treatments throughout this journey. Surgeries, chemotherapy and a very precise, high intensity radiation called stereotactic body radiotherapy to treat the tumors in his bones.
Nadia Laack, M.D. Mayo Clinic radiation oncology	"It's a sophisticated technique that allows us to successfully kill and ablate tumors that in the past we weren't able to do."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Dr. Nadia Laack says to make sure the radiation hits only the tumor and not healthy tissue, patients are vacuum-sealed in a pod so they don't move. The targeted treatment allows some patients like Steve to live longer.
Nadia Laack, M.D. Mayo Clinic Radiation Oncology	"Hopefully we'll have more and more patients that are doing so well despite having metastatic disease."
Voice of Vivien Williams	The trophies and photos lining the walls of the Gustavus Adolphus tennis complex are a testament to Steve's success as a tennis player, coach and mentor. But the love that he shares with his wife Barbara, his colleagues at the tennis and life camp and even the players on the court is proof that Steve lives a life based on the values he teaches.
Steve Wilkinson Tennis coach and cancer patient	"Obviously life has thrown me a few curves and I think that following this philosophy, focusing on what I have control over has allowed me to face cancer in the most positive way."

Anchor tag:

If you're interested in reading Steve's book, go to... <https://gustavus.edu/bookmark/>

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