



# Square One: Returning to Life and Competitive Running after My Devastating Stroke

*Dirk Vlieks*

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# Square One: Returning to Life and Competitive Running after My Devastating Stroke

Dirk Vlieks

## Square One: Returning to Life and Competitive Running after My Devastating Stroke Dirk Vlieks

Dirk Vlieks was at the top of his game. At the age of thirty-two he was a top-ranked triathlete with numerous Ironman finishes under his belt. That all changed in an instant one day in June of 2006 when he stepped groggily from his bike in Honu, Hawaii, and collapsed. He had suffered a stroke so devastating that by the time he reached the hospital, a doctor told his wife to prepare to turn off the machines keeping him alive. Vlieks spent the next two months in intensive care before he was strong enough to begin a rehabilitation program that included learning to speak, talk, eat, and walk again. His first weaving assisted walks turned later to slow jogs, then short runs. Five years later, he returned to Hawaii to finish the race in which he nearly died. He would then run the New York City Marathon. In *Square One: Returning to Life and Competitive Running After My Devastating Stroke*, Vlieks shares his inspirational story about persevering against all odds. It has not been a smooth ride, and he continues to work—and run and inspire. His mission now is to help energize and motivate others to live their lives with determination and joy.

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