

Family overwhelmed by support from community, including total strangers

Marco suffered a seizure while he was recovering from his trachea surgery. He was immediately sent for tests — CT scans, MRI, bone marrow...the whole works. The news was devastating.

The rare form of lymphoma he had battled three years ago had returned. This time, though, Marco's family was told he has inoperable cancer in his brain and spinal fluid.

They spent six weeks in hospital, during which time Marco had to have a second surgery to have the trachea tube repositioned. He also underwent chemotherapy to help slow down the disease.

Nicole spent that time in Slovakia visiting grandparents. Julia said it was hard to be separated from her, but the six weeks flew by in a blur. Getting home was a victory. Julia says Marco loves the outdoors with his mom and dad, who's a self-employed construction worker.

"Can we go camping tomorrow?" he asks his mom, who says no they can't because the life-saving equipment that keeps his trachea tube properly suctioned out needs to have a reliable electricity source to operate. "In the backyard?" he asks.

Mom says maybe, considering the request.

Marco's a huge Lego fan — his creations are complicated and impressive. One of them is a red and white Volkswagen camper van — the kind of camper he wants his family to have.

Last week, he was busy putting together the model of a house, hundreds of tiny pieces lying on the floor in front of his tiny frame. He tires quickly and isn't able to do it on his own anymore, Julia said. He used to be able to put the structures together in just a few days.

Julia knows days and moments together are precious.

It's no longer day-to-day, she admitted.

Now they live minute to minute, Julia said.

She can't question what's happened to Marco.

"I was told once that you don't ask a question that doesn't have an answer and that's a good point," she said.

Julia said there's only one hope left for Marco and it's not research into a cure. It's more desperate than that. It's a miracle.

"That's all we can hope for...that (the cancer) just...goes away somehow," she said, a slim smile on her face, ever hopeful.

Nicole, carefree and smiling, bounces up and down on the couch playing Nintendo Wii games, seemingly oblivious. Her normal includes sharing her mom and dad with a boy who requires constant care and attention.

"I play soccer and we won our last game," she proudly pronounces. "I like candy...a lot of candy."

Julia says Nicole provides a welcome distraction that helps keep the family in check. Her children, she says, are her life, and they've always been number one.

Julia said she's overwhelmed by the community support the family has been given. Food from teachers at Guardian Angels School, her children's school, money, gifts and drop-ins from

people she's never met before...

"Total strangers come by to say hello and ask how Marco is doing," she said. "It's really surprising."

People can follow Marco's story, or make a donation to help alleviate extra expenses such as hospital travel and parking at <https://www.facebook.com/#!/LoveForMarco>.

Julie Slack can be reached at jslack@miltoncanadianchampion.com or on Twitter @miltonmusing.

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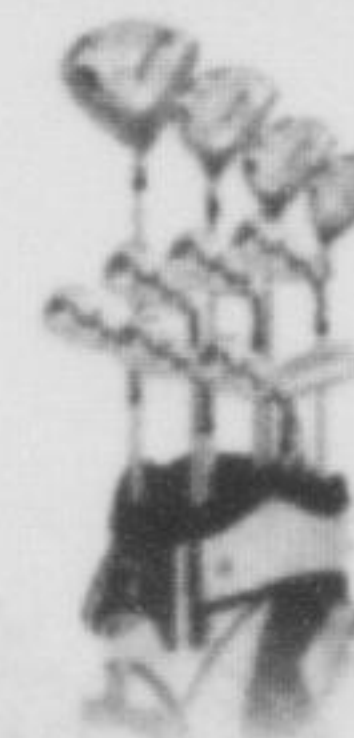
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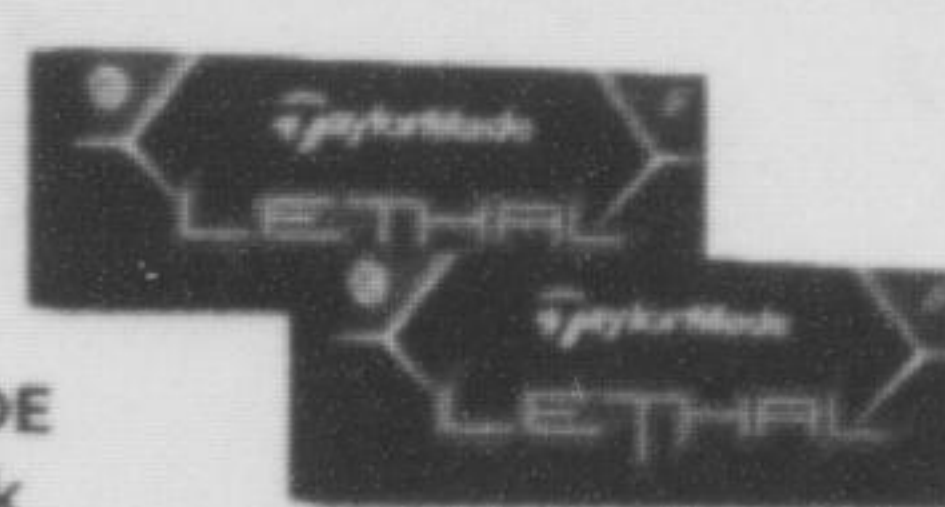
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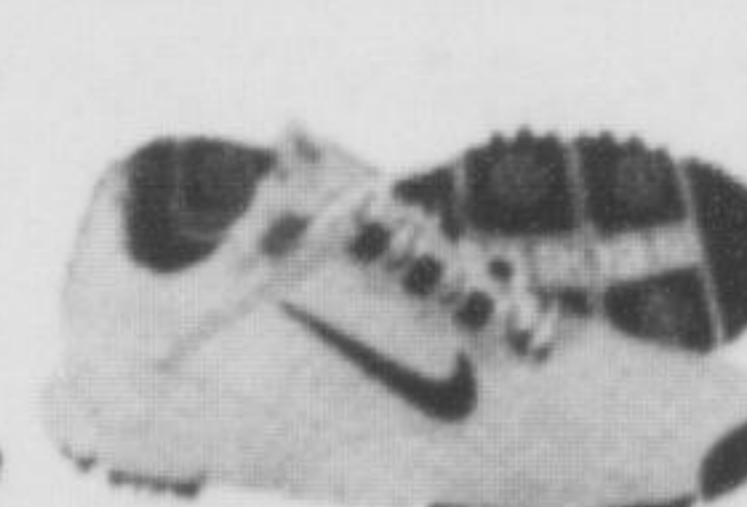
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