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Quadriplegic Hiker Stacey Kozel Knows No Limits



By [WiSP Sports Editor](#)

Posted on April 17, 2017

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IT TAKES COURAGE AND DETERMINATION TO HIKE THE LENGTH OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL AND PACIFIC CREST TRAIL BUT BEING A QUADRILEGIC IS NO HANDICAP FOR THIS EXTRAORDINARY WOMAN

EDITOR'S NOTE: September 27, 2017 – *Since this interview was recorded in April, the validity of Stacey Kozel's claim to having hiked the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) has come into question. While Stacey has categorically defended her story, there are a number of groups associated with the PCT who are challenging its authenticity for different reasons.*

American mountain climber and hiker **Stacey Kozel**, whose very effort of putting one foot in front of the other each day



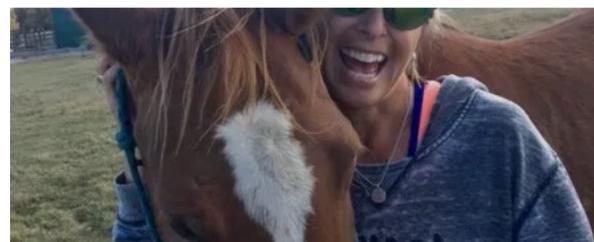
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is in itself an accomplishment, is embarking on another epic adventure. What Stacey challenges herself with are the goals she sets herself to hike over miles of difficult terrain as she pursues some of the toughest country that make up the longest trails in the US. Now 41 Stacey has suffered from Lupus – a chronic incurable inflammatory disease that attacks the immune system, since she was a teenager. It impacts her in different ways from her spine to her lungs and stomach and has resulted in her becoming a quadriplegic. Not that her complex medical condition has prevented her from living every day to the fullest. With the aid of an exoskeletal Stacey has hiked the 2,189 miles of the **Appalachian Trail** and has just begin to tackle the 2650 miles of the **Pacific Crest Trail** of the U.S. from the Mexican to the Canadian Borders. And she hikes alone, not wanting to slow down other hikers or try to keep up with them. Chris Stafford caught up with her in the mountains of Southern California.

Podcast length: 29'27"



WiSP Sports Radio

WiSP Amazons: Stacey Koziel





Stacey explains how Lupus affects her: “It affects people differently. They say there’s not two people that have the same symptoms so they have a hard time diagnosing it. I was diagnosed when I was 19 but I actually had it a few years before that, but that’s typical with Lupus. Sometimes people are diagnosed with something else. You look fine on the



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outside but on the inside you're beat you because you're just beating up on yourself. It's hard to sleep, there's a lot of joint pain, those are just typical every day things of life with Lupus it seems like.

So how many hours hiking is possible with such a debilitating disease?

"I get up early in the morning and I sometimes hike into the night when I try to set up my tent before it gets dark, That's usually the goal but a lot of times especially on the Appalachian Trail I would hike longer to keep up with the other hikers out there, they would hike a shorter day, I would start out before them and end later and that was sometimes before it got dark for me to put up my tent and relax a bit and then try to get up early again in the morning.

"It definitely takes a toll on my body; the more miles I had on the Appalachian Trail the more spasms kicked up... I tried to find time in between to get my legs up and let my muscles relax a little bit or have a zero day and give it a bit to relax the muscles. I had to kind of play it by ear through the trail. When I'm standing up my body's always working, even sitting it's always working to keep myself balanced so the only time my body actually rests and I actually feel it is when I lie down flat. I don't sleep very well. This Lupus in general kind keeps you up. It's one of the symptoms of Lupus so I'm used to being up a lot but at night it feels good to lie down flat so my spasms can kind of calm down."



THE DIRTY DOUBLE

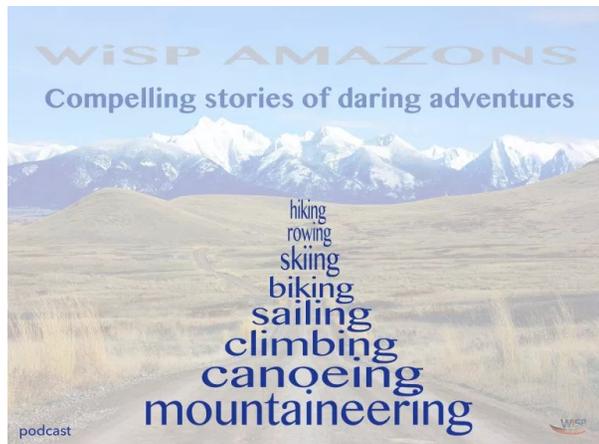
Who are The Dirty Double?



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