Kyle Maner faces her breast cancer diagnosis with courage and strength.

Michelle: Good afternoon, today we are in the studio with MBA 09 student Kyle Maner, welcome Kyle. Kyle is here with us today to talk about some fundraising efforts that she’s undergoing for breast cancer research and awareness. And Kyle maybe you could tell us a little bit about your personal story and how you became so interested and an advocate for this cause.

Kyle: Sure, so back in October, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I was 29 at the time. I am an avid runner, I eat fairly healthy, there’s no history of breast cancer in my family, I actually went through all the genetic testing and everything came back negative. So the fact that I got this disease was earth-shattering in it of itself. But the fact that it came out of the blue added a whole other dimension of fear to the whole situation. And my friends at Sloan, I obviously told them immediately, and everyone was just so completely supportive of me. I had to go through two surgeries and radiation, but I was able to avoid chemotherapy, which I was very, very fortunate for. And then a few months ago, one of my girlfriends from Sloan said we would like to form a team to do the Avon walk and she asked if I would be the team captain and I said of course I would. So we immediately started fundraising then, there are now five members of our team, our total fundraising goal was 9,000 dollars and the walk will take place on May 16th and 17th. We do almost 40 miles over two days.

Michelle: And so you have a team of fellow Sloan women and your team name is?


Michelle: And who came up with that?

Kyle: Actually my best friend Alyssa did. Yeah she’s very creative and silly.

Michael: And would you care to describe your t-shirts for those listening at home?

Kyle: Sure so on Monday we’re going to have, if you make a donation of 20 dollars or more, you get a t-shirt. And the t-shirts say, a nice rack is worth fighting for and nice rack is in large letters, strategically placed. We think they’ll be a big hit.

Michelle: That should be an attention grabber. So is the fundraiser that you’re doing on Monday is that on the Sloan campus and is that to kind of get contributions from the students, faculty, staff, things like that?
Kyle: It is, we’re going to set up a table in the lobby of E51 and do the fundraiser there were a lot of the different student groups do things. And we’ll also have whoopee pies and Mother’s Day cards that people can fill out and we’ll send them to make sure their moms get things. And it’s to raise money, but also to generate awareness throughout the Sloan community for all the guys who have moms and grandmothers and that type of thing and as well for all the women.

Michelle: So knowing that the reputation of going through business school is, you know, extremely draining and demanding so this diagnosis must’ve been, you know incredibly difficult. And could you talk a bit about how you were supported and motivated through it?

Kyle: Sure, from the time that I was diagnosed I immediately sent an email to about twelve girls letting them know what was happening. I knew very little at first that I had been diagnosed with breast cancer. And the Sloan community really rallied around me in a way that I totally didn’t anticipate. I wasn’t able to participate on teams nearly as much as I had and no one barked at me for it or anything, they just kind of picked up my slack very naturally and they supported me in other ways. Some of the guys who wear pink shirts to school occasionally would let me know that they were doing it in my honor type of thing. And the girls were always there. I was offered couches to sleep on during radiation because I would get so tired and everything and it was just really nice to be a part of that community that I was totally comfortable in and felt completely supported by.

Michael: What is your status now?

Kyle: That’s an interesting question. I have a major oncology appointment on May 15th and I’m starting to psychologically develop symptoms in my head that I don’t think are real, just because I’m very nervous. It’s going to be a very tell-tale appointment, but radiation is over, my skin is healing fine, I’m running 21 miles tomorrow, so my physical health is fantastic.

Michelle: So are you a marathoner, thought you said you were an avid runner?

Kyle: I’m actually doing the Nike women’s marathon in San Francisco in October, but I’m running the training for the Avon walk because I don’t really have the patience to walk that far it just takes too much time. But I will actually have to walk the day of the event.

Michelle: I was going to say will you be leaving everyone on the team in the dust or will you walk with them?

Kyle: No, no, I’ll walk with the team that day.

Michelle: And so did you also so that you had been, you became married this year among other things?
Kyle: Yeah, so it was interesting, my fiancé and I were in San Diego when I was lying on a bed flat with my hand behind my head and I was reading a book, and I now say, God reached his finger down and tickled me because my skin started itching and I reach over and I scratched it and I was like, woah that’s not supposed to be there. So I actually took the red eye home at night. But when we were in San Diego, we decided to move the wedding from April 18th to the day after Thanksgiving. Then I found a lump, two weeks later I was diagnosed with cancer. A month later we got married, and that was, so four weeks after the first surgery we got married on Friday after Thanksgiving, flew back to Boston on Sunday and had the second surgery that Monday. My husband is just like, oh God, this is how we’re starting married life? But he has been absolutely fantastic as well and there every single step of the way. And, you know, just to say it, the health coverage that I got from IT has been amazing. I could not have asked for a simpler process, better doctors, they have just taken care of me 100 percent.

Michelle: That’s wonderful, and so will you be graduating this year? And do you have any particular plans, will you still be in this area because of doctors or are you moving on?

Kyle: No at first my fear was that I wanted to stay on the East Coast and be near the Boston doctors because I liked them so much. And then there was the side of me that kicked in and said, you know what, if that’s the way that I’m thinking then I’m anticipating this coming back, I’m anticipating reoccurrences and I have to live my life to its fullest degree and my husband has a job offer in Santa Barbara, California and I was very reluctant to be excited about it, but then I visited and I was like, you know what, cancer be damned! I’m moving to the beach. And it was kind of then that I realized, you know, this is my chance to put it behind me and to live my life to the fullest and to hope that I’m done.

Michael: So do you have any messages for people out there listening who have no experience with this?

Kyle: You know all I would say is, it sounds hokey to say it, but do your monthly self exams. There’s an organization out there, a non-profit called Feel Your Boobies and I think it’s great, it’s aimed towards young people, and all it is is, you don’t necessarily have to do an official monthly exam, but and I hope you’ll forgive just my frankness, but it’s just all about getting to know your boobs. And you can be in the shower, you can be dressed or whatever, because if you just know them, then when something goes wrong you know that it went wrong. You know and then, I know a lot of people are afraid to go to doctors, I mean I was one of them, but when I found the lump I went immediately. And that’s the other thing that I would tell people, is that if you find something abnormal anywhere on your body, go to the doctor immediately, even if it’s nothing, it’s peace of mind that you had it checked out.

Michelle: Now for folks that are interested in contributing to the Rack Pack’s endeavors, is there a website or a phone number, anything that we could refer them to?

Kyle: There is a website. It’s www.avonwalk.org/MITsloanrackpack and that will take
you to our team’s website. And then from there you can click on the individual team member’s pages. My story is on there and two of us have reached our total fundraising goal. There are still three team members though who need to reach theirs in order to walk.

**Michael:** And who are your teammates?

**Kyle:** So it’s me, my best friend Alyssa Shiald, Kelly Raven, Liz DeGruder, and Melissa DeHahn, all MBA ’09s.

**Michelle:** Well we wish you all the best of luck in your fundraising and on the walk and obviously for you a clean bill of health and a wonderful life in sunny Santa Barbara.

**Kyle:** Thank you very much.