

October 18, 2010
Seth
17 year old hockey player

Surgery Summer

Surgery this summer is one of the hardest things I've ever gone through. It has been extremely difficult because I've had to go without my passion—hockey—since March. Along with not being able to play hockey, it's been rough just not being who I am. I'm normally a very physical and active person. Spending the summer on crutches with less than a month of being able to walk in-between surgeries isn't exactly the type of lifestyle I was hoping for. I was hoping for an intense summer, full of training, working out, and skating. Taking this year off hockey has also dampened my chances to get where I want to go. This season would have been a big year for me trying to get scouted. Instead of playing at the AAA travel hockey level this year, I will be playing YMCA, non-contact, house league. It's not an ideal situation, but without these surgeries, I would have a zero chance of moving on to the next level in hockey.

The problem with my hips had been an unknown issue throughout my life. I discovered it at the end of last year's hockey season. I had gone most of the season with what I thought was a groin injury; I couldn't have been more wrong. At the end of the season, I started some physical therapy for my groin. Needless to say, it wasn't helping. At the advice of my coach, we asked my primary care doctor to send me to someone who knew more about sports injuries. He referred me to a sports medicine therapist. Her name was Jen. Jen called a specialist with whom she was acquainted because she wasn't sure it was a groin injury and wondered if he would take a look at me. He said he would if I came up positive to a couple of quick tests. Sure enough, I did. When we called to schedule an appointment with Dr. White, his office staff told us that he didn't have an opening until late August. The next day at physical therapy, my therapist said she would call him directly and get an appointment scheduled. She told Dr. White about my dreams of getting a hockey scholarship and encouraged him to see me quick-

quickly. She got me in the very next day, when Dr. White wasn't even scheduled to be in.

I showed up at this appointment thinking to myself that it was just a quick cautionary check up. I couldn't have been more wrong. Dr. White laid me down and preformed the same tests that my therapist had. Once again, I came up positive. Between those tests and the x-rays I had taken earlier that day, he knew just what he needed to do. He showed us on the x-ray how my hip bone, where it connects to the socket, was convex instead of flat or concave. The extra bone ripped my cartilage, as well as my labrum, causing the bones to grind together. Dr. White told us he would handle this by removing the unneeded bone and making that area concave. Along with that, he would pull the cartilage back into place and sew it up. He also would have to sew the labrum back together and anchor it into the bone using plastic screws. He told us it was a reasonably new surgery, just 15 or 20 years old, and he would do it athroscopically. Arthroscopic surgery is done by using an arthroscope, which is a type of endoscope. It is inserted through a small incision. This way the recovery time is a lot less, because it's less invasive than cutting open the whole hip.

I was pleased to discover that Dr. White had trained under the man who invented the surgery I needed. He also travels extensively teaching other doctors and PTs how to identify this problem. Dr. White told me that I was very lucky to have someone as observant as Jen to discover my problem. He said, on average, this issue goes undiagnosed for three years and through four physicians. He also said these surgeries were not as much to help me play the next level of hockey as they were to prevent me from having to get full hip replacements in my mid to late twenties.

After hearing this news, I felt devastated. It was like my dreams and goals hadn't entirely been ripped away, but placed somewhere so far out that it would be incredibly hard to pull them back in. I knew that it was for the best, and I knew I had to do it. Still, I had a hard time handling the feeling of what I love being torn away and put on hold for a year, one of the biggest years in my young career. I also knew it would be even harder to get where I want to go. I didn't sleep much the night of April 22nd, knowing I was going into a life-changing surgery the next day at 1:00 P.M. I just kept telling

myself that it was for the best, and I needed to have this done. That thought process is what got me through this rough time and continues to keep me grounded.

I woke up the next morning, nervous as I had ever been, scared about what was going to happen, and starving from not being allowed to eat the night before. But I was also ready to get it over with. I got signed in and changed into one of those awful hospital gowns and socks. I then went back into the surgery holding area and waited to get my IV. Once that was done, the nurse wheeled me up to the surgical waiting area. That's where Dr. White and his assistant discussed how things were going to go, and I signed the final papers. I remember the anesthesiologist saying he was going to give me some "happy juice," a drug that would calm me and make it easier for them to put in the spinal block. I vaguely remember being wheeled into the surgery room and getting the shot for the spinal block. From that point on, for four and a half hours, I was out cold while being operated on. I woke up in the recovery room still high from all my medicine and not knowing exactly what was going on. My parents stood next to the bed and tried to talk to me. I was soon asleep once again.

I woke up in a hospital room. My leg was in my motion machine (a machine that moved my leg for me), and my hip was covered with a wrap attached to my Game Ready ice machine (a machine that would ice my hip every 30 minutes). Family and friends surrounded me. I don't remember much of that evening or night because I was in and out of consciousness with all the drugs that were still wearing off. I'm told that I made fun of my sister's best friend's new haircut and complained about Brady Quinn, the Broncos 2nd string quarterback.

I had to pass a physical therapy test the next morning to get cleared to leave the hospital, but because of all the drugs I was on, I felt really nauseous and threw up every time I tried to get out of bed. I ended up having to stay an extra night because I couldn't pass the physical therapy tests. I was, however, able to pass the test the next day and return home. From that point on, recovery was a mixture of movies, movies, movies, and non-invasive physical therapy for the next three weeks.

Physical therapy, strange as it may sound, was the highlight of my weeks. For rehabilitation, I

was sent to Will, a new physical therapist who had been through the same surgery six months earlier by the same doctor. At first, physical therapy started slowly with range of motion exercises and no resistance biking. After three weeks, physical therapy progressed to the point where I did resistance biking as well as some polymeric work outs.

At one month, three weeks, and six days, I was right back in pre-op awaiting surgery for my other hip. I felt like someone had hit the rewind button on my life and I was starting over from two months earlier. Everything was the same as the first surgery, aside from my mom requesting that Dr. White wouldn't prescribe any narcotics because I could handle the pain easier than the nausea. The anesthesiologist decided to give me a patch to put behind my ear that helps with nausea. All this made the recovery in the hospital a lot faster and easier than the first surgery. I was able to check out of my room right on schedule to head home. Once again, I spent my time watching movies, sleeping in my motion machine, and icing every thirty minutes. Here was another three weeks of trying to sleep on my back in a motion and enduring boring.

It has now been three months since my last surgery. Dr. White and Will are very pleased with the pace at which I'm healing. Dr. White spent two and a half hours shaving my bones to perfection so that they operate better than they have in my whole life. Overall, he spent about nine and a half hours operating on me during the two surgeries. That, in itself, shows the patience and character of this man. Beyond that, he performed the surgeries for less pay than he usually gets just to make it possible for me to have these life-changing procedures.

Physical therapy also has a lot to do with my progression. Will has been incredibly caring and has given me extra attention when I needed it. He often spends much more time with me than the hour he is paid for, giving me extra exercises and working me hard. Since he's been through this situation himself, I know he understands what I am going through, and I trust him. He has a great sense of humor and makes everything fun, even when I'm dripping in sweat and my muscles are screaming. I am very grateful to both Dr. White and Will, who are experts in their fields and who have done their work

to perfection.

Last week, I saw Dr. White for my three month check-up on the right hip and five month check-up on the left. I learned that, before surgery, I had only six degrees of internal rotation on the left side and fifteen degrees on the right. I am now symmetrical at an astonishing thirty-five degrees on both sides. I was completely shocked when I learn that my left side had about six times more range of motion than before. The right side was over twice as much. Last week, I also got on ice skates for the first time in six months. I could feel my legs stretching farther than they ever had before. I had no more pain in my groin when I skated, and I could feel my legs working how they were meant to work. Learning all this has rekindled the hope and drive to get where I want to be.

Playing competitive hockey is still months away. I've got a lot more therapy ahead of me, but I plan to make a full recovery and be ready to play high school hockey this spring. My goal is to get back into shape and be ready to play AAA travel hockey one more season next year. Then, hopefully, I will get picked up by a Junior team somewhere and eventually work my way up to play D1 hockey and possibly professional. I know these are big goals, but these surgeries have made it possible for my body to keep up with my heart as I pursue my dreams.