

High School Athlete Makes a Comeback, Thanks to Surgery At Shriners Hospital

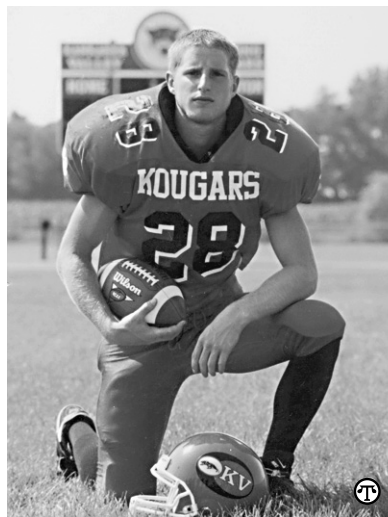
(NAPSA)—He was told he'd never play sports again—but thanks to the remarkable efforts of surgeons at Shriners Hospital for Children in Chicago, Jason Spurgeon is back on the playing field and doing better than ever, even winning an award for his athletic achievements.

On October 8, 1998, just a few games into his high school freshman football season, quarterback Jason Spurgeon's athletic career was suddenly in jeopardy. As Spurgeon rolled out of the pocket, he was tackled at his head and shoulders. His body twisted as he fell to the ground, exerting a tremendous force on his right leg.

Spurgeon was taken to the local hospital, where he was diagnosed with a right femur fracture. An intermedullary rod was inserted in Spurgeon's right leg, the first step in what would turn out to be a grueling, two-year recovery process. "They basically told me I'd never be able to play sports again," said Spurgeon. "That became my main motivation. I had played sports all my life, so when they said that, I made up my mind that I had to get back."

Following rehab, Spurgeon was found to have an inch-and-a-half differential in the length of his legs as a result of the fracture. Not only did he have trouble moving on the field, but his everyday life was affected as well. The leg differential was causing back problems and the long-term prognosis was grim. Without surgical correction, he might never be able to walk normally again.

On October 28, 1999, Spurgeon



Jason Spurgeon returned to sport in 2000 after his leg-lengthening procedure.

underwent a leg-lengthening procedure performed by orthopaedic surgeon John Lubicky, M.D., at the Shriners Hospital for Children in Chicago. Spurgeon's femur was cleanly rebroken and an external fixator was applied by drilling pins into the femur at the hip and the knee. By turning a screw on the fixator, Spurgeon was able to gradually increase the length of his femur. The fixator was removed in April, 2000. Spurgeon continued in rehab to get the range of motion back in his knee.

In the fall, Spurgeon returned to athletic action—this time on the basketball court. Splitting time between the varsity and junior varsity teams, he played in 19 of 20 games, averaging 3.5 points and 2.8 rebounds per game.

Having achieved one goal in his comeback, Spurgeon set his sights

on returning to the gridiron for his senior season. After undergoing one more surgery to remove the intermedullary rod from his femur, Spurgeon moved to playing defense "where I could hit people instead of getting hit." Spurgeon wound up leading the team with five quarterback sacks. He also racked up 37 solo tackles, 16 assists, one tackle for a loss and one interception. The highlight of Spurgeon's season was the homecoming game, in which he tallied seven solo tackles, three assists and two sacks.

For his determination to not only overcome his devastating injury but also to actually return to the playing field, Spurgeon has been named *Training & Conditioning* magazine's High School Male Comeback Athlete for 2002.

Spurgeon is looking forward to college. No matter what his athletic future brings, Spurgeon's successful surgery at Shriners has helped increase the likelihood of a more comfortable life.

For more information on Shriners' network of 22 hospitals that provide medical care and services totally free of charge to children with orthopaedic problems, burns and spinal cord injuries, write to: Shriners International Headquarters, Public Relations Dept., 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607, or visit the Web site at www.shrinershq.org. Treatment is provided to children under age 18 without regard to race, religion or relationship to a Shriner.

If you know a child Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States, or call 1-800-361-7256 in Canada.