

JOHN

RECIPIENT OF: DOUBLE CARTILAGE TRANSPLANT



DOUBLE CARTILAGE TRANSPLANT RECIPIENT REACHES NEW HEIGHTS



For a man who was told he shouldn't climb stairs, climbing Mt. Everest might seem an impossible, unreachable goal.

Not for John Golden, who endured more than 20 knee surgeries over 20 years to repair injuries sustained from playing college football.

"I really felt a lack of hope," John said. "I wanted to get out and be active, but each time I did, it hurt. So I fell into that cycle of not being active because it was painful."

When faced with another surgery, John had a wake-up call. He realized that he was constantly presented with lists of things he couldn't do instead of things he could do. He researched the top orthopedic doctors and focused his treatment on being active again, and not just getting rid of the pain.

"In my career, I challenged assumptions and advocated for myself, but not when it came to my health," he said. "When working with previous doctors, I should have emphasized my desire for an active lifestyle and not just relief from pain."

After talking with several doctors, John decided to work with Dr. Brian Cole at Rush University Medical Center. Dr. Cole performed a double cartilage transplant to replace the damaged tissue in his left knee and leg.

John completed nine months of intense physical therapy after the procedure. As his healing progressed, he realized that he could do more than he first thought

possible. Even though he had some activity restrictions, John came up with the idea of climbing a mountain.

Though he had never climbed a mountain prior to his knee issues, John set his sights on Mt. Rainier. He continued with physical therapy and found an experienced mountain climber to help him train.

"It was amazing," said John. "Climbing Mt. Rainier was empowering on so many levels. To accomplish that after I'd been told I couldn't do stairs was incredible."

Never one to settle, John came up with a new goal: climbing Mt. Everest. He climbed 14 mountains in preparation for the expedition.

"I had to change my entire body to get ready for Mt. Everest. I learned to ice climb, prepared myself for the climate, and worked with the team to develop a strategy for climbing the mountain."

In 2009, John arrived in Kathmandu to start his once-in-a-lifetime climb. He spent 50 days on the mountain, enduring harsh conditions and pushing his body to the limit. As they approached the summit, a sheet of ice broke and caused John to fall. The dangerous weather and John's injuries forced them off the mountain.

"I am very grateful for my experience on Mt. Everest. I knew when I came back that I wanted to take this great journey and give it a voice. I was looking for a way to make my passion my life and give back to others."

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John got involved with company specializing in athletic training. He saw firsthand the benefits of personalized physical training and wanted to help others realize their goals.

John is currently the President of Product Pioneering at EXOS, a company specializing in proactive health and performance. EXOS trains professional athletes and military special operations groups and provides corporate game plans for large companies.

"I wanted to help connect people with solutions that give them hope and purpose. I feel that it's a great way of giving back because I wouldn't be where I am today without the transplant."
