

MARK

RECIPIENT OF: BONE ALLOGRAFT



TRIATHLETE SETS PERSONAL RECORD AFTER TISSUE TRANSPLANT

Triathlons weren't just a hobby for Mark; they were a way of life. Exercise provided him time to think, manage stress, and create focus. When pain stole his ability to exercise, Mark was lost.

Mark's initial back injury occurred while doing construction work on his house. Over the next 13 years, the injury escalated into an excruciating degenerative disease affecting three of his discs. After participating in the September 2012 Ironman Wisconsin, Mark's pain was insurmountable.

As a father of four and an executive for an insurance and financial services company, Mark's condition created many challenges for his busy lifestyle.

"Towards the end of 2012 I had become disabled," Mark said. "I could no longer swim, bike or run. I could no longer carry my daughter, wash my own hair or brush my teeth. The degenerative disc disease was taking a toll on my mind and body; the pain was mind numbing. I was sleep-deprived and I seemed to be aging by the day. It took all my strength and focus to complete an entire day at the office."

It became clear that Mark's best option was surgery. His surgeon explained the spinal fusion procedure and assured him that he would be able to return to his pre-injury level of activity.

Doctors replaced Mark's damaged disc with an allograft disc, made possible by a generous tissue donor. When he woke up from surgery, Mark immediately felt better.

He wondered why he had waited so long to have the surgery.

Mark's surgeon was confident that he would be able to return to his normal level of activity. Mark remained skeptical, because his idea of "normal activity" was much more strenuous than what a regular person might have in mind. Over the previous six years, Mark had not missed six consecutive workout days.

He struggled with his strength when he returned to training after six months of pain-induced inactivity. Mark had already registered for the 2013 Florida Ironman Triathlon, but he wasn't sure if he would ever be ready to swim 2.4 miles in open water, bike 112 miles and run a full 26.2-mile marathon.

With the support and encouragement of his friends and family, Mark rebuilt his strength and endurance. He returned to competition with a reignited appetite and finished the triathlon in 11:47, a personal record. He finished in the top 25 percent of his age group.

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“I got my life back. I went from being disabled to completing an Ironman triathlon in the same year,” he said. “Adversity provides perspective. Without your health, it’s impossible to enjoy your life or maintain your priorities.”

Mark considers himself particularly appreciative for his wellness because he lost his only brother at age 44 to Juvenile Type 1 Diabetes and Addison’s disease, and Mark’s father has muscular dystrophy.

“Consequently, I do not take my health, my many obligations or the many people that count on me lightly,” Mark explained.

Thanks to a tissue donor, Mark was able to regain his strength and surpass his own expectations.

“I am fortunate that an individual made a selfless election and their family followed through with their wishes,” Mark said. “Without this gift I could not function.”

When asked what he would say to his donor, if he could, Mark said, *“Thank you. Your gift of tissue will not be wasted or lost on me.”*