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COMMENTARY

Going that Extra Mile

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Abstract

Dr. Jack Taunton's diligence and total commitment allowed a young athlete to pursue his Olympic dream. **Health & Fitness Journal of Canada 2020;13(4):24-25.**

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Introduction

Jack Taunton doesn't stop even when recovering from multiple heart bypass surgery.

The year is 2000, the location, Sydney Australia, Dr. Jack Taunton is attending the Sydney Olympics as part of the Canadian Medical contingent. Just months beforehand, Jack had undergone multiple heart bypass surgery from clogged arteries discovered when he collapsed on one of his usual long runs. As a serious marathon runner, this was a total shock, but Jack was not to be laid low for long.

While still in recovery mode, he made the trip to Sydney, as did my husband and I (both two-time Olympians). Back home three of our four children were being taken care of by a family friend. Our 16-year-old son, Anthony, was with us for the first week of the Sydney games but returned to Vancouver in September for school, and tryouts for the fall soccer team. Only one week later, we got the call from home that he had seriously hurt his leg in practice and had been rushed to the UBC Alan McGavin Sports Medicine Clinic where the

physiotherapist feared he had torn ligaments in his knee. With his parents thousands of miles away, it was very stressful for all of us. We didn't know what to do, but to call Jack. What to do?

Even though he had just woken up from his prescribed daily rest, Jack leapt to the rescue; called back to Vancouver to get the update and found that he had been seen by Dr. Jordan Leith who suggested that he could save the knee with immediate surgery. Jack agreed surgery in <24 hours was crucial and reassured us that Dr. Leith was the best. Through no doubt Jack and Dr. Leith's pull, Anthony went to UBC Hospital emergency the next morning (after 12+ hours of agonizing pain) and had a 5-hour complicated arthroscopic surgery to repair a complete bucket handle tear of the meniscus on his left knee. Dr. Leith told us he had to be upside down for much of the surgery to delicately try to save the meniscus and tie back the ligaments. Due to Anthony's age, his growth plates had not yet sealed so there was hope for regrowth and repair.

The Extra Mile

Well, only a year later, Anthony was not only back playing sports at a high level, by 2003 he was on Canada's Junior Field Hockey team, and by 2008 he was playing in the Beijing Olympics himself.

Without Jack going that extra mile (in this case, thousands of miles), when he himself was recovering from major surgery, Anthony may never have reached his goal of following in his grandfather's, father's, mother's, and godmother, Lynn Kanuka's footsteps to be an Olympian.

Anthony is now in his mid 30's and is able to run, play soccer, hockey, tennis, and cycle virtually pain free; though the fear of arthritis in his knee, like his father, looms large. Without Jack's unwavering energy, support, and dedication to his patients, this would not have been possible. Thanks Jack, you're the best.

Author's Qualifications

The author's qualifications are as follows: Thelma Wright OLY, BPE, ChPC.