

Wotortsi

there and she checked up on me, again, by pressing around to see where the pain is so she could determine what's going on. She told me it wasn't looking good and I needed to go back to Mission."

Following the doctor's orders, he went back to Mission Hospital, and they put him back in the ER. That's when the pace began to pick up.

"They gave me a MRI, and to do that, you have to drink the highlighter, so they can see your organs," Wotortsi said. "I had to sit there and drink this awful tasting highlighter for an hour. When the results came back, everything went even faster. They rushed me back to the hospital room and all I remember is I had four or five nurses around me, telling me they need to get me ready for surgery."

Doctors proceeded to hook him up to machines to check his vitals, he said. They soon returned with the MRI results.

He said the results showed when the knee struck him in his midsection, it crushed his spleen, which smashed into his pancreas and his pancreas smashed into his backbone, in that order. Doctors told him 80 percent of his pancreas was damaged, and they would try to save as much as they could.

"When he was explaining it to me, I was asking, 'Am I going to be alright? Is this safe?'" Wotortsi said. "They said they would try to take care of it and not complicate it in any way and that they only see this injury from car accidents. This was a freak accident. The doctors told me that I have a high pain threshold because people who would've gone through this, their vital signs wouldn't have been normal. Their heart rate would've been going crazy and their blood pressure would be off the

charts."

Wotortsi said the doctors sent him into surgery around 2 a.m. the next morning. He said he had a few surgeries, but they were really just all part of one complete surgery.

"It really was just one big surgery that I had and a few other procedures to go along with it," Wotortsi said. "I was very lucky because diabetics use 15 percent of their pancreas, and I was able to retain about roughly 20 percent of my pancreas. I got tested everyday at the hospital to make sure I wasn't diabetic."

When he awoke, he could see the results of surgery: 25 staples and three drainage tubes with one leading to his pancreas, to leak out the fluids. Because he only has a small percentage of his pancreas, he said he must receive a booster shot for his immune system every five years.

His stay in the hospital lasted for two weeks, he said. When he left, he said they removed both drains from his stomach, leaving only the single tube to his pancreas.

"I had the one to my pancreas in, and I had to get it checked out to make sure it didn't get infected," Wotortsi said. "I got the last tube out on my birthday, November 12."

The most important question for Wotortsi after his surgery, he said, was whether he would play again. Like most athletes returning from a serious injury, it was the only one that mattered.

"I had to get it clear because in my hospital bed, the only question I was asking was, 'Can I play?'" Wotortsi said. "The doctors said it's possible. There are a lot of athletes in the NFL that play without a spleen. They said I should be back to

normal, but to allow 6-10 months. I got back to training, kicking around without contact gradually within two months of my surgery, which is amazing."

Wotortsi said he is cautious with his training so he doesn't irritate his injury.

"I try not to push myself because certain movements kind of irritate my scar tissue," he said. "Sometimes I have to take a week off if I irritate the scar tissue. I've done it once during the school week and another time during spring break. That whole week I was on pain medicine."

He said he's really thankful for Dr. Watts and UNCA's athletic trainers. However, he said Mission Hospitals could stand to learn from their diagnosis error.

"I'm glad everything worked out, but I wish for Mission to be a lot more attentive to patients than just patch them up and send them home," Wotortsi said.

Last semester, he said he took a leave of absence in order to recuperate from the injury. Although he was able to receive incomplete grades in some classes, he couldn't do that in others, he said.

He said he was really looking forward to playing with his fellow seniors last year, and he is currently in the process of getting his eligibility back for next season.

With an even stronger appreciation for the game, he said this time around he'll play it safe in order to achieve his true goal: finishing with a college education.

"I just can't wait," Wotortsi said. "I'm really excited for the fall. My last year, I'm just going to play safe, finish up and graduate. I just want to get my degree."

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Tennis

ning," she said. "Coach always tells us to play to win, don't play not to lose."

The women finished with an 8-2 record at home.

"My personal goal for the season was to go out and give 100 percent every single time, and I gained a bit of confidence from our results this year," Mateva said.

The team said the collective conference victories, in particular, helped make this season unforgettable.

"Beating Charleston Southern in the first conference match of my college tennis career was unreal," said Cavanaugh. "It was the best feeling in the world celebrat-

ing that victory with my team and coaches, and you can't trade memories like that."

The Charleston Southern victory meant a lot to Mateva for a more personal reason.

"As a junior, this was the first conference match we had ever won," Mateva said. "Winning that match was unbelievable, and it gave us some confidence and the belief that we would continue to do well throughout the season."

"We improved tremendously this season," she said. "If we just keep doing what we did next year, then we can only expect to improve just as much."

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