

GETTING BACK IN THE SADDLE

How spine surgery helps patients walk again



Buffamoyer is working toward his passion of riding horses again.

David Buffamoyer's life is full of passion and activity. Riding performance horses and coaching baseball are bright spots for him, so debilitating back pain did not fit into his lifestyle. When he began suffering from back pain in September of 2008, he sought help all over the country. His first surgery in Florida did not improve his pain, so months later he had another surgery in Ohio. When he woke up from the procedure, he could not use his legs and his condition continued to worsen. "I had tremendous leg pain, and was partially paralyzed. I couldn't even shower on my own, and I faced depression," says Buffamoyer.

Things took a positive turn in the summer of 2010. Buffamoyer's friend, Ken Bjorge, was traveling with Bill Ward, a member of the Board of Trustees of The Johns Hopkins University. Bjorge spoke with Ward about Buffamoyer's condition, and Ward offered to see if someone at Johns Hopkins could help. Soon after, Buffamoyer got a phone call from the office of Johns Hopkins neurosurgeon Ali Bydon, M.D., clinical director of the Spine Program at Johns Hopkins Bayview.

Dr. Bydon made no promises about what he could do for Buffamoyer. But both had hope that he could help. In September of 2010, Buffamoyer traveled to Baltimore from his home in Anderson, South Carolina, to prepare for surgery with Dr. Bydon.

Oh, My Aching Back!

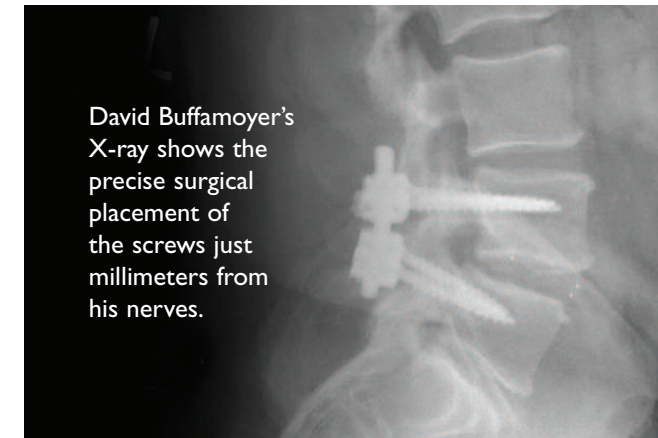
For people who have been diagnosed with degenerative disc conditions and want to learn about the treatment of back and related leg pain

May 19 and September 28
6 p.m.

To register, call 410-550-KNOW (5669).

"Dr. Bydon and his team took a personal interest in my situation, and they wanted to make me better," remembers Buffamoyer. "After five months of pain and not being able to walk, I was miserable."

Using neuro-navigation tools and an intra-operative CT (iCT) scanner in the operating room, Dr. Bydon was able to remove fragments of cartilage and decompress the nerve roots that were causing Buffamoyer's pain. "It is difficult to undo nerve damage, but I knew if I could give the nerves more room, they might recover," explains Dr. Bydon.



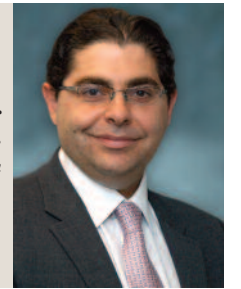
David Buffamoyer's X-ray shows the precise surgical placement of the screws just millimeters from his nerves.

The four-hour-long "redo" surgery wasn't simple. Dr. Bydon needed to place screws just millimeters from Buffamoyer's nerves, so precision was essential in order to avoid damaging them. "Thanks to this neuro-navigation and iCT technology, I was able to see every detail of Mr. Buffamoyer's spinal column. These specialized tools helped me to avoid more injury to him," says Dr. Bydon.

Once the surgery was complete, Dr. Bydon double checked his work while still in the operating room. Using the iCT, the surgical team compared images of Buffamoyer's spine against pre-surgical images, to make sure that their work was precisely accurate.

"When I woke up from this surgery, I could finally feel my feet again! The very next day, I stood up. The results were better than I ever expected," states Buffamoyer.

Ali Bydon, M.D.
Clinical director,
Spine Program



He credits Dr. Bydon and his team, including physician assistant Sharonda Keith, PA-C, for getting him back on his feet and walking again. "Everyone in Dr. Bydon's office made me feel really great. I know I could not have been in better hands, and the people were all so caring."

Now, Buffamoyer swims a half mile each day, rides a stationary bike and lifts light weights. While he is not yet riding performance horses, he hopes to be back in the saddle soon. He says, "I'm not 100 percent yet, but I am 125 percent better than before. My goal is to get back into riding horses and roping with cattle."

Buffamoyer continues to volunteer as a baseball coach at a local high school. He draws on his experience as a catcher in the minor leagues with the New York Yankees organization, and his time as a coach at Clemson University. "I'm thankful that I can give back to this high school team. Dr. Bydon and his team gave back to me and now I have another chance to do what I love in life."

—Karen Tong

David Buffamoyer and his fiancée Kirsten Bjorge relax together.



For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 410-550-0939.