

December 28, 2012

## **Merry Christmas & Looking Forward to a Happy NEW Year!**

Fortunately, I haven't been in the hospital since my last update, which was Thanksgiving – whoohoo! Sad, when that's your greatest accomplishment of late...sigh... In the past month, I've been going to physical therapy three times a week: two days a week they work on both my knee and shoulder (yah, those are tough, tough days) and then on the third day, it's "just" my knee. My sessions include the standard forced bending of my knee (by my therapist, Jason) and lunges over the bad knee to get it to bend (while Jason pulls it forward and I grimace). The shoulder work includes lots of range of motion exercises and ultrasounding to help the swelling. Yah, PT does stand for Pain & Torture, no doubt. But, I'm happy to report, the shoulder work has improved my range of motion dramatically. I now can put my ponytail in my hair without having to bend my head down towards my waist so my arm can reach my head. Oh, and, I now can put deodorant under my right arm again. Yes, these are my big "wins" and believe me they are big!

In December, I started teaching a few lessons each day at home. For the first two weeks, I could only do a lesson or two at a time and required door to door pick up service via the farm's Kawasaki limousine (gator). Most of the horses weren't too fond of my crutches and flew to the back of their stalls as I gimped down the aisle. Then there's Wally. As I crutched into his stall, he greeted me at the door and without hesitation, was nibbling on my crutches. In his mind, if those shiny silver sticks were good enough for me to hold in each arm, they must be good enough for him to eat. Well, duh.

It was great getting to watch him go with Jackie aboard. She's done a super job keeping him working while I've been recovering. He's loose, swinging, forward, and clearly pleased with the job he's done in training her to be his personal sugar cube dispenser. But, it didn't stop at training Jackie...he also has Andrew trained to bring him a donut in the morning and Jon to play games with him while cleaning his stall. Truly evil genius.

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, I was given clearance from the tower to lose the crutches and big, clonky crotch to ankle brace. Halleluia! I found my leg to be shockingly stable to stand on. At therapy, they challenged me to stand on one leg (the injured one) and timed me. I stood rock solid without holding on to anything for as long as they could time me. Oh yah, I was feeling like a rock star! Then Jason said to close my eyes...rock stardom over. Still, I'm thrilled with how solid the leg feels – no wobbliness whatsoever.

Regardless of how solid the leg is to stand on, the sucker isn't bending as it should be. We were gaining about ten degrees each week. Even with Christmas, I was able to get three physical therapy sessions. But, as of last week, I'm stuck at about 86 degrees of bend, which isn't enough. There appears to be a "hard stop" to the knee's bend, instead of the normal "boggy" feeling which is just swelling. The hard stop is usually scar tissue that's not allowing the knee to bend. If you recall, that was what the surgeon warned me of at my last visit; the proverbial "stiff knee". Sh#@.

Today was my four week visit (from the last visit) and sure enough, he's worried about the stiffness of my knee. We agreed to give it a little more time before committing to the Manipulation Under Anesthesia procedure (i.e. forcing the bend to break through the scar tissue while I'm out). The MUA procedure is on the calendar for January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013 BUT, he's having me call in on that Monday to confirm we need to do it. So, he's giving me a chance to keep working hard at bending it (and believe me, I am) and see if my body is just a little slow at recovering (gee, ya think?!?!). I respect this doctor

greatly as when I ask where I'm supposed to be, he said there is no standard to meet. Instead, it's how each body recovers. So, I've asked Jason, my PT to look up my bend & recovery time from my 2009 surgery and compare it to where I am now. That ought to be interesting. Regardless, I don't want to limp around all my life so if to get the bend where it has to be for me to walk with a clean gait and do stairs without looking like Frankenstein. If the MUA procedure is the way to do it, then so be it. And, if the scar tissue is too bad to break through via the MUA (which can happen), then while I'm out, they can clean up the scar tissue via arthroscopic surgery. Yes, you read that right, a potential additional surgery. Unreal.

The good news from my appointment is that we're holding off on surgery for the rotator cuff tear. Whew. Shockingly, I can have the surgery (if needed) at any time as the shoulder won't get worse or gain scar tissue while waiting. Hopefully the strengthening work will be enough to compensate for the shoulder and I can skip surgery completely. Fingers crossed...

I'm excited to get some clinics on the books for February and am confident I will be up to teaching eight rides at each clinic location. It's been a LONG journey and I'm ready to get rockin' & rollin' again!!! Of course it's all dependent upon what happens in January with the MUA thingy...but, I want to get scheduling so we (I) have something to look forward to. Can't wait! Unfortunately, I can't drive yet but thanks to my dynamic duo (Jackie & Andrew), I will have chauffeurs available to take me to clinics.

Now I get to work on 2013 goal planning. Time to wrap up what's been a helluva year and move on. Can't wait – looking forward to filling the clean slate that comes with the new year.

Again, thank you for your unbelievable support. Without a doubt, that's been the high of my 2012: learning how blessed I am to have the people I have in my life.

Happy riding!

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