

March 11, 2013

Just Start Living Normal Life?!?

Well, it's been a long time since my last update wherein I was happy to report I avoided the manual manipulation on my knee to get it bending. I am thrilled to report another update with good news! I had been going to physical therapy three times per week, wherein my therapist, Jason, works hard at getting my knee to bend more & more every time. The last time we measured it was the beginning of March and I was elated to hear it was at 115 degrees – a huge improvement from where I started! Sure, it's not 100% normal and isn't bending enough to do stairs without being in some awkward position, but I get up and down stairs on my own and am happy about that!

My last appointment with my surgeon was on Monday, March 4th which was one week past my four month anniversary from my surgery date (which means five months from the injury date). Dr. Wollager watched me walk, then put me on the table and tested it's stability which was rock solid. He acknowledged the swelling was still there, but wasn't the least bit surprised or worried about it. Then, he said he thought I should "just start living normal life" and that would be the best therapy for my knee and shoulder. You know what my next question was..."do you know my 'normal' life includes riding every day?" He smiled and said, ya, ya he knows. Then said he holds athletes to the four month standard (no athletic sports until the four month anniversary), which I was well aware of and replied confidently that I had passed that the week prior (yes, I was counting days). He said his only worry was how my knee would handle the barrel racing. BARREL RACING?!?!? Say what?!?!? He was convinced that I was a rodeo girl. I couldn't help but laugh out loud, highlighting that I was sitting there in my sweat pants and Green Bay Packers sweatshirt, hair in my usual disheveled pony tail and little to no makeup on...not exactly blingy like a good cowgirl should be. His response was priceless: "well that ruins the rodeo girl fantasy for me". I could feel my face turning red from the bottom up. I quickly changed the subject to how dressage doesn't require me to bend my knee very much and how it's a much more formal discipline compared to rodeo queening. He injected how he didn't mean to use the word "fantasy" and was turning as red as I was. We avoided eye contact for a few minutes of the following conversation, both trying to skirt the embarrassment we were feeling. He finished his side of the conversation by telling me I could totally wear a cowboy hat and boots. I agreed, but told him I'd struggle with the bling.

We ended the conversation agreeing I could begin riding and just had to be careful, but he wasn't as worried since I wasn't spinning around barrels. And, if my shoulder continues to bother me, he could easily do cortisone shots in it to buy me time should I decide to have surgery (which wouldn't happen until winter IF it does happen). I'm down to physical therapy one time a week to help the bend as well as continue strengthening it. That's the best news as PT makes me sooooo very sore.

The following day, Tuesday, March 5th, 2013, I shoved my sausage body into my britches, pinned the zipper up so my pudgy belly didn't push the zipper down and headed to the barn to get on Wally. Jackie warmed him up and I sat like a 7 year old kid, in my helmet and gloves just waiting my turn to get on. My boots only zipped up about ¾ the way up my calf as not only have I gained weight, my knee is still very swollen. So, I found a little roll of black electrical tape and sealed the top of my boots off. I was officially ready to ride!

I've been riding just about every day since. When I was asked how I felt, I could only reply "frickin' fat, frumpy, & floppy!". I'm working hard at losing the weight I gained sitting idle for five months and with all the muscle loss during that time, it feels very different to be in the saddle. But, it undoubtedly is like riding a bike for me; I was immediately trying to half halt and make corrections, some of which I'm sure made Wally wonder what in the hell I was asking since it had to feel different than 'normal'. My light at the end of this tunnel was highlighted by a few incredible canter pirouettes and a line of dead straight one tempis. Yah, he IS a grand prix horse and once I quit jiggling, I'll put my spurs back on and be able to ride light & effortlessly once again. That day will come and he's ready for me. Thank God.

There are so many people I'm grateful to and blessed to have in my life. I'll never be able to thank or repay everyone that was so extremely supportive during the past few months. My immediate support team kept everything running flawlessly. Andrew, my farm manager, never let the farm miss a beat

without me and Jackie kept the horses going beautifully. My Mom took care of me in ways I hope she never has to again (like helping me shower!), but was the Wonder Woman Mother that she has been my entire life. My clients and friends offered never ending support and you simply cannot understand how much that has meant to me and how it helped me heal, both physically and mentally. Although I wish my circumstances on no one, not even my worst enemy, should you ever endure circumstances like I did, I sincerely wish you the same love and support I received.

This will be my last update, unless something exciting happens...preferably something positively exciting, but one never knows in this life. Thank you again and again and again. I can truly say I've grown from this experience, literally and figuratively! Seriously, I've learned a lot about me and those surrounding me. I'm so blessed to have the friends, family, clients and animals I have in my life. I'm fortunate to do what I do for a living – even with the inherent risks, there's nothing more rewarding than working with the noblest animals in the world and their amazing two legged human partners. Life IS good.

Happy riding,

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