

Profile of a Winner- Jonathan Parker

"I will win this race. I am a winner, " has been the mantra of 15 year old Jonathan Parker of Bow, NH, since a freak ski accident on January 20, 2005 changed his life forever. Jon was attending Burke Mt. Academy and had high hopes of making the Olympics someday. But, while finishing his last free run of the day, he was accidentally cut off by another skier near the edge of the trail and hit a tree. At a cruising speed of 35 to 40 miles per hour, he performed an emergency impact maneuver taught to him by his personal ski coach and close friend. Jon hit the tree with extreme force, shattering both his ski and his right leg. He landed face down in the woods and could not move. Jon dug a hole in the snow just so he could breathe and yell for help. Jon's years of specialized ski training saved his life.

Jon dislocated and fractured his hip, broke his femur in several places, shattered his tibia, fibula, and his knee. He also severed the artery and stretched the nerve behind his knee. He underwent 10 hours of emergency vascular surgery to restore the blood flow to his foot. Jon then had 7 additional surgeries in hopes of saving his leg. He spent three weeks at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, NH. Two of these weeks were spent in the ICU. Unfortunately, he was forced to have his lower leg amputated through the knee. Today, Jon still has many months of rehabilitation and strength gaining ahead of him but now has been fitted with his new prosthetic limb here at Next Step O&P in Manchester, NH.

Jon's athleticism, motivation and determination will make it so there are "no limits" for him. His immediate plans include water skiing this summer, playing high school soccer in the fall, and, best of all, ski racing once again. He will start his training in Winter Park Colorado this November training with the US Disabled Ski Team. Jon is not concerned about learning to ski solely on one leg. In fact, he has ski raced since 7 years of age and has trained on one ski from time to time. "The accident has taught me how many things we take for granted," stated Jon.

"We know he will win this race and ski professionally without even missing a step", says his uncle, Bill Diversi, who has accompanied Jon and his parents throughout this entire journey.

In closing, from Jon's parents, Brad and Melynda Parker:

A hero is a leader who you respect, trust and who inspires you. Jon has always set himself apart as a leader. Today he is the leader in a different type of race with many different challenges. His desire to succeed has enabled him to move forward completing an extremely full schedule of full time school, thrice weekly physical rehabilitation, twice weekly strength training and gait training at Next Step O&P, along with regular scheduled visits to keep his prosthesis fitting well as he changes.

Jon saved his life for us on January 22, 2005 and we are so proud of him. Today, Jon is much more than a leader, he is truly a hero.