

Hudey's strength from sports helping with his recovery

Ian Hudey was training to become a national level speed skater, much like his father Brad, who set a number of national records in the sport.

At the age of 17, Ian was already a well-rounded athlete, competing at the national level in both speed skating and soccer. But his life took a terrible turn on October 24, 2011, when the car he was driving was broad-sided by a dump truck on a highway, not far from his home in White City.

Ian suffered several broken bones and internal injuries, including brain trauma, and was put into a medically induced coma so doctors could closely monitor and control the effects of his numerous injuries.

"We were just hoping he'd live," recalls Ian's mother, Marion, who waited more than 30 agonizing hours with her husband at the Regina General Hospital as a team of doctors worked on their son.

"It wasn't until Tuesday night when the doctor came out of the operating room and said, 'Your boy's going to make it'," she recalls. "But there was almost a day and a half where we weren't sure."

It would be weeks before Ian was able to respond to family members, who were at his bedside in the Intensive Care Unit throughout the initial stages of his recovery.

Like their father, all three of Ian's older siblings are accomplished speed skaters, although his oldest sister Sarah has given up competitive speed skating for family life and a teaching career in Edmonton. Austin and Marsha live in Calgary, where they train and compete at the elite level.

Brad is a long-time coach with Regina Speed Skating Club, although his involvement this season has been limited due to the accident, while his wife Marion has served as a stalwart club volunteer for several years.

But Ian's family extends well beyond immediate relatives.

As word of the accident spread, the Saskatchewan Speed Skating community rallied behind the injured athlete, raising more than \$7,000 through a Regina Speed Skating Club fundraiser and through individual donations.

Several Regina speed skaters, now training in Calgary, donated a number of items for raffles to help raise money for the fallen skater. Gold medalist Lucas Makowsky even donated his Vancouver 2010 Olympic jacket to help raise funds for Ian's recovery. Not surprisingly, the winner of the raffle – a parent from the Prince Albert Speed Skating Club – donated the jacket back to the Regina Speed Skating Club to present to Ian.



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“We are so grateful for what everybody did for us,” Marion says. “The support came from everywhere ... it was quite emotional and a bit overwhelming.”

Marion doesn't know how she's going to thank everyone for their words or support, kind actions and generous donations, but she says no matter how small the gesture “It all meant a lot us.”

During Ian's time at the Regina General Hospital, the Intensive Care Unit waiting room served as a place for concerned coaches, athletes and friends to visit and show their support for the Hudey family. That support has motivated Ian to push ahead with his recovery.

After only seven weeks in hospital, Ian was transferred to the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre for physiotherapy. He was recently discharged from Wascana, but makes daily visits to the centre to continue with his physiotherapy program.

Because of his involvement in sports, Ian was in excellent physical condition prior to the accident, which may have saved his life and is now aiding in his recovery.

“The doctors said that being a solid person with a strong core was a huge benefit,” recalls Brad, who coaches speed skaters on the importance of developing their core strength. “His core was strong enough to take the impact and provide a brick wall that protected his vitals.”

Ian is accustomed to following a speed skating training program, which has now been replaced with a physiotherapy program. His goal is nothing short of getting back into the same physical condition he was in prior to the accident.

Brad, who twice suffered serious back injuries working in construction, remains optimistic that Ian will eventually achieve his goals. He said Ian's involvement in sports has given him the mental toughness to focus on his progress while adjusting to setbacks.

“Ian just keeps rolling along,” Brad said. “He seems to be extremely optimistic that he will be able to do everything that he did before (the accident).”

“Just like in sports – you make some progress and you suffer some set backs,” he said. “All you do is keep going, do your best and that's just fine.”

“I think he's surprising everyone,” Marion adds. “To him, it feels like the recovery is going slow, but it's only been 12 weeks. Just the fact that he's doing school work is remarkable.”

Ian has to travel to Edmonton for one last surgery to repair an internal injury that was sustained in the accident. After that, the road to recovery is entirely in his hands.

“We're going to rebuild him and we're going to have to start from scratch,” Brad said. “I have no idea how far he'll go and it won't be easy, but he's made significant progress and maybe he'll go further than we expect.”

