

Paraplegic Professional Motocross Racer Rides Again

George Hammel's love of motocross began in 1990. For many years George raced nationwide, winning numerous races and championships nationwide. In 1998 George was racing his first professional national at Glen Helen Raceway in San Bernardino, CA., when the unthinkable happened, he made a mistake coming down a high speed hill and hit a jump with too much speed ejecting him over 80 feet through the air and landing on his feet, compressing his body, shattering his L1 vertebrae, breaking both lower portions of his legs, both his arms, his pelvis, and fracturing his skull. The surgeons fused and inserted plates, from the T12 to the L2, furthermore, he was told he'd be a paraplegic for the duration of his life and of course, never walk again.



Determined to not only walk, but to compete again in motocross, George spent numerous years doing physical therapy, in which he regained some movement in his upper legs. Over the span of 5 years, he was able to start walking with the assistance of forearm crutches, and in the span of 7 years, walk on his own (with a large limp and the support of AFO lower leg braces). With a strong will power, he learned to walk again and started riding a bicycle as well as began riding motocross.

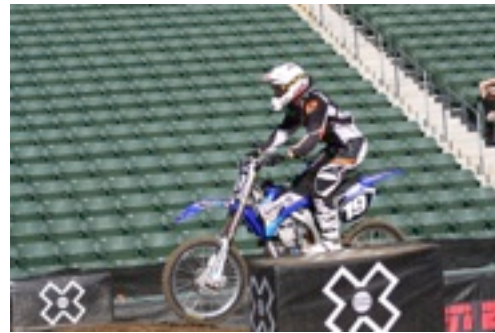


It has been a long and difficult journey and even after breaking 54 different bones throughout his racing career, and through huge leaps, George was able to fulfill his passion and achieve his dream, he won a Gold medal at the 2009 Motocross Extremity Games (www.extremitygames.com), next he competed in the X Games (www.xgames.com) in the Super X Adaptive event.

Last year, while racing motocross, he broke his back for the 3rd time, he burst the T11 vertebrae. Dr. Eric Sipos, an extraordinary knowledgeable and skilled neurosurgeon, was able to perform the rebuilding of the vertebrae without having to insert extra metal or fusions, so as not to impede with the previous 1998 surgery. Unfortunately, this time, Hammel was told he would be unable to ride motocross again due to the weakness of the vertebrae in his back. However with George's strength of character, he began riding

road bicycles (without modifications), and with this, spiked Hammel's competitive edge.

This is the first time George will compete in the Tour de Tucson. Hammel hopes he can motivate others whose lives have been affected by spinal cord or other injuries. He will compete in the 42 mile portion of the Tour this year, and we expect to see Hammel going further and further in the future.



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