

NOTES ON SHOULDER REPLACEMENT

by Jim Rockstad

I started playing racquetball in 1974. In 1991, I had head-on car accident (prior to air bags) which caused whiplash and a few bulging discs in my neck.

I began losing range of motion in my right shoulder and arm just after the accident. I couldn't throw a baseball without experiencing great pain.

I still played racquetball (my passion) but it was harder to do since the range of motion was going away. Lots of ice, Advil and exercising so I could continue with racquetball, but my game was deteriorating over the years. My shoulder was constantly sore and the range of motion was a real struggle.

In 2004, I saw a University of Washington video on shoulder replacement and made contact to see if that was for me. I made an appointment with Dr. Matsen at the UW.

Dr. Matsen said the timing was up to me, when I couldn't take the pain any longer. I knew I would be coming back in the near future. He also said he could grind away some of the existing bone which would allow me better range of motion in addition to the new replacement. (He was certainly correct about this additional range of motion).

In early July of 2005, I was painting a room and my shoulder would "clunk" with each stroke of the brush; I knew it was bone-on-bone.

I had the surgery later in July of 2005 at 62 years old. I requested a replacement that would keep me in the game and not wear out. I wanted to get more range of motion so that I could do the backhand swing again.

In early October, Dr. Matsen allowed me to hit the ball lightly for a short time twice a week with ice after the exercise.

In January 2006, I returned to playing racquetball and using light weights to strengthen the area.

Currently I play three times a week, at least two hours each time. I played 16 games over three days at the March 2007 NMRA event in Portland with just some soreness. I entered the October 2007 Huntsman World Senior Games in St. George, Utah, and won four out of eight games there.

Most players who hear about my replacement can't believe it. I hit the ball harder now than I ever did and the range of motion is wonderful. I work out with weights every week to keep the strength in my upper body to help with my game.

Without the replacement shoulder, I can't imagine where I would be today since the game is so good for my body and health at age 65. I see no reason why I can't play for many, many more years, which is really exciting to me. I certainly hope to play for 10-20 years if the rest of my body holds up.

Without a doubt, this replacement



is the best thing I have ever done for my health -- it allows me to continue to work out in the later years. As a retired guy, I can focus on playing the game and entering tournaments throughout the year.

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