



Connection

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Article by Michael Savoie

Brandon Schoth's Resilient Journey Back to Sports From Serious Injury

ST. ANNE, IL — Whenever someone participates in sports, they run the risk of injury.

For St. Anne Community High School junior Brandon Schoth, that risk turned into reality during the 2023 football season.

During the first game of that season, then a sophomore, Schoth was playing linebacker when Bushnell-Prairie City ran a running play. In pursuit, he made the tackle, but throughout the tackle, Schoth's right leg extended too far out of his body's frame.

He had just completely tore his right ACL and meniscus.

"It broke my heart," Schoth said. "It made me think a lot actually, because one day you could be playing sports, and the next day [you could not]."

What followed were some of the most grueling times of Schoth's life. However, with resiliency and determination, he was able to make a comeback playing the sports he enjoys.

A physical and mental recovery

Schoth had to go through months of physical therapy to recover. He never missed an appointment; his determination to come back and play sports was very strong.

"He was definitely very determined," Matthew Langellier, one of Schoth's teammates and friends, said. "He went to physical therapy every week, multiple times a week, never missing it."

There were times during Schoth's recovery that he hit a mental roadblock. Second-thoughts about playing sports were on his mind.

"I didn't know if I could play sports again," he said. "I just didn't trust myself enough, I guess."



Brandon Schoth hustles off the field.
Photo by Ella Langellier

The confidence Schoth had when he played sports was gone. Mental recovery became as important, if not more important, to Schoth as his physical recovery.

Schoth would regularly meet with therapists, who along with coaches, would encourage him to keep pushing and never give up.

A tightly-knit friend group was also a big piece of the puzzle. Whether it was through in-person conversation or text message, childhood friends and teammates of Schoth were regularly checking in on him, bringing encouragement with them.

“I texted him a lot and we talked a lot. I encouraged him a lot to just keep going, to not give up,” Langellier said. “... We were all definitely really encouraging just to try to get his hopes up, get him in a better mood every day.”

Still if anything was going to be done with his recovery, Schoth had to do the majority of work on his own, which is what he did.

“A lot of [the recovery] he did on his own,” Langellier said. “Just knowing that he wants to get back to how he was, and that he has to work really hard to get there.”

Finding a way to stay involved

With Schoth’s injury happening in the first week of football season, he had the entire school year to heal his body. That meant the months that were once filled with athletic events, were now filled with recovery obligations.

Schoth wanted to find a way to still be involved with his teams. He ended up going to the practices and games for all the sports he would have played: football, basketball, and baseball.

“He knew he could not participate in anything, but he still went to every practice, every game,” Valarie Schoth, Brandon’s mother, said. “I think he learned a lot from sitting on the sidelines.”

And learned a lot he did. Schoth never took a moment for granted, learning about the sports from a third person, coach’s standpoint.

“Just sitting at the practices, I can see everything and learn a lot more from a coach's point of view,” Schoth said. “In a player point of view, if you make a mistake, you don’t see it when you’re

doing it. But when you’re watching other people make a mistake, you can point it out.

“... You see everything differently.”

He was even used in certain game-like situations in practices.

“We used him in practice in certain situations where he could help us and help keep him involved,” Rick Schoon, St. Anne head boys basketball coach, said.



Schoth attempts a dribble drive in a basketball game vs. Reed-Custer on Nov. 29, 2024.
.Photo by Ella Langellier

On top of going to practices and games for each sport, Schoth was also one of the team captains on the basketball team.

“We were hoping to keep his spirits high, knowing that he’s recovering from his knee injury and the surgery,” Schoon said. “He did us a favor [by coming to our practices and games] and hopefully we did him a favor by making sure that he’s still part of our team.”

A return to playing sports

Fast-forward nearly nine months after Schoth’s injury, and he is now the designated hitter for the baseball team in their regional championship

game. The Cardinals fell to Armstrong-Potomac, but for Schoth, being on the baseball diamond was an accomplished goal of his.

“I was pushing myself really hard to be able to play in baseball,” he said. “That’s my favorite sport, so I was pushing myself really hard to be able to get a game in.”

After summer break, Schoth found himself once again on the gridiron, on the football team. An injury-riddled past with the sport created anxiety at times when Schoth was in action.

“When he went back on the football field was I nervous? Yes,” Valarie Schoth said. “Every time he would make a tackle and he was on the ground, I’m like, ‘let’s get up, let’s get up.’”

Schoth completed the football season healthy, being a part of the first Cardinals team in school history to make the playoffs. Currently with basketball, he is a routine starter on a Cardinals team surging atop the River Valley Conference and looking to make a deep playoff run.



Schoth sets up in defense in a basketball game vs. Herscher on Nov. 26, 2024.
.Photo by Ella Langellier

On the court he’s been so valuable because of his high-IQ, and it traces back to when he was injured, watching on the sidelines during practices and games.

“He shows a high basketball IQ,” Schoon said. “He’s been able to develop that even further, because he’s able to have an opportunity to sit and watch [us practice]. ... Brandon has that basketball IQ where he can see two steps ahead.”

Schoth has had to wear a knee brace since the baseball game, something that has kept his right knee stable. But in a basketball game against Watseka last month, Schoth was playing without it.

“It’s a funny story,” Langellier said. “We’re getting dressed before the game, and [Brandon’s] like, ‘oh, I forgot my knee brace.’ I said, ‘uh-oh.’ And he’s like, ‘I don’t need it.’”

“He’s definitely putting a lot of trust in his knee, which is good.”

Schoth has been able to have more trust in his knee because his effort with his recovery was valiant. All the physical and mental recovery and sitting on the sidelines in practices and games paid off.

He is now back where he left off: playing sports for the St. Anne Cardinals.

And he has three words for any young athlete who is going through a similar situation to his:

“Trust the process.”

Have any article ideas? Reach out to Michael via email at micsav12@gmail.com.

Catch Schoth and the rest of the boys basketball team in action Friday, Jan. 10 vs. Tri-Point at home. JV tips off at 5:30 pm, varsity follows.

St. Anne Grade School volleyball is underway! Catch our girls in action tonight at 4:30 pm at Clifton Nash Middle School.