

Race car driver surges ahead in his rehabilitation

Racing is in Kevin Sloan's blood. He loves the crowds, the rush from spinning his sleek, blue race car with "21K" emblazoned on it, around a dirt racetrack. On July 1, 2007, Kevin's racing career screeched to a halt as he rolled end-over-end on hazardous track conditions at the Central Missouri Speedway in Warrenburg, Mo.

Kevin, 25, was taken by ambulance to Kansas City Missouri Research Medical Center and diagnosed with a incomplete spinal cord injury. The severity of his injuries included a crushed C6 vertebrae but doctors were able to fuse C5 and C7 vertebrae utilizing the cutting-edge Cyberknife® surgical technique. He spent two weeks post-surgery at the hospital.

Kevin and his family realized he would need extensive rehabilitation and began researching facilities. Kevin's mother, Lori Simmons, said Madonna was their number one choice, based on the education and referral efforts of Bonnie Huff and Jane Bilau, Madonna development coordinators. "They really impressed us with the specialized treatment Madonna could offer Kevin," said Lori. "Dr. Tracey Cheatham, in medical rehabilitation at Kansas City Missouri Research Medical Center, also spoke highly of Madonna and is a big advocate of your spinal cord rehabilitation program," Lori stated.

On July 16, Kevin was admitted to Madonna and his therapy team rallied around him, becoming his pit crew on the road to rehabilitation. "I think Madonna's therapists are unbelievable. They adapt my therapy to reflect what I enjoy doing," Kevin shared. He appreciates the dedication his therapists have shown. Lori agreed saying, "A patient at Madonna doesn't receive a one-size approach to therapy. Kevin's team really took his goals to heart."

Kevin had a solitary goal when he came to Madonna. "I've kept my focus simple — to walk again," he said determinedly. Hazel Abel Tallman Aquatic Therapy Pool remains one of his favorite therapy venues. Sarah Stevicks, Madonna physical therapist assistant, was working with Kevin in the

therapy pool when he took his first steps and walked 10 feet. He progressed rapidly and recently walked 120 feet twice in the pool. Sarah said, "Kevin certainly is driven in his therapy but throws in his keen sense of humor, too."



Kevin's increasing strength is being accomplished by exposure to a variety of therapies. "I'd lost my fine motor skills as a result of the accident," said Kevin. He's worked hard in occupational therapy on activities like shredding paper and gripping balls. Kevin said it sounds like a mundane task but he's having to retrain his hands. "I had zero pounds of grip strength when initially evaluated and now I'm up to 10 pounds."

Last week, he participated in a group outing to Pizza Hut with other Madonna patients, which enabled him to practice eating skills and maneuvering his wheelchair in public. During

physical therapy, Kevin has trained on the Robomedica®, a body-weight support system that provides stability during locomotion and helps progress weight-bearing according to a patient's needs. Kevin has also challenged himself on the NuStep TRS4000, a recumbent crosstrainer that provides simultaneous upper and lower body motion to build strength and endurance.

Kipp Ransom, a Madonna counselor, understood Kevin's racing passion and organized trips to local racetracks in Eagle and Beatrice. The energy of the track has Kevin eager to get back behind the wheel of "21K." His friends are working furtively making modifications, like hand controls, to his car. "I'm not wanting to race at this point, but I'm anxious to take a few laps again," Kevin stated.

There's no doubt that by his proposed discharge date of Sept. 10, Kevin will be in top "pole position" to surge ahead in his outpatient therapy back home in Kansas City.