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Knee Injury/Condition

ACL Injury

At 46 years old I was a very enthusiastic runner and an avid skier. Unfortunately, one trip to Aspen, Colorado changed all that. I took a huge tumble on a double black diamond (a hill I didn't belong on) and tore my ACL and damaged many of

the other supporting ligaments in my right knee. After the sled ride down the hill and an ambulance to the local hospital, I was diagnosed with a torn ACL and was convinced by the hospital staff to have the replacement surgery later that week even though my knee was the size of a soccer ball (bad move!).

I returned back home to Northeast Pennsylvania to begin my physical therapy and long road to recovery. Within 4 to 5 months it was very clear my knee was not right. I was in pain, could barely walk (not to mention run) and my leg bent out to the right like the bow of a bow and arrow. After visiting multiple orthopedic surgeons in my local area, all with dismal prognoses (of living with a brace and never running again), it was recommended by a local physical therapist that I go to HSS (a top notch orthopedic hospital) in NYC to get an expert assessment on my knee.

That's when I met Dr. Marx. He was kind, smart and respected my desire to run again (ahh a first!). He took my case very seriously and provided me with a surprising option. He suggested he perform an osteotomy, a surgical procedure that entailed cutting my femur in half, re-positioning my leg to remove the bend (or valgus as Dr. Marx would say), and securing it with a plate to hold the leg in position while the bone regenerated itself in its new position. He made it clear to me that this was a radical surgery that required weeks of crutches ("with no weight on that foot!") and a long road of physical therapy. I felt so confident in Dr. Marx and his skills and I had such a strong desire to run again I agreed to the surgery.

10 months after the surgery I was back running again. Yes, I did have a plate in my leg and it did feel strange but I was happily running with no pain. 12 months post-surgery the plate was removed and I was on the road to a full recovery.

Dr. Marx's surgery on my knee uncovered an interesting finding: my MCL, which to me, seemed like an overstretched rubber band actually decreased in laxity after the surgery. In other words it tightened up and started to function properly again.

Dr. Marx was so intrigued with the results he continued his research (with other colleagues) by performing similar procedures on cadavers. His research is now published and he regularly lectures to other orthopedic surgeons about his findings.

I told Dr. Marx I never considered my legs to be my best asset, but to hear how he is using them to teach hundreds of surgeons how to be better at their work, I truly believe they are my best asset. What an honor!

I am now 53 and continue to run 2 to 3 miles almost every day. I must admit, I did give up downhill skiing but still love to cross country ski whenever I can. I remember the first day I walked into Dr. Marx's office, I was so discouraged. I truly believed I would never run again. I think of him often while running and when I do, I always say to myself: "Thank you Dr. Marx!"

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**Robert G. Marx,
MD, MSc, FRCS**
Orthopedic Surgery

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