

Bigger, Better, Stronger: A Young Athlete's Experience with Concussion

Twelve-year-old Alec Silverman is “bigger, better, and stronger” than he was last summer—and it’s not just from eating his vegetables and taking his vitamins.

On April 30 last year, Alec collided with a teammate in a school baseball game and he sustained a concussion and other injuries, including a sinus fracture and damage to his eye. The injury, and the road to recovery, taught him quite a bit about sports concussion, the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, and making smart decisions for your individual well-being.

When the injury occurred Alec was a sixth grader playing on a school team that consisted of mostly seventh and eighth graders. Just happy to be part of the team, Alec didn’t get much playing time. However, when his team was up by several runs that day, the coach decided to give him a chance. He was put into left field. The very first pitch was hit his way—it was a shallow fly ball between him and shortstop. Alec remembers going hard for the ball and colliding with his teammate. He didn’t lose consciousness, but the collision was a bad one. He spent five days in the hospital, was home from school for about a month, and didn’t return to sports until later in the year.

Alec, with the help of his parents Jodi and Steve, has been working to help raise awareness about sports concussion and making decisions about when it is safe to return to play. He has been speaking with his friends and teammates about the seriousness of concussion, and opportunities to increase awareness. “I’d like them to know that if you aren’t feeling normal you have to speak up. Unlike a broken bone, a brain injury can last a lifetime. If you suspect that something is not quite right it is important to tell somebody,” he said.

Alec has started the “22K” program. The number 22 represents the number on his baseball jersey and the letter K symbolizes the term for a

strikeout in baseball.

Through the “22K” program Alec donates Curious George dolls to young children who remain hospitalized after suffering a serious injury. Alec isn’t able to meet the children who receive his Curious George dolls because of patient confidentiality. However, Alec can visualize the smiles he has brought to so many young faces. “I am determined to send a little sunshine to any child who has been injured,” Alec explained. “I am very lucky to have made a full recovery but know what it is like to be on the other side. “I want to make a difference.”

