



Just 6 years old, PJ O'Brien recovered from a racing accident with the help of the experts at K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital. Today, he is happy to be back to training and racing at CJ BMX in Howell.

Orthopedic Surgery Keeps Young Biker on Course



PJ O'Brien isn't like most 6-year-old boys. Instead of spending weekends learning to ride a bike, he races them. But this accomplished BMX biker had an accident that almost ended his budding career — and could have left him with limited use of his hand.

In December 2010, the then 5-year-old was set to race in a BMX bike competition — something he had been doing for six months. But as PJ was up on the hydraulic starting gate, waiting to begin, a gust of wind sent him over the handlebars. At the same moment, the 1,000-pound gate dropped for the start, pinning PJ's arm underneath.

"Thankfully, his dad and other men nearby were able to lift the gate off of him," remembers PJ's mom, Dina. "We called 911 and rushed him to Jersey Shore University Medical Center."

Surgical Skills and Experience

Lawrence Stankovits, M.D., a pediatric orthopedic surgeon at K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital at Jersey Shore University Medical Center and part of Meridian Pediatric Network, was urgently

called to treat PJ. That night, PJ had his first surgery to repair the injury. But the next morning, Dr. Stankovits recognized the development of a far more serious injury.

"PJ had compartment syndrome in his arm — a limb-threatening condition that happens when an injury causes extreme swelling and pressure," explains Dr. Stankovits. "Without treatment, PJ would have lost function in his fingers and hand."

Dr. Stankovits performed surgery to relieve the pressure. Over the next few weeks, he worked with plastic surgeon Michael Risin, M.D., to slowly close the wound using skin grafts as the swelling subsided.

"PJ is an example of our expertise in treating complex pediatric cases," says Dr. Stankovits. "K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital has become a one-stop shop for pediatric surgical care."

The Road to Recovery

PJ was in the hospital for nearly two weeks and had a total of six procedures. Today, he has only scars to remind him of the injury. Not only did PJ get back on his bike, he was ranked the number one BMX bike racer in the nation in 2011 for 6-year-old rookies.

"I am eternally grateful for the doctors and nurses at K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital," says Dina. "If they didn't have the skills to effectively treat PJ, he would have never used his hand the same again." ★



Lawrence M. Stankovits, M.D.
Board certified in
Orthopedic Surgery
Shrewsbury | 732-544-9000

SURGICAL EXCELLENCE FOUND HERE

At K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital, we excel in all types of surgery, in addition to orthopedic surgery. Other areas of expertise include general surgery, neurosurgery, urology, and ophthalmology.