

Second shoulder work injury jeopardized Kucera's job, bow hunting pastime



Kevin Kucera is among the countless people who suffer aches and pains after they move, lift, push and pull things. However, the day after Kucera moved a heavy display on his own at work, his shoulder was exceptionally sore. Kucera, an customer service representative whose clients include “big box” hardware stores, knew his arm pain was more than just a strain. So, he completed his employer’s necessary injury report paperwork and called Dr. Steven Chudik, an orthopaedic surgeon and sports medicine physician with the Steven Chudik MD Shoulder and Knee Injury Clinic. Dr. Chudik performed surgery on Kucera’s knee several years earlier and non-operatively treated him the previous year for another shoulder work injury.

Dr. Chudik ordered a magnetic resonance image (MRI) that showed a possible labral tear in Kucera’s shoulder and recommended surgery to repair the tear. “All I could think about was the need to get the surgery scheduled so I could get back to my job and hopefully bow hunt in the fall,” Kucera said.

What Kucera discovered was how complicated the Illinois Workers Compensation approval process could be. “The checks and balances within Workers’ Comp are there for a reason, and I understood that,” Kucera explained. “Thankfully, Dr. Chudik and his staff helped me through the process so I could get my surgery, start physical therapy, return to my job and get my life back to normal as soon as possible,” Kucera added.

“At the time of his arthroscopic surgery, Kevin not only had a bicep tear that needed to be reattached, but also needed a distal clavicle resection on his shoulder,” Dr. Chudik said.

For someone always on the go, the restrictions of a sling and not being able to drive were the worst part of his recovery, according to Kucera. “It got to the point where I actually looked forward to physical therapy because it got me out of the house” he joked. “Physical therapy started days after surgery incorporating range of motion and six weeks later I started light weight lifting. After a few months, I moved into work conditioning. Once I was able to pass the strength test, I was released to work. I was feeling good, so I asked Dr. Chudik if he’d let me bow hunt. Dr. Chudik told me my shoulder was still healing and he did not want me to for fear I’d tear out everything he repaired, Kucera explained.”

However, a change in Illinois’ crossbow permitting provided an acceptable compromise. Dr. Chudik signed paperwork allowing Kucera to apply for a temporary permit. Once drawn, a crossbow does not require the hunter to hold the bowstring taut making it easier for people with disabilities. In Kucera’s case, it let him hunt without reinjuring his shoulder. On his first evening out, Kucera got a record book 173-inch, nine-point buck and his outdoor life back. Grateful to be able to work and hunt again, Kucera said he is much more conscious about moving and lifting and asking for help. “I think now before I do anything,” Kucera said. “I don’t want to screw it up again!”