



Kmoch “nets” six largemouth bass first day fishing just five months after rotator cuff repair surgery

No good deed goes unpunished according to the adage.

Unfortunately, Robert Kmoch experienced the maxim firsthand when he and fellow fishing club members were setting a pier as part of their fishing club’s membership obligation. Kmoch slipped while carrying a shovel and landed awkwardly on his left arm. He knew instantly he’d hurt his shoulder but kept working “because the work had to get done.” The pain continued throughout the day and eventually subsided. However, previous experience with a torn rotator cuff in his right arm about nine years prior taught him that this was going to require an appointment with an orthopaedic shoulder specialist.

“For the next month, I tried to work around the yard and fish all the while thinking and hoping the pain would go away,” Kmoch explained. “However, it got to a point where I just couldn’t tolerate the pain any longer and scheduled an appointment to see Dr. Chudik.”

Dr. Chudik’s evaluation confirmed Kmoch’s fears. He had a full-thickness rotator cuff tear and needed surgery. However, the avid outdoorsman wanted to put it off. “My biggest concern based on my past rotator cuff injury was the recovery time,” Kmoch said. “I didn’t want to miss the rest of fishing season or bow hunting,” he lamented. “Dr. Chudik warned me that delaying treatment for the type of tear I had could allow the tear to get worse,” Kmoch said. “I was pretty adamant. I stubbornly told him I’d be ready once the seasons were over.” According to Kmoch, Dr. Chudik was right. “By the time I scheduled surgery four months later my injury was worse after fishing all summer and a week of bow hunting,” he explained.

“There are some rotator cuff tears that are at a smaller risk for progression and delays to accommodate life plans are more than acceptable. However, rotator cuff tears don’t improve and increase in size over time resulting in more pain, limitations and lesser outcomes after treatment,” Dr. Chudik explained. “Some tears can actually become irreparable. Therefore, it is best to see an orthopaedic specialist early because many tears, especially acute tears that already are large and retracted, need timely treatment and surgery shouldn’t be delayed to achieve a good outcome,” he cautioned.

Following surgery, Kmoch was in a sling for six weeks going to physical therapy three times a week and diligently doing his home exercises every day. “Dr. Chudik told me that unless I do my job, his time and expertise will be wasted, and I could jeopardize my ability to fish and hunt,” Kmoch revealed.

When Kmoch went to his post-op appointment five months after his surgery while still doing physical therapy, he already had been fishing three times “I caught six largemouth bass my first day out,” he exclaimed. “I can’t thank Dr. Chudik and his team for repairing my rotator cuff and biceps tears. I am back doing what I love, and able to share it with my grandchildren as my grandfather had with me. But you need to listen to your doctor and your therapist” he said. “They’re on your side.”