



Injury Prone

Name: Shelby Hafner

Grade: Senior

Fastest 5K Race: 21:50

Lesson: Life is short. It is what it is.

Don't dwell on the past.

STORY BY TAYLOR ATLAS
PHOTO BY TAYLOR ATLAS

The dark doctor's office was typical looking, with an X-ray machine and a table. Senior Shelby Hafner anxiously watched the doctor carefully zoom in and out of the X-ray of her foot, looking for her source of pain.

"[The doctor] looked at the X-ray and then walked out of the room, leaving me not knowing what had happened," Hafner said. "Then he walked back in with a box of Kleenex, and that's when I started bawling."

The doctor broke the news: she had a broken foot. The devastation was evident, not only on Hafner's face, but her dad's as well.

"I looked over at my dad and he looked like he was ready to cry," Hafner said.

Hafner saw her senior year of sports disappear, as a broken foot would keep her off both the soccer field and the cross country course.

"The hardest part was watching everyone, knowing that I could be out there," Hafner said. "The fact it was my senior year did not make it any better."

Hafner has been playing soccer since she was five years old and began running cross country in seventh grade. This is not how she saw her high school sports career coming to an end. But she is no stranger to rough starts caused by injury.

"Freshman year I tore my ACL in a pre-season soccer tournament, so that was a six-month recovery to start high school, and then I tore it again freshman year in a high school [soccer] game that spring," Hafner said.

Hafner had been hoping to participate in cross country her freshman year, but the tear occurred right before the season began, dashing her hopes of competing. Her second ACL tear was not quite recovered for her sophomore cross country season, keeping her from participating once again. Senior year, she thought, would be the year that she could finally compete.

"I was really hoping to be able to run this year, but once again an injury ruined it for me," Hafner said. "And it took me out of soccer again, all because I got stepped on during soccer practice by a cleat so hard that it broke the bone."

But through it all, Hafner knows she will get through it.

"I have gotten through other injuries, and I guess I just keep telling myself that my foot could have been worse. Six weeks is a lot better than the six months it would have taken to recover from another ACL tear," she said.

While Hafner often wanted to give up while recovering from her second ACL tear, her motivation to heal the broken foot has been extremely strong.

"When I tore my ACL a second time, having to go through the healing process again was really hard and some days I did not want to do it," Hafner said. "But with my foot, I actually wanted to fight through it and get better."

With a lot of support, especially from her dad, and a passion for sports and competition, Hafner said has been able to find the bright side of her injuries and realize that there are worse things in the world than missing a few sport seasons.

"I'm just fortunate that I have the opportunity to come back because there are so many people out there who don't, for one reason or another," Hafner said.

She understands now that the past cannot be changed and that it is best to let it go.

"Life is short. It is what it is. It happened, but don't dwell on the past," Hafner said. "This is not just for the injuries, but for life. The past cannot be changed."

Hafner said she also is not going to let the past dictate her present life or scare her away from what she loves. Even though she has been hurt three times, Hafner does not regret returning to sports even with that recurring fear of injury.

"I love sports too much to not try and come back," she said. "If I would have given up, I would have regretted it for the rest of my life."

When she says that sports are her life, she means it.

"I wanted to run so badly again that I was willing to disobey my doctor's orders not to and run before I was supposed to," Hafner said.

Each day marks a step towards full recovery, and Hafner cannot wait. She plans to even attend the Nike Cross Country Regional race in Arizona Nov. 21, which will act as an unofficial end to her short cross country season.

"Since I only got to run one race this season, I am so excited to be given the chance to run another race, especially NXR," Hafner said.

Even though she constantly pushes through and moves on, the fear of getting injured is always there every time she steps onto the soccer field or laces up her running shoes.

"The thought [of getting injured again] is always in the back of my mind," Hafner said, "but I just have learned to push it aside and move on."