

The quick operation that got me back in the gym

Lawyer **Greg Davis, 29**, has suffered with shoulder problems since he was a teenager. Here, the Pontyclun resident explains how Nuffield Health Cardiff & Vale Hospitals allowed him to continue his sporty lifestyle

■ How long were you suffering?

I have suffered with shoulder and joint problems since my early teens.

I first dislocated my right shoulder at 17, and suffered a number of full and partial dislocations before my first surgery.

I had my first open repair and stabilisation on my right shoulder at 18, which involved one major screw insertion along with a number of anchor screws.

I followed this with preventative surgery on my left shoulder about a year later.

The problems have never really gone away through a combination of genetics, poor rehab after the first surgery and involvement in sports.

I dislocated my right shoulder again in 2016 and suffered a partial dislocation in early 2017, which was the catalyst for further treatment.

■ What happened to cause the problem?

The most recent full dislocation in April 2016 happened during my first full game of American Football.

When grappling with an opponent, my right arm was pulled sharply down and to my left, which historically has been the most vulnerable position for my shoulder.

The partial dislocation in February 2017 occurred while hitting golf balls at a driving range.

This time, the problem occurred at the end of the swing, having exerted force throughout the striking motion.

■ What were the key features of your treatment?

I had X-ray guided fluid injections followed by MRIs on both shoulders to establish the extent of the damage.

The procedure then undertaken was an arthroscopic stabilisation

with labrum repair, as the labrum, the rubbery fibro cartilage attached to the rim of the shoulder socket, was badly torn.

It took less than two hours and I was kept in overnight as a precaution.

My shoulder was effectively immobilised for four weeks after the procedure. Physiotherapy started after four weeks and began with mobility exercises to return a full range of motion to the shoulder.

Basic stability exercises were introduced two weeks later, progressing in duration and intensity.

Loaded exercises have now been introduced and strength is slowly starting to return to the shoulder.

■ How does it compare with the other shoulder now?

At 12 weeks post-surgery my shoulder is feeling about 75% in terms of overall recovery.

My physiotherapist has noted that my scapular stability is now superior in my recently operated right shoulder as compared to my left, so I am now rehabbing and strengthening both shoulders simultaneously.

I am exercising the shoulders for roughly 30-45 minutes each day, with a variety of bodyweight, mobility and loaded exercises.

I am able to squat using a safety squat bar and hope to return to using a standard Olympic bar within two weeks.

I have also resumed bench pressing and deadlifting this week and am not getting any significant issues with the repaired shoulder.

There are still some limitations - I have to put shirts and backpacks on in a specific way, I can't sleep on my right hand side and mobility is only 90-95% but overall the recovery is coming along very well.



➤ **Greg Davis, 29**, has suffered with shoulder problems since he was a teenager

■ When did you have it and when were you able to function again?

The procedure was undertaken in early May 2017.

With immobilisation for four weeks, I needed three weeks off work and a phased return to shoulder function.

I stopped wearing the sling completely after six weeks and returned to driving. Strengthening exercises started at about nine weeks.

■ Who was especially helpful?

Mr Huw Pullen, my consultant, was open and honest with me about what needed to be done and what could/should be done as additional measures.

He was happy to answer questions and go through my MRIs with me on several occasions so that I could fully understand what had happened to my shoulder and how I could prevent it re-occurring.

He did not push me to have a further procedure on my left shoulder, but left the option open should I not be able to resolve the issues effectively through rehab and physio.

My physiotherapist Nicola Phillips has been excellent. I have seen her on a number of previous occasions and requested from the hospital that she lead my rehab.

Her CV speaks for itself and I know that I would not have recovered as well as I have, had Nicki not been leading.

She knows my body's limits quite well, and also knows that I want to push myself as much as possible, so has been able to give me enough work to keep me interested and motivated, while phasing my return to physical activity to make it sustainable.

■ How did you find out about your surgeon?

I have used the Nuffield Health at the Vale Hospital on several previous occasions. I have seen several physiotherapists there, and also saw an ankle specialist when I tore two ankle ligaments.

I have only ever had good experiences with the team and I knew that if I needed to have any work done it was going to be there.

My medical insurance company set up the initial appointment with Mr Pullen having taken into account my preferences.

I knew after my first consultation with Mr Pullen that I could trust him to do a great job with the procedure and so far I seem to have been correct.

■ Would you recommend this procedure?

I would definitely recommend this procedure to anybody suffering the same issues.

The advances made in surgical and recovery techniques in the last 10 years made it a night and day

experience from my first shoulder repair to this one.

The procedure was shorter, the scars much smaller, the recovery timetable much quicker and the prognosis much better.

I would happily speak to anybody considering this procedure and give them my full recommendation to book a consultation and get the repair work started.

■ What were you prevented from doing before the surgery?

I am a lawyer, so my desk-based job was never really at risk.

However, I also like to be very active out of work, my main sports include weightlifting, mountain biking and skiing.

I am also learning to surf and climb and am looking to compete in trail running and powerlifting competitions within the next year.

Most, if not all of these, sports would have been at risk if I had not had this procedure.

I was never able to reach my full strength potential due to the inherent shoulder instability, and there was always a risk that a heavy fall while skiing or on the bike could have led to a further dislocation.

It is about risk management, which is why I have given up American Football, as the risks outweighed the potential rewards, but I am well on the way to returning to a full, active lifestyle.