



Chris Klug Story --- I'm Lucky to be Alive Today



On July 28, 2000, I had a liver transplant at University Hospital in Denver, Colorado. I had been diagnosed 9 years earlier with primary sclerosing cholangitis, a rare degenerative bile duct condition that required a liver transplant.

It was truly an amazing experience for me and for my family. To receive the gift of life is a humbling experience and I will forever be grateful for my second

chance. Everyday I thank God and I thank the donor's family for their decision to donate. The doctors and their team took great care of me leading up to the transplant and the surgeon performed a perfect surgery. I was back doing what I love, snowboarding, less than 2 months later.

The hardest part of the ordeal was the waiting game leading up to the transplant. You're life is put on hold; you hope and pray daily for a second chance. I wore a pager every minute of the day and carried a cell phone as a backup in anticipation of receiving a call from the University Hospital transplant team informing me that a liver matching my blood type, age, and size was available. Three months after being upgraded on the waiting list to a more critical stage, my phone rang. When I finally got the call, I was relieved that the wait was finally over, but scared to death at the prospect of possibly not surviving the surgery.

I received a perfectly matched liver and had one of the best teams of doctors performing the transplant. Because I was physically fit before the surgery, I bounced back quickly. I was out of the hospital in record time?four days?and back in the gym doing light exercise. I had to listen to my body and to my doctors and go easy for the first month because the risk of a hernia was high. The doctors suggested that I walk and so my family and I walked to Broncos Games, Rockies Games, the new aquarium, and shops all over the city. I returned to Aspen a month after my transplant to begin my rehab. I eased back into strength work and was back on my road bike about four and a half weeks post-surgery. Three weeks later, I began light abdominal strengthening and a week after that I headed to Mt. Hood, Oregon, for my first runs back on my snowboard. It was pretty special. I remember being so excited to be back on snow and with my friends. I never take a day of riding with my buddies or a single turn for granted any longer.

I was back on the World Cup Circuit 4 months after my surgery. Six months later, I stood atop the podium in Oleng, Italy, for the first time. That winter was one of my best seasons ever. I attribute that to a new perspective on life and feeling lucky to be doing what I love again after running the "Race for my Life." A year and a half later, I had the opportunity to represent the United States in my second Olympic Games, where I won a Bronze Medal in snowboarding and fulfilled a life-long dream.

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