

# Beating the Odds by a Shoestring

A handshake with Derek Paulsen reveals the power of an athlete. The UW-Parkside mathematics major has the grip – in his right hand – of someone who excelled at baseball, football, wrestling, and other physical activities.



It's Paulsen's left side, however, that continues to feel the devastating affects of a stroke he suffered at the age of 16.

"I was at baseball practice and took batting practice. I felt normal, hit the ball well," he said. "And all of a sudden this immense pain took over my head. It just got worse, and things started spinning. I eventually just passed out."

This led to a series of frightening and frustrating events. Paulsen was hospitalized. Tests were done but there was no apparent reason for his collapse. He was released from the hospital but the pain continued. He returned to the hospital for more tests. Again, they were inconclusive. Shortly after being admitted to the hospital the second time, he was engaged in physical therapy when he was stricken.

"They told me to stand up and when I went to stand up, I had no control over my left side. It just went dead. That's when the stroke happened," Paulsen said.

Once his condition stabilized, Paulsen spent a summer in physical therapy and he had surgery last winter to improve

blood flow to his brain.

Recovery and rehabilitation were tough but Paulsen's greatest challenge came from a shoestring.

"I wanted to go away (to college), you know, being an independent teenager. But there were things I couldn't do such as tying my shoes," he said. "So, I commuted my first semester. During Christmas break, my dad said, 'If you can tie your shoes by the end of break, we'll sign you up for a room at Ranger Hall.'"

Paulsen conquered the shoestrings during that break and was soon living on campus.

Although he feels the lingering effects of the stroke every day, Paulsen refuses to engage in "why me" thinking. He continues to exercise; he takes the stairs rather than the elevator. And he continues to approach life with a relentless can-do attitude.

"I could sit in my room and be quiet and be upset and depressed about what happened to me. Where's that going to get you? Nowhere," he said. "Just more depressed and more upset. So I try to look at the positives."

## Athletics

### Track and Field

The highlight of the women's outdoor track season was a sweep of the top four spots at the NAIA championships in the 3,000-meter race walk which included an individual title by Amber Antonia in 13 minutes, 27.46 seconds. Anne Favolise was second; Robyn Stevens, third; and Amanda Bergeron, fourth. Jessi Scardina finished sixth to give five All-American honors to the Rangers. Antonia also placed in three events at the Great Lakes Valley Conference (GLVC) outdoor track meet.

Over on the men's side, the race walkers swept the top five spots at the NAIA meet. Ben Shorey earned championship honors in 20:57.16. Jim Heys, Steve Quirke, Mike Stanton and Matt DeWitt followed Shorey. At the NCAA Division II national meet, Bob Sikorski finished fourth in the high jump.

### Softball

The traditionally strong UW-Parkside softball team qualified for the GLVC tournament in coach Laura Fillipp's initial campaign. The team ended with a winning season at 20-18 (6-8 GLVC) and earned the eighth seed in the conference tournament. The Rangers lost two games in the double-elimination tourney by a 2-1 score, one in 10 innings.

The rebuilding Rangers only had one senior on the active roster in catcher Nicole Niles. Hollie Carpenter, also a catcher, missed the entire senior season due to an injury. The team won five of its first six games and endured 20 cancelled games due to bad weather. Freshman pitcher Jen Mayer was a bright spot. She logged a 13-6 record with a 1.44 ERA. Sophomore Erin Bravo was the top hitter on the club with a .296 average.

### Baseball

The Ranger baseball team finished with a 10-19 GLVC mark (13-32 overall). The team finished strong, winning two of three from perennial power Indianapolis. The squad captured an 8-3 decision at Lincoln, Mo., in its first game of the season to give first-year coach Tracy Archuleta his first career victory as a head coach. Brian Rehm, a second baseman and one of four seniors on the club, paced the Rangers in hitting with a .327 average. Erik Kraemer, a junior, was next best at .313. Wally Vojacek, a senior left-hander, was the ace of the pitching staff compiling a 4-4 record with a 3.92 ERA. During the season, Vojacek was named a GLVC Pitcher of the Week.

*For fall sports schedules, contact the Athletics Department at (262) 595-2245.*