



Getting Back in the Game

Major League Baseball star regains control of his life following rotator cuff injury.

As a starting pitcher on the 1986 World Champion New York Mets, Bobby Ojeda, 45, of Rumson, has enjoyed a remarkable career, although he's also endured the physical effects of his dedication to baseball.

"Playing baseball is one of the great joys of my life; however, 13 years of major league pitching has caught up to me," says Bobby, who now is the pitching coach for the Brooklyn Cyclones, a Class A minor league team affiliated with the New York Mets.

"All that wear and tear left me with an increasing pain in my shoulder that was making my life difficult."

While under the care of sports medicine specialist and orthopedic surgeon Mark M. Seckler, M.D., Bobby was diagnosed with a *rotator cuff* injury that required surgery. Rotator cuff injuries are usually strains or tears in the group of muscles that allow shoulder movement and hold the shoulder joints together. When damage is done to these muscles, the pain can become debilitating and can render the shoulder incapable of even the simplest everyday functions.

"Rotator cuff injuries are very common and definitely not restricted to just athletes," says Dr. Seckler, who also serves as an orthopedist for the New Jersey State Troopers and the U.S. Olympic team. "Of the 100 patients I see a week, about 30 of them are rotator cuff-related. Anyone who uses aggressive shoulder rotation in their daily life runs the risk of a rotator cuff injury, from doing housework, to construction, to sports — basically any repetitive motion can lead to an injury."

When Enough is Enough

"I am not someone who runs to the doctor with every ache and pain," says Bobby. "However, my condition continued to get worse. When I couldn't golf anymore, that was bad enough. But, I knew I absolutely had to do something when I couldn't pick up my own kids."

In December 2000, Bobby underwent shoulder surgery by Dr. Seckler at Jersey Shore Medical Center. "I'm not a big fan of any kind of surgery," jokes Bobby. "But, I knew I had a



Mark Seckler, M.D., orthopedist, repaired a rotator cuff injury of former Mets pitcher Bobby Ojeda of Rumson.

great surgeon, and it was something I had to do or this injury would control my life."

A good percentage of rotator cuff injuries are treated through conservative methods, such as physical therapy, anti-inflammatory medication, or pharmaceutical injections. However, it's important to note that any medication should be accompanied by physical therapy. Even after conservative options have run their course, there are still surgical options to consider.

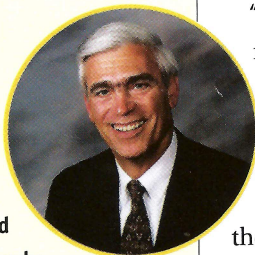
"Thanks to our increasing knowledge and surgical skill, patients now have several options that can help reduce the discomfort following surgery and return them to a better quality of life," says Dr. Seckler, who was fellowship trained in sports medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. "In years past, we would be required to perform traditional surgery. We are now able to repair the same type of damage in some patients with minimally invasive procedures that result in much less discomfort during the healing process."

After a successful surgery, Bobby learned a valuable lesson that he passes on to his players today. "Always complete the proper physical rehabilitation — it's the key to recovery," says Bobby. "It's very important to listen to your doctor and pay attention to your

Photo: Chris Gehler

Message to the Community

Our body is a complex system of bones and joints that give us strength and mobility and permit us to perform a variety of physical activities that shape our daily lives. Unfortunately, our joints and bones are regularly subjected to trauma and gradual wear and tear that may seriously impede our health and well-being.



In the United States, musculoskeletal disorders are a leading cause of physical disability. Conditions such as osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, back pain, spinal disorders, and fractures affect hundreds of millions of people around the world.

We have filled this issue of *Meridian HealthViews* with amazing stories about the human spirit and its ability, with the help of medicine, surgery, and rehab, to mend itself from orthopedic-related injuries and illnesses. We have featured some of the many physicians and other health care professionals who provide comprehensive orthopedic services and rehabilitation programs throughout Meridian. If you are living with any pain or immobility issues, we hope you'll call on these experts to help improve the quality of your life.

Sincerely,

John K. Lloyd, FACHE
President