

Blessed to be back after a traumatic event

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Calvin Martin has competed in a little bit of everything for the Imbler Panthers track and field team during his prep career.

The senior's primary events are the javelin, the 4x100 and 4x400 relays and the 800. He took seventh in the 800 a year ago at state.

Off the track, he's surprised himself with a sharp memory, saying he's recently been able to memorize large passages of the Bible.

He's involved in the lives of people around him, be it helping coach a junior high basketball team, or, as his mother Kelly Martin put it, using sports as a way to minister to others.

And he's engaged to be married this summer.

All are accomplishments he attributes to the grace of God, and all are feats that, about 3-1/2 years ago, would have been tough — if not impossible — to imagine after he suffered a brain hemorrhage during his freshman year of high school. It was an event that took away many of the activities he had participated in for years but opened up opportunities he otherwise may not have experienced.

"We're very, very happy and thankful that he is who he is today, and that he can do the things he does today," his mother said.

LOOKING BACK ON THE FATEFUL DAY

Calvin Martin said he recalls most of the details of the day the brain hemorrhage happened — Oct. 14, 2015.

"I remember going to (football) practice. I remember having a headache in the locker room," he said, adding he didn't think much of the headache, attributing it likely to being dehydrated and then taking some ibuprofen. "I remember drills, warm-ups. I remember the drill we were doing when it happened. About where (my memory) stopped was when I took my helmet off."

According to an October 2015 Observer article, Martin passed out on the sidelines and after not responding was airlifted to Walla Walla, Washington, for emergency surgery to remove a piece of his skull and a clot from his brain. He was then transferred to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle and later to Seattle Children's Hospital for the early stages of his recovery.

His memory of the events following when he passed out is, as he put it,



Top left: Calvin Martin shown in one of his senior photos. (courtesy of Kelly Martin)
Top right: Calvin during the early stages of recovery, wearing a helmet to protect the area of his head where a piece of his skull was removed. (Dick Mason, Observer file photo)
Bottom left: Calvin throwing javelin at the La Grande Invite. (Ronald Bond, The Observer)
Bottom right: Calvin helping coach the Imbler junior high basketball team. (Kelly Martin photo)

"wishy-washy," with most of the details passed on to him by family.

"My dad (Mike Martin) told me when I woke up in the (Walla Walla) hospital, they actually had to put something on me to hold me to the bed," he said. "When I woke up I freaked out. I was all over the place. I was struggling to get out. I woke up and didn't know where I was or anything. Of course, I have no conscious memory of this."

He does have some memories of events during that time that were more pleasant, including an ambulance ride where he shared laughs with the medical team in the back, and a visit from a Seattle superstar.

"(Seattle Seahawks quarterback) Russell Wilson visited me. That was pretty cool," Calvin said. "I remember he came up behind me. He came up while I was doing therapy. He put his hand on my shoulder. I got up and hugged him. It was a cool experience."

He instantly became a fan, adding he made sure to get a Wilson jersey, which he still has.

His mom said the doctor told them after the surgery Calvin was fortunate, but that there could be some major complications from the hemorrhage. At times, Kelly admitted the family wondered if her son would lead a normal life again.

"There were times we had a question in our hearts about that, but we've always looked at it like what the doctor said in the beginning, 'Your son is extremely lucky to

be alive,'" she said. "Even when he woke up, they prepared us that he may not have the use of all his extremities."

The fears of that were assuaged, though, through a humorous moment after he awakened from the procedure.

"We pinched his toes, and asked if he could feel it. He asked, 'Why are you pinching my toes?'" Kelly said.

RETURNING TO EVERYDAY LIFE

Calvin returned home in November 2015. The early stages of recovery were a challenge, and he was limited in much of what he could do. Kelly said the amount of tasks the brain does are taken for granted, and that was seen as Calvin worked his way back from the brain injury.

"You don't realize how many things your brain is working on," she said. "When you're sleeping, it's still working. Even watching TV or reading a book is a challenge to someone whose brain is bruised."

Kelly said if Calvin did too much he could get nauseous and throw up — and "too much," in the early stages, was as simple as getting up too fast from a chair or natural functions

like sneezing. Tasks had to be slowly reintroduced.

"We had to learn to set limits for him on his recovery and then gradually allow him to continue on with normal life," she said.

Academics, for example, when they were eventually worked back into his schedule, were given to him in small doses. Calvin, who is home-schooled, spent at first five to 10 minutes per subject before taking a rest and moving to another subject. He then built that up to 15 minutes per subject then 20, and so on.

"His day was really long, but he was recovering at the same time," Kelly said, adding that Calvin had to study into the summer that year and next as he worked to catch up.

While there were several additional struggles along the road back to where he is now, the family has also seen many positives and changes as his recovery progressed, and Kelly said Calvin has transitioned smoothly into understanding many of the facets of being a young adult.

"He's moved right into that arena of young adult life. It was a lot smoother than we anticipated," she said. "We were thankful for

that. He didn't have a lot of struggles in that area."

Calvin has seen positives as well.

"Sometimes I think my memory isn't that great, but I proved myself wrong on that," he said. "There was a time when we were trying to memorize a whole book of the Bible, and I told myself I couldn't do it, and God told me otherwise. He said, 'You can if you rely on me.'"

He memorized each of the first three chapters, and part of the fourth, of the book of James during that challenge.

Calvin said some of his perspectives have changed as well, and his faith has grown. He said he believed in God prior to the hemorrhage, but that belief has only gotten stronger.

"I have a great God. He can pull you through anything," Calvin said. "Life's not easy. It sucks a lot of times, but I say always look toward him (and) look at all the blessings throughout your life. A lot of times

we can get down and focus on the negative situations. A lot of people would think I would do that. God's put (it) as part of my life to try and have joy through everything. I'm blessed to be here. I'm blessed to be able to run still and do all the things I do."

Kelly added that part of Calvin's perspective includes an empathetic perception, which he had previously, but that he had to relearn after the injury. "He recognizes things in people that a lot of people don't. He'll notice little things about people who sacrifice," she said.

Calvin also attributes the injury — and God working through it — to opening his eyes to his fiancée, Maddie Seggerman, whom he will marry in July.

"My thought process on that is if I hadn't had the brain problem, the surgeries and whatnot, that my life would have been more wrapped around myself," he said, adding that he's

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