

A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN

Senior volleyball champ prepares for comeback following knee replacement

At 85, it's not uncommon for Paul Winkel to play competitive volleyball six hours a week against athletes 30 years younger than he is. Or to spend mornings at the gym lifting weights, exercising on a stationary bike and treadmill, stretching and doing pushups. That's because the senior volleyball world champion is solely dedicated to his game. Even after a recent total knee replacement, he can't wait to get back on the court as soon as his doctor gives him the green light.

A former Airborne Ranger and senior Army aviator whose helicopter battalion was depicted in the movie *We Were Soldiers*, Paul knows a thing or two about toughness. (While he did not

appear in the film, he earned the Silver Star serving in that battle for nearly 10 hours as a flight leader of four helicopters). So it may not come as a surprise that when he retired from 31 years of military service, Paul embarked, with his wife, whom he met on the court, on a strenuous, highly competitive volleyball career. Paul has racked up more than 30 medals competing in national and international competitions. His achievements have not come without a cost to his joint health, however.

"Volleyball is very aerobic. It's a quick move here, a quick move there; you have to be in the right position at the right time," Paul says.

After several arthroscopic surgeries on both knees, plus a series of conservative treatments, Paul underwent

Back to Business: Paul Winkel, who underwent two knee replacements, plays senior volleyball at the highest level.



knee replacement surgery on both knees, the first in March 2015 and the other this past February.

"Mr. Winkel was diagnosed with severe osteoarthritis of the knees," says Nitin Goyal, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at the Inova Joint Replacement Center at Inova Mount Vernon Hospital (IMVH), who performed both of Paul's knee replacements. "He had already been given conservative treatment options, which can include anti-inflammatory medications, injections, physical therapy or bracing, but none of those treatments really worked for him so we discussed surgical options."

RAPID RECOVERY

As it turned out, a minimally invasive total knee replacement was Paul's best option. Thanks to outpatient knee replacement available at IMVH, he can get back in the game sooner.

"Our goal is focusing on rapid recovery," says Dr. Goyal. "People who undergo outpatient procedures get back to living their lives faster. They don't have to stay in the hospital; they get to recover in their own homes and be comfortable in their own environments."

For Paul, recovering from both knee replacements has been a straightforward process that he has tackled with gusto. "Last year I walked into the hospital at 5:30 a.m. and I woke up, I climbed the stairs and I walked out at 3:30 p.m.," Paul says. This year? "Been

there, done that and got the T-shirt," he laughs.

Having been prescribed minimal pain medication after his surgery in February, Paul walked around the house with a walker as soon as he got home and went to physical therapy the very next day. Within a week he was driving and using a cane for stability and support.

Today, no longer using a cane, Paul goes to a physical therapist near his home in Sterling where he trains using weights and exercise bands, and does aerobic exercise on a bike and treadmill. Having gone to therapy a month prior to surgery has sped up recovery. He has nicknamed his therapist, Mark Meadows, "the assassin," who is tough as nails on healthy programs for improvement.

As a result of his speedy recovery, Paul is bursting to get back to the court, for he's already established an over 70s-bracket team for this October's Senior World Volleyball Championships held in Utah every year. Last year, his team won silver among five competing teams.

"It's a lot better," Paul says of his quality of life. "You're faster and you trust your knees. They don't hurt and everything just works like you have a real knee in there."

"Paul is a super-motivated guy, one of those people you really can't hold down," comments Dr. Goyal. "We love patients like him because they are so driven to get better after surgery."

Leading the Pack

Inova Mount Vernon Hospital is a trailblazer when it comes to minimally invasive outpatient joint replacement. Nitin Goyal, MD, and colleagues at the Inova Joint Replacement Center performed the first outpatient knee and hip replacements in the Northern Virginia area. Dr. Goyal is a hip and knee replacement surgeon with a special interest in minimally invasive surgery and cutting-edge pain management techniques.

"Our use of minimally invasive surgical techniques along with tightly controlled anesthesia protocols, modern pain management techniques and early physical

therapy gets people up and moving quickly," Dr. Goyal says.

With board-certified orthopedic surgeons, specially trained nurse therapists and other healthcare professionals working in tandem to make sure patients receive the highest level of care, it's no wonder the center has been awarded prestigious rankings. The Inova Joint Replacement Center has earned The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval for outstanding care in hip and knee replacements. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked Inova Mount Vernon Hospital as nationally "high performing" in knee replacement.

Paul Winkel works with physical therapist Mark Meadows, who has helped the patient recover quickly from his knee replacement surgery in February.



LEARN MORE

To learn more about the Inova Joint Replacement Center, call 703.664.7493 or visit inova.org/joint_replacement.