By Shelley White

How the Inherited Arrythmia Program tackled Short QT syndrome for a young athlete

DARRIAN SEATON-TUCKER

DARBRIAN doesn’t remember much about the football game he played right before his heart stopped beating. It was October 2015, and the 16-year-old was a cornerback for the local high school in Welland, Ont., where he shares a home with his mother. “It felt good to get out, but I was still very sore,” adds Mr. Seaton-Tucker. “My foot is totally on the brake. If I need to play football again, it will be right back; I just need a minute,” says Mr. Seaton-Tucker.

“Right now it’s my little nemesis,” says Ms. Seaton of her son’s wish to return to football. “It’s true when they say life is uncertain. If I were to Durrian, he would be like, ‘I’m just going to check out the field, see what’s saying,’ but he needs to just walk a little bit, just take it easy.” Regardless of what the future holds, Mr. Seaton-Tucker says that his experience with SQTS has profoundly affected him and made him realize how precious life really is. “It’s true when they say life is very short and it can be over very fast,” he says. “So I guess that is one of the positives I’ve gotten from this experience.”

“Darrian essentially died from this condition but fortunately received CPR and a shock from paramedics to return him to life,” says Dr. Gollob. “The risk of recurrence of this sort of sudden event is high. There is no single medication proven to lower his risk. The condition is not influenced by diet, weight or exercise. The safest treatment is the placement of a defibrillator, which works by sensing his heart rhythm, beat by beat, and should it detect a deadly arrhythmia, the defibrillator will shock his heart to terminate that dangerous arrhythmia,” says Dr. Gollob. Mr. Seaton-Tucker was required to carry a portable defibrillator in all games, as well as constantly have someone with him who was trained how to use it on him in case of another cardiac event. “Darrian always had to be with somebody, and if you knew my son, he’s in those moods where he’s like, ‘I want to shut everybody out and I want to be by myself.’ So it was a real chore,” says Ms. Seaton.

The procedure to implant the defibrillator was successful, and Mr. Seaton-Tucker relayed his new-found freedom. “The same day, his friend came over, and Darrion said, ‘Mom, please, just let me go. I will be right back; I just need a minute,’” says Mr. Seaton-Tucker. “It felt good to get out, but I was still very sore,” adds Mr. Seaton-Tucker. These days, he says, he barely notices the implanted defibrillator at all. “Morning, sometimes I feel it, but other than that, I don’t really pay attention to it.” Mr. Seaton-Tucker graduated from the local high school in June, and now he’s taking a year off before university, focusing on getting a part-time job and getting his body back in good, physical condition. He says he wants to play football again in the future, although Dr. Gollob does not recommend it. “Due to the high physical impact from this sport, there is a significant risk that he could damage his implanted defibrillator,” says Dr. Gollob.

Dr. Michael Gollob