



Dear Hockey Community:

As you may now know, Derek Zike, a 1992 birth year player on the Chicago Fury minor midget team was seriously injured in a tournament game in Ann Arbor, MI this past weekend.

On Friday (January 16) night, Derek and the team were playing their game and Derek was forechecking a Dallas player into the corner of the Dallas zone. Derek attempted to make a turn and lost an edge of his skate. The result of losing his edge caused Derek to propel head first into the boards at a high rate of speed. Derek was not hit by anyone; it was quite simply the result of a lost edge while trying to turn.

Because of his speed and close proximity to the boards at the time he lost his edge, Derek did not have time to brace himself with his arms nor did he have an opportunity to alter his position before striking the boards head first. While on the ice, Derek was unable to move or feel virtually anything.

Derek was rushed to the University of Michigan medical center where he was diagnosed as sustaining a burst fracture of the 5th cervical vertebrae. This is approximately where the neck joins the shoulders.

In the emergency room Derek could not feel or move anything below his waist nor could he feel or move his arms from the elbows to the fingers.

Derek was taken into surgery within hours and the bone fragments were removed from the spinal cord. Also, the surgery stabilized the injury site and he was placed on steroids to control the swelling and also given pain medications.

As of last night when his teammates visited him in the ICU, Derek was alert even with his pain medications and spoke to his team in small groups. Earlier the same day, the Mission minor team visited Derek after their game on Saturday and other teams provided signed "Get Well" cards for presentation to Derek.

Also as of last night, Derek had regained some sensation in his arms to the fingers and regained more motion to the forearms and hands. He still did not have sensation to the legs.

The news is positive but guarded in that the bone fragments did not sever the spinal cord and the surgeons were able to remove the fragments without additional injury to the spinal cord.

Derek's fracture area is stable through the implantation of cages around the injury site.

The next few days are critical to Derek's recovery and is based in large part on the reduction of the swelling in and around the spinal cord area.

Derek will remain in the Intensive Care Unit for approximately 7-10 more days and then he will be moved to another area of the hospital.

On behalf of the Zike family and the Chicago Fury please accept the following thoughts.

First, please keep Derek and his family, Mike (Dad), Robin (Mom), Sam (younger brother) and Taylor (a 1993 birth year player on the CYA minor midget team) in your thoughts and prayers. Derek will go through some good days and some days where his progress may be limited and keeping him in your thoughts and prayers will only help him and his family in this time.

Second the Chicago Fury will make every attempt to keep the hockey community frequently updated as the information is provided to us.

Third, the hockey community is a tremendous community and has an unbelievable capacity to come together to help one of its own. While we wait for Derek's condition to improve, the Fury will provide information on its website regarding how the hockey community may help this fine young man and his family. More information will become available as Derek's recovery progresses.

Fourth, Derek is in the ICU at the University of Michigan medical center. I know everyone wants to call him and/or send him cards, etc., but his condition at this moment is not conducive to receiving telephone calls because he will require

his rest and full energy for a speedy recovery. When Derek is moved to a location more conducive to receiving calls and letters, etc., the information will be posted on the Fury website.

Fifth, Derek is under the care of excellent physicians and staff at the University Hospital and the doctors and nurses have been wonderful to Derek and his family.

Last, Derek and his family are great people and truly representative of the Chicago Fury players and family and the hockey community at large. On behalf of the Zike family and the Chicago Fury, please take the time to enjoy your family and children and take no moments for granted.

Thank you for your thoughts and concerns and please keep your prayers coming.

The Chicago Fury