

Little Leaguer Returns to Field, Makes All-Stars, One Year After Leg Amputation

Williamsport, Pa. (Sept. 25, 2005) – Cody Perdue of Fremont, Calif., is just like other 14-year old boys in mind and spirit, yet his recovery from a devastating injury has made him an inspiration.

Two years ago, Cody was with some friends and he decided that he would try to jump on to a moving train. The outcome of that decision was life-altering, as he suffered injuries serious enough that his left leg had to be amputated four inches below the knee.

Despite 10 surgeries, a variety of skin grafts, and a new prosthetic limb, Cody has persevered. “Cody is an amazing young man. He is just a great person,” Cristine Thompson, Centerville National Little League Baseball president, said.

“Right after his first surgery, he asked me if he was going to get a new leg,” Karen Perdue, Cody’s mother, said. “He was determined from the start to get back on the field and play baseball again.”

The journey to get back on to the playing field was long and demanding on Cody, though he had great support. “My coach (Wayne Row) and his wife came to the hospital the next day to visit me,” Cody said.

“We wanted to make sure Cody knew he could overcome this obstacle,” Mr. Row, manager of the Centerville National Little League’s Giants, said. “I told him straight up, ‘I am going to bust your hump every day’, and I was not going to cut him any slack. Though he would get mad at me, I told him that is the way it had to be.”

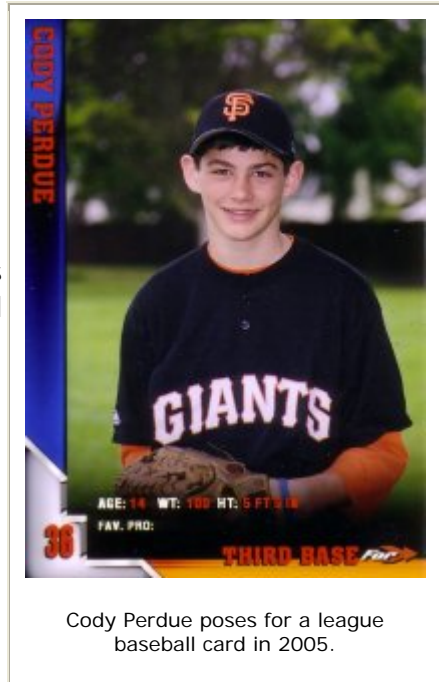
Mr. Row was not the only one who helped support Cody during his rehabilitation. “My family really encouraged me to get better,” Cody said.

Cody’s older brother Dustin, 18, made sure Cody never felt disabled, or handicapped.

“Cody and Dustin would play catch almost every day, and he never treated him any different.” Karen said. “We knew that we had to keep helping him reach his goal of playing baseball again. The biggest concern I had was that he would get depressed and I am proud to say he has not felt that way.”

Before Cody got back to playing baseball, he took on the role of assistant coach.

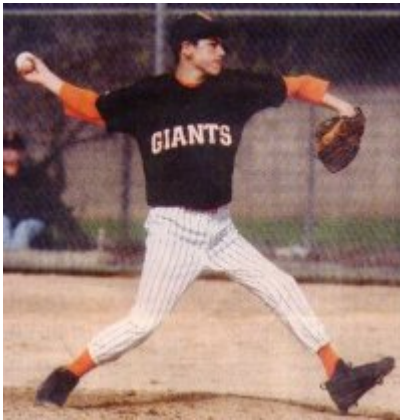
“I brought Cody on as an assistant,” Mr. Row said. “He was at the field everyday working with his teammates to help make them better. I do not think another kid would have been able to come back from this injury like Cody did. He is just that great.”



Cody Perdue poses for a league baseball card in 2005.

Cody's determination to play Little League again helped him and his parents decide on the type of prosthesis he now wears.

"We all knew that he was going to come back and play baseball again, therefore his prosthetic leg had to have a 'flex foot,'" Karen said.



Cody Perdue of Centerville National Little League in Fremont, Calif., pitches during a 2005 regular-season game. One year ago, Cody suffered an injury that required amputation of his left leg below the knee. He returned to the field this season with a prosthetic leg, and made the local league's California District 14 Junior Baseball all-star team.

A flex foot is the portion of a prosthetic metal leg that function similar to toes, and provides stability and flexibility. "I was amazed how fast he learned to run and I was so proud of him," Karen said.

This mechanism allows Cody to walk and run with minimal limitations. During extensive physical therapy, Cody learned to run again under the tutelage of current and former Paralympics participants, and is close to regaining 100 percent of his running ability.

This past season, Cody was able to play for the Giants. He pitched and played third base, yet his ultimate goal remains making it back to his favorite position - shortstop.

Mrs. Thompson, Mr. Row and Cody's mother all agreed that Cody had a great season.

"Now that the season is over, we all know it was the right decision (to let him play)," Karen said. When asked how he felt on the field, Cody said, "I'm good!"

Some of the local league's coaches and parents did have concerns about Cody playing, mainly because of their fear of him suffering another injury.

There were times when the opposition tested Cody's supposed physical limitations by trying to hit the ball to him. In turn, Cody used his prosthesis to his advantage.

"The other team would just think that he's not going to steal a base, and right when they ignored him, he would steal a base," Mr. Row said. "It was great."

Little has changed for Cody. He has become a bit slower around the base paths, and he can not squat very well, so he won't be playing catcher, but he still wears his regular cleats and can slide into a base, wearing additional knee pads.

Away from the baseball field, Cody continues to enjoy the typical teenage pursuits like spending time with his friends, skateboarding, swimming and playing paintball.

The 2005 baseball season was such a success for Cody that when he made the Centerville National Little League's California District 14 Junior Division All-Star team, Karen was worried that he made the team out of sympathy.

"The coaches told me that his ability is how he made the team," Karen said. "That is how I knew he was back."