



Abigail Merritt: Sets high standards in surgeon choice for **ACL Repair**

High school senior **Abigail Merritt** found her final season of competitive soccer cut short when she fell and tore the Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) in her left knee.

Abigail knew that the ACL is a critical component for keeping the knee joint stable for active individuals - and Abigail intended to remain active in college and adult life.

“I wanted to have [my knee] fixed so that I wouldn’t have issues in the future,” she shared. “I want to be a mom, an *active* mom, and I don’t want to worry about my knee. Having this fixed appropriately so that I could live a full life was very important to me.”

With that motivation, Abigail wanted only the best doctor to fix her knee. So after her diagnosis, she began to

speak with other students who had also undergone ACL repair to understand both the surgery and recovery experience as well as impressions of her physician options.

“I listened to what other people had to say, and did my own research,” explained Abigail. “I met with multiple physicians including **Geoffrey Van Thiel, MD.**”

Abigail noted Dr. Van Thiel fully explained the multiple ways to fix her ACL and carefully communicated her options.

“I knew that he would be the one to help me,” Abigail continued, “and when we decided to go with him I was very confident in the decision.”

Because Abigail was already physically strong from the soccer season, Dr. Van Thiel advised undergoing the surgery sooner rather than later because strong physical condition would prove to be beneficial during the surgery and her recovery.

[Continued on back.](#)



Abigail's surgery was performed as an outpatient procedure at Orthollinois Surgery Center. "The nurses were great and helped me a lot," she recalled. "They calmed my anxiety - I had never had surgery before and it was a comfortable environment. Meeting with Dr. Van Thiel before the surgery started was also nice because I saw how confident he was."

The surgical repair was a success. While Abigail experienced some challenges with her reaction to pain medication during her first post-operative week, she quickly felt better after discontinuing the medication and was ready to begin physical therapy. She understood that focus and hard work during physical therapy would be key to not having issues later in life.

"I knew that recovering from surgery wasn't going to be easy, that it is hard to be a patient," she stated. "I wanted to be ready right away, but Dr. Van Thiel had prepped me for the whole process, which made it easy and working through recovery better."

Abigail finished her therapy and recuperation during the summer months. Her goal was to be out of the knee brace she wore while healing by her first day of college. She succeeded. She is now a student at Olivet Nazarene University majoring in Dietetics and minoring in Chemistry.

Abigail has made a full recover from her injury. In fact, over winter break of her college freshman year she participated in a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. Thanks to Dr. Van Thiel, Abigail didn't have any issues with her knee while helping to build houses and teaching Vacation Bible School!



**To schedule a consultation,
please call 815-398-9491.**

 **Orthollinois**[®]

Geoffrey Van Thiel, MD/MBA
Orthopedic Surgery - Sports Medicine

www.vanthielmd.com

