



# Jack Engel: **Multi-ligament knee tears** no obstacle to return to sports

**Jack Engel** is passionate about sports, so after stopping short during a high school football playoff game resulted in an injury to his knee, the multi-sport athlete wanted a knee specialist that could help him resume activity safely and quickly.

At the time of his accident on the football field, both the team's athletic trainer and the covering physician realized that Jack had incurred a significant injury to his knee.

Jack wanted answers about the extent of the damage and what his options were for treatment. He utilized the convenience of OrthoIllinois' walk-in injury care at Ortho Express to quickly acquire an accurate diagnosis.

Upon a physical exam, the injury specialists at Ortho Express suspected serious and complex damage and performed an MRI to secure the detailed images inside Jack's knee needed for an accurate assessment.

Suspensions were validated by the MRI results: Jack had a very serious injury, one from which many athletes never return to sport. He was advised to meet with an orthopedic surgeon to discuss the implications of the MRI results and explore his treatment options.

Jack wanted the best and most experienced sports medicine surgeon available and chose **Geoffrey Van Thiel, MD**.

During his meeting with Dr. Van Thiel Jack learned he had incurred a multi-ligament knee injury. Non-treatment of the injury was not an option and would greatly impede Jack's ability to remain active in sports.

Jack had torn three of the four main ligaments in the knee. He not only tore the ACL, which is the most commonly torn knee ligament, but also injured his lateral collateral and posterior cruciate ligaments. All of these ligaments are required for knee stability and participation in sports.

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Dr. Van Thiel advised that the swelling and inflammation in Jack's knee be allowed to stabilize over the next few weeks. The time delay would allow Jack to regain some of his range of motion before the surgery to repair the ligaments. The operation was scheduled for early December, about four and a half weeks after his injury.

"I asked Dr. Van Thiel to fix my knee the way he would an athlete's. I wanted to keep an active life and still be able to play basketball, football, and baseball," Jack shared.

To prepare Jack for the surgery, Dr. Van Thiel showed him where his ligaments were missing and explained in detail what the procedure to repair them would entail. When Jack arrived at the hospital for his operation, he felt prepared and ready.

"When I woke from surgery, I was really excited," explained Jack. "I knew this would make my life better."

Many surgeons would have split the ligament repair into two separate surgeries due to the complexity of the procedures. However Dr. Van Thiel repaired all ligaments in one four-hour operation with overwhelming success.

Given the magnitude of the procedure, Jack did spend the night in the hospital. As the effects of anesthesia wore off and initial discomfort eased, he eagerly anticipated the recovery process. During his school's winter break, Jack completed physical therapy and continued to regain range of motion in his knee.

That football potentially debilitating injury is a memory Jack has now left in his past. As a freshman at the University of Alabama focused on a mechanical engineering major, he is active and back to playing basketball daily. Jack is thankful that his injury didn't impede his active lifestyle and feels fortunate in his choice of surgeon, who made that lifestyle possible.

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

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