



Mike Welch

Over the last 2 decades, Mike has built a portfolio of investments in franchise companies, as a franchisee, managing equity partner, and passive investor. He has also helped thousands of people evaluate business ownership through franchising. "I believe in the power of franchising. You don't have to be Zuckerberg, Gates, Jobs, or Musk to be an entrepreneur." – Mike Welch

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I tore my ACL my sophomore year, but it went undiagnosed because I grew up in a small town in rural East Tennessee with poor medical facilities.

The doctors told my parents that I had dislocated my hip, which was true, but they never even checked to see if anything else was torn and completely overlooked the ACL. I was on crutches for quite some time and missed sport in my sophomore and junior years. Although I was telling the doctors that my knee hurt, they said it was just pain from my hip.

So, I played football and ran track my senior year. I played tight end and defensive end that year in football. For track, my 4X200 relay team made it to state semi-finals that year.

What no one knew, until many years later, is that I did both of those things without an ACL!

The way that I found out that I lived from ages 15 to about 25 without an ACL is that I tore my meniscus in my mid 20s in a party-bus accident that we had rented for Halloween. When the surgeons went in to fix the meniscus, they found a scarred-up mess of a torn ACL. They told me it looked, from the scarring, that it had been torn for about 10 years and wondered why I hadn't had it repaired. Because I didn't know about it.

After many conversations with my parents and becoming a retrospective sleuth into the decade between ages of 15-25, we can only pinpoint one injury that was traumatic enough, and about 10 years old. The football injury my sophomore year. As it turns out the "hip pain" that I felt in my knee seems to have been an undiagnosed torn ACL.

So, they reconstructed it with a cadaver patella tendon that time.

If you know anything about ACL's, the one God gave you is the best one you will ever have. The second best one you will ever have is the first replacement and after that, long term success rates go downhill quickly.

In between my early 30s and mid 30s, I tore it two more times. Once during a surfing accident off the coast of Hatteras Island, NC.....and once getting out of an above-ground swimming pool! For those injuries, they used my patella tendon and the last time a synthetic tendon was used.

My late 30s and early 40s was littered with cortisone shots and at the ripe old age of 44, they told me it was probably time to consider a complete reconstruction. So, I had my first total knee reconstruction at 45 years old. I will have to have another one in my mid 60s, but with technology improvements and a little luck, hopefully that will be the last one.

I don't think the first injury had much of a psychological impact on me as I was a pretty well-rounded, popular kid, with a big support network and didn't think my life was over after missing two years of sports.

But the dread, fear, and anxiety of rehab as an adult, especially after the total knee replacement has sent me to some pretty lonely, dark places. The good news is that the knee is holding up well. I'm very active, working out 7 days a week. My regret is that I wish I had known more about stem cells at the time I had the surgery. I likely would have invested a little more time in the research around that before I went under the knife.

My journey with a faulty knee has been long and challenging, marked by missed diagnoses, unexpected triumphs, and the constant battle of recovery. While the initial injury didn't break my spirit as a teenager, the subsequent surgeries and endless rehab as an adult have certainly tested my resilience. Yet, through it all, I've learned the incredible capacity of the human body to adapt, and the profound impact of comprehensive medical care — or the lack thereof. My story serves as a testament to perseverance, but also as a quiet reminder of the importance of advocating for your own health, no matter where you live or what the initial diagnosis might be.

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EMERGENCY

In a crisis call "911" immediately

● If considering self-harm, call "988"
The National Suicide Intervention Lifeline

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

To speak to a counselor,

Call (800) 656-4673
RAINN

**BULLYING/HAZING, VIOLENCE,
ADDICTIONS & SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

For helpful resources,

thebmsproject.org/Safety

CHILD ABUSE

To report suspected child abuse,

Call (800) 422-4453

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

It is recommended that incident(s) of serious misconduct be reported to law enforcement.
Minors should report incidents of misconduct to their parent(s) or guardian(s).