

PROJECT WALK VISIT APR/MAY 2009

It's only right that I give all you generous supporters of ProjectBeetleWalk a quick summary of my time at ProjectWalk, San Diego USA in April/May this year. After all, sending me there for rehabilitation is one of the major reasons the boys formed this well supported organisation.

After having asked a few questions of myself during the last 6 months regarding my progress, I realised that ProjectWalk was the place I needed to be. I only wish I could have got back over there sooner. There is an atmosphere in that joint that gives you a buzz, a real feeling of hope and determination. This is one of the main features of Projectwalk and it is this energy that each client draws on.

I was fortunate enough to be given my lead trainer from last year, Bri. She took control of my program and had me for the majority of training sessions. Bri visited our SCIA facility up here in Brisbane, called WalkOn, last year for a couple of weeks. She is someone that has been with me since I first started the ProjectWalk program, so she has a great understanding of the progress I've made. The remainder of my training sessions were overseen by one of the co-founders of ProjectWalk, Eric. His main focus is as the Director of Research and Development, although he still enjoys being involved hands-on, especially with repeat clients. In my view, I was in the best hands possible.

Upon arrival I was asked what goals I had and what I hoped to achieve during the visit. The area which I felt needed most attention was trying to develop more muscle and strength in the quadriceps, particularly the left side. Having both strength and function in the quadriceps is vitally important, as it allows you to have the ability to 'lock' your knees straight, thus allowing you to stand. I have already established a consistent gait pattern with my rehab, therefore my only focus now is to rebuild muscle mass and to regain strength in the quadriceps – and I am totally convinced that this is only achievable through the rehab programs provided by ProjectWalk and WalkOn.

Another area of improvement which is of benefit to me in everyday life is that of core-strength. This assists in maintaining balance and good posture whilst in the wheelchair. These were the 2 main areas we concentrated on.

The first 3 weeks were very demanding physically, which brought about some real gains which were evident in the 4th week. There was definitely an improvement in core-strength and also that of my right quadricep. More importantly, there were signs that the left quadricep was finally responding to treatment. This was significant, as the left leg has been what can best be described as 'asleep' since the accident. To finally be getting a flicker was very encouraging!

Unfortunately the 4th week was to be my final week, although I wasn't too disappointed. I was obviously looking forward to getting back home to the family but I was also buoyed by the improvements I gained. You can only expect a certain level of improvement within a 4 week period and I felt that I had definitely met expectations.

Overall I feel this year's trip was both enjoyable and successful. More importantly it was just the tonic I needed to confront the challenges associated with my continued rehabilitation for the remainder of the year - and none of this would be possible without you guys. I can't thank you all enough again for your support, cheers!