

## Joel's Journey – June 20, 2016

Before I begin on a report of week 2, there are a few organisations and an individual who financed this whole journey who I would like to mention. I am aware that there are many other contributions from individuals and private businesses, and I am extremely grateful for them as this wouldn't have been possible.

- Greensborough RSL
- Bentleigh RSL
- Box Hill RSL
- Longbeach RSL
- Reservoir RSL
- Watsonia RSL
- Glenroy RSL
- Sunshine RSL
- Bairnsdale RSL
- Dandenong RSL
- ANZAC House
- Ben 'Ironman' Flannagan

This week saw innovation of old techniques and processes previously tried in Melbourne. Still with an emphasis on my core and posture, functional movements were predominantly the main focus e.g. putting stimulation pads on my quads and glutes to assist me in squatting whilst maintaining correct posture and trying to activate my core. This being a movement not attempted in nearly 2 years, I fatigued extremely quickly therefore making the following exercises for the day a lot harder. I never realised how much (or in my case how little) it takes to confuse and fatigue my central nervous system.

My flexibility and ability to maintain correct posture has come along quicker than expected. Considering how uncomfortable the first hour of each day initially was, this is making things a lot smoother (less pain during stretching and my leg spasms are less frequent).

Tuesday saw an unexpected blood pressure problem which kept me bed ridden, which was unfortunate to miss a day but this industry allows for such days and I will now fill in my lost session this week. Temperature is always a big factor in

how I feel physically and mentally due to my inability to regulate body temperature, fortunately the weather here has been warm with plenty of sun allowing me pain free days and a good mindset. This being California the weather will only get warmer from here on in. In the words of the great Borat; 'Great success'.

Thursday I was placed with a trainer for 2 consecutive hours which allowed us to really get stuck into some complex movements yet also EXTREMELY fatiguing. Although I cannot feel or use my abs and oblique muscles, much of my first 2 hours were spent trying to activate and create a muscle memory. I find that with these repetitive exercises, unlike prior to my injury where I could feel my muscles weakening and not being able to operate at full strength, I now have no knowledge of when my last repetition could be before my muscle will just not move or react. This is not a bad thing it just makes exercising interesting not knowing when I could end up on the floor. The last hour all of this became evident when I tried to use the stand up frame and none of my muscles were reacting to stimulation and my functioning muscles weren't reacting when I was trying to move them.

Friday saw a vast improvement in my posture, flexibility and ability to resist against force whilst turning on my core muscles. An exercise called 'The Wall' consists of sitting at a 90 degree angle directly against the wall with legs straight out in front. Due to the lack of muscle in my back, shoulders and neck, remaining flush against the wall is extremely hard to maintain yet very beneficial for me. Being at the end of week 2 of a demanding program, my central nervous system had little left in the tank and by the halfway mark nothing was working, creating a few speed humps for the trainers and what they had planned for me. Fortunately Project Walk have excellent staff who are able to think on their feet and adapt to this sort of situation. For the next exercise, imagine the wall has been taken out from behind me and someone tries to knock me off my balance. The goal here, again, is posture and core focused, maintaining one yet turning on another. I find this one of the hardest things to do.

I am learning things everyday about my body and pushing it to its limits. I am about to embark on my hardest week yet with there being no rest day. Thanks to everybody back home for your messages and phone calls of support, I love it and please keep it up.

Joel