

## Janko Stukic's Story

On Saturday, January 17, 2004 Janko was out with some of his friends in London after coming home for the Christmas holidays from Fordham University in New York, where he was attending on a full soccer scholarship.

It was the night before he was to fly back to New York to resume his studies when the car he was in hit a patch of black ice and spun out, crashing into a telephone pole. Unfortunately, the point of impact was precisely where Janko was seated in the back seat.

Although his memory of that night is gone, Janko thinks he saw the pole coming because he turned his head and hit the headrest of the seat in front of him, smashing the bones in his face and skull. He also sustained a stable fracture of the C2 vertebra and his pelvis as well as a broken right ankle.

He was rushed to the hospital with a Glasgow coma scale rating of 3. The doctors were not optimistic about Janko's survival. They told his family that if he survived the first 48 hours, then they'd talk about what steps to take next. He did survive and after much discussion, it was decided that Janko would require surgery for the compound fracture of his femur, which was worrisome because it had broken through the skin and there was chance of infection.

Janko survived that surgery only to have another to alleviate his inner cranial pressure by removing his forehead bone. This entire trauma resulted in a traumatic brain injury and it has changed Janko's life significantly. Before the accident, Janko was extremely active playing basketball, football and his favourite, soccer. His relationships have also changed.

His relationship with his mother has strengthened because the love and support shown to him by his mother and family in general motivated him to keep going. However, he says that 95% of his friends prior to the injury have moved on, but he says he has made new friends that are more understanding at Cornerstone Clubhouse and in the brain injury community in general.

Janko says that he is most proud of returning to Fanshawe College and obtaining a certificate in General Business and his new responsibilities as the Member who oversees The Scene publication at Cornerstone Clubhouse. Janko is motivated by his desire to keep improving and proving wrong the people who doubted his capabilities .

Instead of playing sports, which he can no longer do, Janko spends his time volunteering at the Brain Injury Association of London & Region once a week and he spends time at the Clubhouse twice a week, attending the Wellness group and the outings with other Members to shoot pool every other week. Janko also spends an evening and an afternoon with a rehabilitation counselor, or as Janko likes to call him, a leisure buddy.

Despite everything Janko has gone through, he enjoys all the things that he is currently involved in and he is no rush to change, however he does understand that he needs to make a couple of very important decisions to determine where his life will be in the future, but one thing he is certain about, he enjoys being alive!!