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A disease stops this Ridgefield boy from playing sports, but he can still captain the high school lacrosse team

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RIDGEFIELD — All Conner Curran ever wanted was to feel like part of a team. Having lived with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a progressive muscle-wasting condition, for more than half his life, the 10-year-old Barlow Mountain student has had to watch sporting events from the sidelines.

But on May 1, Curran got the chance to lead Ridgefield High School's varsity lacrosse team as their honorary captain against Greenwich during a conference game at Tiger Hollow. And although the Cardinals bested the home team 15-13, Curran said the experience was "amazing."

The opportunity arose after Curran's mother, Jessica, shared an emotional post on Facebook that caught the attention of Roy Colsey, the team's coach. She wrote that while driving her son Kyle, Curran's twin, to his first lacrosse practice, he discussed what number he would rep on his jersey. Curran chimed into the conversation, saying, "I would pick number 7 if I could play."

Coincidentally, the team's current roster doesn't have a player wearing number 7, so Colsey surprised Curran with the jersey, which he will wear at the Tigers' home games for the rest of the season. Curran also received a pair of cleats signed by all the players and merchandise from the Ridgefield Booster Club.

Before the game, Curran accompanied the team as they walked onto the field from the locker room and performed the coin toss. As he shared fist bumps and high fives with players and coaches while sporting his favorite number, he had a huge smile on his face.

“It makes me feel that I’m really part of a team,” Curran said.

Continuing the fight

Curran was diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, or DMD, when he was four years old. The genetic condition affects mostly young boys and is marked by the progressive loss of muscle as the body fails to make dystrophin, a muscle-building protein. It also causes deterioration of the skeletal, cardiac and pulmonary muscles.

Some 90 percent of boys with DMD become non-ambulatory in their early teenage years, and many don’t live past their late 20s.

Curran’s father Chris said his son is doing well despite the disease. “He’s still on his feet and has good stamina for a boy with Duchenne,” he said. “Most 10- and 11-year-olds (with DMD) would be in a wheelchair by now.”

Three years ago, Curran was the first patient dosed in an ongoing gene therapy clinical trial offered by Pfizer for boys with DMD. Since then, he has shown some signs of improvement.

“There is hope, but there is still no cure or treatments for Duchenne,” Chris said.

On Sept. 11, the Currans will host a fundraiser at the Captain Lawrence Brewing Company in Elmsford, N.Y., for their nonprofit, Kindness Over Muscular Dystrophy. To date, the organization has raised more than $1 million for research, clinical trials and benevolent assistance associated with DMD.

“We started KOMD to teach children with DMD and our own children not to give up,” Jessica said. “(Conner’s) disappointments are short-lived because he focuses on the positives … his strength is more than muscle.”

Tickets for Curran’s fundraiser go on sale the first week of June. For more information, visit www.kindnessovermd.org.

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