

Twelve-year-old Alec Silverman is “bigger, better, and stronger” than he was last summer—and it’s not just from eating his vegetables and taking his vitamins.

On April 30 last year, Alec collided with a teammate in a school baseball game and he sustained a concussion and other injuries, including a sinus fracture and damage to his eye. The injury, and the road to recovery, taught him quite a bit about sports concussion, the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, and making smart decisions for your individual well-being.

When the injury occurred Alec was a sixth grader playing on a school team that consisted of mostly seventh and eighth graders. Just happy to be part of the team, Alec didn’t get much playing time. However, when his team was up by several runs that day, the coach decided to give him a chance. He was put into left field. The very first pitch was hit his way—it was a shallow fly ball between him and shortstop. Alec remembers going hard for the ball and colliding with his teammate. He didn’t lose consciousness, but the collision was a bad one. He spent five days in the hospital, was home from school for about a month, and didn’t return to sports until later in the year.

The Silverman family credits Alec’s determination to recover from his injuries. While many young athletes rush to get back on the field as soon as possible without feeling 100 percent, Alec thought about his future and didn’t mind sitting out the remainder of a season to be sure he was completely recovered.

“Sitting out a season at such a young age isn’t the worst thing in the world,” his father Steve Silverman noted. “I’m really proud of Alec because he made some difficult but wise decisions to not put his life at risk. As a dad you can’t rush your kids back. Be patient and focus on the bigger picture.”

Alec, with the help of his parents Jodi and Steve, has been working to help raise awareness about sports concussion and making decisions about when it is safe to return to play. He has been speaking with his friends and teammates about the seriousness of concussion, and opportunities to increase. “I’d like them to know that if you aren’t feeling normal you have to speak up. Unlike a broken bone a brain injury can last a lifetime. If you suspect that something is not quite right it is important to tell somebody,” he said.

The Silverman Family, while doing research on brain injury and concussions came across the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, a statewide organization committed to supporting and advocating for individuals affected by brain injury and raising public awareness through education and prevention. The Association implements a statewide Concussion in Sports Campaign including a very informative website www.sportsconcussion.com. that is aimed at students, parents and the medical and professional community committed to sports safety. The Silvermans read through the information and then reached out to the Association to see how they can become greater advocates for this important healthcare issue.

“Alec has set a remarkable example for all young athletes,” said Barbara Geiger-Parker, President and CEO of the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey. “He’s only 12 years old, yet he had the intelligence to recognize how he was saving his entire future by sitting out just a couple of games.”

Alec has started the “22K” program. The number 22 represents the number on his baseball jersey and the letter K symbolizes the term for a strikeout in baseball. Through the “22K” program Alec donates Curious George dolls to young children who remain hospitalized after suffering a serious injury. Alec isn’t able to meet the children who receive his Curious George dolls because of patient confidentiality. However, Alec can visualize the smiles he has brought to so many young faces. “I am determined to send a little sunshine to any child who has been injured,” Alec explained. “I am very lucky to have made a full recovery but know what it is like to be on the other side. “I want to make a difference.”

For more information on the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey please visit www.bianj.org or call 1-800-669-4323. For more information on sports concussion visit www.sportsconcussion.com.