

# Putting Their Best Foot Forward

**Patients win at golf and water-skiing thanks to advanced foot and ankle surgeries**

**By Anne Gallagher**

When someone puts their best foot forward, it usually means they try their hardest. But for Gary Dudash, the phrase took on an uncomfortably literal meaning. For a couple of years, he actually had one good foot and one bad one.

"I had extremely flat feet all my life," says Dudash, a 52-year-old Willoughby resident. "Then in 2002, my left ankle collapsed. I was in severe pain and could barely walk. I went to see several doctors who fitted me with orthotics and ankle braces, but nothing worked.

"The doctors told me that my case was the worst they'd ever seen and that there wasn't anything they could do to help," he adds. "Then one doctor recommended seeing Dr. Cavolo at Hillcrest Hospital, and I decided to give him a try. I'm glad I did!"

## **Doing the Impossible**

According to Daniel Cavolo, DPM, chief of the division of podiatric surgery at Hillcrest Hospital, the field of podiatry has benefited from dramatic innovations in recent years. "For most patients, such as Gary, new advancements in foot and ankle surgery offer great hope for full recovery from injuries and other problems that may have been untreatable in the past," he says.



Thanks to surgery at Hillcrest Hospital, Willoughby resident Gary Dudash is back on the golf course.



Thanks to his surgery, Richard Lambert is back to competitive water-skiing.

An avid sportsman, Dudash played basketball and softball before his ankle gave way. He also coached a number of teams and served as assistant coach for the junior varsity girls basketball team at Villa Angela–St. Joseph High School in Cleveland. He was 47 when his ankle collapsed.

During approximately 5½ hours of surgery, Dr. Cavolo inserted new bone in Dudash's ankle. He also realigned the heel bone and moved it over one half inch and lengthened the Achilles tendon.

"Now my foot is great," Dudash says. "It looks like a normal foot with an arch. Most days I have no pain at all. I walk an 18-hole golf course and am shooting in the mid-80s. I even broke par a couple times.

Without the surgery, all this would be impossible."

#### Walking on Water

While golf is a casual pastime for Dudash, water-skiing is an all-consuming passion for Richard Lambert. But a year ago, it looked as if Lambert would have to become a spectator instead of the world champion water skier that he is.

When Lambert is not skiing at lakes in Geauga County or Orlando, Fla., he works as a real estate developer. One morning last year, as he inspected a newly constructed metal roof, he slipped and plummeted 50 feet to the ground.

Lambert was rushed to a hospital, where the emergency department

staff told him he was lucky to be alive. The unfortunate news was that he had shattered his heel bone. "This is a bad thing for someone who wants to walk, let alone compete at water-skiing," says Lambert.

"The first doctor I saw told me I'd be lucky to even walk again," he adds. "I also saw two orthopaedic surgeons, who were equally negative. Then based on a friend's recommendation, I went to Dr. Cavolo, who was confident he could repair my fractured heel."

In July of 2005, Lambert underwent foot and ankle surgery. "My surgery was one of the most difficult to do, but Dr. Cavolo obviously did a great job," he says. "I'm 99 percent healed now and ready to compete."

#### Starring Roles *continued from page 37*

One way to rein in perfectionism is to focus on the task at hand. "Either deal with a task right away or decide when to deal with it and put it aside until then," Butler says. "Don't spend time in the limbo of neither getting down to work nor enjoying your leisure."

"The really weird thing about acting is you can't get ready to do it,

you can't do it before you do it, and you can't do it in the trailer or your home," Streep has said. "You can only do it in the moment it's happening."

Mike Nichols, who has directed Streep in several films, told *Time*, "Every day, more than any other actor I've worked with or seen, she comes on the set clearly feeling, 'Oh, boy, I get to do this one more time!'"

Finding peace while juggling multiple life roles can come from focusing on what's important to you and letting go of the desire to have everything perfect.

"Thank God I have my children," Streep said on *Oprah*. "It's everything. It's not without compromise, and it's not without mess ... but I like mess." ■

Just 12 months after surgery, Lambert won his age division at the Midwest Regional Water Skiing Championships in Chicago. After that, he went on to compete in the U.S. Water Skiing Nationals, finishing in fifth place. The icing on the cake was winning the senior slalom event at the World Senior Water Ski Championships in France.

### The Freedom to Move

Without his successful surgery, none of this would have happened. In the past, treatments for foot and ankle injuries were often marginally successful at best and often resulted in stiff and painful joints—rather than the flexible limbs a water-skier wants.

“At Hillcrest, we’re successfully using new techniques that result in less stiffness, more freedom of movement and faster healing,” says Dr. Cavolo, who is past president of the American Board of Podiatric Surgery.

“These options include permanent, internal fixation, a surgical procedure that usually involves making a small incision on the outside of the foot or ankle and then inserting a screw, using an X-ray monitor to ensure proper positioning,” he explains. “Patients typically return to normal activities sooner than if they had been treated with older methods, such as casting.”

For Lambert, the innovations offered at Hillcrest were priceless. “If Dr. Cavolo was like the other surgeons, he could have changed my life drastically in the wrong direction. Instead, he gave me the chance to return to what I love doing.”

### A Footnote

The people in this story aren’t the only ones who are happy. Shady, Gary Dudash’s German shepherd, is one happy dog. Now that Gary Dudash’s ankle is back in shape, he takes Shady for long walks—about a mile and a half in length. And knowing Dudash, he’s probably not just dogging it. ■



## On Good Footing at Hillcrest Hospital

In the division of podiatric surgery at Hillcrest Hospital, services include:

- ◆ Reconstructive foot and ankle surgery
- ◆ Special care for diabetic feet and complex wounds
- ◆ Treatment of Achilles tendon disorders and fractures of the foot and ankle

The caring, professional staff includes board-certified and board-qualified doctors of podiatric medicine. They are:

- |                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Atta Asef, DPM        | Barbara Marshall, DPM      |
| Daniel Cavolo, DPM    | Gary Most, DPM             |
| William Donahue, DPM  | Edward Nemet, DPM          |
| Joseph Favazzo, DPM   | Tiffany Orlando Weber, DPM |
| Edward Floyd, DPM     | Stephen Pearl, DPM         |
| Ronald Freireich, DPM | Scott Peters, DPM          |
| Vadim Glukh, DPM      | Ted Peterson, DPM          |
| Jennifer Goodman, DPM | Rocco Petrozzi, DPM        |
| Michael Hauman, DPM   | Christopher Tighe, DPM     |
| Scott Hirsh, DPM      | Mark Tozzi, DPM            |
| Irving Lewis, DPM     | Robert Weaver, DPM         |
| Shane Manning, DPM    |                            |