

[← Back](#)

Pine-Richland grad who overcame life-threatening obstacles featured in book 'The Positive Athlete'

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SUBMITTED

PINE-RICHLAND GRADUATE CONNOR ANDERSON WITH HINES WARD LAST SUMMER AFTER EARNING THE POSITIVE ATHLETE AWARD.

BY 11:00 PM, KAREN PRICE

Four years ago, Connor Anderson's life took a dramatic turn after what seemed initially to be a soccer injury turned out to be a tumor.

Discovered when he was a freshman at Pine-Richland High School, Anderson is now a freshman at Penn State. He's healthy and happy, and his story is one of a collection of 100 in the new book, "The Positive Athlete."

← Back

that rewards positivity, leadership and those who overcome adversity with awards and college scholarships.

Anderson was named one of Western Pennsylvania's Positive Athletes in 2019. They emailed him a few months later, Anderson said, to ask if he'd like to be part of the book.

"I have no idea, really (why they picked my story), " he said. "At the ceremony I heard so many amazing stories. Honestly, I don't know."

Scott Pederson does.

The CEO, president and co-founder of Positive Athlete said Anderson's story is a microcosm of the book itself.

"Life is just going on very calm and normal and all of a sudden you're hit with something that rocks your life, " he said. "You make a choice one way or another to let it defeat you or not. What stood out about Connor's story was that this didn't happen just once. He chose to not give up."

Anderson was playing in a soccer game for Pine-Richland when he hit a routine header, only this time it felt like someone had just hammered through his skull. He ended up with a goose egg that just wouldn't go away, and eventually testing revealed the unthinkable: A tumor had eaten almost entirely through Anderson's skull and when he headed the soccer ball it broke what little bone was left. The goose egg was actually the tumor protruding.

Fortunately, the cancer hadn't spread and Anderson underwent surgery to remove the tumor. Two months later, they found a smaller tumor and this time he had a steroid injection, a painful procedure performed while he was awake.

The tumors were gone, but a year later the titanium plate in his head became infected and he needed two more operations, one to remove the plate and one six weeks later to replace it. In between he had to wear a helmet to protect the hole in his head and have twice-daily intravenous antibiotic treatments. Managing both the pain and his schoolwork wasn't easy.

He's now healthy and hasn't had any complications since March 2017.

"The doctors said that as time goes by the chances of it recurring get less and less the more time that I don't have any complications, " he said. "So by now I shouldn't be too worried about it."

The Positive Athlete book contains stories like Anderson's of students who've overcome not only physical illness but also issues such as battles with mental health, challenges at home, bullying and disabilities as well as stories of kids who've gone out in their communities to fill a need, solve a problem and give back to others. Pederson said the goal is to get it into the hands of as many students as possible through schools, sports teams and parents, and that it

[← Back](#)

donate to a school, team or other organization, Pederson said.

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