Glove Selection and Use Fatality File

Brad Hurtig suffered a devastating workplace accident, resulting in the amputation of both his hands during the summer after his sophomore year at Fairview High School in Sherwood.

Hurtig was a three-sport athlete to whom athletics played a big part in his life. On the way to the hospital after a 500-ton stamping press crushed his hands, he said he hysterically cried that he was never going to be able to play sports again. He soon discovered that he could play sports, and many of the other things as wall.

“I’m excited to be here to share my story with you,” Hurtig said.

“I’m here to remind you, safety doesn’t hurt. It’s the accidents that do,” he said.

Sports were his first love. He set the school record for tackles his sophomore season before the accident and came back to earn All-Ohio honors after the accident as a 5-foot, 10-inch 150-pound middle linebacker.

Hurtig was helping a friend out at his father’s factory, a metal stamping plant for automobiles.

Midway through the overnight shift, Hurtig reached into the stamping press to straighten a sheet of metal about the size of a piece of paper. His friend didn’t see him reach in and had pressed the stamper.

“The first thing I remember was hearing somebody else scream at what they saw when they looked at me,” he said.

His boss hustled him to the hospital, where they tried to save his hands, but were unable to do so.

He spent 11 days in the hospital and went through multiple surgeries.

He said there are two approaches to safety, a proactive approach and a reactive approach.

He says a couple principles from his accident could've prevented it from happening. First, recognize that safety equipment can fail. The machine that took his hands had lasers that are designed to shut off when a body is detected. "It seemed fool-proof, yet this accident happened," Hurtig said. "Think about safety mechanisms, be cautious, because sometimes while we're working, the danger subsides, and we become complacent. And when they fail, there's devastating consequences."

The second principle is to stop and think. "Process with your mind and then respond. Move your eyes before you move your body," he said.

Communication on several levels is the third principle he discussed that could've prevented his accident. "If I had simply communicated with my friend that I was going to adjust that piece of metal, I might still have my hands today," Hurtig said.

He credits his football coach with helping him move on with his life after his accident. Starting with his coach telling him if he is thirsty enough, he will find a way to get a drink. Hurtig said he went through practice and a trainer would get him a drink when he was thirsty. After practice, he asked his coach to get him some water from a bottle that lay at his feet.

Eventually, Hurtig dropped to his knees and used his stumps to pick up the bottle. He got himself a drink and he was on his way to adapting his new life.