

'IF THERE'S A WILL, B WILL FIND A WAY'

Plano surgeon brings teen back from major accident

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Dr. Rajesh Arakal reviews the recovering spine of 18-year-old Braiden Williams from Achille, Oklahoma. Two year ago, he was involved in a car crash that nearly paralyzed him, but thanks to help from Arakal and his team, he was back to living life.

Courtesy of the Texas Back Institute

Michelle Williams described her son Braiden as “the golden child.”

He’s the kid that can win a calf roping contest without ever having roped a calf. You want the ball in his hands when there are three seconds left on the clock. He taught himself piano, guitar and ukulele. Basically, Braiden can do anything he sets his mind to.

“If there’s a will, B will find a way,” she said.

**Plano Children’s Medical
Clinic is moving to a new
location and all
appointments beginning...
April 15th will be at
Wylie Children’s Medical
Clinic, 303 S. Hwy 78,
Suite 106 in Wylie,
just 9 miles down the street.**

It’s hard to imagine this active young man was nearly paralyzed from a car accident two years ago. It’s even more unimaginable that he was back to rodeos and roping calves just three months after his injuries. But for Braiden, if there’s a will, B will find a way.

“I just think it was by the grace of God, the skill of Dr. Arakal and Braden’s sheer determination,” Williams said.

Late November 2017, as Braiden was heading home from work, he was about a mile north of his hometown Achille, Oklahoma, when he lost control of his truck and was through 20 feet into a nearby pasture. For 45 minutes, he laid in that pasture with a broken back, signaling for help from the roadway until a truck driver stopped, called 911 and got him a CareFlite to Medical City Plano.

“The ride to the hospital was the worst part because we didn’t really know the extent of his injuries,” Williams said. “I was distraught. I was just making noises. It was a verbal pain. Not screaming, not yelling. I couldn’t stop it coming up.”

When Braiden arrived to Medical City Plano, a surgeon with the Texas Back Institute, Dr. Rajesh Arakal, was on call. Since Medical City Plano is one of the only treatment centers in the northern Collin County area, they’re accustomed to transfer patients from Oklahoma, Louisiana and various parts of North Texas.



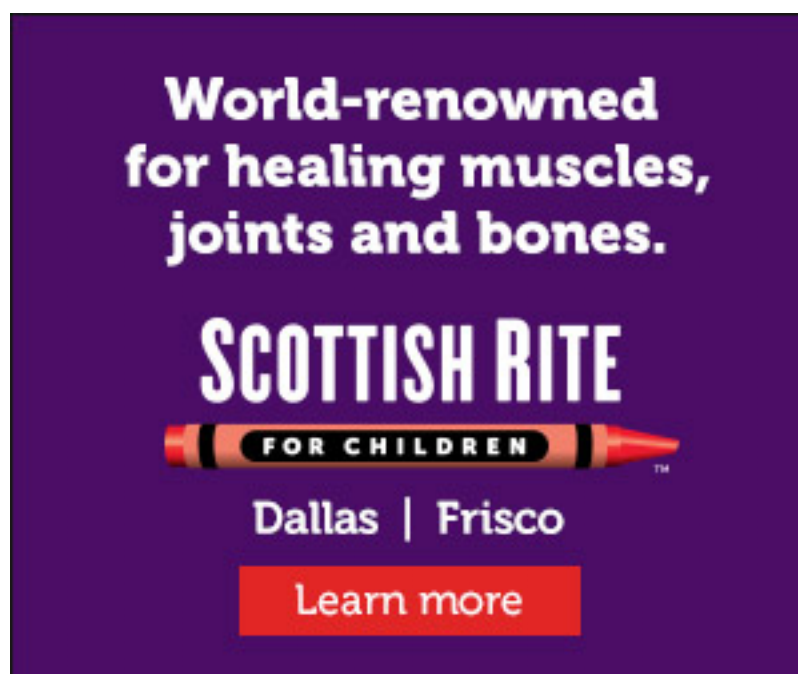
While in the hospital, Braiden was awake and talking. He didn’t sustain any head injuries, but he had sustained several fractures to his upper thoracic area, T3, T6 along with multiple rib fractures, a broken sternum and multiple broken vertebrae, some that were even sliced or peeled away. He had severe trauma to his neck and upper back, which typically spells trauma for the rest of the back. There was a real possibility that he’d never walk again.

And, Arakal said he sees injuries like Braiden's more often than he likes.

"This is the really sad truth about being a Level I trauma center," Arakal said.

But no matter the injury, he said the goal is to give every patient the best chance possible.

"What we do is we fight for hope," he said. "We don't ever give up, even if they are very severe injuries."



Some of the worst injuries have had big turnarounds, like Braiden's.

"So we hope for the best and we prepare for the worst-case scenario," he said.

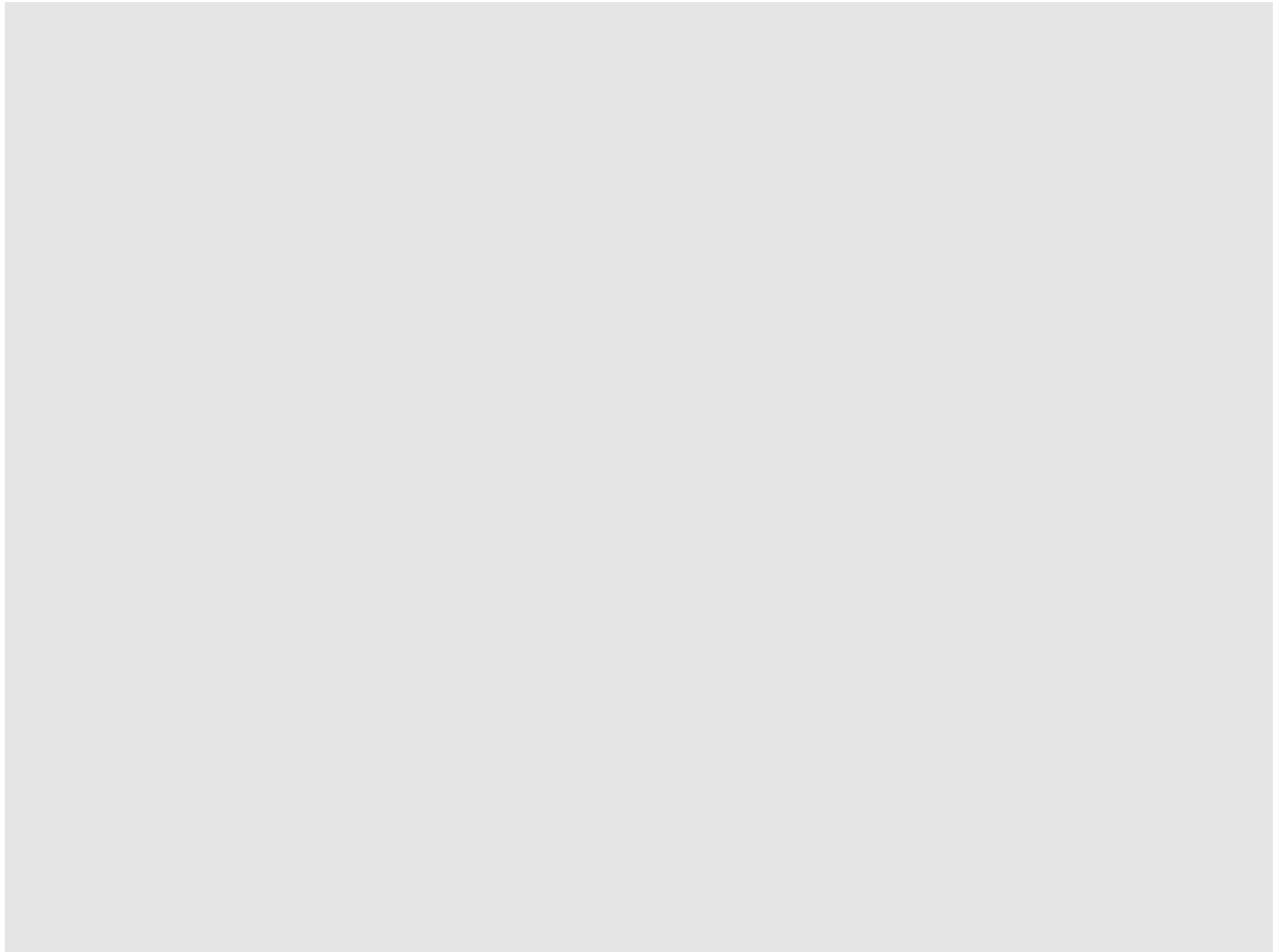
When Williams and her family arrived in Plano, she said they were immediately comforted by Arakal and his team.

"If anyone can fix him, Dr. Arakal can fix him," the nurses said to her. "And once I knew we was going to live, I thought 'We can deal with anything,'" Williams said. "I knew he was still Braiden."

Plus, Braiden's attitude heading into surgery was positive and hopeful.

"Braiden had already said, 'So what? I just won't walk anymore. But I can play my guitar. Life is going to be great. I get to live life.'"

Braiden's surgery lasted roughly five hours. Using an intraoperative CT-SCAN, Arakal's team looked at his spine and, like in a video game, placed screws in broken vertebrae, repaired fractures and put Braiden back together again.



Three months after his accident, Braiden Williams was back at the rodeo like the cowboy he is.

Courtesy of the Texas Back Institute

Just six hours earlier, Williams saw her son on the side of the road among the wreckage of his truck, and just six hours after surgery, Braiden moved his legs for the first time. He still had a lot of work to do, but if there's a will, B will find a way.

"I'm grateful. Grateful. It's just mind-blowing. God has had favor on our family for years and years. We're truly blessed," she said.

After a few months of physical therapy and some intense determination from Braiden, he was back to being a cowboy just three months after his injury. Today, at 18 years old, he’s the same Braiden he was before the crash – just 30 pounds lighter. It took some time, but Williams recently penned a letter to Arakal and his team, thanking them for fixing Braiden and having his back.

“We always revel in the good stories. It makes this extremely meaningful as a practitioner,” Arakal said. “It’s nice to make a difference and know your work counts. It’s what makes it worthwhile.”

Tags

- Braiden
- Rajesh Arakal
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- Surgery
- Michelle Williams
- Injury
- Fracture
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