



**R. J. Rosenberg
Orthopedic Lab, Inc.**

Making a Difference in the Lives of our Patients

CLINICAL PROFILE

Avid Golfer Experiences New Level of Prosthetic Comfort with Elevated Vacuum System

The last time Kevin Malone was featured in a R.J. Rosenberg newsletter, it was 10 years ago. That story was all about Kevin being fitted with a more comfortable prosthesis, not only for durability on-the-job, but also for keeping up with his children and continuing his athletic pursuits – softball and volleyball. After getting his prosthesis, he also discovered a new passion – golf, a game he had not played before.

Today, Kevin is a retiree and maxes out his time on the links. “I play four or five times a week; 18 holes on Sunday, 18 on Monday, nine on Tuesday, 18 on Thursday, nine holes Thursday night, and whenever else the phone rings. This is what I worked 48 years for,” he said.

Kevin became an amputee as a result of an industrial accident when he worked for Cincinnati Gas & Electric. As he was walking out of a building, the brakes went out on a crew truck. “I had just enough time to put my hands up and fight it off and that didn’t work,” he said dryly. “That’s what caused both my arms to be broken.”

Kevin also sustained severe injuries to his legs, especially his left leg. “My leg was split from knee to ankle. They took bone out of my hip to replace bone, muscle out of my stomach to replace muscle. The plastic surgeon refused to do a skin graft because there were some questions whether it would work, so my orthopedic surgeon said to just let it fill in naturally. That remained open for months with constant dressing changes. Recovery was rough,” he recalled. “I was laid up for months and I couldn’t do anything.

“I had a brace on for awhile and I went from a wheelchair to a walker to a cane, but I was hobbling at best. After an infection flared up again, I told my doctor to amputate.”

“After the amputation, I felt good, but I was getting antsy waiting for a referral to a prosthetist. I needed legs, so I took one of the



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old braces I had and padded it, and strapped it onto my leg. It was not very effective. Homemade doesn’t work when it comes to prosthetics,” he said.

When Kevin finally got his referral to Rich Rosenberg, CPO, things improved dramatically. “At my first fitting, Rich wanted me to walk slowly through the parallel bars. I walked through them and right out the front door. Everybody was shocked, but I turned around and came right back,” he chuckled. “I took to it like a duck on water; it felt so good. I just put it on and went.”

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Since then, Kevin has had several upgrades, and recently was fitted with a new elevated vacuum system, the Otto Bock Harmony® System. The Harmony System provides a secure connection to the socket by use of a vacuum pump to remove air molecules from the thin, sealed air space between the socket and the liner. Vacuum locks the prosthesis onto the residual limb.

This alleviates slippage, a problem common to other sockets. As amputees like Kevin know, the residual limb doesn't stay the same size all day when wearing a prosthesis. A patient can lose between 6 to 12 percent of the limb's total volume through perspiration, edema, and other fluid movement. This results in the prosthesis becoming loose and causing skin irritation, which may lead to uncomfortable and unstable movement.

The Harmony addresses this issue by reducing variations in limb volume through a mechanical pump that draws air out of the system during normal walking and a sealing sleeve that makes an air-tight seal with the user's liner and body. The result is that the liner is drawn completely against the socket for a more intimate fit, allowing fluids to be more easily drawn back into the leg, even during weight bearing. This increases healthy fluid flow and maintains consistent limb volume to maintain the socket fit. The Harmony also features an adjustable shock absorber and a torsion adapter to increase walking comfort and relieve the impact an amputee can feel at heel strike.

"The Harmony is definitely a class up from my last one," Kevin said. "I didn't plan on getting a new prosthesis; I had my old one for about 10 years, but it needed repair. Rich took one look at it and explained to me that if my prosthesis was a car, I had 400,000 miles on it. He said it was behind the times and I could do a lot better. I told him to go for it and it's working out really well."

"Try to maintain who you were before amputation. That's the way I approached it."

Kevin explained his old prosthesis always had a pulling sensation whenever he was walking. "It's fighting you," he said. "You know it's there. Not with the Harmony. Once I put it on, there is no reaction. When I lift my leg, it just feels more a part of me."

Kevin said his new leg hasn't improved his golf game. "It hasn't lowered my scores," he laughed, "but it's easier to walk the course."

Even with his previous generation prosthesis, Kevin's determination to walk again was huge. He went back to work supervising contracting crews for the utility company, and was on his feet and in and out of his truck all day long. "When contractors I worked with and who knew me for several years found out that I had a prosthetic leg, they were just amazed. They didn't know and that's good. That's my goal. I'm not trying to deceive anybody. I just wanted to be who I was before the accident," he said.

That's Kevin's advice for a new amputee: "Try to maintain who you were before amputation. That's the way I approached it. I need to have something to strap on to keep me going, but I will live as normal a life as possible.

"When I had my accident back in 1986, they told me I wouldn't be able to return to work. My goal for a long time was to make it to retirement. And I did."