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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Brownsburg, Carmel, Covington Students Win Comeback Athlete Awards**

*Methodist Sports Medicine / The Orthopedic Specialists Honors  
Three Local Student Athletes Who Overcame Severe Injuries*

**Indianapolis, IN – Jan. 10, 2012** – Methodist Sports Medicine / The Orthopedic Specialists (MSM / TOS) is pleased to announce the November Comeback Athlete Award co-winners are Brooke Backes of Carmel, Ind., and Tanner Coffing of Covington, Ind. In addition, Alexandra “Alex” Shipley, of Brownsburg, Ind., has been named the December Comeback Athlete Award winner. These student athletes overcame devastating and even life-threatening injuries to fulfill their comeback dreams.

Brooke Backes, a Carmel High School student athlete, broke her leg in a violent collision with a soccer goalkeeper during a 2010 state tournament game. During surgery, doctors placed a titanium rod and several screws into her leg, which caused extreme pain throughout her rehabilitation process. She fought through the agony, became team captain next season and led the Greyhounds to the state championship game on Oct. 29, 2011. Brooke scored the only goal of the game against the same goalkeeper she collided with in the previous season that resulted in her injury. She told reporters it was the best moment of her life.

“As a coach I have seen many athletes injured, and many return, but none with the drive that Brooke had,” said Jenny Ellery, assistant soccer coach for Carmel High School.

Brooke committed to the University of Iowa, where she will continue playing soccer starting in the fall semester of 2012.

The second winner of November’s Comeback Athlete Award overcame multiple concussions, partial memory loss, a severe shoulder injury and was struck by lightning during his high school career. Tanner Coffing was recently named to the Wabash River All-Conference first team after leading Covington High School’s football team in rushing and return yards. The senior was also a dynamic defender and was honored as the team’s most valuable player.

“Each time adversity would strike, Tanner would handle the situation with great character and perseverance,” said Phil Cunningham, head football coach for Covington High School.

After high school, Tanner plans to pursue his second passion, welding, and continue his education to become a certified welder.

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The December Comeback Athlete Award recipient is Alexandra “Alex” Shipley, a basketball and softball student athlete at Brownsburg High School. She tore her ACL during her sophomore year of high school and missed the softball season in the spring. After her surgery, Alex went beyond her required physical therapy workouts so she could regain her strength and return sooner. With Alex back on the court, her basketball team advanced to the Class 4A Indianapolis Tech Sectional in 2011. At season’s end, her team had won 20 games, a feat accomplished by only four other squads in Brownsburg girls' basketball history.

“She has become a stronger, more confident person and has overcome the obstacle of having a torn ACL,” said her mother, Tonia Sampson.

Alex will attend Grace College in the fall of 2012 to continue her athletic career playing softball and she wants to study to become an athletic trainer.

“All three student athletes refused to allow injuries to keep them sidelined for long. We celebrate their toughness and inspiring comeback stories,” said Pete Sallay, M.D., president of Methodist Sports Medicine / The Orthopedic Specialists.

The Comeback Athlete Award is a monthly award honoring a different Indiana high school or college athlete who has overcome adversity or injury and returned to excel beyond expectations in his or her respective sport.

In order to be nominated each month, the student athlete must play one of the following sports during these designated seasons:

- August to November Awards (Fall Sports): Boys Tennis, Cross Country, Football, Girls Golf, Soccer, Volleyball
- December to March Awards (Winter Sports): Basketball, Wrestling, Gymnastics, Swimming
- April to June Awards (Spring Sports): Baseball, Boys Golf, Girls Tennis, Softball, Track

To nominate a comeback athlete from Indiana, visit [www.comebackathlete.com](http://www.comebackathlete.com). Nominations should include one to two sentences describing why he or she should win the Comeback Athlete Award and the nature of the injury or adversity that the student athlete overcame.

Comeback Athletes of the Month will each receive an Under Armour workout shirt as well as recognition at the Thomas A. Brady, MD Comeback Scholarship Award ceremonies in the spring. Monthly recipients also are invited to submit an application for the [annual scholarship award](#).

### **About Methodist Sports Medicine / The Orthopedic Specialists**

Methodist Sports Medicine / The Orthopedic Specialists, a partner of Indiana University Health, is Central Indiana’s premier provider of comprehensive orthopedic services and has built its reputation on excellence in orthopedics and sports medicine for more than 25 years. Official team physicians for many high schools, college and professional teams, including the NFL’s Indianapolis Colts, 100 percent of the group’s orthopedic surgeons are fellowship trained, board certified and leaders in new technologies, procedures and research. For more information, please visit [www.methodistsports.com](http://www.methodistsports.com).