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Recovered coach plans payback tourney

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By **ERIC BENDER**, FREE PRESS SPORTS REPORTER

Three days after he woke up and had his first appreciation of what had gone wrong and how he was being kept alive, Harry Muir began planning to pay back the people and organizations helping him.

Next Monday, 144 golfers will assemble at FireRock Golf Club to help the London Majors baseball coach begin that payback with a charity golf tournament and silent auction named Play It Forward. Proceeds go to the London Health Sciences Centre critical care unit and MannaRelief, which assists stricken families.

On May 10 last year, Muir was throwing batting practice at Labatt Park, preparing to take the Majors into the 2005 season as their field manager. The next day, he woke up desperately ill. By evening, he was in hospital in a coma and for the next 18 days was in a fight for his life.

The former Toronto Blue Jays farm hand had contracted streptococcus toxic shock syndrome. All his organs began to shut down. He was on life support and his heart stopped pumping blood to his extremities. It was feared he would be losing a foot, if not a leg.

"It's important to be aware that anyone can get sick at any time," Muir said as the Majors began their first round of

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playoffs. Play It Forward is a slogan and name of the golf tournament Muir selected to urge people to be proactive toward health sector organizations.

Two weeks after being released from hospital, there were no plans for dialysis as had been felt necessary. He was on no medication. He didn't even have a doctor's appointment and he was getting around with a walker. Muir put faith in supplements he began taking, supplements supplied by Mannatech, of which MannaRelief is an arm. "My body began healing itself," he said.

Because of his exceptional condition as an athlete, it is believed Muir recovered when others wouldn't have fared as well.

He's gushingly appreciative of everyone who helped him through his ordeal.

"I hope to develop this into a foundation to help families who are going through things like this. There are people from out of town and poorer families who need assistance," he said. They need help such as a place to stay in the city if they're from out of town, babysitting, cutting the grass. Muir noted Molly Maid, for instance, donated house-cleaning service while his wife maintained her vigil.

Muir is back with the Majors this season as a pitching coach. "I have no side-effects to speak of except for a toe that didn't quite heal properly and the occasional bad dream. I'm in better shape than I've been in five years. Lost weight. Threw a couple of bullpens and have been throwing a lot of BP. BP is good for me. I've got my curve back. I'm going to pitch next year."

Muir, 33, was a Blue Jays draft choice who worked in their minor system before going to France for a season where he led his team to a national championship. He returned to London and the Majors.

Twenty-eight teams have signed on for Play It Forward. There's room for eight more.

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