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*In an instant, injury ended Mark's season. But despite the setback, he found ways to help the team.*

**D**uring the second match of his senior season, middle blocker Mark Fletcher of Desert Vista High School in Phoenix, Arizona, leaped high into the air, just as he had in so many volleyball games before. But this time when he landed, something went horribly wrong.

#### **It Was Tough**

"You could hear the bone snap," he recalls. "There was no question my leg was broken." He had suffered a near compound fracture of the tibia and shattered the fibula in his leg. The next two weeks were filled with heartache, both in the hospital and then recovering at home. "I kept thinking about the years of practice and training, the hopes for a winning season," he says. "It was tough."

His father read two scriptures to him, Doctrine & Covenants 121:7 and 122:7, and told him that this would give him experience and be for his good. Mark also remembered reading in 2 Nephi 2:11 that there must be opposition in all things. "I figured something good could come out of this, so I might as well figure out what it was." The answer was to focus on helping others rather than wondering why he had been hurt himself.

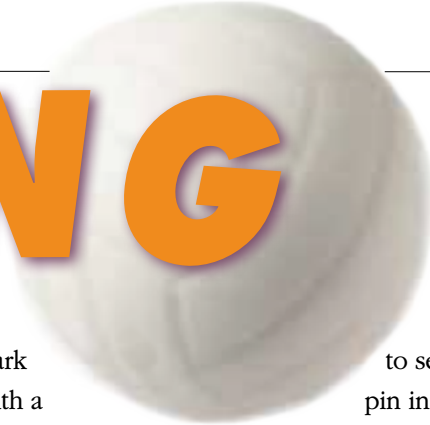
Coach Ryan Tolman, who is also a Latter-day Saint, kept Mark practicing with

the team daily and assigned him to work with younger players, who could benefit from his experience. Call it service of a different

***Mark serves the ball in the final game of the regular season (right) and joins the celebration (below) after the team takes state.***



# SERVING



kind. Team members adjusted by playing in different positions; Mark adjusted by offering encouragement. Even though the season didn't turn out as great as everyone had hoped, Desert Vista still qualified for the playoffs.

## Strong Enough

As the last home match approached, Coach Tolman asked

Mark to serve the first serve. With a pin in his leg but strong enough to participate, Mark practiced over and over. "I didn't want to just hit it into the net," he explains. "I was praying the whole time."

When the game began, he limped to the line and then hit the ball so precisely the other team couldn't return it. The coach left him in. Mark couldn't move around the court, so his teammates had to cover balls that came his way. With the score 9-0, Mark finally lost service and left to a standing ovation. He limped to the bench and continued to cheer for his team.

## A New Award

Three weeks later, Desert Vista High School won the state championship, the lowest-seeded team ever to do so. In the official photo,

teammates asked Mark to hold the trophy. Then at the annual awards ceremony, the coach announced a new award to be given each year in Mark's honor: the Teammate Award, presented to the player who exemplifies courage, dedication, and team spirit.

Today, Mark is serving full-time in the Brazil Manaus Mission. "What I learned in volleyball was that the scriptures are true," he concludes. "Without misery, you don't know happiness. So if life hands you something bitter, look for a way to make it sweet." **NE**

*Mark Fletcher and his brother, Matt, were featured in the article "Brothers" in the May 2007 New Era.*

