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## Brown puts injury-shortened season in rearview

Former U.S. champion to debut new short program at Team Challenge Cup

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*After having his season cut short by injury, Jason Brown is just happy to be skating in front of an audience again. -Sarah S. Brannen*

After missing most of the 2015-16 season with a back injury, [Jason Brown](#) is looking forward to competing "100 percent healthy" at the [2016 KOSÉ Team Challenge Cup](#) in Spokane this weekend. He'll be debuting a new short program, too, to Secret Garden's "Appassionata."

Backstage at the Skating Club of Boston's "Ice Chips" show on Saturday, Brown spoke about the new program, his health, quads and an upcoming trip to Israel.

The *Great Gatsby* short program Brown used this past season put a lot of strain on the skater's back. As a result, he and his coaches made the strategic decision to use "Appassionata," which is more of a slow, lyrical piece.

"I absolutely love the new program," Brown said. "We were trying to do something that wouldn't be as strenuous on my back. I absolutely loved, loved, loved my old short, but it just has a lot of quick movements back and forth, and a lot of fast torque, and so we decided what would be best, moving forward, would be something that's not as quick."

In Spokane, Brown will compete his "Scent of Love" free skate, and he plans to keep it for another year.

"(My choreographer) Rohene [Ward] is pretty adamant on it, because I only got to compete with it three times," he said. "I'm kind of looking at the Team Challenge Cup as the first event of next year, for me, because I haven't really gotten to compete."

Brown's season came to a screeching halt last November, after he competed at Skate America and the Ice Challenge in Graz, Austria.

"I had a strained ligament in my lower back that got really inflamed," he said. "The two connecting points where the ligament attached also got really inflamed. The doctors were like, 'You have to let it calm down. You have to get it healed if you want the inflammation to go away.' It got more and more and more inflamed, and the pain level was increasing."

The injury forced Brown to withdraw from the NHK Trophy in late November, and then the 2016 U.S. Figure Skating Championships in January.

"It was just something that got worse and worse over time," Brown said. "Every year I'm trying to do more and add a level of difficulty in everything that I do. It kind of seemed like it might have been bound to happen at some point down the road. So I'm kind of glad that we got to fix it."

As the U.S. championships drew to a close, Brown petitioned U.S. Figure Skating for a spot on the world team, but it was denied. He insists that he was not hurt by the decision, although he thinks his health might have permitted him to compete.

"To be honest, I was so excited for the team," he said. "I wasn't at all upset, or mad. It was just like, OK, this is the next path that I'm going on. Whether I was on the team or off the team, it was a relief to know where I was headed next and what the plan was moving forward."

Once he knew he wouldn't be competing, Brown and his coaching team laid out a plan for rest and physical therapy. He refuses to speculate on how he might have done at worlds, had he been selected.

"I can never say what the training would have been like, because we didn't go that route," he said. "We

went on a very different return-to-play plan, and we took it a lot more cautiously than we would have. I can't sit here and go, 'Yeah, I would be ready!' I'm not that type of person to put myself in shoes that I wasn't in. But definitely, from the back doctors looking at me and my physical therapist, [competing at worlds] would have been fine with them."

After several weeks off the ice, and a gradual return to skating, Brown says he is completely healthy and beginning to work on quad jumps again.

"My back gets a little tight every so often and I have to roll it, but pain-wise, I'm 100 percent," he said. "I definitely think it's going to keep getting better from here. I got back on the ice February 1, and then it was a week and a half of non-jumping, then integrating singles, then doubles. By the third or fourth week, I started doing triples. It's keeping the jump count low and the amount of time on the ice low. But every week we increase it a bit."

Brown says he has been training at full strength for almost four weeks. He is working on quads again, mostly the quad toe, but quad salchow as well.

"It's not something that we're rushing to integrate, because I want my back to be completely healthy for the start of next season," he said. "The quad is definitely something I want to keep practicing, keep putting it out there. I've been working on sal and toe, but toe was the one that I was landing in the fall. I just want to get back to that point, get really strong with it, really consistent, and I really believe that I can."

A month after the Team Challenge Cup, Brown will take a 10-day trip to Israel, and he is agog with excitement at the prospect. He is going with Birthright Israel, which leads groups of young Jewish adults, ages 18 to 26, on tours of the country.

After he returns, Brown will start preparing for the season in earnest. He expects to compete at some point over the summer, although his schedule isn't in place yet.

"We generally do Glacier Falls; I may do a program at (the) Broadmoor (Open). We don't plan that far in advance, but that's the tentative plan," he said. "The trip to Israel will be good, to give my back that little bit of rest, and then I feel like it's going to be completely, totally great."

For the moment, Brown is just happy to look neither forward nor back but to enjoy the sensation of performing again after a long time away.

"To be in front of an audience, and to be healthy, it was awesome, it was amazing. It all comes at you, that excitement," Brown said. "It was something that I've been waiting for. I'm just really excited to have that feeling again."



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