



Barbaro's surgical team inspects the leg he shattered in May

Until recently, Barbaro—the majestic 3-year-old Thoroughbred who stormed to victory in the Kentucky Derby in May—seemed to be recovering nicely after sustaining a severe break in his right leg during the May 20 Preakness Stakes. But after surgery on July 8 to replace hardware and clear up an infection in that leg, doctors found and treated an abscess in his previously healthy left foot. But the inflammation worsened: Barbaro had developed laminitis, a breakdown of the tissue joining his foot bone and hoof.

Laminitis, which is caused by favoring an injured leg and putting too much weight on the healthy ones, can be so painful that Barbaro's doctors considered whether to put the horse down rather than let him suffer. His surgeon Dean Richardson at one point listed his prognosis as poor. But Barbaro fought back like a champion. At week's end, his appetite and spirits, if not yet his body, seemed healthy. "As long as the horse is not suffering, we're going to continue to try," Richardson told reporters. "It's worth the effort." —By Sean Scully

