

A golf game leaves Killeen man fighting to save his sight

Joel Stephens spent his 50th birthday doing one of his favorite things, playing golf. But his day of fun in the sun turned into a nightmare in a split second.

Mr. Stephens, a Copperas Cove resident, was sitting in the golf cart as his wife teed off from a par three. While talking to a friend, Mr. Stephens looked up at what would turn out to be the worst possible time.

“One minute we were talking, then the next thing I remember is hearing this awful popping sound as the ball hit my eye.”

Mr. Stephens was taken to a Killeen hospital where surgeons were able to save his eye. But after months of healing, Mr. Stephens’ surgeon knew his patient would need more specialized care to have any chance of seeing again. So he sent him to Samuel Fulcher, M.D., Chief of the Section of Corneal External Disease in the Scott & White Division of Ophthalmology.

“When Joel first came to see us, he was essentially blind in his left eye. We knew that if he were to regain useful vision, he would need a new cornea and a lens implant,” Dr. Fulcher said.

“When I first went to see Dr. Fulcher and he told me I needed a cornea transplant and a new lens, I was very concerned about such a complicated procedure,” said Mr. Stephens. “But I realized this was

my only chance at being able to see out of that eye again, so I decided to go for it. It was the best decision I ever made.”

Dr. Fulcher gave Mr. Stephens a new cornea and lens to restore much of his vision, and today, Mr. Stephens says he has at least 70 percent of his vision back, and it’s getting better every day.

“I still can’t believe what they were able to do at Scott & White,” Mr. Stephens said. “First I was told I would lose my eye, now I can see again. I couldn’t have asked for better care.”

So did his injury affect his golf game? Not even close.

“You can still find me on the golf course about every weekend.” [Q](#)

Samuel Fulcher, M.D., Chief of the Section of Corneal and External Disease, looks at the cornea of patient Joel Stephens, who had a corneal transplant at Scott & White.

