Diving again after major back surgery

The sea was rough that day. The wind was strong and the waves were huge. I was having a blast sailing on my surfboard. All was great, until I made a hard manoeuvre and my board was suddenly swept from beneath my feet. The sail was ripped from my hands. I went flying onto a nearby reef. I landed on my back with such force – I heard my bones break.

I was rushed to hospital, where I was taken to the operating theatre. They thought I'd never walk again. During the long surgery they removed two lumbar vertebrae discs and cut two nerves that ran from by back to my leg. I ended up with 22 pieces of titanium screws and bolts in my body and morphine in my veins. The doctors told me that, if I was lucky, I would be able to walk – but I'd have to forget about everything else.

I'm an incredibly active person so the doctors' words were a huge emotional blow to me. I felt a darkness come over me. I didn't even want to imagine my life without diving. Diving is my passion, but it's also my work, as I'm a professional diver.

Recovery was hard. At first they had to feed me through a straw. The pain was terrible. I cried, I screamed, I even thought of committing suicide. After two weeks in that hospital room – that felt like it had become my prison – I was finally discharged.

The doctors had nothing more to tell me. They had done their part. I was left to fend for myself. Back then I could only move from my bed to the armchair, with help. Moving was painful.

I remained in that dark space for quite some time. Then, one day, I told myself: Enough! With the help of my family, my friend and physiotherapist Oliver Prat and Ferragut Casas – a doctor who is worth an empire – things started changing. We started working on my recovery plan with TRX, swimming, stretching and physiotherapy treatment twice a week.

I also worked on my mind a lot. After some time swimming, I started mimicking a dive using my legs. I would curve my back into a foetal position and use my hands as fins. But I wanted more.

So I got onto a plane and boarded a ship – to dive in the Maldives. I had to prove to myself that I could do it. I put on my compression shorts and top, followed by my elastic waist belt and wetsuit. I got help wearing the rest of the gear, and in I went.

After a couple of minutes, I was diving again. I felt free, happy. A smile returned to my face. I had climbed out of that dark hole and into the light.

I returned home a new man, full of confidence and ready to take on new challenges.

I went back to the doctors and showed them photos of my trip. I told them: Not only am I walking, I'm diving again. They were all amazed.

I really want to thank Dr Ferragut Casas who took over my care and helped me by recommending magnetic resonances and morphine patches, which I wear on my arm. Based on his advice, I worked with my physio-osteopath Oliver Prat and, together, we tailored my recovery plan to my needs. This mainly consists of swimming, a lot of meditation and physiotherapy twice a week.

Apart from these people I want to send my deepest thanks to my family who have been amazing. They helped me make it through this dark patch.

I am writing these lines a little more than six months after the accident. I’m enjoying life again. So if anyone out there is in a similar situation, my message to them is: If I could do it, so can you. You need to adapt to the new situation, make some changes and accept that there are things you can’t do. But, most importantly, you must remain positive.

Never give up, anything is possible.