

**Cyclist changing gears after heart health scare**

VIDEO	AUDIO
	----NATS of bike-----
	"I do feel like I'm flying. And the hum of the tires on the pavement is just like music and meditation."
	-----NATS UP-----
	"Now we're officially on the Rabbit Road."
	Becky Brooks has a passion for pedaling.
	"It's freedom. It's joy. It's exertion."
	-----NATS UP-----
	The 66-year-old from Mankato, Minnesota ...
	"It couldn't be better."
	... has won national titles in long distance cycling.
	"I don't think of biking as a workout. I think of it as a ride. And I don't do it because I want exercise. I do it because I want to ride."
	But ...
	"After all I went through, I thought I could never ride the way I used to ride."
	-----NATS UP-----
	"It was the 24th of April 2021."
	-----NATS UP-----
	As Becky prepared at home for a bike ride, she felt a horrific pain in her chest.
	"Stabbing — I mean, it felt like a knife inside."
<b>Becky Brooks Mankato, Minnesota</b>	"So I said to my husband, 'Shall I call the cardiologist?' And he goes, 'No, we should call 911.' And thankfully, we did."
	----NATS SIRENS---

	It wasn't a heart attack.
	"My aorta dissected."
	----NATS of chopper----
	Quickly flown to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, Becky was unconscious and in dire need of emergency surgery.
<b>Dr. John Stulak</b>	"Certainly, when I met Becky, it was a very dramatic scene."
<b>Dr. John Stulak</b>	"If there's one analogy you can make to the diagnosis of an aortic dissection, it is a ticking time bomb."
	-----NATS heart monitor-----
	The cardiovascular surgery team at Mayo, led by surgeons Dr. John Stulak and Dr. Alberto Pochettino, rapidly prepared for what would be an eight-hour procedure to repair the dissected aorta.
<b>John Stulak, M.D. Cardiovascular Surgery Mayo Clinic</b>	"The aorta is the main blood vessel that leaves the heart. It carries blood to all of our tissues and organs."
<b>Dr. John Stulak</b>	"Blood now instead of being in the middle of that tube, gets into the wall of the aorta, and then kind of does exactly what the term says. It dissects along in through the wall of the aorta."
<b>Dr. John Stulak</b>	"And as time goes on, it could pop and patient can bleed to death."
	The surgical team removed the damaged aorta and replaced it.
<b>Dr. John Stulak</b>	"It's a woven, artificial tube that the patient has. And it's just like if a pipe were damaged in your house, you would splice that out and put in a new piece of pipe. And that's basically what we did."
	----NATS of Becky reading a sentence----  "I saw a flash of her orange Kona bike through the trees and held my breath ..."
	Now, more than a year later, Becky, a retired

	English professor and accomplished author ...
	----NATS of Becky typing----
	... is working on her newest novel and feels blessed to have this next chapter in life.
	"I feel great!"
	Her racing days are done, but she is back on a bike — an e-bike.
	"It's a bike that gives assist at when you're pedaling."
	"I took it out on the road, and I started to cry. Like, oh my gosh, I can do this again! I can go hard without putting all that stress on my body."
	----NATS of Becky riding----
	"There's not an hour goes by that I don't appreciate being alive."
	"I could have been dead."
	"I'm here."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network ...
	"I'm so grateful."
	... I'm Jason Howland.
	----NATS of Becky riding----