

## 2017 KBCA Student Athlete Courage Award

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### Brianna Johnson

### Wichita West High School



It's every athlete's dream as a child to win the championship game. I was one game away from that when everything changed.

My name is Brianna Johnson. I was a freshman starter on the Maize High basketball team when my life forever changed. My freshman season was over when I tore my anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in the game before the championship game at the state tournament. Watching my teammates from the sideline, keeping me from what I wanted to do, was killing me. I would have given anything to be out there with them. I felt like I let them down. Next season came around and the title game was within arm's reach yet again. My sophomore year was looking promising until a repeat of last year, tearing my other ACL. Yet again, I felt as though I was helpless when my team needed me most. At that point, I was done with sports because I felt that I was letting everyone down. I

told my mom "I couldn't go through this again". After all the time, effort and dedication I put towards coming back to be a better and stronger after my first ACL tear, I felt it had all gone to waste. Knowing what it took to come back the first time, I could only imagine the work that would be needed to regain my ability for a second time. Basketball is a major part of my life and I love it. Deep down, I could never imagine giving it up and never stepping foot on the court again, so I continued to push on. The second surgery was by far the easiest. I knew what to expect and what needed to be done to get back to doing what I love. Through all the tears, pain and prayers I continued to push through with one goal in mind. I sat out my junior year to allow myself more time to heal physically and mentally. My dad, Brian Johnson, helped train me and get me to where I needed to be. He pushed me to my limits. Being my father he knew the potential I had. Time and time again, work out after work out, he helped me heal along with the help of my great physical trainers Monica and Laurie. On and off the court, my dad made sure I stayed on track in order to get back on the court and now here I am.

Through all the process of my recovery all seemed worth it when Coach Lord, Pitt State coach, said that he would even honor my scholarship even if I was to every tear my knee again and not be able to play (knock on wood that it never comes to that). That is when I knew I would be attending Pitt State. I had several Division I & II schools pull back from recruiting me when I tore my ACL. I'm on my way to play the sport I love at a Division II school, in spite of all the obstacles placed in front of me. Along with everyone telling me I had lost my speed or I wouldn't make it. The feeling of being on the court after all of that is a feeling like no other. I tell them, look at me now. My defense, speed, ball handling- you name it is infinitely better than what people expected of me. Coming back from not only one, but two ACL tears is a task many wouldn't be able to or wouldn't want to take on. I have endured and look at me now.