

PHOTOS SPEAK M1



Photos courtesy of Inky Johnson

IMAGINE

... you're a star football player who is only eight games away from a big NFL contract! You're in a game and you have the opportunity to make a big hit on a receiver who just caught the ball. SMACK! You're on the ground, your teammates are shouting, "Get up! Shake it off!" But you can't get up – you can't even feel your body!

This moment changed Inky Johnson's life dramatically. Inky was born to a 16-year old mother, lived in a 2-bedroom apartment with 14 people, and slept on the floor. He grew up in a neighborhood surrounded by crime, drugs, and gang violence. Inky decided he was going to find a way to get his family out of poverty that did not involve drugs and gangs. He began to define who he was and committed to living a life of positive behavior.

Inky decided football was his way out. He got up Saturdays at 5:30 am to work out with his dad. He stayed at the park until after dark running drills. A football coach also gave him free training. Inky became an extremely talented football player and the University of Tennessee gave him a scholarship.

Inky didn't play much his freshman year, but his coach encouraged him. He trained hard and got into the starting lineup his sophomore year. Junior year, Inky found out he would be a first-round pick in the NFL draft. Everything he dreamed of was coming true. Then 'the tackle' happened.

'The tackle' caused an artery in Inky's chest to rupture and he was bleeding internally; if they didn't do surgery immediately, he would die. Even after the surgery, his injury devastatingly left his right arm and hand paralyzed, but the rest of his body was fine. Inky didn't care anymore that he wasn't going to the NFL. He was just grateful to be alive!

Inky had put all of his hope in football and had thought life had "no substance or value beyond football." He quickly realized he had put his hope in something that could be so temporary and

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... strengthens hope.™



TREASURE HUNTING A PARALYZED ARM

shallow. Inky committed to being more than that. He says, "Some of my greatest lessons in life came from pain." Inky became a 'treasure hunter' and found the benefit of the loss of the use of his arm and hand was to encourage others not to put too much hope in things that can vanish quickly.

Inky learned through his injury and paralysis that healthy hope and encouragement come from discovering and enjoying your talents to help others and eventually support yourself. He is asked often if he would change what happened, and he always answers, "No." He knows his injury gave him greater inner-strength, a greater purpose, and has positively affected more lives than if he'd gone to the NFL. By what Inky has overcome, others have been encouraged and found healthy hope. How can you learn from Inky and encourage yourself and others to be 'treasure hunters' to help you write your own best TrueSuccess lifestory?

Note: See more lifestories, videos and more: www.TrueSuccessTools.org.

QUESTIONS LEAD TO UNDERSTANDING M2/5

1. What evidence is there that Inky found encouragement from others? How did Inky give encouragement to others?

2. How did Inky learn to value encouragement? What did Inky learn to put his hope in?

3. How can you learn from Inky's lifestory? Where can you find encouragement if you are dealing with painful situations?
