

# The rise and return of track star James Green



Senior sprinter James Green survived life-saving open-heart surgery after he was stabbed in August. Now he is preparing the winter track season. Photo courtesy of Jenna Childs

**By Dylan Manfre**

James Green sat on the bench in front of the Fine Arts Center wearing a beige sweater and necklace with a silver Eye of Horus medallion. The pendant is a symbol of protection in Egyptian culture. He tried to get comfortable. Still, his eyes peered around left-to-right, up and down. His head was on a swivel as he was checking his surroundings on an October afternoon.

Underneath his shirt lies a distinctive light-red scar with 36 staples in the center of his chest, the result of life-saving open-heart surgery. Green, a senior sprinter on Rider's track and field team, was the victim of a brutal stabbing on Aug. 15 and almost died from his wounds.

Nearly three months after the incident took place, the 21-year-old Maryland native who genuinely thought his life was ending, has been cleared by Rider's training staff to run. There was no doubt in his mind it would happen. Jenna Childs, his mother and biggest supporter, knew it too. She always believed in him.

## **A screwdriver and a stabbing**

The violent encounter occurred outside of a shopping center in Hamilton, New Jersey. Green went to the center with a few friends to support a female coworker who was confronting her male partner with her father. Green had never met the coworker's boyfriend before the incident.

Green looked down at the pavement, cracked a smirk and said, "That's where I messed up."

Moments later, the atmosphere completely changed. Green said the man allegedly began following him. Wherever Green went, he followed, and after a short while, he confronted him.

According to Green, the man said, "There was going to be no talking."

The man was later identified as Jmaurie Tucker, 24, of Chesterfield, New Jersey, in a criminal complaint report.

Tucker was arrested and charged with aggravated assault and two weapons offenses, according to documents obtained by The Rider News.

Green was stabbed 13 times on the left side of his body with a black and yellow screwdriver. His left lung collapsed. Blood gushed down the side of his body as he attempted to stand up. Green was fighting for his life. Each breath forced more fluid into his chest.

He was killing himself with each gasp.

Green said at least 10 people saw the altercation and did nothing.

"That was the one thing that broke my heart," Green said.

He was physically, mentally and emotionally drained. All he wanted to do was rest.

Paramedics yelled at him to keep his eyes open as he was transported to the Capital Health Medical Center. Green experienced three seizures from the time the paramedics

arrived to when he woke up in the ambulance.

"I wanted to rest," Green said. "Even if that means a permanent rest,"

He fought to open his eyes. He thought of his mother and his two brothers. Childs sacrificed her youth years to make sure Green had a good life. Instead of having fun "she broke her neck working." Green kept fighting for his mom, his biggest motivation.

"I guess it's only right that I keep going," Green said. "[I] couldn't give up."

## **A knock on the door**

Childs was two-and-a-half hours away sitting on her bed in their Maryland apartment when she got a call from a male paramedic. From what Childs described, he downplayed what happened to her son.

She asked him if she should drive up there and the paramedic replied, "No, no. It's not that serious. He's fine. He's sitting up."

She got another call from the hospital shortly thereafter. In this call, she heard two words that pierced her ears like a glass of wine shattering.

"Trauma team."

A third call came from a surgeon who brought Childs up to speed.

Green was being prepped for emergency surgery to save his life.

The surgeon put Green on the line.

"Mom," Green muttered over the phone.

"I'm coming, James. I'm coming. I love you," she said frantically to her son over the phone, not knowing if he could hear her.

Those were the last words she said to her son before his surgery.

Green thought those were going to be the last words he would ever hear his mother say.

"I'm thinking she's going to get here and that's it," Green said. "They're gonna tell her I didn't make it."

Childs threw on shoes and got behind the wheel of her car. With only a quarter of a tank of gas, her oldest son, his girlfriend and Childs raced two-and-a-half hours north on I-95 to New Jersey.

They arrived at the hospital shortly before 9 p.m. to a group of nearly 40 college-aged people standing outside the hospital wanting to see Green.

The rest was a blur.

After the three-hour surgery, his mother and brother approached the room. They paused and prepared themselves for what they might see.

Childs took a breath and opened the door. Green was sedated and received supplemental oxygen.

"You really scared me this time, kid," she said to her son, who had tears trickling down his face.

She was able to contain herself for "95% of the time" when she was at the hospital. That other 5%, Childs went outside and lit a cigarette "to get [her] mind right."

Even in her son's serious condition, she refused to let the thought of him dying enter her mind.

"I swore I would never bury another one of my children," Childs said. Her first daughter died of sudden infant death syndrome when Green was 3 years old. He was going to pull through. He had to.

Green knew his mother already carried the pain of losing one

child. As he was transported to the hospital, he began writing what he believed might be the last poem he would ever write. The words held a message to his mother, in case she would need to bury another.

The poem in part reads: "The show has suddenly come to an end, but the life I lived was amazing, I promise you it was nothing less. Allow the curtains to close but tell my mother I tried my best."

### **A day felt like a week**

Green's progress surprised many. He was out of the hospital in six days and eventually got the OK to train with Rider's team. His mom knew it would happen, but did not think it would be this season.

Rider track and field Head Coach Brett Harvey, who is close with Green and graduated from the same high school in Maryland, is "optimistic" about him running this winter. Harvey said Green is already going through practices and is "his normal self,"

"If you were to ask me any person I know to go through this, who [I think] would be the most likely to come out of it the best, it's probably him," Harvey said.

Jerome Boyer was on the 4×400 relay team with Green when they broke the school record their freshman year.

When he first saw Green's hospital picture on Instagram with wires and bandages across his body, Boyer was nervous if his teammate would ever run again.

"Knowing James, he's a very strong-willed person," Boyer said. "He knows how to bounce back from things."

Green's charisma is palpable. His determination spreads throughout the whole team during practice.

Allie Riches, his good friend and teammate, said, "I see him at practice, still running. He was doing hill runs [one day] and he didn't seem like he had any problems. ... He's back to being himself. He's back to being James Green."

He endured intensive physical therapy but took every opportunity to demonstrate that he was healed. Each day felt like a week of progress to him. It was a stark contrast from the doctors telling him he would never run again.

Now Green is grateful to kiss his mom and work on getting faster. He wants to "give everything plus more. Everything times two." Green could have taken a semester off, even a school year, but his mind was focused on proving people wrong.

"That's what life is about," Green said. "It's about proving that those mistakes don't define who I am. Even after I make a mistake, I'll show you it gets better from here, I'll do better,



I'll learn from this."