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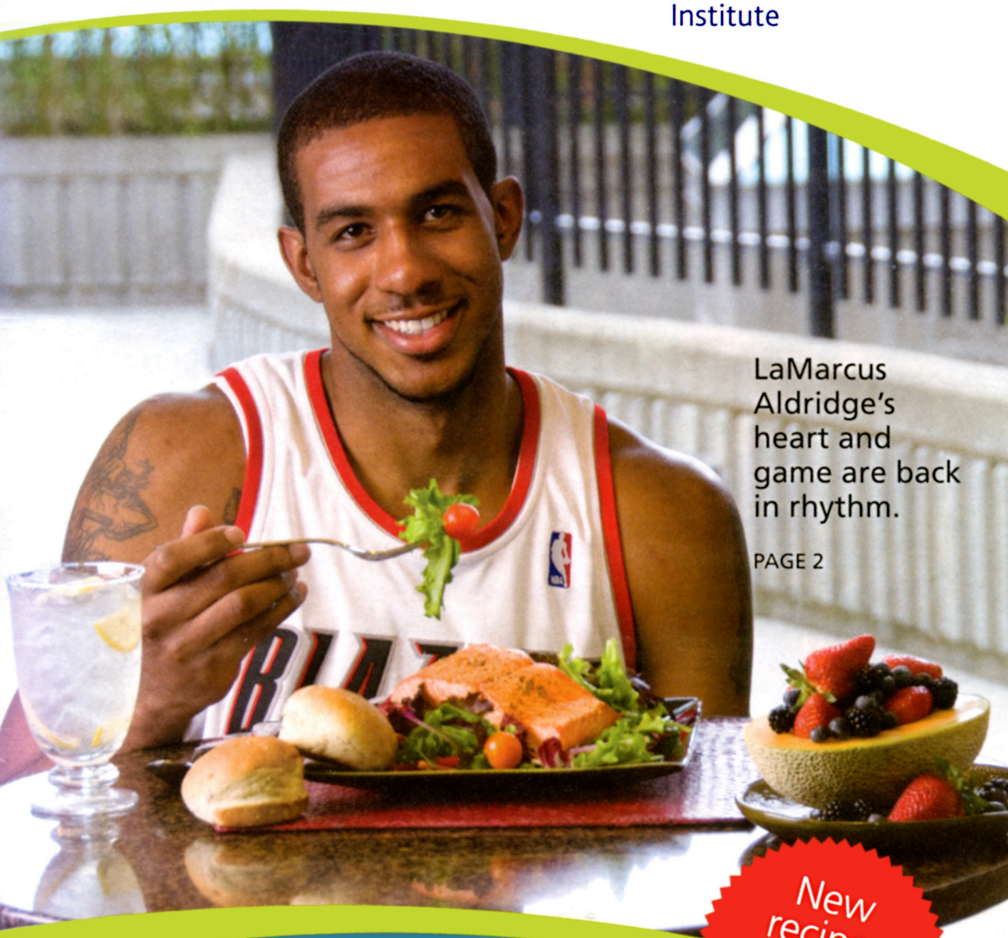

LaMarcus Aldridge's heart and game are back in rhythm.

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New recipes and menus!

OREGON GUIDE TO Heart-Healthy Living

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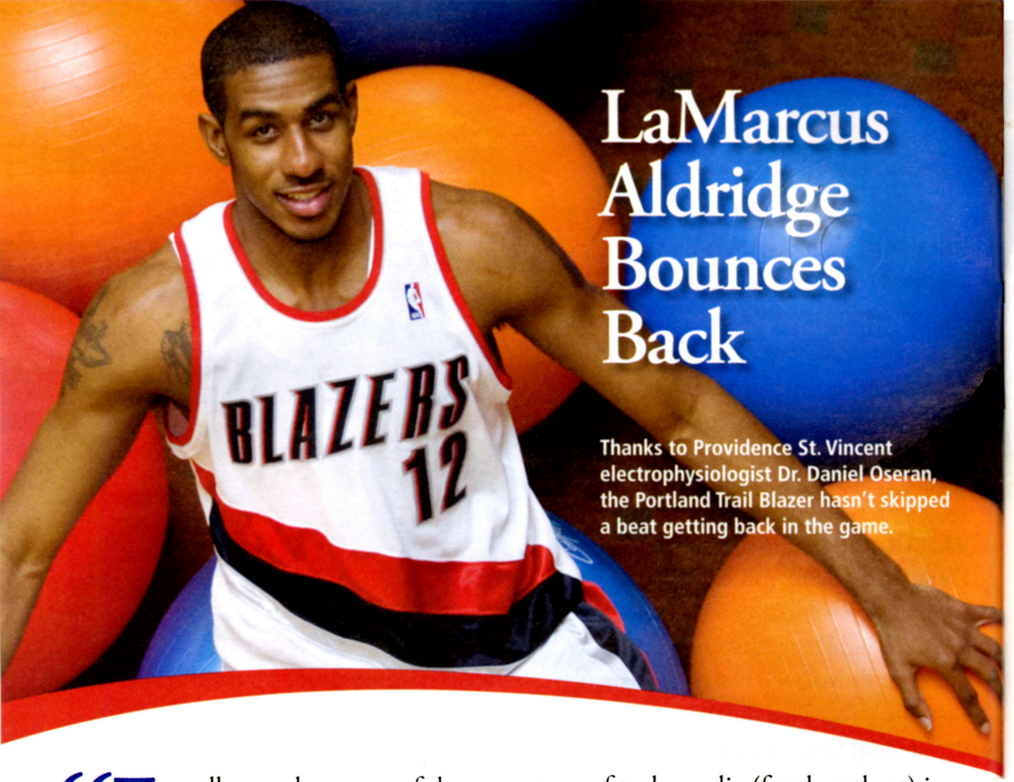


LaMarcus Aldridge Bounces Back

Thanks to Providence St. Vincent electrophysiologist Dr. Daniel Oseran, the Portland Trail Blazer hasn't skipped a beat getting back in the game.

"It really struck me out of the blue," says Portland Trail Blazers' rising star LaMarcus Aldridge. "I had no idea what was going on, aside from my heart beating a lot faster – *a lot*. You don't really prepare for things like this."

What the sensational young athlete is recalling is his episode of arrhythmia, an irregular heart beat, which occurred during his rookie season in a Trail Blazers' game against the Los Angeles Clippers. It was March 31, 2007, and Aldridge was just 21 at the time.

Pulled immediately from the game and diagnosed soon after at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Aldridge was found to have Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome (WPW), a form of supraventricular tachycardia. This type of tachycardia (fast heartbeat) is caused by a glitch, or short circuit, in the electrical system that regulates the heart, throwing off its normal pace or rhythm. It occurs in approximately one out of every 1,500 people. Though not normally life-threatening, cardiac arrest has been known to occur.

Referred to Providence Heart and Vascular Institute – "They came highly recommended," says Aldridge – he came under the care of a team led by Daniel Oseran, M.D., regional director of arrhythmia services.

"LaMarcus was shocked that, as an elite athlete, he was suddenly told he had a heart condition," Dr. Oseran recalls. "He was disappointed that he had to come out of a game and miss a few games while we evaluated it."

"Zapping" the trouble spot

To treat Aldridge for WPW, Dr. Oseran performed a catheter ablation. This procedure entailed inserting catheters into Aldridge's heart, identifying where his heart's short circuit was, determining what was causing the heart rhythm problem and then cauterizing or zapping it to eliminate the trouble spot.

"We've expanded the application of this technique," says Dr. Oseran, "so now we're using it to treat more and more patients, especially patients with one of the most common heart ailments, atrial fibrillation." (Atrial fibrillation is a heartbeat irregularity that occurs when multiple abnormal electrical impulses in the upper chambers of the heart fire rapidly at the same time.)

"I had a lot of support from friends, family and the team, and that includes Dr. Oseran and his team at Providence," says Aldridge. "They were awesome all the way through the process, the follow-ups and getting me on a path to recovery."

Adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle

So what do you need to know about arrhythmia and its causes to stay heart healthy? Arrhythmias often divide themselves into two groups: those due to electrical-system abnormalities that people are born with, such as WPW, and those associated with heart diseases that develop over time, such as atrial fibrillation. Arrhythmia symptoms can range from occasional palpitations to the sensation of a racing heartbeat to actually passing out.

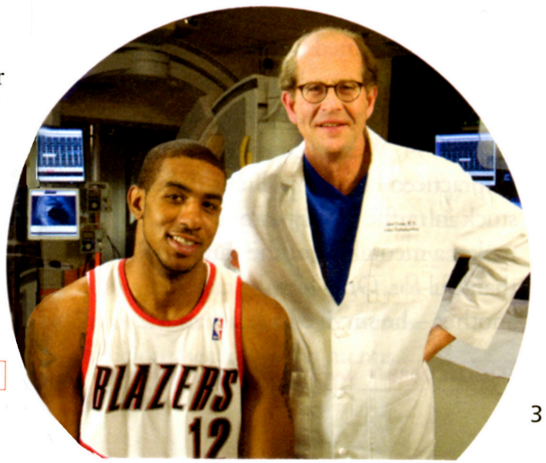
Dr. Oseran recommends a sensible diet, regular exercise and being tobacco-free as ways to ward off heart disease.

"I think establishing good habits early makes a difference," he says. "We've all read in the paper about the high incidence of childhood obesity. So staying lean, eating healthfully and exercising – establish these habits early in life, or if you're older, adopt such a plan now."

Aldridge agrees. "Staying fit and eating right are key. In my case, my fitness didn't prevent me from getting a heart condition, but I believe it helped me to bounce back from it big time."

The former All-American from Texas is poised again to become a mighty force in the NBA, following last season's performance of 18 points and eight rebounds per game.

"This year I'd like to be an all-star and play MVP ball," he concludes. "I think that would be another strong indicator of how much I'm back, healthy and on top of my game."



For more information, visit www.providence.org/heart. You will find a wealth of information relating to heart conditions, healthy lifestyles, treatment plans and more – all to keep you on top of your health.