

# Victory comes in more ways than one for 11-year-old

By **KIM HAYES**  
*Sentinel reporter*

Imagine this. It's the World Series. The bases are loaded. The score is tied and your team has two outs against it. With just one chance left at bat, there couldn't be more pressure on the next person up to hit the ball — and that person is you.

The sun beats down as you grasp the bat and take your stance. When the moment comes, you swing, hear the crack of the bat and start running. The crowd cheers as you make it to first base, screaming for you to continue to second and third and finally, as you cross home plate, your teammates and coaches rush toward you in excitement.

It sounds like a scene straight from Major League Baseball, but it's not. This is exactly what happened to 11-year-old Nicholas Bedlyon, of Lewistown, during his baseball team's final game of the season. He may have made it look easy, but getting to this joyful moment in Bedlyon's life was no stroll down Easy Street. Bedlyon, who plays on a team sponsored by Central Pa. Dock and Door, got the winning hit in the 2011 Challenger Division World Series.

Nicholas and his teammates

are all kids with special needs. In Nicholas's case, the grand slam was a particularly special moment because at one time, his very survival was in question.

At the age of 2, Nicholas was diagnosed with a condition called hypothalamic hamartoma, a benign brain tumor that affects one in every one million individuals. The hypothalamus is a region of the brain just above the pituitary gland that controls an immense number of bodily functions, including body temperature, hunger and thirst. In Nicholas's case, the tumor prohibited the youngster from ever experiencing feelings.

"He never had emotions, never cried, never laughed," Nicholas's father, Bob, says.

Nicholas's mother, Denise Bedlyon, first became concerned about her son because he started having giggling fits, also known as gelastic seizures, when he was 4 weeks old. Dismissed as colic and gas, it was six months before Nicholas switched pediatricians and was eventually referred to a neurologist. Though the results of an EEG showed nothing of import, the seizures continued, and Denise insisted upon having an extended EEG completed. Finally, an MRI found a mass at the base of Nicholas's



*Sentinel photo by BRADLEY KREITZER*

Nicholas Bedlyon celebrates with friends and teammates after making the winning play in the 2011 Challenger Division World Series.

brain, and he was diagnosed.

Doctors tried regulating the HH with medications. The medicine would work for a while, but then the seizures would return and slowly increase until a new solution was necessary.

Finally, the only remaining solution was surgery. Without it, the seizures would continue to get worse and Nicholas likely would have ended up in a nursing home.

But the surgery was risky. With only 24 patients undergoing the procedure before Nicholas, it was still considered experimental. Doctors in

Phoenix, Ariz., would remove Nicholas's tumor from the top of the head by going in between the left and right halves of the brain. For Bob and Denise, the unknowns were terrifying.

"It was a great unknown. He could be a vegetable, he could die — anything could go wrong," Bob says.

Encouraged by others' reports of immediate results after recovery, they decided to go ahead with the surgery.

During the six hour surgery, doctors were able to remove about 98 percent of Nicholas's tumor, which was approxi-

mately the size of a large grape. The remaining two percent was touching his optic nerve, and it was better to leave it there than risk damaging Nicholas's vision.

He spent a month in the hospital and in the months that followed, had to learn to walk and talk all over again.

There was also slight damage to his hypothalamus because of the tumor, and Nicholas now has diabetes insipidus, which is a condition where the kidneys are unable to conserve water, and a lower

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