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'EXTREME MAKEOVER' VISIT
Carpenter slices hand during project
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THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

An unexpected subplot emerged during the weekend on *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* when a cast member suffered a serious hand injury while working in Whitehall.

"It's going to be a big part of the show," Ed Sanders said yesterday during his first physical-therapy session at Hand and Microsurgery Associates on the Northwest Side.

The actor and carpenter, 31, was helping to put the finishing touches on the home of Jason and Kirsti Thomas on Saturday when he accidentally sliced the width of his left palm with the blade of an electric saw.

Medics rushed Sanders to the emergency room at Riverside Methodist Hospital, where he underwent four hours of surgery.

A camera crew documented his operation and recovery, Riverside spokeswoman Christina Fitzer said.

The additional footage includes a bedside visit from Ty Pennington, host of the ABC reality show.

On Sunday, the show concluded six days of shooting in the Columbus area — with the two-hour episode about the construction of the Thomas home expected to air in February.

Mr. Thomas, a 32-year-old father of five, is a former Marine who helped rescue police officers from the World Trade Center rubble after the terrorist attack of Sept. 11, 2001.



Ed Sanders, a carpenter, awaits a physical-therapy session at Hand and Microsurgery Associates in Columbus.

The new twist adds medical drama to the story line.

Dr. Lawrence Lubbers repaired dozens of severed nerves, tendons and arteries in Sanders' hand.

"Anytime someone takes on a . . . blade that's moving at 11,000 rpm like Ed did, it's going to be a bad injury," Lubbers said. "But it's not uncommon for our practice. I saw three similar injuries last weekend."

Sanders was sculpting a U.S. flag in wood for the Thomas dining room when the accident occurred.

"It was horrendous," he said. "It took a massive load of meat out of my hand. I was sure my carpentry and acting careers were done and dusted."

Still, Lubbers said, Sanders should eventually expect "nearnormal function" in the hand.

"We were able to repair all of the structures precisely, but 50 percent of his outcome will depend on his rehabilitation. He needs to really work hard with his therapists."

Sanders was scheduled to fly home to Los Angeles today, Fitzer said, but might return to Columbus for checkups or more therapy.

Despite the dramatic premise of completing ambitious remodeling projects in five days, Sanders said, haste didn't play a role in the accident.

"I never rush a project, and we have loads of guys to help."

He blamed himself for removing the safety guard.

"I want to get this message across to the audience: Don't ever do that."

His only previous showrelated problem, he said, was a staph infection that developed from a foot blister.

Sanders grimaced in pain yesterday as therapist Kathy Villacres slowly removed his bandages.

"Oh, my God," he said upon inspecting the wound. "The fact that he (Lubbers) put everything back together is amazing."

The native of London, England, recently completed his second season with Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.

As of yesterday, he hadn't told his wife about the severity of his injury.

"She's pregnant with triplets, and I don't want to upset her," he said. "She's already had two miscarriages."

Sanders, who didn't require a skin graft, has full movement in his fingers.

"It could have been worse," he said. "It could have left a couple of fingers on the floor."

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