

# Abigail serves up a determined battle

## Teenager fights condition with tennis dream

By HEIDI TRAVIS

WHEN Abigail Bendall was diagnosed with severe curvature of the spine, doctors told her that the only course of treatment was a 10-hour operation to fuse her spine.

But the determined 13-year-old, who is a talented tennis player, was determined to prove them wrong and has now defied all odds.

The Leigh teenager had always loved sport and dreamed of becoming a professional tennis player, but when she was 12 Abigail's dreams were shattered.

She was suffering from excruciating pain in her back and started feeling tired quickly during PE lessons, while mum Lois noticed that her daughter's shoulder blade was protruding on one side.

Abigail said: "I have always been so passionate about keeping fit and playing sports, getting up on the tennis court and giving absolutely everything to performing but when I started feeling tired and getting pain down my back, it was really hard to



stay motivated. I struggled to keep up with all my practices and I lost loads of confidence.

"Everyone around me was really worried and it was hard because I felt like certain things were being kept from me."

Abigail's GP diagnosed scoliosis, which means her spine is curved. The condition affects around four per cent of the population and, if left untreated, can lead to fatal heart and lung problems.

Orthopaedic surgeons said

Abigail's condition was one of the worst they had seen.

Her only option was a 10-hour operation to fuse the spine from top to bottom to prevent any further damage, but the Bedford High School student didn't give up hope and together with her family, she searched the Internet for alternative treatments.

They found Scoliosis SOS, which is a clinic founded and run by Erika Maude, who has scoliosis herself, and it is the only place in the world to offer treatment following the ScolioGold method using non-surgical treatments.

Abigail said: "Scoliosis completely rocked my world but I feel like myself again. I really felt like my world had fallen apart and I didn't know how to cope with all the emotions that were going around in my head.

"I just wanted to be able to run around like my friends and be a real team player.

"The exercises I learned were not too difficult. It was just about staying motivated, but for me just the thought of being normal again was enough and it helped me to push myself.

"I cannot wait to get back to the specialists at the hospital and show them what I have achieved.

She added: "I have been watching Wimbledon on the TV and dreaming that one day it could be me."