

# USC's Vaughn Starnes Operates on Little Darth Vader

Selected News Clips



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On June 14, 2012, Vaughn Starnes, Hastings Distinguished Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery and chair of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, performed open-heart surgery on 7-year-old Max Page, the child actor who played a mini-Darth Vader in a popular car commercial.



June 12, 2012

## 'Little Darth Vader,' 7, to undergo open-heart surgery

Max Page's mom describes her son's fears leading up to procedure

By Scott Stump

May the Force be with him.

Max Page, the 7-year-old who played a miniature Darth Vader in Volkswagen's popular Super Bowl commercial in 2011, will check in to the Children's Hospital Los Angeles on Wednesday to repair a congenital heart defect, according to ad agency Deutsch LA. The goal of the surgery is to repair a hole in his heart and replace his pulmonary valve.

Max appeared with his mother, Jennifer Page, on TODAY in February 2011 after the Super Bowl ad gained instant fame. In the ad, Max dresses as a mini Darth Vader and attempts to use the Force around the house to no avail before being surprised that he can start his father's Volkswagen with the wave of a hand.

At the time of his interview with Matt Lauer and Meredith Vieira, Max said he had never seen any of the "Star Wars" movies. His mother also mentioned that Max had been diagnosed with a heart defect when he was only a few months old and was using a pacemaker.

Max has been serving as an ambassador for Children's Hospital Los Angeles, working to raise money for other children with heart defects. In an email released by the Deutsch LA ad agency, Jennifer Page talks about her son's fear of his upcoming surgery and describes how his family has been helping him prepare for the procedure:

*"We told Max and Els [Max's brother] Sunday afternoon. Initially, Max was crying and repeating how scared how he was. We unpeeled the layers by asking what exactly he was afraid of and tackled each issue as he could verbalize it. Blood draws, spending the night in the hospital and hurting are the big three. He was also very sad that summer would be in rest in recovery instead of playing baseball, golf and traveling.*

*"Around bedtime he asked if I would stay up with him and talk. He wanted to make a 'CAN DO' list. So we wrote out all the things he can do so he could focus on those. Then he said we definitely had to 'Fun Up' the house. So we went and got Els out of bed and spent the next hour redesigning each room with a theme, special rules and secret codes. In the Library (Els' Room) we have to read with flashlights. On Whisper Lane (the hallway) you have to whisper. Going up the stairs you have to sing 'Take me out to the ball game.' The most favorite is the garage — Explode Zone — science experiments and art projects, the messier the better.*

*"Last night, I wanted to make sure he was doing as well as he seemed. He said, 'Mom I don't have a choice. I have to go through it. I don't like it and it's still*

*scary — but I have to. So I think I might as well go through it with a good attitude.' So as we hop on Max's coattails to go on this ride — we too, shall do it with a good attitude. Though we will still tremble with tears and have our overwhelming moments — we will focus on the 'CAN DO' and enjoy our Fun Up House.*

*"Mighty Max wants me to include one more thing — one of the lines he uses when he speaks to groups.*

*"Kids, if you use your FORCE and dream big, you can achieve anything. We may be small — but we're mighty!"*



Max Page, 7, will undergo open-heart surgery in Los Angeles on Wednesday.



# The Washington Post

June 14, 2012

## Max Page, boy behind Darth Vader mask in car commercial, recovering after open heart surgery

By Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The 7-year-old actor known as the boy behind the Darth Vader mask in a popular car commercial underwent open-heart surgery Thursday, hospital officials said.

The surgery to replace Max Page's pulmonary valve lasted two hours and took place without incident, according to the surgeon, Dr. Vaughn Starnes. The operation was done at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, where the boy was recovering in the cardiac intensive care unit.

Max, who plays Reed on the CBS soap opera "The Young and the Restless," was born with a congenital heart defect and has undergone multiple surgeries.

The valve used for Max will last about 15 years and won't require invasive surgery to replace it, according to the hospital. He was expected to be released in about five days, a hospital spokesman said.

He faces six to eight weeks of recovery.

Jennifer Page, his mother, said there's been an outpouring of support and kindness and that Max and the family welcome all "prayers and encouragement."

Max's parents and his younger brother, Els, were at the hospital with him. He was in good spirits the night before the operation, making everyone laugh, his father, Buck Page, said in a family statement.

"Max wanted to hold his brother's hand, and Max said to Els, 'It's OK, I'm not scared.' He just wanted to hold our hands and his stuffed animals. He was much calmer than we were," Jennifer Page said.



J&R, JPI Studios/Associated Press — In this undated photo released by J&R, child actor, Max Page, who played little Darth Vader in Volkswagen's 2011 Super Bowl commercial, is shown. The 7-year-old underwent surgery to replace a pulmonary valve on Thursday, June 14, 2012, without incident. The operation was done at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.



June 19, 2012

## Pint-Sized Darth Vader Goes Home After Heart Surgery



7-year-old Max Page (June 13, 2012)

LOS ANGELES (KTLA) — Max Page, the 7-year-old who was the face behind the force in Volkswagen’s popular Super Bowl commercial is home from the hospital

Page was discharged from Children’s Hospital Los Angeles Monday, just four days after having open-heart surgery, but he still faces six to eight weeks of recovery.

Dr. Vaughn Starnes said the surgery to replace Max Page’s pulmonary valve went without incident on Thursday and that Max is recovering in good condition.

The 2-hour operation — Max’s eighth surgery — was performed at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

Max was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect when he was just 3 months old.

His mother, Jennifer, described his condition on the “Today” Show last year.

“He had his first surgery at 3 months old at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, and from then they saved his life and gave him back to us,” she said.

“About a week after his first surgery, he had to have a pacemaker put in,” she explained.

Now that Max is older, Children’s Heart Institute’s chief of cardiology says it’s time to fix a small artery they created for him as a baby to accommodate the blood flow of a growing boy.

Surgeons inserted a tube between the right pumping chamber and the main artery to the lungs.

The replacement valve he is receiving during Thursday’s surgery will need to be replaced by a larger one when Max is about 17, and then he will need another one in his 20s.

Max starred as a pint-sized Darth Vader in a 2011 Super Bowl commercial for the Volkswagen Passat.

He’s also had roles on *The Young and the Restless* and *Prime Suspect*.

Max has also become an official junior ambassador for Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

“This is not gonna hold Max back,” Dr. Silka said.

In lieu of cards and gifts, Max’s family asks well-wishers to donate to Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

To donate to the hospital in Max’s name, visit [www.CHLA.org/MAX](http://www.CHLA.org/MAX).