

SET! HIKE! The guards pulled to the right. The running back cut to the outside. Sam and the outside linebacker ran to the tackle. CRACK! Then a whistle. I went back to the huddle. Sam wasn't there. He was still on the ground. The coaches ran over, and soon an ambulance came. As they took him to the hospital I knew that my twin brother's high school football career was over.

Football has always been our favorite sport. We got to see newspaper clippings and hear stories from when our dad played in high school. We played football with our friends at lunch every day. It was my twin brother Sam that convinced me to join the high school football team.

Then Covid hit. The friends that we played football with moved away. Among the masked people who showed up to practice six feet apart, Sam was the only person I knew.

The team exercised all summer but the season kept getting delayed. After months and months of practice, we finally were allowed to have a season in March. The first two days went by quickly but then everything changed.

It was only the third practice of the season when Sam broke his leg. When I got home I just cried. He was in pain and I was alone.

The rest of that season I was afraid. I sat out of drills at practice. Every day I came home and wanted to quit. My parents wanted me to quit. So what made me stay?

Two things. One: People I had never met on the team would always ask how Sam was doing. Two: I couldn't quit. There was always a part of me that said keep going, even if I wasn't going far. Seeing the way my teammates cared for Sam combined with the urge to keep going convinced me that I would never quit.

As the next season came and went I got decent playing time on JV. But by junior year, the size and athletic difference between my 135 pound self and my teammates grew apparent. I worked as hard as I could, being first to volunteer for every drill, staying before practice to set up

and staying after to clean up. But my coaches never put me in. It was painful to watch my friends doing their best to help the team as I stood on the sidelines, unable to help. It felt like years of my life were wasted.

I hoped my senior season would be different. I hoped that they would at least put me on special teams, or use me as a reliable backup. The coaches however, gave those spots to kids who had just joined the team instead of me purely because of size. I thought about quitting because I didn't want to go through the pain of watching my teammates from the sidelines again.

My mindset completely changed when a teammate suffered a season ending injury and lost his mom on the same day. As I watched the ambulance take him off the field, I thought of that day back in freshman year when my brother was in a similar looking ambulance. I thought of how that teammate had always asked how Sam was doing.

After that day I decided to change the way I looked at Football. I kept working as hard as I could to earn playing time, but I ultimately accepted that I would stay on the team even if I didn't get to play at all. Football is important to me because of the brotherhood I feel with the team as well as the fact that Football is hard. The experiences that I have had on the team have changed me into a better person, and hopefully will stick with me forever.