

From the press box:

Injured player's spirits still riding high

By [Ray Brewer](#)

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LaQuan Phillips starts getting antsy if he hasn't heard from one of his teammates on [Green Valley High's](#) football team by 9:30 on Friday nights.

Phillips, who was left temporarily paralyzed with a bruised spine while making a tackle during a game Sept. 5, has regained movement and sensation in most of his body while rehabbing at Shriners' Hospital for Children at University of California at Davis in Sacramento.

It's not easy on Friday nights, however, when his teammates are in action. He desperately wants to be cheering on the sideline and nervously waits for his cellular phone to ring with updates.

So, when the clock in his hospital room ticked closer to 10 p.m. on Oct. 17 and nobody had called, Phillips was nervous.

Green Valley, riding a four-game winning streak, had its biggest game of the year against perennial Southeast Division power Del Sol and Phillips was growing impatient waiting for an update.

Then, came a phone call from one of his closest friends, teammate [Derrick Garrett](#). The hooting and hollering in the background was all Phillips needed to hear — the Gators had won their fifth straight.

It was no ordinary victory.

Green Valley trailed by seven points with under a minute left, but drove 70 yards and scored on the game's last play. It could have kicked the extra point to tie the game and force overtime, but elected to go for the 2-point conversion and victory.

Roughly one hour after [Quincy Bagsby](#) ran in the conversion for the win, the celebration was still at its peak in the locker room. Garrett got Phillips on the phone to join in the festivities.

Like their injured teammate, the Gators weren't about to quit and wanted to share the moment with Phillips.

"It lets me know that we are all a big family and I'm still part of that," said Phillips, a linebacker. "Someone always makes sure to call before or after the game to tell me they love me and are thinking of me."

Phillips has accepted his fate of missing the season and is thankful he's expected to make a full recovery. He sees patients in the hospital's burn unit and couldn't imagine being in their situation.

"I just want to be able to do all the normal stuff I did before getting hurt," Phillips said. "I'm always thinking about football because I love it so much, but right now it's about being a fully functional person."

Daily therapy sessions are aimed at his biggest goal — walking again, which he's confident will happen before December, and returning to the normal lifestyle of a high school senior.

Phillips spends three hours daily in therapy and is progressing nicely. He nearly has full movement in his hands, which allows him to send periodic text messages.

His has good control on the left side of his body, including being able to squeeze his left arm, and is working to have equal success with his right arm and leg.

He tells everyone he talks with, from teammates to family and hospital staff, that he'll be walking in no time. He has to learn to walk all over again and said the hardest part is staying balanced.

The closest he's come to walking is moving his legs in a whirlpool during therapy.

"I remember one of my therapists saying the rehab would take six months to a year," Phillips said. "I told her I planned on being out of here in two months and she told me how that would be pretty unusual. I told her I'm an unusual guy."

It's that type of enthusiasm that makes him a special person.

"He's just a classy kid," Green Valley coach Matt Gerber said. "He's a hard worker on the field and in practice. He's a kid who certainly leads by example."

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