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Neck injury's sting ends season for Cougars standout Prep Focus

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By Meg Wochnick | The Olympian • Published October 07, 2008

Just when he thought it was another stinger, the injury turned out to be much more for Capital's Reid Wall.

This wasn't like the 17 or 18 times before, when he would stretch out the muscles and continue playing. Something was different this time. The hit he endured in a football game late last month was perhaps the last hit he would receive.

The hit happened during Capital's 56-14 win over Olympic on Sept. 26. Wall took a 3-yard pass reception and turned it into an 18-yard play all while breaking six tackles. However, an Olympic player plowed into Wall and his helmet went directly into Wall's left shoulder. Wall didn't think anything of it, figuring it was just another stinger - a common football injury.

In fact, Wall finished the game. He scored the Cougars' first touchdown and rushed for 47 yards on two carries and also caught one pass for 19 yards. He even practiced all last week, leading up to last Friday's game against Bremerton. But the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) test revealed an injury to a cervical vertebra. That finding put an immediate end to Wall's senior season and his football career.

"It was the hardest thing I've ever gone through," Wall said. "I put my life into it. I've put a lot of time into football. I was expecting to play college football somewhere and it's not going to happen anymore."

Wall has had shoulder problems since middle school, ever since an accident on his family's farm. Stingers - or pinched nerves - weren't uncommon for Wall in his shoulder. But as time has worn on, the amount of fluid and tendons around the neck on his left side became thinner, he said.

Wall said he plans to have second and third opinions on his neck injury and see if surgery is necessary. For now, however, he still plans to be on the sidelines during the Cougars' games.

"If I did it again, I probably would be paralyzed," he said.

It wasn't a particularly good week for the Walls in terms of injuries. Reid's brother, Riley, suffered a high ankle sprain during practice and didn't play in the Cougars' 33-0 win over Bremerton on Friday night.

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