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Local football player fighting for his life



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DANVERS, Mass. -- A high school football player is in the fight of his life off the field.

The varsity football team at St. John's Prep in Danvers is preparing to tackle an upcoming game. But one player, Jared Coppola, will not be there. A few weeks ago, he injured one of his vertebrae during a play.

And now, Jared trying to battle back from an injury his brother once experienced.

"We all went to the hospital together. He had long surgery that evening that was all successful. The doctor came out, there was positive news every time, every step of the way," Jim O'Leary, St. John's Prep football coach.

Jared comes from a football family. His older brother Derek plays in college. Jared is a triplet and his brothers Tyler and Brandon have also played. But now only Tyler remains on the field.

"A year ago Brandon, playing football in the JV game, fractured his C5," O'Leary said.

That is the same vertebra Jared injured.

Brandon has since recovered but no longer plays football. Right now, no one knows exactly what the future holds for Jared, who has been moved to a rehab center in Atlanta.

"The reality, still, is he is laying in the bed paralyzed. He has some feeling and some positive things, but it touched everybody there," O'Leary said.

The school and the community have raised nearly \$30,000 for the Coppola family and are offering an outpouring of support.

"We really just spread the word and it's been impressive to see how our community has come together to support Jared and his family," said Dr. Ed Hardiman, St. John's Prep principal.

Friends and teachers have offered well-wishes to Jared in online messages and in a video where the St. John's Prep student body gave a standing ovation during a mass that was webcast to Jared's hospital room.

"One of the mottos we have here at St. John's is no one walks alone," Hardiman said.

Jared's friends and teammates say his spirit is strong and they look forward to welcoming him back to his home turf.

"I just can't wait to see him walking around campus again," said Chris Ryan, St. John's Prep junior.

"He's just the same kid, always joking around, just being funny and I just hope he's going to be alright," Sean Patrikas, St. John's Prep junior.

Friends and family have been helping Jared's family by cooking meals and assisting in any way they can.

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