

Nashua player undergoes surgery after breaking neck at football practice

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NASHUA — A 15-year-old football player underwent surgery Tuesday after suffering a severe neck injury during practice Saturday.

Cooper Doucette has been at Children's Hospital in Boston since the incident, which occurred during a tackling drill.

According to a family friend, Doucette broke the C5 vertebra in his neck, which resulted in some paralysis.

Tuesday's surgery was intended to stabilize his neck and vertebra, said Cathy Lynch Robert, who has established [a Facebook page](#) updating friends and family about Doucette's medical status.

"We need lots of prayers and support right now," said Robert, adding Doucette, a sophomore, was in good spirits when she visited him Monday.



She said many people have visited the hospital to offer their support, including Nashua High School North football coach Jason Robie and athletic director Tom Arria.

School Principal David Ryan said Doucette is a well-known student and respected athlete.

DOUCETTE "We are all supporting the family and each other with positive thoughts and prayers," Ryan said Tuesday. "Once we know how we can best help the family, we will act. Many people in the Titan family are poised and ready to respond to the family's needs."

The football team's nickname is the Titans.

On Monday, Ryan sent an e-mail to the school staff informing them about the accident. He said Doucette has regained feeling in his torso and arms and use of his hands and fingers. However, his legs remain paralyzed, and the family has not chosen to release further information, Ryan said.

The accident occurred when Doucette made contact with another player during a routine drill, according to Ryan. He said Doucette's head struck the opposing player and the impact fractured one of his cervical vertebra. Doucette was stabilized before being taken to Southern New Hampshire Medical Center, where he underwent an MRI and was then taken to Children's Hospital.

Robie and Arria addressed the football team on Monday about Doucette's condition, and Ryan said the school staff and the athletic department are forming a support network.

"We are waiting for the prognosis," he said.

Robert said it could be weeks before the extent of Doucette's paralysis is known.

"It is just one day at a time," she said of his recovery.

Her son, Michael Robert, is a good friend of Doucette's and has played baseball with him since he was 5.

"He is an all-around good athlete," Michael Robert said, explaining his friend plays football and baseball and has tried wrestling.

Michael Robert said Doucette seemed well when he visited him in the hospital this week, even making jokes during the brief stay.

"He is a strong kid, and he has a lot of support," Michael Robert said. "I think he will pull through this."

Cathy Lynch Robert said Robie and Arria have visited Doucette. Arria would not comment on the accident, referring all questions to Ryan. Robie was unavailable for comment Tuesday.

On the Facebook page, dozens of people offer support to Doucette, who many refer to as "Coop" or "Coopdog." In one posting, Suanne Potito Sullivan wrote: "Cooper, remember that you are loved by an entire community and we are all praying for you and your family. Get better soon. We love you."

In a separate posting, Dominique Doucette said she visited Cooper on Sunday, and he told her, "I broke three bones in my neck and I didn't even cry."

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