

Player listed in fair condition

By [Sean Ammerman](#)

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Days after suffering a frightening injury that left him temporarily paralyzed, Green Valley football player LaQuan Phillips was regaining feeling in his extremities and joking with his teammates in the hospital.

Phillips, a starting defensive back, [suffered a bruised spine](#) on Friday while making a tackle during a game against Centennial, Green Valley coach Matt Gerber said.

The game was delayed about 15 minutes as medical personnel stabilized Phillips and took him by ambulance to Sunrise Hospital.

Phillips had surgery on Sept. 7 to alleviate swelling, Gerber said. As of Sept. 8, Phillips was listed in fair condition, hospital spokeswoman Ashlee Seymour said, an improvement from over the weekend, when he was listed in serious condition.

"From all that I have heard, the surgery went as well as it could have gone," Gerber said. "He does have a little bit of feeling back in his toes and fingers. They expect a full recovery but it could take some time."

His family could not be reached for comment.

Gerber said the experience has been difficult for Phillips' teammates. "It's been an emotional roller coaster for everyone," he said. "Most of our players have never been through something like this before, so it's been tough."

Many of Phillips' friends and teammates visited Sunrise Hospital after their practice on Sept. 6. Some were able to see Phillips while others left get-well notes.

Green Valley quarterback Nick Libonati said Phillips was in good spirits and even made a few jokes from his hospital bed.

"It has really hit the seniors hard because we have gotten to know him so well in the last three years," Libonati said. "It's just weird not having him around."

Gerber said Phillips is a talented player and popular with his teammates. "You wish you had more kids like him out on the field," he said.

Injuries similar to Phillips' are rare but inevitable in football, said Jim Porter, a sports medical coordinator for Select Medical, a specialty healthcare company that provides athletic trainers for 25 area schools, including Green Valley and Centennial.

The best way to avoid a serious neck injury is to tackle with the shoulders rather than the head, the method taught by all coaches, he said.

"Unfortunately there's not a piece of equipment in the world that would protect from an injury like that," said Porter, an athletic trainer for more than 30 years and a former paramedic.

Porter said the trainers who aided Phillips had to go through practice scenarios for serious neck injuries.

"I give kudos to the athletic trainers who were out there on the field that day," Porter said. He said it is critical to stabilize a neck injury to prevent further damage.

Back at school, the Green Valley football team presented the Student Council with an idea to raise money to help pay Phillips' medical costs. Boosters will be selling rally towels with Phillips' jersey No. 3 on them for \$3 during every home game, starting Sept. 19 against Foothill.

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