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## Cougars QB let out of hospital with fractured vertebra

Gary Rogers, the Washington State quarterback taken from Saturday's game in an ambulance, was discharged from a Pullman hospital Sunday...

By **Bud Withers**  
*Seattle Times staff reporter*

Gary Rogers, the Washington State quarterback taken from Saturday's game in an ambulance, was discharged from a Pullman hospital Sunday and will begin recovery from a small fracture of the C-7 vertebra.

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Rogers, a fifth-year senior, faces a three- to four-month recovery, so his college-football career appears done.

Bill Drake, WSU's head athletic trainer, said Rogers' spinal cord "was not compromised in any way." Rogers, he said, must wear a "hard collar" neck brace during his recovery, "but every indication is that he'll get his strength and motion back."

Rogers, out of Kamiak High School in Mukilteo, was injured in the third quarter of a 48-9 win over Portland State in Pullman. He had replaced starter Kevin Lopina in the second quarter after Lopina's right (throwing) shoulder was bruised when he fell on it as he was tackled by a blind-side, blitzing linebacker.

Lopina was sore Sunday and the Cougars are calling his availability day-to-day. If he is unable to be ready for WSU's home game Saturday with Oregon, the Cougars would turn to redshirt freshman Marshall Lobbestael.

The Rogers hit, by PSU safety Aaron Dickson, "wasn't extremely late, but it was late," said WSU's first-year coach, Paul Wulff. "It wasn't an actual cheap shot, it was just a late hit. The kid didn't go for a body part or intentionally try to hurt Gary."

Both teams gathered and knelt on the field as Rogers was taken from Martin Stadium, but Wulff said Sunday he was "very stunned" to learn that Rogers had an injury that would sideline him for the season.

Now it could fall to the 6-3, 195-pound Lobbestael, who led Oak Harbor to the 2006 state 4A title, to lead the Cougars. He threw for touchdowns on his first two pass attempts Saturday.

Asked what Lobbestael's strengths are, Wulff said, "We're still finding that out. He got so few reps in the spring; Gary and Kevin got most of them, and the same thing in the fall. But you can tell he's got a little moxie."

Behind Lobbestael, the quarterbacks are walk-on Dan Wagner, a redshirt freshman from Portland, and J.T. Levenseller, a true freshman who enrolled in January.

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The possibility exists that WSU (1-3) and Oregon could face off with starting quarterbacks who were Nos. 3 and 5, respectively, at one time in fall camp. The Ducks (3-1) are enduring a second straight year of quarterback problems, and freshman Darron Thomas came off the bench and threw for three fourth-quarter scores in a loss to Boise State.

Meanwhile, Rogers' injury appears to end a WSU career that was seemingly just blossoming when he earned the starting job in the spring after backing up Alex Brink for three seasons.

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