

Las Vegas Sun  
PREP FOOTBALL:

# Shadow Ridge senior survives life-threatening football injury

## Son of former boxing champion Virgil Hill severely hurts neck while returning a kickoff



Sam Morris

Shadow Ridge football player Zak Hill.

By [Ray Brewer \(contact\)](#)

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[Zak Hill](#) wanted to go back into the football game.

Thankfully, his mother, Denise Moorman, insisted her son go directly to the hospital. Turns out, Moorman saved her son's life.

Hill, a senior running back at [Shadow Ridge High](#), injured the C-1 and C-2 vertebrae in his neck last Friday while returning a kickoff against Palo Verde in the first quarter. He put his head down to avoid tacklers and his neck was severely damaged.

Hill walked off the field under his own strength and was getting ready to go back into the game when trainers called his mother down to the field from the bleachers. She sensed something was wrong and drove him to Centennial Hills Hospital.

"Not only is he lucky to be walking, he is lucky to be alive," Shadow Ridge coach Gabe Gledhill said.

Hill was transported to the trauma unit at the University Medical Center and had surgery Saturday morning to repair his neck. He was released Sunday, Gledhill said.

The coach said Hill will wear a Halo-brace for three months to immobilize his neck and then be re-evaluated. He said doctors have had a lot of success treating these types of injuries.

But the coach stressed Hill was lucky. One swift turn of his neck could have ended his life.

"It's a pretty serious thing for any player," Gledhill said. "Zak means a lot to our team as a teammate and a player."

The 5-foot-8, 165-pound Hill is one of Shadow Ridge's top players, rushing for 190 yards and two touchdowns Sept. 17 against Centennial and 71 yards and another touchdown Sept. 11 against Cheyenne. He is the son of former boxing champion Virgil Hill.

This is the second straight season a Las Vegas area football player has suffered a life-threatening injury.

Green Valley High's [LaQuan Phillips](#) was temporarily paralyzed after bruising his spine while making a tackle last September.

He spent nearly three months in the hospital and needed surgery to alleviate the swelling his spine, and is still in therapy attempting to regain normal movements. He eventually regained feeling in his arms and legs and was walking with the help of a cane and classmates last June for graduation.

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