



Everything Michigan

## Spartans fullback Josh Rouse undergoes neck surgery, full recovery expected

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Greg Johnson | The Grand Rapids Press

EAST LANSING -- Michigan State fullback Josh Rouse, who suffered a neck injury in Saturday's win over Western Michigan at Spartan Stadium, had surgery Tuesday morning and was resting comfortably.

Coach Mark Dantonio reported the news at the start of his weekly press conference. Dantonio had said Sunday that Rouse might not need surgery. He had said after Saturday's game that he would have surgery later that night.

Rouse, a fifth-year senior and starter from Newton, Conn., is lost for the season, but Dantonio said the prognosis from doctors is that he will have a full recovery.

"He's an emotional leader of our team, and we will have him around," he said. "He won't be in games, but we will have in meetings and he will go to games."

Nick Bendzuck, a senior walk-on who started his career at Mercyhurst College, played most of the game Saturday after Rouse left with eight minutes remaining in the first quarter.

Dantonio said he has some technique areas to work on, but that he was functional.

"He knows what to do, and he plays with enthusiasm and toughness," he said.

TyQuan Hammock, a redshirt freshman linebacker and prominent recruit last year, was moved over to fullback after discussion with the coaches Tuesday morning.

"We'll see how that all works out," Dantonio said. "It's an experiment. He's played linebacker for us and emerged as a very active guy on special teams."

Converted wide receiver Fred Smith, a sophomore, is currently listed as the second unit fullback. Freshman Niko Palazeti of Northville was recruited as a fullback, and practices at the position, but likely will be redshirted.

Rouse damaged vertebra in his neck when his head hit the ground in what Dantonio called an awkward manner in the first quarter against Western. He walked off the field under his own power, and has had a tough emotional time with his season and possibly career ending, Dantonio said.

"We're going to help him get through this, he's a great kid," Dantonio said. "Several of our players have been up to see him. He means a lot to his teammates."

Linebacker Greg Jones said hearing the news at halftime was tough Saturday.

"He's a final year guy like me, and hearing that, you know I couldn't imagine how I would feel," he said. "That was tough to hear."

It stunned me. I felt really bad for him."

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