

Invincible

What am I doing? What position do I play? I'd jumped offside three plays in a row, my coach furiously called me over to the sideline demanding to know what was wrong with me, only to see eyes glassed over on a face that was utterly vacant.

Afterwards, I was feeling better and figured I would just sleep it off like I had with my previous concussions. However, my sister, who is an R.N, told my parents that I should have a CAT scan. I knew I didn't need this, I was invincible. However, as always my sister won out. After the scan I was told I'd be out of the emergency room in no time. Over two hours later the Doctor informed us he had some good news and some bad news. The good news was, I didn't have a concussion. *Which was better than I could have hoped for!* I'd be playing the next week! The bad news was, I had an inoperable brain tumor and needed emergency brain surgery, and unfortunately Oklahoma didn't have any Neurosurgeons on call that weekend.

If my condition deteriorated they should take me directly to a major hospital.

First I was in shock, then utter disbelief. I went home a little shaken but 100% sure I'd been falsely informed, I was after all, invincible.

During the night my situation became dramatically worse. My head hurt so bad it was unbearable. I was so sensitive to light, sound, and touch that I couldn't function.

They were going to medflight me to a state that could perform the surgery I needed, but fortunately my sisters' friend had the home phone number of a neurosurgeon.

I was incredibly blessed, life saved, bright future ahead, I should've been so grateful! I wasn't. As a result of the shunt placed in my brain to drain the excess fluid, my lifestyle would be changing dramatically. I'd never be able to play contact sports again. The year round practice and workouts from the age of 6, were for naught. Up until that point I had been known for my happy care free spirit, but for the next year I was bitter that this would happen to me, and in denial at what was taken away.

The following summer I was out ramping Dirt bikes with a few of my buddies only to realize I wasn't wearing a helmet. A huge "no no" given the danger of breaking my shunt. I turned back to the house to get my helmet, taking the jump once more on the way, only to crash. Getting up I didn't realize I'd shattered my shunt. All I could think about was having to call my mom to tell her I'd been so stupid.

I called her and she was not happy. She picked me up and took me back to the house, by this time my head was agonizingly painful but I was so angry with myself for doing something so stupid I decided to tough it out.

As a result of the damage to my skull I had changed the pressure in my brain. For the next 9 days I was comatose as my Dr.'s searched for ways to rig my shunt and pull me out of the coma. As a result, I had damaged several parts of my brain.

As I lay in the hospital bed, I realized I had to refocus and re-evaluate who I really was. Were they the priorities that would matter if my life ended tomorrow? My life was threatened, my athletics were gone, and the damage to my memory caused me to struggle and fight to learn new methods of remembering and learning. During those years when things were the hardest, I wondered if the treatments and surgeries would ever end, but those around me continued to encourage me. Did I want to be bitter about the hand life dealt me and lash out against the one's closest to me, or appreciate the blessings I'd already received.

From that point on I no longer was angry at God or bitter about life, instead I was overjoyed to be alive realizing how special each and every day was. I promised myself to never make that mistake again.

I still think I'm invincible. However, years of coping with my inoperable tumor have resulted in a shift away from my emphasis of invincibility on the gridiron. Instead I've chosen to continue forward with the knowledge there is nothing insurmountable life can hand me that will stop me from enjoying it's every breath. I am going to live my life, each and every day to the fullest. I am invincible because now I live each day with thankfulness, and joy, and the recognition that God has given me an incredible life, and a second chance.