

—Gridiron— Goals

In January 2011, Drew Gibson felt an all-too-familiar tingling sensation. First affected by Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS)—a disorder in which the body's immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system and results in varying degrees of weakness or paralysis—at the age of 10, Drew immediately recognized the warning signs when they resurfaced seven years later. Within hours, the athlete who attracted the eyes of college football recruiters as a high school junior could not move his legs.



"At that time in my life, I found my identity in the weight room and on the field," said Drew. "Within a few hours, I couldn't walk." Twenty-four hours later, the young man who could squat 505 pounds the day prior couldn't move. In the coming weeks and months, he would miss an entire semester of school, not to mention the 2011 football season. As his nerves froze, so did dreams of a senior season under the Friday night lights and the pursuit of a college football career.

Within a day of the symptoms' return, Drew was admitted to the PICU at Egleston.

"When you arrive at the hospital, you depend on every single person you interact with," said Drew's mom, Andrea. "And each one we met went above and beyond as they tended to every part of his recovery. I never had any doubt that he was in capable hands."

After two weeks as an inpatient at Egleston, Drew moved to the CIRU at Scottish Rite for daily physical rehabilitation. Though his therapy often was painful, the road to recovery wasn't always arduous.

"It was an incredible journey, and Children's staff made it fun with games and impromptu dancing," said Drew's dad, Wes. "They made Drew feel better about himself. They really wanted him to get better, and not just because it was their job."

While encouraging physical achievements, Drew's care team also worked hard to build his confidence. Staci Rosing, Occupational Therapist, guided Drew through weeks of painful rehab to regain

mobility and strength. Lauren Meisenheimer, Child Life Specialist, and Cori Snyder, Music Therapist, incorporated knowledge of the activities Drew enjoyed when healthy into his recreational therapy. Suzanne Trumbower, Physical Therapist, helped Drew to his feet for the first

After two weeks of treatment and six and a half weeks of physical therapy, Drew regained enough strength to start training for his final season of high school football. Having lost 40 pounds of muscle during recovery, Drew hit the weight room. He successfully appealed to the



“Drew is where he is today because the Rehabilitation team kept him focused on the positive during physically and emotionally challenging times,” said his father, Wes. Eighteen months after being confined to a wheelchair, Drew rushed for 148 yards and scored four touchdowns.

time. “I remember the first time I successfully stood up; it was with Miss Suzanne, who had seen me when I couldn't scoot myself out bed, in the therapy room. She said we were going to try and stand up, and I said I couldn't do it. She proved me wrong.”

The Gibsons found comfort knowing that every person at Children's who came in contact with Drew had his best interest at heart. “Ms. Loretta Walker [Licensed Practical Nurse, Day Rehab] had a huge impact on me and everyone around,” said Drew. “On graduation day from day rehab, we stood up and did the ‘Dougie’ dance for everyone. It was classic.”

Georgia Independent Schools Association and received eligibility for the 2012 football season.

Back in the gym, on the field and in the classroom, Drew is making the most of his last semester as a high school student. The Air Force offered him a Division I football scholarship in July, and offers from other football programs are trickling in.

No matter where he next suits up to play, Drew's personal mantra will follow: “Put the work in today, and don't take a day off”—a mantra that yields success story after success story under the guidance of our Rehabilitation teams. 📍