

ATHLETES
ASSERT

'Dawgs Boys Baseball
lead playoff push
through heartbreak



This season of baseball at Bowie has been a really fun and competitive one. We are currently 18-7 overall and 8-3 in district, coming off a sweep against Akins. I have really enjoyed playing with my best friends and watching them succeed and play super well.

Seeing the guys I have played with since before freshman year live out their dreams with me has been a super cool and exciting process. Our seniors have carried the majority of the load, with Cole Miller and Ryder Melsa leading the way on the mound. They have both done a really good job shutting down opposing teams and taking a big workload.

Sadly though, our starting right fielder, Senior Joaquin Welch was critically injured in a game against Dripping Springs and will not be back out on the field this season, so we hope to continue winning for him.

I think the whole incident really brought the team together and was just another reminder to be grateful for the opportunities we sometimes take for granted. He was such a key piece in our rotation, not just as a player but as a person. One of the funniest and whole hearted guys on the team.

Coming back the next game and beating Dripping after the loss of Joaquin just shows what type of team we have.

Coach Degelia did a great job refocusing the team and preparing us to continue playing well. That was by far the best memory from the whole season.

Everyone was emotional after the game because everyone knew the significance of the win and we knew Joaquin was going to be so excited when he found out. It was a special moment in honor of a special teammate.

We have a few more tough games and match-ups on the schedule. We play Westlake and Lake Travis in back to back weeks, followed by Del Valle to wrap up the season.

Our goal is to finish at the top of the district and make a deep playoff run for our seniors who have done so much for us already this season.

As for me, a junior with inconsistent playing time, I try my best to just stay ready whenever it is my turn to go out and compete. It is super important for me to be the best teammate I can be, especially in such a wild season that we have had so far.

I know I am not the star player, but sitting behind some amazing players I think have really helped me learn what it takes to be really good. It has kept me very motivated and it translated to me getting more time on the field which is great.

The seniors have been such great people to all the juniors which has allowed us to really develop and hopefully succeed next year. It has also allowed us to play some really good baseball in a really tough district.

We have shown we are able to compete with some of the best teams in Texas. It's now all about gaining some momentum and getting "hot" at the right time.

Texas is a powerhouse state for baseball, as a lot of the best teams in the country are within just a few hundred miles of Bowie.

This being said, anything can happen in the playoffs with baseball, because it is a best of three series which means there are a lot of upsets. If we remain focused on the present, we have the talent to make a deep run into the playoffs. I believe in our guys.

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New beginnings: Mallett's story

Former football captain recovering four years removed from near-fatal wreck

Ben Tillisch
Executive Editor: Sports

In a singular moment, the trajectory of Evan Mallett's life changed. Despite taking and bouncing back from countless hits on the gridiron as a Bowie quarterback, this collision would prove to be much more difficult to overcome.

On April 25, 2020, Mallett was involved in a single-car accident that rendered him quadriplegic. For nearly a month after the crash, Mallett remained in the severe trauma intensive care unit (ICU) at St. David's Medical Center in downtown Austin, where he was treated for a fractured neck, spine, and skull.

"Being in the hospital put it in perspective, what could have happened," Mallett said. "I knew I was pretty messed up, but the nurse told me that I probably should have died. It was almost like a feeling of second chances. Like, it was a very unfortunate situation, but it could have not been a situation at all. It could have just been nothing."

While being treated in the St. David's ICU, doctors discovered pneumonia in Mallett's lungs. As a result, Mallett was transferred to Tier Memorial in Houston, where he was placed on a ventilator until he regained the ability to breathe unassisted.

"It was pretty brutal, because I would feel myself breathing by myself, and then I'd have to be plugged back into the ventilator," Mallett said. "It was hard. I would try to go against the ventilator as best I could. The feeling of breathing myself was the type of thing I wanted back."

To progress past the need for the ventilator, doctors would test Mallett with timed checkpoints of breathing unassisted. Eventually, roughly two months after the wreck, doctors determined Mallett no longer needed the ventilator to breathe, thereby enabling the former quarterback to talk and eat solid food for the first time as well.

"Hearing my voice was hard at first because it took a lot to get the words out, but it definitely felt good," Mallett said. "It was progress, and that was the biggest thing, which was that we were taking steps forward for me to eventually go home."

Because of Covid-19 restrictions, contact with Mallett was strictly limited in the subsequent months of the crash. In order to show support, lifelong friend and then teammate Mark Chada, a current junior at the University of Texas, organized and participated in an overnight vigil while Mallett was in the hospital.

"Honestly, it was very hard at



WORKING HARD: Former Bowie quarterback Evan Mallett works on a strengthening exercise to increase mobility. Mallett has been in occupational therapy since the 2020 crash that left him quadriplegic. **PHOTO BY** Austin Ikard

the beginning to see Evan," Chada said. "I had known him so long that it almost didn't seem real. I know everyone says that tragedies similar to Evan's cause you to see life from a different perspective that allows you to appreciate the little things. Having something happen to a close friend really forced me to take that to heart."

At the time of the crash, Mallett was preparing for his third and final season as the Bulldogs quarterback. Four years later, Mallett recognizes that a return to the gridiron is unlikely, yet he continues to find alternate avenues to regain the thrill of competitive sport.

"One of the biggest things I miss is football," Mallett said. "The gravity of my situation

compared to football makes it seem like nothing, but I love football, and I miss playing it. My goal has been to find pathways to do things like football just in a different way."

Specifically, Mallett has taken an interest in Wheelchair Rugby, which has been a Summer Paralympic sport since 2000. Chada asserts that Mallett's innate determination to improve his situation is contagious.

"I still see Evan when we both get the chance," Chada said. "We are both very busy, but we make time to just hang out. Seeing him do daily tasks and especially getting better at them really shows how strong he is. He even started driving recently and is thinking about joining a rugby team, which is pretty cool.

Evan is a great friend to have and seeing him push himself every week makes me want to push myself as well."

Head football coach Jeff Ables coached Mallett for his sophomore and junior year as varsity quarterback. However, according to Ables, Mallett was a leader first and foremost and represented the program at the highest level.

"He's an example of how something can happen in your life, and you can take what's happened and make the best of it," Ables said. "He had a great attitude, and he was always a competitor. That fighting spirit after his injury made him able to get back to where he needed to be and overcome what had happened."

Mallett was still named team captain for his senior year, despite the fact he never put on football pads again. His journey spurred a new perspective and appreciation of the sport throughout the entire football program.

"Life is precious," Ables said. "You never know what's going to happen, and you can't take anything for granted. As a coach, you try to remind your players that [football] is just a game. Everybody likes to win, but it's really about trying to make an impact and a difference in a kid's life every day."

Along with being named varsity captain for the 2020 season, Mallett was honored as the 2020 homecoming king. Beyond the football team and Bulldog community, Mallett was also recognized by Kendra Scott and Craig O's Pasta and Pizzeria, both of which organized fundraisers on his behalf.

"It was surreal going back to Burger Stadium for the first time," Mallett said. "A lot of my family and friends were there. It

meant a lot, and it was nice because I met a lot of people that had supported me behind the scenes, so I got to thank them."

For the past four years, Mallett has been on a mission to live his life on his terms. In order to do so, Josey Silva, an occupational therapist, has channeled Mallett's determination into relearning functional tasks like cooking and driving.

"I'm very impressed with his attitude, because a lot of people give up and feel sorry for themselves, but not him," Silva said. "He will try anything and keep trying until he gets it. He's very well adjusted and ready to move on to do whatever he can to be successful."

Since the wreck, Mallett has graduated from Bowie, and he currently attends classes at Austin Community College. A sophomore in terms of credits, Mallett plans to transfer to the University of Texas in the fall of 2024, where he study business.

"When you first initially get hurt, a lot of people think their life is over," Mallett said. "When I got into the wreck, I got a whole new perspective on everything. It's given me a new appreciation of the small things."

Mallett's injury has resulted in ongoing challenges, including a lower back surgery in 2022. Still, Mallett continues to maximize life's possibilities with his unwavering resolve and work ethic.

"The setbacks that I've had have probably been the hardest part over the past four years," Mallett said. "But, the ongoing challenges are also the motivators for me to go to college and live my life. I kind of look at each setback as a bump in the road. At the end of the day, I have my goals and I know that I'll achieve them one day."

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Evan Mallett
Former Quarterback



MASKS ON: Then senior Evan Mallett poses for a photo with his family before heading onto the field to receive the nomination for Homecoming King. Along with being named Homecoming King, Mallett was chosen by his team as a Varsity Captain for the 2020 football season. **PHOTO COURTESY OF** JR Flores - REPRINT FROM 2021

COMING UP IN SPORTS:

APRIL 19 Varsity Softball
vs Lake Travis @ Lake Travis High School

APRIL 20 Varsity Boys
Lacrosse vs Stony Point @ House Park

APRIL 20 Varsity Track
Regional Meet @ Heroes Stadium San Antonio

APRIL 27 Varsity Baseball
vs. Del Valle @ Burger Stadium