Young Football Players Injured, but Not Forgotten

By Kathleen Toner, *CNN*

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1 Two moments have changed Eddie Canales' life. Both happened on the football field. The first happened almost 10 years ago. It was November 2, 2001, and Canales was watching his son's football game in San Marcos, Texas. Chris Canales, a high school senior, had three offers to play college football, and that night, he was having the game of his life, but with four minutes left in the game something **went wrong**. "I could hear my teammates saying, 'Chris, come on, let's go,' " Chris, now 26, remembered. "And I couldn't move."

2 At the hospital, doctors told Eddie and his wife that their son had suffered a spinal cord injury.[1] If Chris lived, he'd probably never be able to move anything below his shoulders. Chris almost died twice during those early days. But he started to get better. Eddie quit his job to become his full-time caregiver. The family **adjusted** to their new **circumstances**, but Eddie, 55, said it wasn't easy. "You don't want to even think that your son may never walk again," he said. "That was a hard pill to swallow."

3 Near the first anniversary of his injury, Chris was **depressed**. To **cheer him up**, Eddie invited him out to do something he'd always enjoyed — watching high school football. It was the first time Chris had been out to watch a game since his injury. But that afternoon, as they watched, a player went down[2] and couldn't move. Eddie and Chris knew immediately that it was a spinal cord injury. "Chris turned to me and said, 'Dad, we've got to go help him,' " Eddie recalled.

4 In that moment, Eddie's life changed again: He found his **mission.** He and Chris visited the injured player and his family in the hospital, and within months, Gridiron Heroes — a nonprofit[3] that helps athletes who've suffered spinal cord injuries while playing high school football — was born. It now includes 19 injured players in Texas. Many spinal injury organizations raise money for medical research. But from the start, Eddie wanted to give **emotional** support to injured athletes and their families. Whenever a new player joins the group, he and Chris drive to visit them no matter where they live in the state. Eddie helps the families face many emotional, financial, and practical issues, while Chris encourages and **mentors** the athletes. "We try to provide information, **inspiration**, and hope," Eddie said. "We want to make sure they don't feel alone."

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[1] ***spinal cord injury:*** damage to the long string of nerves that go from the brain down the back, through the spine

[2] ***went down:*** fell on the ground

[3] ***a nonprofit:*** an organization that uses the money it earns to help people instead of making a profit

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A Main Ideas

Circle the word(s) that correctly completes the sentence.

1. Chris had a serious accident in
2. The doctors told Chris's parents he might never be able to move his again.
3. Chris' dad quit his job because he .
4. Chris' dad took him to see a football game after his injury.
5. When Chris saw the football player fall, he to help him.
6. Chris and his father started an organization to give injured athletes support.

B Close Reading

Read each statement. Decide if it is *True* or *False* according to the reading. Check (✓) the appropriate box. If it is false, change it to make it true. Discuss your answers with a partner.

	TRUE	FALSE
1. In paragraph 1, the author writes: "Chris Canales, a high school senior, had **three offers to play college football**, and that night, he was **having the game of his life**." This means that Chris was such a great football player in high school that three colleges wanted to give him a scholarship, and he was playing really well during that game.	☐	☐
2. In the last sentence in paragraph 2, Eddie, Chris' father said: "**That** was a hard pill to swallow." *A hard pill to swallow* describes a situation that is very difficult to accept. In this sentence ***that*** refers to Eddie quitting his job.	☐	☐
3. When Chris realized he could help another football player who got injured, he opened a new door to happiness.	☐	☐
4. Chris speaks on the phone to injured football players who live far away from him to give them advice.	☐	☐

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