

Tebow's Concussion Hits Home for Former Gator Star Brantley

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As [Tim Tebow](#) lay motionless on C.M. Newton Field at Kentucky's Commonwealth Stadium Saturday, Scot Brantley had an uncomfortable flashback.



It was the 1979 home opener against Georgia Tech. Brantley, a two-time All-America honorable-mention linebacker at Florida, tripped on the AstroTurf at Florida Field and took a knee to the left side of his helmet on a tackle, receiving a concussion that knocked him out of the game. Forty-eight hours later, Brantley was told by physicians that he'd miss the remainder of his senior season and would never play football again.

"I am looking at Tim and immediately thought back to 30 years ago," Brantley, an announcer for the Gator Football Radio Network and uncle of UF backup quarterback [John Brantley](#), told [FanHouse](#) Tuesday.

"It wasn't like I remembered [the hit that caused Brantley's concussion]. But watching Tim's actions ... 30 years ago [Florida team physician] Peter Indelicato and [Florida assistant athletic director for sports health] Chris Patrick were hovered over me -- I remember seeing their faces. And as I am watching this unfold, they were the first two guys out to tend to Tim."

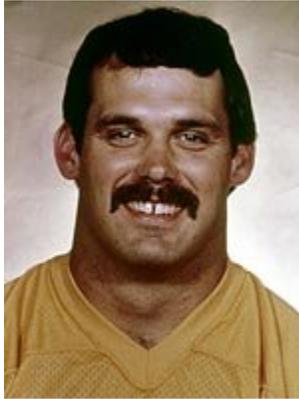
Florida coach Urban Meyer said Monday that Tebow is feeling good, his medical test results all have been positive so far, and Meyer is hopeful he'll have his All-America quarterback for the Gators' LSU game in Baton Rouge on Oct. 10. Tebow, who attended team and player meetings Tuesday, will not return to practice until he is cleared by the trainers and doctors after he suffered a concussion late in the third quarter in UF's 41-7 win at Kentucky.

Tebow was released from the University of Kentucky Chandler Medical Center on Sunday morning after being held overnight for observation.

With Tebow recovering from his brain injury, Brantley, a redshirt sophomore, is running the offense this week in practice. After Saturday's victory, Meyer said that if Brantley were to start against the [Tigers](#), the offense could resemble Florida's offense from the Chris Leak days, with more passing and formations under center.

"John Brantley is a hell of a football player; big-time guy," UF offensive coordinator Steve Addazio said Monday.

"We're going to have some wrinkles for Brantley, like we always would. John Brantley will run our offense. John Brantley will compete. John Brantley would be starting for a lot of teams in this conference right now and that's a good thing."



Getty Images

Scot Brantley, 51, watched the UF-Kentucky game from a radio station in Gainesville, Fla., where he hosts pregame, halftime and post-game radio shows for the Gator Football Radio Network when the team is on the road.

As Brantley saw Wildcats defensive end [Taylor Wyndham](#) fly around the left edge untouched into the UF backfield, the former middle linebacker who also played eight seasons with the Tampa Bay [Buccaneers](#) knew the unsuspecting Tebow was about to be clobbered as he looked to pass.

When replays showed that Tebow had slammed the back of his head against right tackle [Marcus Gilbert](#)'s knee as he fell backward -- Tebow's head then snapped forward to his chest -- Brantley was hopeful that Tebow hadn't sustained a far more serious injury. In 1998, FSU quarterback Chris Weinke suffered a jammed neck while sacked. X-Rays later revealed a fractured vertebrae that required surgery.

Meyer said Saturday night that Tebow, who was motionless on the field for several minutes, did not lose consciousness. Kentucky linebacker [Sam Maxwell](#) said he saw Tebow's eyes roll back into his head.

"When I saw Tim's hands go stiff, I said 'he's [knocked] out,' " Brantley said.

"As I am watching the initial hit, I am thinking he might have broken his collar bone or bruised his sternum. But then when you see him hit his head on Gilbert's knee, you are thinking this is a concussion."

Concussions are graded at three levels. Tebow might have suffered a Grade II concussion, which causes confusion and difficulty recalling the event but no loss of consciousness. Television cameras showed Tebow saying "I can't remember" several times, and he sat dazed on the sideline for 15 minutes and vomited several times after being carted off the field.

Brantley missed the rest of the 1979 season after he suffered his concussion. But thanks to Gil Brandt, then-general manager of the Dallas Cowboys, Brantley visited doctors at Johns Hopkins University, NYU and in Dallas, and all three doctors cleared him to play. Brantley was drafted in the third round of the 1980 NFL draft and played eight seasons with the Bucs.

Brantley, an Ocala, Fla., native who resides in Tampa, never had another problem with concussions.

"I remember when [UF head coach] Charley Pell called me into his office, my mother, father,

brother and sister were all there, too, and it was like a funeral," Brantley said.

"I am like, 'What's up?' That's when he told me that after further testing we feel it's in your best interest and the university's that you not play any more. I am like, 'What?' In 48 hours I went from missing one game to missing my entire season. When [football] was taken away, I told myself I'd appreciate it even more if given another opportunity."

While many have questioned whether Tebow should have even been in the game with a healthy lead against the Wildcats late in the third quarter, Brantley disagreed.

"They were driving and at the 9-yard line," Brantley said.

"If he throws a touchdown or UF scores, he's out of the game. It's his last play. Don't even bring it up, people. That's a coach being a coach and a player being a player, and he wants to get that final touchdown. Here's a guy who is trying to win a national championship and another Heisman Trophy, you have to give him the opportunity to put the numbers up."

Brantley's nephew -- the son of Scot Brantley's brother John, also a former Gator quarterback -- may get the opportunity to put numbers up at LSU in his first career start if Tebow is not cleared medically. Despite having to sit behind Tebow for three seasons, John Brantley says he's learning the game from one of the best.

"He's one of the greatest players in college football history and to learn from him and be around him I think it's a huge opportunity for me," Brantley said.

"Johnny's been patient," Scot Brantley said. "He and Tim are great friends, on and off the field. Johnny's biggest fan is Tim Tebow -- I promise you that. He has taken him under his wing the past few years."

Since his retirement from football, Scot Brantley has worked radio broadcasts of both Tampa Bay Bucs and Florida games. At one time, he was the color commentator for each. But he's also recovering from a tough year.

Brantley says he's on the mend and in good spirits following recent heart surgery in Ocala to repair damage caused by a "mini-stroke" he suffered last fall. The surgery will help fix a small hole in Brantley's heart. A second mini-stroke, sustained last January, caused severe harm to Brantley's left eye, however.

"I've lost 90 to 95 percent of my vision and doctors are unsure if it will ever return," Brantley said.

Brantley also underwent hip surgery last year. Always good-natured, Brantley joked that everything happens at 50. And everything happens for a reason, too.

Brantley realized that again as he watched Tebow lay motionless on the turf Saturday night.