



## Sea King player fights his way back to the field

By Nick Ingram Special to the News  
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When rivals Palos Verdes and Peninsula high schools take the football field this afternoon for the final regular season game, it will be the last game on the Hill for those seniors participating in contest.

But there is one senior who many held their breath for, hoping he would join his teammates one way or the other.

That young man is David Carter.

Carter, stricken with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma near the end of his freshman year, will get the start at either defensive back or wide receiver when the Sea Kings (7-2, 4-0) host the Panthers (4-5, 1-3) today at 2 p.m.

But don't look at this as a matter of respect for what he has been through, Carter has done everything in his power to earn that start.

"[Starting David] is on the top of our list to try and get it done, because he has earned it," coach Guy Gardner said.

As a freshman, Carter was well on his way to enjoying a "normal" high school experience. After finishing up an undefeated season with the freshman football team, he joined the track and field squad during the spring.

"David was a typical freshman," PV High academic counselor Paula Stapleton said. "He was a little on the shy side, but just a sweet kid."

But a rising fever and pains all over his body forced Carter and his parents to see a doctor in May 2009.

"I was in pretty good shape at the time," Carter said. "People had noticed I was getting a lot stronger."

But what Carter calls a horrible setback nearly took his life from him, and his family and friends watched his weight drop to 60 pounds.

Yet his faith kept him fighting, as prayers continued to be sent his way.

"I couldn't do anything expect stay positive," Carter said. "I put my faith in God, and he did the rest. It's a true miracle."

After being at home during his sophomore year to fully recover, Carter was back on campus for his junior year before rejoining the football team before his senior season.

While he was away, the football program made sure no one wore No. 2 (Carter's number), out of respect for him, and his freshman teammates each shaved their heads in support.

"We weren't going to put that number on the field until he was back," Gardner said. "Even the seniors that year brought out the number \[before the game\] in tribute to David, because obviously he was fighting a tougher battle than any of us were."

The biggest obstacle, in Carter's eyes, was getting normality back in his life.

"I was used to the routine: going to school, hanging out with friends and playing sports," he said. "All that was taken away so quick. I had to realize I had to get through it."

Gardner, who replaced former Sea King coach Pat Fresch after the 2008 season, has seen the work ethic that made many think so highly of the young player.

"He will do whatever is asked of him, and then some," Gardner said. "When he first came back, it was whatever the doctors let him do. I had to keep an eye on him. But you'll never hear anything negative coming out of his mouth. His attitude is just amazing. He just wants to play football, be with his friends and get busy with the rest of his future."

While Carter has gotten on the field at times through the season, he has not gotten the start, marking today as his first start on the varsity level.

Even on the sidelines, he has provided his teammates with an unforeseen amount of inspiration, as the Sea Kings look to wrap up its first outright Bay League title since the schools reopening in 2002.

"David provides us with so much inspiration. It shows how much you have to appreciate life and the privilege it is to just live," senior Robby Kolanz said. "He is such a strong kid, and we all knew if anyone could fight it, it was David. He is the toughest kid and it is so nice to have him back out on the field with us."

When he got on the field his first time this season during the 46-7 Sea King romp over visiting Central High School of Fresno, Carter was getting back to what he wanted to do.

"It was my goal for so long to get back on the field, and I actually got there," Carter said. "I am so blessed to have gotten this far, to be healthy and do what I love to do."

Each of his teammates knows Carter is deserving of that start, especially after watching him battle the life-threatening disease and earn his spot back on the football field.

"He has always had the biggest heart and has been the hardest worker," said Jake Macer, who started playing football with Carter in Pop Warner. "I knew he was going to get through it the whole time. I love seeing him out here. It puts a smile on my face to see him out here."

One might even say that Carter personifies the Sea King spirit.

“David is someone that won’t quit no matter what,” senior quarterback Zack Fixen said. “He is a big part of this team, even though he doesn’t play much. He is on the scout team, helping our guys get better every day. He always comes to play, even if he isn’t going to get in. He works hard no matter what. It says a lot about him.”

Even though it may be cliché, Carter knows you cannot take life for granted.

“It’s cliché to say, but you have to live every day like it’s your last,” he said. “We are so blessed to have every day. This is the best, and last, year of high school. You have to live it up.”

*Nick Ingram is a freelance writer and a frequent contributor of the News.*



Sea King and senior David Carter, No. 2, was stricken with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma near the end of his freshman year, but today he’ll make his way back on the field as either defensive back or wide receiver. (Steve McCrank/Staff Photographer)