

Shoulder surgery causes Hunter Flowers to miss the rest of basketball season, reflects on dream football campaign

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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ST. LOUIS - It all lasted a couple of seconds.

Hunter Flowers, the star Carrollton Hawks three-sport athlete was in St. Louis this past Tuesday to get surgery on his left shoulder.

“They put a block on my arm, and I didn’t feel anything. said you’re gonna feel a burning in your hand and made me breathe through this mask,” Flowers said. “I was out, and it was only like two or three seconds.”

Though he never felt any physical pain, he will endure much more mentally.

“It’s terrible.”

The first thing that he noted was that he couldn’t put his socks on. Then how he goes about his business in the classroom.

“I can’t write. I have to put my books on my lap and still write with my left hand. It’s not fun.”

The injury to his left shoulder occurred last summer during two-a-days when first-team all-WIVC linemen, Jacob Decker tripped and fell on top of Flowers’ shoulder.

“His helmet went right into my shoulder, and I couldn’t throw for five or six days after that.”

Flowers also stated that his shoulder worsened during a throwing drill in practice days before their first playoff game.

“I heard and felt it pop twice. It hurt to throw after that, but I just kept throwing because it was the playoffs and I didn’t know what else to do.”

He sucked it up, played through the pain, and ended up throwing four touchdowns, and scored the game-winning two-point conversion to defeat Madison 36-34 in overtime.

For the next four-to-eight weeks Flowers will wear a cast and sit out the remainder of the basketball season as well as all of baseball. Missing baseball will hurt Flowers mainly because he was going to get much more playing time and step into a vital role for the talented Hawks as they aspire for a state championship.

However, he’s had to miss an entire baseball season before.

“I love baseball. I had to miss my eighth-grade year because I didn’t have a team. will be fine without me. Everyone’s back. They’ll be just fine,” Flowers said. “I’ll go to the games and watch them with my family, but be hard to watch and not be apart of it.”

The reason why Flowers had his surgery during this time frame was so he can rehab and be fully healthy to prepare for his junior football season in June or July. Perhaps the

injury could be a blessing in disguise because Flowers' doctor told him that his shoulder, which is his throwing arm, should be stronger than ever.

The left shoulder of Hunter Flowers is worth its weight in gold because of what he accomplished on the football field in the 2017 season.

The six-foot-two sophomore threw for 2,550 yards with 34 touchdowns and ten interceptions. Flowers tallied 2,861 total yards and 40 touchdowns in 12 games.

He broke the Carrollton and WIVC South with the passing and total touchdown single-season records. Unofficially there's a good chance he led the Illinois sophomore class in both of those categories too.

Flowers' job was a little easier because he had Nathan Walker an IHSFCA Class 1A All-State wide receiver to throw to. Walker caught 15 of Flowers' 34 touchdown passes. Flowers has high praise for Walker, and the duo will be back next season as well.

"Just about anything I threw to he could catch as long as it was in his vicinity. I don't even know how to put it. He caught everything and made some crazy catches on the sidelines. He's agile and can go up and catch it too. best skill is probably being able to make defenders miss, he jukes so many kids out. He'll go from stepping inside to going back towards the sidelines. I don't know how he does it."

Flowers was named to the WIVC South second team at quarterback, losing out to Pleasant Hill's Dalton Crane.

Any other year Flowers probably would've gotten higher honors, but the sophomore insists he doesn't care about that. He just wants to win. In that regard, he succeeded because the Hawks went the farthest out of all the WIVC schools finishing in the IHSA Class 1A quarterfinals.



However, no one saw this success coming so soon, and even Flowers himself didn't think he would achieve what he did.

"No one knew how good I could be. Coaches didn't even believe in me at the beginning of the season," They would always run the wildcat with Byron Holmes just as much as normal. It definitely helps when you're teammates pick you up and support you."

It seems like a long time ago in week one of the 2017 season against the Triopia Trojans when Flowers was an inexperienced quarterback. In fact, he hadn't even played any football his freshman season because of a broken arm.

"I didn't get to play any JV. I had to watch everything. The 7-on-7's helped me in my confidence a little bit and got to build with my receivers. After that, I figured it out, and it was fun."

Even in his JFL days Flowers wasn't consistently playing quarterback.

"Most of the time it was Ethan and I. I'd go to receiver, and he'd go back to quarterback. We would switch every quarter."

His first career start began poorly.

On his first ever series he threw an interception in the end zone. Then on the ensuing drive the Trojans scored and led 12-0, but then the Hunter Flowers that we now know was essentially born.



He threw his first-ever touchdown pass to his cousin Zach Flowers, a 61-yard bomb. He ended up throwing for four touchdowns, two interceptions and a season-high 304 yards in a 39-30 come from behind victory.

Another drive he remembers well in that game was when he threw a pass to Zach, and he caught it one-handed. That eventually led to an athletic touchdown catch by Alex Bowker.

"I didn't have time to say anything to . That was a terrible throw whenever I go back and look at it. I don't know how he caught it because if he let that go that probably would've been intercepted," Flowers said. "That drive that we had right before the second quarter ended set up for the second half and how that was gonna be."

There was a lot of momentum for us. That fourth quarter is one I won't forget. That was fun."

Flowers also mentioned how tough Triopia's offense was and believes they'll be Carrollton's toughest test right now heading into the 2018 season.

"With Burns and Thompson those two are quick and very athletic. With Bell at quarterback, you can't play a cover-two whenever they release three receivers like that. I think that'll be the best game out of all of them."

For all intents and purposes, the Hawks football team will have a high preseason ranking and should be heavily favored to run the table in the WIVC South. Maybe even go undefeated as well. Coming off a 10-1 season, a WIVC South championship, and a quarterfinal appearance, including several skill players coming back, Carrollton has plans for an even better season.

Many outsiders believe that, but so does the Hawks.

"I hope they're thinking that because that's what I'm thinking, but we have a lot of positions that we've got to fill. Our seniors will be missed. It'll be tough, but I think some of the kids my age can step up and I think they're ready to take that role."

Now that Flowers will not play any sports for the rest of the semester, he'll have to find ways to pass the time, which is going to be a difficult endeavor because he's been three-sport athlete ever since he was in elementary school.

"When you go from sport to sport like that you don't get a break. You don't have time to be lazy. It keeps you active and healthy. With three sports it's fun, and I don't know what I'd do without it," Flowers said. "I don't know how I'm going to go home after school, do my homework and then have the rest of the night."

You can find Flowers sitting on the end of the bench with his teammates as wants to support the basketball Hawks as they'll have to find a way to make up for his points and minutes. Before the surgery Flowers was the second leading scorer on the team.

With his left shoulder supposed to be stronger than ever when he returns Hunter Flowers will have expectations to deliver on, but he'll be focusing on his own.

He has the rest of winter and all of spring to do that.

