

# FORGIVENESS

BY ERIC HOYT

*Why did I have to forgive my opponents when they were the ones who played dirty?*

***I replayed the fateful play several times, and I became angrier with each repetition. The linemen from the other team deliberately double-teamed me in a way that often results in an injury to the defensive lineman.***

**40**-stack, cover 3, 40-stack, cover 3, hit . . ." "HARD!" we yelled in reply to Joey, the middle linebacker, as we broke our huddle and lined up against the offense. Tensions ran high on both sides of the ball.

It was the last regular season game of my senior year, and we needed a win in order to secure a share of the league championship and a number-one spot going into the playoffs. It was still early in the first quarter, and our opponents were marching down the field. We needed to stop their drive and score so that we could take an early lead. We had prepared all season for this game. We did not want all those four-hour practices to be in vain.

"43, 43, hut, hut!" I was off at the snap of the ball. As soon as I hit the offensive guard, I felt someone hit me from the side. I heard a loud pop, and my left leg collapsed beneath me. *This is not good*, I thought as I lay stunned on the ground, unsure of what to do. I had never been injured in a game, and I hoped that someone would

notice me before the next play started.

After a few seconds that seemed like an eternity, our team trainer was in front of me, examining my leg. I still did not know what had happened, and I waited for her to explain what was wrong. Eventually, the paramedics on duty at the game appeared, along with my parents and my head coach. From their conversation, I discovered that my kneecap had been dislocated and was currently on the side of my leg, instead of the front where it belongs.

I could not

# AND FOOTBALL



the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”

**D&C 64:10.**

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believe it! Injuries happen in football, but they were not supposed to happen to me, especially on senior night, our last home game.

Feelings of misery overwhelmed me as the paramedics loaded me onto a stretcher and rolled me into an ambulance. I was sure the season was over for me, and I could not hold back the tears.

Since my dad is a doctor, they allowed him to ride with me to the hospital. Once we arrived, the ER doctors gave me some pain medication that also relaxed my muscles. After taking some X-rays, they popped my kneecap back into place. It provided instant relief for the time being.

The next day, the sports doctor informed me that I would be on crutches for at least six weeks.

Playing football was out of the question. My high school football career was over.

Later that day, I watched the game film from the night before. I replayed the

fateful play several times, and I became angrier with each repetition. The linemen from the other team deliberately double-teamed me in a way that often results in an injury to the defensive lineman. According to my coach, I was not the first victim of their blocking scheme. One lineman blocked me head-on and held me up, while the other rolled into me from the side. This had pushed my knee in, causing the kneecap to pop out, ending my season prematurely. I was disgusted that they would sink that low. I thought that the referee should have called a penalty on them for doing an illegal high-low block, but that would not have changed the end result for me.

After a few weeks of living in almost constant anger about what had happened, I finally realized that being angry was not going to change anything. My knee was injured whether I was angry or not. I knew that in order to truly overcome my anger, I would have to forgive those two linemen, whom I did not even know. They may not have felt any remorse for what they did, and they probably did not know the extent of my injury. At first I did not think it was fair that I should have to forgive them, since they never apologized, but I knew that I needed to forgive them for my sake more than for theirs.

Over time I was able to realize that those two linemen are children of God and that they may not have anticipated injuring me. Now I can look back on this experience without anger at the two players who ended my season. I am not happy about being injured, but I am grateful that I did not need surgery on my knee and that the injury was not permanent. I am glad that I was able to move on and not let anger consume my life. **NE**

To learn more about forgiveness, read President James E. Faust, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, May 2007, p. 67.