**COVID-19**

The outbreak of Covid-19 led to a world-wide pandemic, ultimately changing the reality of my everyday life. It affected me in many different ways, ways that I would never expect. It altered the end of my senior year and the beginning of my collegiate football career. It also influenced my outlook on life and taught me not to take anything for granted, because you never know when it could be taken away.

Towards the end of February in 2020, my teachers noticed that there was a serious virus going around, and that people were dying from it. As a result, during school they would tell us what the news said about the virus and how quickly it was spreading. My friends and I didn’t think it would spread all the way to the U.S., but once it came people started to worry. There were a lot of things going through everyone’s head, but personally, the only thing that was going through mine was, “it will only effect older people.” It turned out I was wrong.

The first way Covid-19 impacted me was by cutting the end of my senior year short. I didn’t get to finish out my four high school years the traditional way, but instead experienced it with virtual classes and a socially distanced graduation. Going from in person classes straight to virtual classes wasn’t really that bad for me. At that moment, I felt it was actually the best thing that could happen. The reason why is because it made it easier for my overall success in school. I had all day to do my assignment, my tests weren’t timed, and plus, I didn’t have to get out of bed to go to school. Another reason why was because if I was done with my work, I could do whatever I wanted for the rest of the day, like spending time with family, playing the game with friends, or even sleeping all day if I wanted to. The worst part of not having school in person was, for seniors like myself, missing out on special events at the end of the year. Events like the senior cookout, senior skip day, and the main reason why you go to school, graduation. Not having those things really hurt deep down, especially a normal graduation. Luckily, my school was able to work something out and have a socially distanced graduation. It was on the football field outside, and only a certain amount of people were able to attend. If you had other family members who wanted to watch the graduation, they were able to watch it online.

Going into college with the pandemic was pretty frustrating. This is because I wasn’t able to get the real college experience, like getting to know new people, besides the football team. It was difficult academically because some classes are better learning in person than online. With online classes I didn’t physically have the professor in front of me, explaining the assignment in detail, which made it difficult to absorb the material I was being taught. Coming into college as a student athlete, all I wanted to do was party and have fun playing football. With Covid-19 still around, all I was focused on was football, until school started in August. During the summer, I had to get tested 3 times a week, just incase I got the coronavirus and had to quarantine. Sadly, within the first 3 weeks of being on campus, I ended up testing positive for Covid-19 and had to quarantine for 10 days. It was the worst experience I’ve ever had to go through because I wasn’t able to do anything but eat, sleep, shower, and play video games, literally. After I got out of quarantine, I felt so far behind because I was out of shape and behind in the playbook we were installing. Fast forward to my first college football game. At this point, I no longer was getting tested 3 days a week, because my antibodies were still positive. Remind you, I’m a freshman and I can’t wait to play my first collegiate game on television. The bad part about this was, there were no fans at all. Not one fan was there to see me play, including my family. In my mind, I couldn’t stop thinking about how it will feel to have zero fans at my first college game. But it turned out to be not that bad and overtime, we ended up having a limited capacity of fans that could attend the games.

With all this being said, my college experience so far has not gone as planned, but there is still good that can be taken from this experience. I am glad that through these tough times, I was able to make a strong bond with my football team. I’ve also learned that anything can be taken from you at any given time, so to appreciate all that I do have in my life. And without this pandemic, I think there are a lot of people who I would’ve never been close with, that I have now formed life-long bonds with.