

Glendora teen battling rare cancer visits USC football practice

By Daniel Tedford, Staff Writer

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Fifteen year-old Glendora resident Jacob Barret was diagnosed with brain cancer. Barret a USC football fan during practice at the University of Southern California on Tuesday, November 24, 2009, in Los Angeles. (SGVN/Staff Photo by Keith Birmingham)

GLENDORA - Jacob Barrett doesn't normally shake hands.

Diagnosed with a stage- three soft-tissue tumor in his sinus cavity, 15-year-old Jacob is on his fifth week of extensive radiation treatment to combat his cancer. The treatment leaves him vulnerable to bacteria, disease and illness.

But when Jacob got his wish to visit a USC football practice Tuesday and meet coach Pete Carroll, quarterback Matt Barkley and other USC players, Jacob extended his hand on more than one occasion.

"It was pretty cool," Jacob said. "I always wanted to meet (Pete Carroll)."

Jacob was diagnosed Sept.23. He had been visiting the doctor due to sinus problems and was thought to have a sinus infection. After treatment didn't work, he received a CAT scan, and the tumor was discovered under his left sinus cavity. Surgery removed much of the tumor, but not all.

The hopes are that radiation and chemotherapy treatment can prevent the tumor from metastasizing and spreading, his family said.

"I try not to think about the negative too much," Jacob said. "When I do, I wonder why this is happening to me. I like to get it off my mind by doing other things."

In an unnatural and incomprehensible situation, Jacob's mother, Carrie, worried how he would react. The result was surprising. He accepted the idea of death and never got too depressed, she said.

A mother who never intended to stop fighting, Carrie Barrett hoped for the same from Jacob. Eventually, his positive nature and strong will showed through, she said.

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"He has kept his spirits high," Carrie Barrett said. "He doesn't complain a whole lot."

Jacob's interest in sports was still in its infancy when he was diagnosed. He was on the Glendora High School Tartans junior varsity football team this year and had found his stride playing baseball within the last two years, she said.

Despite his limited experience with football, it gained his focus and admiration, she said. He doesn't read for fun very much, but the only book he has read and enjoyed is Steve Bisheff's "Always Compete" about Pete Carroll and the USC Trojans football team.

His head shaved and body clad for warmth in a USC sweat shirt, Jacob was quiet and reserved watching practice. He didn't ask for much or try to approach the players during practice, like many of the younger guests do.

Instead he was patient, letting Associate Athletic Director Mark Jackson introduce him to players, including running back C.J. Gable, linebacker Chris Galippo and Carroll.

After watching practice, Jacob made a prediction about USC's big game Saturday versus rival UCLA.

"They will win," he said.

That attitude transitions into Jacob's own battle. Throughout his journey, he has tried to keep a mature level-headedness that is beyond his age.

"I look at it as a partly a learning experience," he said. "Not everything is good, but not everything is bad."

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