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Ben Roethlisberger: Overcoming Odds
By Daniel Casciato

Despite a challenging year that included a motorcycle accident and an emergency appendectomy, Ben Roethlisberger was once again leading the defending world champion Pittsburgh Steelers. Although the team has struggled in its title defense (5-7 as of this writing), Roethlisberger has shown no quit this season.

"We'll never quit. That's one thing about this team that's special," he said. "We will never quit. We're going to go out and fight every week."



Avid Steelers fans haven't quit either. Homes all across Steelers nation tune into every game with snacks at the ready. We are standing by to cheer every touchdown, field goal, and even every yard that shortens the length to the red zone.

In only his third season in the NFL, Roethlisberger has emerged as one of the NFL's fiercest competitors. Despite the injuries he's suffered so far — broken toes, bruised knee, concussion, sore thumb, broken jaw — Roethlisberger continues to play like a

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linebacker trapped in a quarterback's body.

"I feel that I've really tried to step my game up, to be the best I can be for this team. I want them to know they can count on me when it's crunch time and it's about to be crunch time for us. Hopefully I'll be able to step my game up and they can count on me," said Roethlisberger.

When head coach Bill Cowher was asked about Roethlisberger's resilience this season he had words of praise. "He's a tough kid, there's no question about that," said Cowher. "I think that's the one thing that has been very evident through it all. This is a guy who is a tremendous competitor, he's a team guy, and he's got unbelievable toughness. He's never been one to complain about not throwing it too much or throwing it too much and that's the thing that you go through your career."

Those comments shouldn't come to the surprise of anyone who's seen Roethlisberger play before the NFL. Roethlisberger, who grew up in the small Ohio town of Findlay, became very active in sports at a young age, focusing primarily on basketball and football.



He didn't play quarterback until his senior year of high school. In his only season as the starter, he threw for 54 touchdowns and ran for seven more. One of the legendary games that fans still discuss came against Napoleon when the Findlay Trojans trailed 28-24 with 33 seconds remaining. They had no timeouts left and the ball at their own 33. Within 32 seconds, all Roethlisberger did was throw two long passes to win the game.

He also displayed some offensive prowess when he became the starting point guard for his high school in his sophomore year. By the time his high school career was over, he broke the school scoring record with 1,095 points.

Part of Roethlisberger' appeal as a fan favorite is that he wants to make a difference off the field. He has proven himself time and again, showing his importance not only to the team but the community as well.

Shortly after the Christmas day tsunami of 2004, Roethlisberger donated his \$18,000 playoff game check to the relief effort, and challenged other NFL players to do the same. Some of the profits from many of his products go to various charities. He also promotes youth sports through a partnership with several area school districts, and he often participates in charity golf tournaments in the off season.

Recently Roethlisberger and his mom weighed in on an oversized spoon-shaped scale to help Campbell's Soup fight hunger. The scale was balanced by hundreds of cases of soup. The soup was then donated to the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank.

Roethlisberger said that there are many requests for his time. Even though he can't answer all the requests, he tries to do what he can especially if it's to help his community.

