



What do Sam Darnold and Austin Rader have in common? No, it's not our throwing arm

By: Austin Rader

September 16, 2019 — Last season Sam Darnold became the youngest quarterback in the history of the National Football League to take a snap behind center. The recently turned 22 year old phenom is going to be a force in the league for years to come. He has all the right tools, a big arm, the ability to read a defense, and he looks the part with his 6'3 225 pound physique.

What is stopping this guy?

Mononucleosis.

On Thursday morning, it was reported that Sam Darnold would be out for a while with mono. Mono should not be taken lightly. It is not an easy road to recovery. I know this because I experienced this.

In December of 2018 I was diagnosed with mono. The doctor said I got it back in November, and I would be out until February. He told me I would gradually get stronger and more energy as the months went by. He compared it to recovering from a major surgery.

The best way to describe having mono is being so tired all you want to do is lay in your bed. You feel nauseous all the time and you get the sweats constantly.

I had great medical treatment, but Darnold is going to have the best medical treatment the New York Jets can find. He will probably have someone by his side giving him fluids and the right food to eat while he lies in bed resting. Taking care of yourself has to be your top priority. A

friend of mine that I played baseball with in middle school passed away a couple of years ago with mono.

Darnold's going to come out of this as a better person. He's going to be grateful that he got through it, no matter how long it takes.

No matter who you are the gratitude is going to shine through whether you are an NFL quarterback or an intramural athlete.

There are different strands of mono, so Darnold might only be out for a month or two. He can still be active and go to the team facility he's just going to have to pace himself.

On a fantasy football note, a lot of teams might need to pick-up another back-up quarterback for their leagues.

Luckily for me, I was cleared just days before our first intramural game (about three months after I was diagnosed with it), and boy was that a wake up call. I had to check myself out of the game with 2:00 to play.

I was about to pass out.

I started taking precautions before every game after that. Get 8-9 hours of sleep, drink plenty of water and gatorade throughout the day, and eat four-five healthy meals before tip-off. This worked as I slowly built up my endurance as I was able to play more minutes as the season went on. I also would do fifteen minutes of yoga every morning.

Also my role changed. Since I still wasn't even close to 100%, I started face-guarding the opponents best player and the defensive game-plan worked. Maybe when Darnold comes back he will have a limited type of role. Maybe the game-plan will focus on Le'veon Bell and Darnold will make quick throws on his first read and avoid scrambling until his energy and endurance builds back up. Kind of like having training wheels on.

Darnold has a bright future ahead, but his mindset coming back from this will determine how long it could be before he is 100%. He could look at it is a blessing in disguise, or maybe he thinks this is the worst thing that has ever happened to him. Staying positive is critical to getting back to 100%.

He also can use this time off to watch more film on NFL defenses.

But will he able to play four quarters when he returns? I can't imagine being the starting quarterback in New York with mono. I was just an intramural basketball kid at Alabama and I felt pressure to recover quickly.

My advice to Sam Darnold? Be patient. The Jets aren't going to win anything this year anyway.

Just make sure no one on the Jets drinks after you.