

Myron Rolle was once football's No. 1 recruit. He's now a doctor at Mass. General.

Rolle, a neurosurgery resident, has been shifted to help diagnose and treat COVID-19 patients.



Myron Rolle is currently helping treat COVID-19 patients at Mass. General. —*Barry Chin/Globe Staff*

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By **Hayden Bird**, Boston.com Staff

April 6, 2020

It began in 2000 when Myron Rolle was a high school freshman at the Hun School in New Jersey. His phone rang. It was Bob Stoops, coach of the University of Oklahoma football team.

That the head coach of the reigning national champions was personally calling a high school freshman — four years away from choosing colleges — was an early and clear indication of Rolle's potential.

Yet even then, there was still far more to Rolle than mere athletic ability. He was already in the process of achieving a perfect 4.0 GPA, and had been the [lead in his school's musical](#), "Fiddler on the Roof."

By the time he was a high school senior, Rolle was ranked as [ESPN's No. 1 football recruit](#) for the class of 2006. He outranked future Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow and future NFL stars like Matthew Stafford and DeMarco Murray.

Rolle chose Florida State University due not only to its outstanding football program, but its capacity to further his eventual dream: becoming a doctor. During his time in college, Rolle not only thrived under the rigorous schedule of a Division I athlete but also excelled in the classroom. In 2008, mere hours before a game against Maryland, he was [named a Rhodes Scholar](#) (eventually studying for a year at Oxford).

Flashing forward to 2020, Rolle is living his dream. He's currently in his third year as a neurosurgery resident at Massachusetts General Hospital.

But like everyone else, Rolle's normal life has been put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic.

His floor at Mass. General has been transformed into an emergency COVID-19 ward, as doctors and healthcare professionals exchange their usual hospital roles to help deal with the crisis.

For Rolle, who started for four years at Florida State before playing in the NFL for the Titans and Steelers, the current demands remind him of something he faced in the sports world.

"Obviously, neurosurgery is not directly connected to this upper respiratory illness," [Rolle told Erik Bacharach of *The Tennessean*](#). "But just like in football, if you're called to do something different that you weren't expecting, you adjust. You adapt. They're showing us a new formation that we didn't see on tape? You've got to hunker down and get the job done. In my opinion, this novel disease is something like that. A formation, a personnel package that we haven't seen before. We have to meet the challenge, and I'm happy to be able to join the fight."

His role in the hospital will soon be to work in the "surge clinic," which will help triage patients walking in with COVID-19 symptoms.

“We are trained to be medical doctors first and if you have to put neurosurgery aside to deal with the most vulnerable and susceptible patients, then that’s what we’ll do,” Rolle told *The Boston Globe’s* Nora Princiotti.

Given his background, Rolle has become a frequent interview for television shows and news services.