

Former NFL player Myron Rolle on front lines of coronavirus battle

Steve Gardner USA TODAY

Myron Rolle was once a standout safety at Florida State. Now, he's looking out for the safety of coronavirus patients at Massachusetts General Hospital.

As a third-year neurosurgery resident, Rolle's life is typical of doctors across the country during this time of crisis.

“Our neurosurgical floor has been transformed into a floor just full of COVID-19 patients,” he told ESPN last week. “It is hectic, that’s for sure.”

Rolle once had dreams of being a first-round NFL draft pick. However, he skipped his senior season at FSU to accept a Rhodes Scholarship and spend the year studying at Oxford in pursuit of another dream: to become a brain surgeon.

He was selected by the Tennessee Titans in the sixth round of the 2010 NFL draft and spent three years trying to make a career in the NFL before retiring in 2013 to go to medical school.

Now 33, Rolle is battling his toughest opponent.

The neurosurgery department operating rooms at Mass General may have to be turned into intensive care units to deal with the increasing number of coronavirus patients.

"The numbers are staggering," he said. And the staff there are facing the same shortages of protective equipment found across the country.

One way Rolle is able to meet the challenges each day brings is by relying on the lessons he learned under legendary Seminoles coach Bobby Bowden.

“Football has never left me,” he said. “I still wake up in the morning and think of the operating room like a game, like it’s showtime, let’s perform. I gotta do what I gotta do because people are counting on us right now.

"This is our time to help very sick people. So that motivation continues to drive me every single day.”