



## Worth remembering

### Kevin Everett's recovery is the story of a lifetime

Posted: Friday December 14, 2007 1:15PM; Updated: Saturday December 15, 2007 4:40PM

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We write a lot of stories here at SI. Stories for *Sports Illustrated*. Stories, like this one, for SI.com. Stories for *SI Presents*, *SI Latino* and *Sports Illustrated for Kids*. In the course of a week, a month, a year, that's a lot of keystrokes on the old Apple PowerBook. Most of them are disposable; after all, we're talking about sports and I don't imagine I will be saving my 2006 Detroit Lions scouting report to show to my grandchildren or bringing it along when I give talks at local schools.

Then again, some stories are not entirely disposable.

Last September I began reporting a story on Buffalo Bills' tight end **Kevin Everett**, who was seriously injured in the Bills' Sept. 9 season-opener against the Denver Broncos. Over the course of ensuing three months, I talked to doctors and coaches, friends and teammates, scientists and publicists. Finally, last week in Houston, I met and spoke with Everett, his first expanded interview since his injury.

His injury. That's a good place to start. In simple terms, Everett broke his neck and damaged his cervical spine. You saw the images of him lying on the field that afternoon in Buffalo, with players gathered nearby, somber and frightened. Everett could not move his arms or legs on the field or in the ambulance. He could barely breathe. As his surgeon, **Dr. Andrew Cappuccino**, whose candor enabled the story that appears in SI this week, put it to me, "Kevin was frankly quadriplegic on the field."



**A few months after suffering a severe neck and spine injury, Kevin Everett is walking and close to living a normal life.**

Simon Bruty/SI

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From that point Everett has made a remarkable recovery. Information leaked out along the way, although none of it came from Everett. He was moving his arms and legs. He was eating. He was sitting up. In mid-October, Cappuccino told me that Everett was walking with assistance.

But on Dec. 5 when I arrived at the home Everett bought for his mother, **Patricia Dugas**, I did not know what to

expect. I didn't know if Everett would greet me in a wheelchair or if he would be using a walker or leaning against a wall for support. When you spend three months reporting on a person's life (not that I wasn't doing anything else), you become invested.

I was already in the living room, having arrived a few minutes early, talking with Everett's sisters and mom, when he got home from rehab with his fiancée, **Wiande Moore**. Everett walked through the front door, down a hallway and into the kitchen, stood in front of me and shook my hand. I did everything I could to stay professional, but it was an emotional moment. Kevin Everett is not yet fully recovered, but he looked pretty damn good at the moment, standing and talking, almost like any other football player I might interview in front of his locker.

[CONTINUE STORY](#)

1 of 2

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