

The Captivating Comeback of Chris Autman-Bell

By: Shayen Maun, 6th Grade, Sycamore School

Chris Autman-Bell is a Minnesota Golden Gopher wide receiver who has had tremendous success in his first three years of play. In his freshman year, he had 28 receptions for 449 yards. That is an average of about 16 yards per reception, something that you don't regularly see even in the NFL. He only got better in his sophomore year with 28 receptions, 371 yards, and 5 touchdowns. These are very impressive stats for a two-year wide receiver. Again, he improved even more through his junior year. Though he played only a seven game season due to COVID 19 stunting the season, he still managed to have 22 receptions for 430 yards and one touchdown. He was on track to get 676 yards that year, an amazing number to have as a junior.

Unfortunately, Autman-Bell missed the first three games of the much anticipated 2021-2022 season due to an injury that stopped his about-to-be explosive season. It was August 12, 2021, during a normal drill during Minnesota's training camp. Autman-Bell caught the ball and was running down field when he was accidentally horse-collar tackled from behind. This caused a high ankle sprain, an injury that typically takes a long time to heal. When he first got the injury, he felt really frustrated. He stated "[the injury is] something you never want to go through... You know, injuries suck obviously." Many feared that he would not return this season

because the regular time frame is about four to eight weeks to recover, according to Autman-Bell.

While many players with this type of injury would feel hopeless, Autman-Bell had another approach. “I have my teammates and my family to lean on. You know it’s kind of frustrating, but you know it’s a part of the game of life. I kind of just stay positive and keep moving.” That is exactly what Chris Autman-Bell did. He just stayed positive and kept moving. Instead of an eight week recovery, Autman-Bell came back in just 4 and a half weeks, playing an outstanding game in week 4 against Colorado in a 30-0 win. Of course, this miraculous recovery came with hard work. “I did rehab like strengthening every day, elevated [my ankle] at night with ice.” This amazing work ethic and mindset got him back up and playing for the Golden Gophers.

Chris Autman-Bell’s positive attitude and effort has led him to a point where more success awaits him. When he came back from his injury in week 4 against Colorado, he had an average of 20 yards per catch with a long reception of 33 yards. He felt amazing just to be able to make a positive recovery and help his team get the win. “It was awesome just being back on the field with my teammates,” said Autman-Bell. He only had more improvement against Iowa in week 11, getting 5 receptions for 109 yards including an amazing 68 yard touchdown grab that kept the Gophers in the game. He also had a massive win against 14th ranked Wisconsin in a thrilling rivalry matchup. Autman-Bell had a 27 yard touchdown along with a ten yard reception.

With the determined mindset of Chris Autman-Bell, fans can expect to see more success for the Minnesota Golden Gophers football team in the remaining weeks of the season.