

milwaukee journal sentinel

PREPS PLUS

Seldom do state QBs get attention of Notre Dame, Wisconsin and Georgia. But Kettle Moraine's Chase Spellman is different.

Curt Hogg Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 6:02 a.m. CT Aug. 19, 2021

Ask Chase Spellman where he went this summer and you better have a notepad handy to write it all down.

He attended the football camp at the University of Georgia. Then Georgia Tech. Wisconsin. Cincinnati. Northwestern. Notre Dame. Vanderbilt. Then capped it off by throwing for coaches in an unofficial visit at Texas A&M.

The Kettle Moraine junior quarterback has a laundry list of Division I Power Five conference schools interested in him not often seen for high school signal-callers from Wisconsin.

What's more is that Spellman is doing it all with a torn labrum in his throwing shoulder.

"I've been playing through it for a couple of years now," Spellman said. "I just didn't get it checked out until late March and by that point it was too late to get surgery or I'd miss the whole season."

More: A North Dakota State recruit who held six Ivy League scholarship offers, Slinger's Ashton Beers is the 'total package'

More: Oconomowoc's Greg Galloway is one of the most intimidating defenders in the state. Here's why.

More: Led by this playmaking trio, Kenosha Bradford is chasing a 'Melvin Gordon era type of season'

Watch some of Spellman's best throws, the ones on which he rolls out and zips the ball 40 yards into a tight window or drops the ball into a bucket against Cover 2, and you wouldn't have guessed he is operating without the tissue that helps keep the bones of the shoulder joint together. But, quite often, it is bothersome for Spellman, and those that are most used to watching him operate can sense it when the throws just don't have the same kind of mustard on them.

"You can tell when his shoulder isn't bothering him," Lasers head coach Matt McDonnell said. "He can make any throw on the field, and that's what popped to coaches on the film. He can throw from the hash to the sideline. He can zip it anywhere."

Spellman has surgery scheduled with well-known orthopedic surgeon James Andrews after the conclusion of Kettle Moraine's season. Until then, he knows the pressure is on, labrum injury or not.

"I think he knows he needs to produce what a DI recruit would produce," McDonnell said. "Make the throws, make the reads. He's got a target on his back because everyone knows he's hurt already, but he's playing. If you play through it, there's no excuse. That doesn't exist anymore."

A critical junior season ahead

Spellman won the starting job out of camp last August, becoming the rare sophomore starting quarterback in the talent-rich Classic 8.

"There's always that hesitation, especially in our conference, that you don't want to play sophomores," McDonnell said. "But the more he showed us in practice and in any chance we gave him, he had to be played. He was really smart, just like another coach in the field, made all the throws. He really just earned it."

Spellman struggled in his final game in 2020, throwing three interceptions against West Bend West. Before that, though, he had thrown for 12 touchdowns with an average of 170 yards passing per game with just two interceptions.

"It was tough taking over as a sophomore," Spellman said. "Classic 8 football is the best in the state, but my teammates helped me through it."

Colleges took note, especially during the first four games in which he was lighting the area

on fire with nine touchdowns, one pick and a rating of 96.7 or better in every start. UW was the first to reach out about Spellman, with dozens of others close in tow.

“If he didn’t have an injury, he’d have an official offer at this point,” McDonnell said.

Instead, coaches told Spellman that they would closely monitor his junior film and evaluate how he throws post-surgery next summer. Programs rarely take on more than one scholarship signal-caller per class.

“It’s hard to get an offer at quarterback to begin with,” McDonnell said. “If he was a skill kid, it’s easier to bounce back from an injury and easier for a school to offer. It will happen for Chase, but it’s just going to be a year later for him.”

After a whirlwind summer, Spellman is looking forward to throwing on Friday nights in front of bleachers full of fans rather than college coaches. It may be Muskego or Arrowhead on the other side, but there will be less pressure. More fun. The way it should be.

“I was surprised by all of the interest,” Spellman said. “When Georgia calls my head coach and the offensive coordinator from them wants to have me come down there, that surprised me. It’s cool. But now I get to just focus on the season now, playing with my teammates and focusing on having a great season.”

Even with his injury, Spellman can still make just about all the throws the Lasers will ask him to make during games. He hopes a year of experience , gave him greater knowledge of defensive alignments and coverages.

“I feel like I’ve grown the most mentally,” Spellman said. “Things like reading defenses, picking up defenses, whatever they throw at me, getting to the right checks, things like that.”

In practice, Spellman is on a pitch count in an effort to save his arm for Fridays. He also is going to physical therapy. Don’t expect too many early-morning throwing sessions for a few months, either.

If the pieces all come together, Spellman should be in a position to pick apart defenses methodically this fall.

It could be the surgery before the surgery.