

The Green Room: Never give up

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Woody Morgan, who will receive his medical degree from Tulane University on May 16, learns at [Match Day](#) that he will remain in New Orleans for one more year while serving a preliminary medicine internship at Ochsner Clinic Foundation. Then he will travel to Harvard Medical School in Charlestown, Massachusetts, to begin residency training at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)

On a beautiful, sunny day in Florida, during spring break of Woody Morgan's sophomore year at the University of Georgia, he dove into the ocean to cool off. But unlike the hundreds of other times Woody dove into the waves, this time he didn't come up.

"My friends had to pull me out of the water," says Woody, in his usual straightforward manner. "When I woke up I was in a hospital room."

Although he still isn't sure exactly what happened under those waves, Morgan had damaged his spinal cord's C-5 and C-6 vertebrae, paralyzing him from the chest bone down, confining him to a wheelchair and leaving him with limited movement in his arms and hands.

"At first, I was kind of in denial, I thought I would be able to rehab and just walk out of the hospital," says Morgan. "But it eventually set in that this was going to be permanent."

Woody endured months of rehabilitation at the highly regarded Shepherd Center near his home in Georgia. He could have continued rehab indefinitely, but Woody was determined to finish his sophomore year of college. In just five short months, he returned to classes.

"When I was going through rehab, I met with a vocational therapist who tried to help me plan for what kind of career I could have in the future," says Morgan. "She wasn't the most encouraging with regards to me pursuing medicine, but it's what I always wanted to do."

Hear about his experience at the Tulane University [School of Medicine](#) in this podcast.

The 2015 Commencement ceremony will be [streamed live online](#). Follow us on social media at #tulane15.

“In medicine you have to be a driven person. I just have a few more obstacles than most.”—Woody Morgan, medical school class of 2015