



"She would sit outside in the lobby. I remember the first day that he walked without the walker, and she was standing at the door, and she saw him and me, and she started crying," said Simon, being brought to tears herself by the memory.

Blanks was approved to play in August through hard work and devotion, even when training became tough. And at the first home game, Blanks caught a pass from Spencer Arceneaux ran the ball to the end-zone. Legs once wrapped up ran freely to score a touchdown.

"We yelled and hollered—so much excitement. We had a lot of family there, aunties, uncles, and cousins. Everybody was at the game," said Mrs. Blanks. "He told me later, 'I had to get to the end zone. I had to get there. It was just right there,'" she shared.

Blank's passion for the game pushed him to overcome compartment syndrome. With the support of his family, teammates, and the UWA community, he returned to playing, led his team to victory, and earned an athletic scholarship. "We are so grateful and thankful to God Almighty," said Mrs. Blanks. "Without Him, this would not be possible."

Photos by Trent Spruell