



Making an impact

By [THERESE AAKER, FOR THE DAILY PRESS](#)

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PHELAN • Most teen athletes, when injured, want to rub it off and keep playing at all costs. Serrano football player Shawn Shanks, 17, was no exception.

While at practice three weeks ago, Shanks collided head to head with another player. Although Shanks was vomiting after the hit, he wanted to be tough and keep playing.

When Shanks' friend told his mother, Ralisa, what happened, she immediately took him to see Dr. T. Thomas Liu, who had tested the entire football team last August before practice started.

Dr. Liu performed an impACT test, which stands for Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing. The video-game like test measured and scored cognitive functions for the players to serve as a baseline to compare to, should they ever get a head injury.

In Shanks' case, the test could have saved his life, as Dr. Liu was able to compare it to the current state of his brain and quickly assess that Shanks had a concussion.

Shanks' father, Rick, said that had Shawn not had the test, he would have gone back out to play, risking another head injury, which could result in death.

"He's a 17-year-old boy, he's still going to beg to play," Rick said. "I thought he was fine, but you can't see inside the brain and see the way it works."

Rick believes the impACT test should be required for athletes everywhere.

"You just don't know," he said. "It's scary. I told (my son), 'You know I love the game, but when it comes to you, there's nothing more important.'"

While Shanks brushed off the injury at first, he was very grateful when Dr. Liu diagnosed him.

"He wouldn't have taken the test if it were up to him, but it hit him once the doctor told him he could have died if he had gone back and gotten another concussion," Rick said.

Shanks went back to Dr. Liu on June 28 to see if he was ready to hit the field again. Shanks is feeling "pretty good," according to his father, and seems back to normal.

"We are so blessed that Dr. Liu does this," Rick said. "He really does care about the boys, and keeping them healthy so they can keep playing."

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