



Dr. Gregory Phillips poses outside the Hatfield-Dowlin Complex courtyard, where he frequently visits to consult with Oregon student-athletes.

Photos provided by Angel Montes

A Duck for Life

Dr. Gregory Phillips turned a love of football into a lifelong career caring for athletes and patients.

BY VANESSA SALVIA

FOR LANE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY

Dr. Gregory Phillips logs into our Zoom call on a weekend afternoon in full green — decked out in Oregon Ducks gear — even though it's not a Ducks game day. His dedication is more than just being a fan; it's because he has actually worn the Duck uniform.

A former Oregon Ducks football player turned triple board-certified physician, Phillips has spent nearly two decades building a career that lets him practice in the town he loves, near the sidelines of the sport he loves, and in the operating room helping athletes and non-athletes alike get back to the activities they enjoy.

Phillips is a partner at Pacific Sports and Spine, a practice he co-founded in 2018. The clinic has grown from a two-doctor partnership to include eight physicians, seven physician assistants, three facilities, a surgery center, a physical therapy team, a research arm, and a fellowship program that has already trained two young sports medicine doctors. He is board-certified in sports medicine, physical medicine and rehabilitation, and interventional pain management, a combination that lets him treat the whole patient rather than a single diagnosis.

From Long Beach to the Rose Bowl

Phillips was born in Long Beach, California. His family moved to Boise, Idaho, before settling in Salem, where he attended high school. It was there that his football talent caught the attention of recruiters, and he made the choice to stay in Eugene, close to home.

He played football at the University of Oregon and graduated before heading back north to Salem, where he spent five years working for State Farm Insurance. Working at State Farm, he says, made him feel too “comfortable,” and he wasn’t putting his general science degree to much use.

“After five years, I felt I don’t really want to be comfortable and continue with this job. So I quit, and then went to medical school,” he recalls.

Among his favorite memories from his playing days is a trip to the Independence Bowl in Shreveport, Louisiana. “We hadn’t gone to a bowl game in years,” Phillips says. “It was a lot of fun. My sister came in from South Carolina, so I got to hang out with her. They really treated us well down there.”

He also got to play a game in the Rose Bowl stadium in Pasadena, which he says was “a dream” of his as a kid. Above all, he treasures the lifelong friendships he made. He still gets together every year with former teammates for a barbecue.

A Later-in-Life Calling

Despite the detour working for an insurance company, a career in medicine wasn’t a total surprise. Phillips grew up watching his father work as a respiratory therapist and admired an uncle who was a dentist — “the most successful person I knew,” he says. Phillips always gravitated toward science in school.

At 28, he enrolled at Ross University School of Medicine,

planning on a career in general surgery. That plan changed when he met an anesthesiologist finishing pain procedures after Phillips’s own surgical cases were done for the day.

“I asked him what he was doing,” Phillips recalls. “He said, ‘Well, I do pain. I don’t have patients in the ICU, don’t have any calls, I still get to do surgery, and I make more than a young surgeon.’” Phillips shadowed him and learned about physical medicine and rehabilitation, a residency path that would let him pursue pain management. He completed that residency at the University of Washington and a fellowship in California, where he started working.



Phillips received multiple academic and athletic honors, including the Ray Farmer Family Scholar-Athlete Award, Oregon Club Student-Athlete Award, State of Oregon Scholar-Athlete Award, and Sports Fever Student-Athlete Scholarship Achievement Award.

Coming Home to Eugene

A mentor from his playing days, orthopedic surgeon Dr. Kenneth Singer, operated on Phillips’s knee and later recruited him back to Oregon. Phillips says Singer let him know Slocum Orthopedics was looking for someone who was doing the work that he was doing. A job interview brought him back in 2007. He was offered the position and moved to Eugene a

couple of months later. Reconnecting with the university and the team he’d once played for was a big part of the reason he took the job.

“I wanted to come back up here and be involved with the team, be involved with the university, and be in Oregon,” he says.

He spent five years at Slocum Orthopedics before moving to the Neurospine Institute, where he began working alongside Dr. Greg Moore, who became his longtime business partner. The two had been informally covering each other’s patients and comparing notes on care for years.

When Neurospine dissolved around 2017, Phillips and Moore struck out on their own and founded Pacific Sports and Spine. They later brought on a third partner, built a surgery center, and grew the practice into what it is today.

Being back in Oregon not only meant being closer to home and to Duck games; it meant reconnecting with Duck athletics in a professional capacity. Phillips works closely with University of Oregon sports medicine staff, treating athletes for spine-related injuries as well as other conditions. “It’s kind of a dream fulfilled, really, to come back here and work at the University of Oregon,” he says.

A Field Transformed

Pain management has changed dramatically since Phillips started practicing. Pain management used to rely primarily on medication and the occasional injection. Today, treatment options include minimally invasive spine surgery, endoscopic discectomies, spinal cord stimulator implants, nerve ablation, and regenerative treatments like stem cell and platelet-rich plasma injections.

“The field really has grown,” he says. For Phillips, more options mean more patients can get real relief, and that is what keeps him going.

“When I have a patient say that they got their life back by seeing me,

that's the most rewarding thing that I can hear," he says. "It's not about the money, it's not about anything else. It's just about the patient care."

He describes developing relationships with his patients because he sometimes cares for them over the course of several years, as they return for follow-ups or treatment for different issues over time. "I really have a close bond with my patients," he says, "and just having them say thank you, or having a family member come in and say 'my wife is doing so much better,' that's really what makes it worth it."

Family, Fishing, and Fall Saturdays

Outside the clinic, Phillips's life is all about his family. He and his wife, Jennifer, a nurse who works at the practice's surgery center, are approaching 25 years of marriage. They met in Bakersfield, California,

while Phillips was completing rotations and she was in nursing school. The couple has three children. Their oldest son is studying aeronautical engineering in North Dakota with plans to become a commercial pilot. Another son, who hopes to become an anesthesiologist, plays football at Linfield University, while their daughter plays volleyball at Marist.

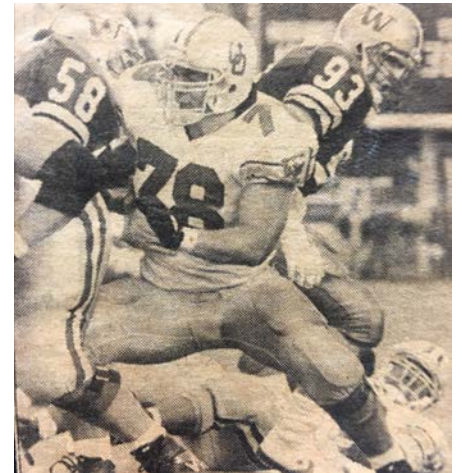
When he's not working, Phillips can usually be found tailgating before Duck football games, occasionally playing golf, or fishing.

Investing in Eugene's Medical Community

Phillips joined Lane County Medical Society in 2007. As a member, he values the camaraderie among local physicians and worries about providers leaving the area.

"I find that the physicians who move here do it for a reason," he says.

"It's a destination for them. They want this kind of a lifestyle and to be in a smaller community. They want to be outdoors. They want to be involved in the community or maybe the University of Oregon. It's a great place to live." ♦



Phillips played center on the University of Oregon's offensive line from 1987–1991.

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