

Story from **Foot & Ankle**
CENTER OF ILLINOIS

How foot and ankle surgeons get athletes back on their feet

Top foot and ankle surgeons are critical to athlete recovery after an accident.

By **Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois**

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After an accident, top treatment is crucial for an athlete's recovery. Getty Images

In recent news, a sports legend's devastating car accident has left fans around the world wondering if he will ever return to a normal life — or play golf again on a competitive level.

Getting into an accident that impairs mobility is tragic for anyone, but for top performing athletes, it can mean the end of a career.

Performing advanced foot and ankle surgery on athletes

In an accident where advanced surgery is required, a timely surgery can make a difference. This can result in minimal damage to the muscles and leg structures outside the fractures.

In cases where the leg is broken into more than two pieces and bones have broken through the skin, surgeons may need to insert a long rod into the tibia, or shin bone, from below the knee downward to the ankle, as well as stabilize the foot and ankle with screws and pins, and release coverings of the leg muscles. The wound may even be left open to let the muscles settle.

Navigating the road to recovery

For athletes who undergo advanced foot or ankle surgery, additional surgical procedures like wound debridement, which involves removing any tissue that is damaged or infected, and wound grafts may be required.

A devastating accident can mean an athlete may not be able to return to their sport for a year or longer, but as Dr. John Sigle, a podiatric physician at the [Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois \(FACI\)](#) explained, advanced treatments and techniques can go a long way to aid the healing process.

“Biologic interventions like platelet-rich plasma, bone marrow aspirate, autologous adipose graft, human amniotic membrane or amniotic membrane can be used as an adjunct to surgical reconstruction,” he said. “These biologics are proven therapies that are safe and used to create a more favorable healing environment.”

Once physical therapy begins, Sigle said athletes will have to endure a long rehabilitation process to regain strength and mobility. Luckily, most top athletes have the tenacity and mental discipline to accomplish this.

According to Sigle's associate, Dr. Christopher Collazo, “The goal of [an athlete's] medical team will focus on optimal healing and minimizing adhesions and scarring

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to maintain as much functionality in the leg as possible. [The athlete] will hopefully have greater mobility if they are able to reduce the adhesions and scarring.”

Trauma to the lower extremities can come in all forms. Individuals can suffer lacerations, torn tendons, contusions and fractures. Sometimes they may not even realize they have done damage until it becomes a serious issue.

It is important to know that dropping an object on your foot or rolling an ankle may not be just a simple injury. If you suffer a traumatic injury, it is in your best interest to be evaluated by your foot and ankle specialist or in the emergency room. You may have torn a ligament, injured a tendon or fractured a bone unknowingly. In any of those scenarios, it is very likely that some form of treatment will be required to allow you to return to your normal activities as soon as possible.

When pro athletes are injured it can serve as a reminder of why it is important to have highly skilled medical experts care for you when you experience a trauma to your foot or ankle. FACI has advanced foot and ankle surgeons who have fellowship training and are prepared to treat foot and ankle traumas, ranging from minor to severe.

Many foot and ankle injuries can be treated right at FACI clinics. Typically, you will be seen on the same day or within a day and there is no need to assume high out of pocket costs for unnecessary emergency room visits. Patients have immediate access to world-class diagnostic imaging, including digital imaging X-rays, a weight-bearing CT scanner and an open extremity MRI.

However, in the case where you are taken to an ER for a trauma injury, you may instruct the attending medical staff to contact your podiatric physician at FACI. They are accessible 24/7 and have privileges at hospitals located in Springfield, Decatur, Taylorville, Carlinville, Shelbyville, Sullivan and Monticello.

For pain therapy and post-op treatments to promote healing, restoration and mobility, FACI patients have access to state-of-the-art lasers. FACI also offers a wide selection of durable medical equipment and foot and ankle products recommended by the American Podiatric Medical Association, as well as medications.

To better understand what FACI offers, you can [view short videos](#) about special procedures performed by their expert podiatric physicians. Watch Dr. Grant Gonzalez administer a [bone marrow aspirate procedure](#), during a surgery to promote post-op healing.

Or, see a video about [cutting-edge MLS laser therapy](#) used to reduce pain and swelling following surgery. This is the same laser that is used by several sports teams on professional athletes.

To view these informative videos and learn more about why the Foot & Ankle Center of Illinois is a one-stop shop for all foot and ankle needs, visit <https://www.myfootandanklecenter.com/>.

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