

Voices Search

Hi, Daniel Lewis ▾

Mail

Entertainment Auto Business Creative Writing Health Home Improvement Lifestyle News **Sports** Tech Travel All Categories
Recreation

The Story of Darrelle Revis' Year-Long Recovery: An Interview with Andrea Kremer



Daniel Lewis, Yahoo Contributor Network
Nov 4, 2013

MORE: [Darrelle Revis](#) [ACL Tear](#) [ACL](#) [Bill Bradley](#) [ACL Injury](#)

[Flag](#)[Post a comment](#)

In a one-on-one interview with Andrea Kremer, Chief Correspondent for Player Health and Safety Issues for the NFL Network, Kremer and sports journalist Daniel Lewis discuss a number of issues, including Darrelle Revis' recovery from the ACL injury he suffered in 2012.

It has been over a year since [Tampa Bay Buccaneers](#) star cornerback Darrelle Revis, then with the New York Jets, crumpled to the ground in a game against the Miami Dolphins.

"The play that injured Revis," Kremer reflected, "was remarkable for coming on a play that was really unremarkable."

The star cornerback was positioning himself to tackle Dolphins running back Daniel Thomas, who was slithering through the field on a screen pass. But in his way was opposing center Mike Pouncey, whom Revis tried to weave past to bring down Thomas.

Suddenly, Revis felt his left knee buckle.

"Darrelle Revis is down!" [CBS](#) commentator Marv Albert lamented.

He immediately clutched his knee, knowing something had gone wrong as soon as the injury happened. It felt unlike anything he had ever experienced. He lay sprawled on the turf, almost as if by taking time to rest on the ground, he could somehow make the sharp pain suddenly disappear. As he was carted to the sidelines, his mind wandered to the worst of thoughts. Had he blown out his knee? Had he just played his last down in the NFL?

"A serious injury can change everything for an athlete in just a matter of seconds...on just a single play," said Kremer, who chronicled Revis' rehabilitation as part of the NFL Network series, *Darrelle Revis: A Football Life*.

Speaking with the training staff on the sidelines, Revis felt his heart sink as he overheard the Jets' team doctor utter the letters "A.C.L." Before the trainers could cart him into the locker room for tests, he bought himself a minute to allow himself to weep.

MRIs would later confirm Revis' suspicions. He had suffered a tear to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) of his left knee.

"It happened without contact. The tear was a non-contact injury," Kremer added.

Though he injured his knee without taking a hit, the tear was still incredibly painful.

"It felt like somebody had a knife and stuck it through my knee," Revis told ESPN. "That's the feeling I got from trying to make the cut. It's crazy because I've made that cut a thousand million times. Looking at it on film, it didn't look like much. I guess it was meant to happen."

Related Content

[New York Jets Vs Cleveland Browns: Las Vegas Line & Pick Against the Spread](#)

[New York Jets Vs Detroit Lions: Las Vegas Line & Pick Against the Spread](#)

[Cincinnati Bengals Vs New York Jets: Las Vegas Line & Pick Against the Spread](#)

[New York Jets Vs New England Patriots: Las Vegas Line & Pick Against the Spread](#)

[New York Jets Vs Pittsburgh Steelers: Las Vegas Line & Pick Against the Spread](#)

[Green Bay Packers Vs New York Jets: Las Vegas Line & Pick Against the Spread](#)

[Reporter Ines Sainz Says She Didn't Make Charges Against New York Jets](#)

As he was carted off the field, he knew that he would be shelved for the season.

"Coming back from a knee injury," Kremer acknowledged, "begins with accepting that your season is over."

In fact, shortly after the injury, Revis had already begun to set his sights on the daunting recovery process ahead of him, an unfamiliar obstacle for him having never suffered a season-ending injury before.

"It was interesting to hear that he never really thought to himself, 'Why me, or why did this happen?'" Kremer said.

Usually an ACL tear happens when an athlete receives a blow to the knee, but as in Revis' case, it can also occur when an athlete cuts or twists his leg in a way that overstretches the ligament.

After the initial injury, an athlete typically faces a recovery timeline of nine to 12 months. For three weeks after the injury, Revis worked closely with the Jets head trainer John Mellody as he prepared his knee for surgery with a rigorous conditioning program designed to strengthen the muscles around his leg and build range of motion.

Then came the surgical repair of Revis' ACL, which holds the knee in place and prevents the lower leg from protruding in front of the upper leg. The ligament also provides support for deceleration and change of direction.

Fortunately for Revis, though, there was no other damage in his knee.

An athlete faces three options for surgical repair of the ligament: a hamstring graft, patellar ligament graft—both from the athlete's own body—or a cadaver graft. Operated on by New York Giants' team physician Russell Warren, Revis opted for the patellar ligament graft. By selecting the patellar ligament graft, Revis assured himself the tightest and most secure repair possible, but also a more painful rehabilitation process.

["We make an incision and harvest the graft from the patella tendon,"](#) said Dr. Warren, an attending orthopedic surgeon at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, describing the surgery as Kremer interviewed him. "Then, arthroscopically we clean out the area where the ligament used to be and try to get good placement up on the wall and on the tibial surface. We fix it with a couple of screws and lock it in place."

Just one day after surgery, Revis would already find himself back on his feet, walking around and going up and down stairs using crutches as prescribed by his physician. The surgery was over, but going under the knife was just one check off the list for Revis. The full-fledged rehabilitation process began a mere six days after the procedure.

Revis' rehabilitation would include a physical therapy program centered around regaining quadriceps function, strength, and control as well as strengthening his core, calf, and hip rotators. The emphasis on quadriceps exercises was necessary because the injury and surgery both cause the thigh muscles to weaken, a phenomenon called quadriceps atrophy.

In addition, the implanted tissue and cells of the Revis' ACL graft would need to heal into and become part of the knee, a process that can take several months. Along the way, he would experience knee pain, swelling, buckling, and difficulty walking as direct consequences of the acute injury. Fortunately for Revis, the physical pain, though, only lasted a couple of weeks.

Instead, the most difficult part of the prolonged rehabilitation process often involves overcoming the mental and emotional pain associated with recovery. Complete healing of the new ACL can take up to 12 to 18 months; however, after about six months or so, it is usually healed enough to allow resumption of athletic activity. Unfortunately, professional athletes such as Revis cannot do anything to accelerate this process and can grow frustrated as a result.

Despite playing 79 career games, making four Pro Bowls, and earning All-Pro honors three times,

Revis reflected on the long rehabilitation process he was going through and knew that making a return to full health threatened to be the most challenging obstacle he had ever faced.

"Adrian Peterson can make the recovery look so easy, but it is far from that," Kremer cautioned.

Before the injury, Revis had been the league's most feared cornerback—a player with the iconic nickname "Revis Island."

But now he found himself on an island of his own, reduced to being a spectator of a game that he had played his entire life. He felt lonely as he watched the Jets' rout of the Indianapolis Colts the week following his injury in a suite at MetLife Stadium. And despite spending hours rehabbing in the Jets' training facility, he never felt that he truly belonged to the team as he stood off the field week after week.

"It can be very hard," Kremer said, "because the athlete is forced to look from the outside in instead of inside out."

Working tirelessly through the rehabilitation process, Revis knew that his goal was not only to return for week one of the 2013 season, but also to return to his level of play prior to the injury.

Accordingly, Revis spent a lot of time researching his injury and seeking advice from a number of athletes who had undergone reconstructive knee surgery, including Adrian Peterson, Donovan McNabb, and his former teammates Antonio Cromartie and Sione Po'uha.

Revis said back in November, "[I'm getting a lot of help and support from a lot of people](#), which is awesome, because it's making me more educated so I can do what I can do to get back on the field as fast as possible."

Last season, it took Peterson several weeks to get rolling after tearing an ACL in December 2011. Eight weeks into the season, Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III is finally regaining the mobility an ACL injury robbed him of in January 2013.

"The process is tedious both physically and mentally, but ultimately, he realizes that he can't let it mold him, Kremer said. "It is something that can be overcome."

The challenge for Revis is ongoing. More than a year later, he has proclaimed himself as still not fully healthy. Indeed, making it onto the field is not enough. Still, Revis has started eight games for the Buccaneers, and [glad to be back playing the game](#) that he longed for last season.

"I'm just more excited to be back out there with my teammates," Revis said. "They've been anxious, I've been anxious. It was a great feeling to be out there and be playing, and compete at a high level."

["I'm just grateful, I just thank God I got a second chance."](#)

1. Rich Cimini. "[Darrelle Revis resumes running](#)," ESPN.
2. Nick Peruffo. "[Revis to have surgery on torn ACL, optimistic he'll be full strength for start of next season](#)," *The Trentonian*.
3. Matt Ehalt. "[Darrelle Revis quiet in return vs. Jets](#)," ESPN.
4. Bill Bradley. "[NFL Media's Andrea Kremer goes inside Darrelle Revis' comeback](#)," NFL.com.
5. Rich Cimini. "[Darrelle Revis' surgery on Tuesday](#)," ESPN.

Published by [Daniel Lewis](#)

I have a passion for sports, be it playing, watching, or writing. I enjoy watching professional basketball, football, and tennis. I treat sports almost as a field of study, watching highlights and attempti... [View profile](#)

[NFL Draft 2010: New York Jets Final Draft Breakdown](#)

The New York Jets have been busy signing free agents before the NFL Draft and in the early rounds of the draft they picked up even more players with speed.



Baltimore Ravens Vs New York Jets: Las Vegas Line & Pick Against the Sp...

Monday Night Football gets off to a rip roaring start September 13th with a defensive battle to the death between the New York Jets and the Baltimore Ravens.



New England Patriots Vs New York Jets: Las Vegas Line & Pick Against th...

Tom Brady had this game circled on his calendar in early August. When the New England Patriots drive down the turnpike to take on the New York Jets September 19th, this could be...



Football Playoff Teams: New York...



The Life of Man: Joe Namath

Reporter Ines Sainz and the New York Jets -- Pictures of a Sexual Harassment Scandal

Give a scandal a sexual angle and everyone wants to see pictures of the parties involved. In the case of the TV Azteca reporter, Ines Sainz, and the New York Jets, the pictures everyone seems to be searching the Inte...



New York Jets Vs Chicago Bears: Las Vegas Line & Pick Against the Spread

The New York Jets travel to the icy cold Soldier Field in Chicago to take on NFC North leader the Chicago Bears December 26th.

[Block All Comments](#)

Post a Comment as Daniel Lewis

Empty text box for user comment.

Post Comment

YAHOO VOICES

- Entertainment
- Auto
- Business
- Creative Writing
- Health
- Home Improvement
- Lifestyle
- News
- Sports
- Tech
- Travel
- Slideshow Library
- Video Library

ALSO ON YAHOO

- Autos
- Celebrity
- Finance
- Games
- Groups
- Health
- All Yahoo Services »
- Mail
- Maps
- Movies
- Music
- My Yahoo
- News
- Shine
- Shopping
- Sports
- Travel
- TV
- Contributor Network

YAHOO CONTRIBUTOR NETWORK

- Help
- Community
- Resources
- Blog
- Forum
- Promotional Tools
- User Search