

New York *Newsday* SPORTS

LT's Surgery Goes OK

Lawrence Taylor could begin playing golf in about three months and do some light running in about four after undergoing surgery yesterday to repair his ruptured right Achilles tendon.

The surgery conducted by Giants team physician Russell F. Warren lasted an hour and 15 minutes at the Hospital for Special Surgery-Cornell Medical Center in Manhattan.

Warren sewed a tear in the tendon, which occurred about an inch and a quarter above the heel. Taylor, 33, was expected to remain in the hospital last night.

A statement released by the Giants said Taylor's lower leg will be placed in a plaster cast for the next four or five days. After that time, he'll be fitted with a bivalve cast that he'll wear for approximately two to three weeks.

He'll then be fitted with a brace that will limit his range of motion, but allow him to begin the rehabilitation process. He will wear the brace for about eight to 10 weeks. If his mobility progresses, he may be allowed to do some light running in March.

Warren was not available for comment, but **Dr. Jacob Rozbruch**, chief orthopedic surgeon at Beth-Israel Medical Center North and a specialist in Achilles tendon surgeries, said it's a good sign that the tear occurred above the heel.

"If it's very close to the bone, the more difficult it is to get a good result," he said. "If it's up near the muscle, the better the result."

Giants trainer Ronnie Barnes said once Taylor begins his range-of-motion exercises, he may be placed in a softer brace so he can begin playing golf and take part in other recreational activities. "That's what he wants to do and we're going to try to accommodate him," Barnes said.

The rehab work will consist of two principles, Barnes said, to increase flexibility and improve the muscle strength in the calf. Along with the standard range-of-

motion exercises, Taylor will undergo a number of manual resistance type of exercises, involving equipment such as rubber bands and foot boards.

"He also will be doing a lot of calf and toe raises and pulling his foot up and down," Barnes said. "There are really no real machines involved, just a lot of toe raises." Taylor, a 10-time Pro Bowl linebacker, is gearing up for the rehab process, although he hasn't said whether he'll return to football next season or retire as he previously intended. While the rehab may be slow and tedious, Barnes doesn't consider it difficult. "Quite frankly, it'll be an easy rehab, barring complications," Barnes said. "I think it'll be uneventful and I think he'll meet the challenge."

A number of NFL athletes have had the same injury and played again, although some not as quickly as others. Bills cornerback Chris Hale suffered a torn Achilles tendon in the middle of the 1990 season and spent the first six weeks of 1991 on the physically-unable-to-perform list before playing five games. Lions quarterback Rodney Peete has torn his Achilles twice, the latest occurring in the eighth game of last season against Dallas. Peete, who also tore the tendon in college, rehabbed with a personal physician in California and was ready for the opener this season.

Seahawks running back Rueben Mayes spent the entire 1989 season on injured reserve after tearing his Achilles tendon. He came back the next season to rush for 510 yards.

NBA star Dominique

Wilkins ruptured his Achilles tendon last January and missed the remainder of the season. Wilkins, 32, was back in the Hawks' starting lineup on opening night.

Lions trainer Kent Falb said Taylor's age may work against him should he want to play again. "It's a little bit harder for an older player to come back than a 22-year-old kid," Falb said. "And he plays a position where acceleration and power are so vital. But if Lawrence does what [Barnes] tells him to do, he'll be OK."

George Willis, STAFF WRITER



Newsday File Photo / David L. Pokress

Though Lawrence Taylor's Achilles tendon surgery went well yesterday, he won't be able to do any running until March.

➔ For more information on Dr. Rozbruch, visit www.JacobRozbruchMD.com