



The Highs and Lows of Ankle Sprains

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The high ankle sprain of Terrell Owens is the latest plague to extend the Philadelphia sports fans' torment of 21 years without a major championship. While the suffering of Philadelphia sports fans is difficult explain to a casual observer, Terrell Owens' injury can be plainly described. Ankle sprains are the most common of all sports injuries and can run a spectrum of severity. By definition, an ankle sprain is a partial or complete rupture of one or more of the ligaments of the ankle joint.

The simple Low ankle sprain occurs as a result of inversion and involves the anterior talofibular ligament located on the outer side of the ankle. More severe "Low" ankle sprains may sequentially involve other ligaments that stabilize the ankle. These low ankle sprains are treated with bracing and rehabilitation and typically heal uneventfully without surgery.

High ankle sprains or syndesmotic injuries are a distinct entity from the more common inversion ankle sprain. High ankle sprains involve a disruption of the ligaments above the ankle joint. These ligaments stabilize the lower portion of the tibia to the lower portion of the fibula and are referred to as the "distal tibiofibular articulation" or "the syndesmosis". High ankle sprains are often the result of twisting on a planted foot such as is seen in football, soccer, skiing and hockey. High ankle sprains can manifest as stable or unstable injuries. Stable High ankle sprains require 3 to 6 weeks of non-weight bearing followed by rehabilitation. Unstable injuries, like Terrell Owens', require surgical stabilization of the distal fibula to the tibia with 1 or 2 screws. The screws are generally removed after 12 weeks to allow enough time for ligament healing. Even if Terrell Owens is in uniform at the time of playoffs, realistic expectations are such that he will not be able to explode out of his stance nor land comfortably from high jumps. However, with a set of pom-poms, he can still be a quality cheerleader!