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3-MAN TEAM PERFORMS SURGERY

Montana's elbow repaired

Operation will sideline 49ers star for rest of season

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SANTA CLARA — Bowing to the inevitable, 49ers quarterback Joe Montana finally had surgery on his right elbow Wednesday night at Stanford Hospital.

Montana, 35, underwent the operation to repair a torn tendon in the elbow of his right, or throwing, arm. It was the seventh surgery of his 13-year professional career and the most serious since a 1986 back operation caused him to miss eight games. He also had an operation to remove a bursa sac in his right elbow in 1988.

Montana, who has been on the 49ers' injured reserve list since Aug. 27, will be out the remainder of the year, marking the first time he has missed an entire season.

The team: "We're a team," says Jennifer Montana of her partner. [C-1]

Joe's ad: He stars in a commercial for pain reliever. [B-1]

Comeback: Joe has many games to go, says Frank Cooney. [D-1]

◆ MONTANA from A-1

Montana undergoes surgery on elbow

49ers scheduled a Thursday morning press conference with Dillingham, who was expected to provide detailed information on the operation. According to the 49ers, the operation went fine and Montana is doing OK.

The damaged area was to a tendon on the inside of Montana's right elbow near the knobby medial epicondyle joint, onto which the pronator teres muscle is attached and which allows the hand to turn palm down.

In a Sept. 9 press conference,

Dr. Dillingham outlined the injury and projected what the surgery would entail:

"It's not a classic tendon tear. There's a point on those muscles that's separated from the tendons, and that creates the problem. It's the pronator and wrist flexors that we're primarily interested in.

"For a repair, what you try to do is take out any abnormal tissue, and if the tear is such that it can be sewn back to where it came from, you do that. That is not always possible. Sometimes you're simply taking out inflamed debris and closing the space so it will heal."

There had been speculation by some orthopedists that ligaments in Montana's elbow were damaged as well — indicative of a more serious injury — but the 49ers have repeatedly denied this.

"If I hear the 'L' word I'm going to get up and walk out of here," Policy said. "There's no suggestion at this point of any damage to the ligaments. This is a tendon situation."

However, an associate of Dr. James Bennett of Houston, sought for one of two second opinions by Montana, said, "Either something has drastically changed since the 49er doctor said that or they are not being completely honest with people out there. The problem involves more than the tendon."

The problem dates to 1981, when Montana required 11 cortisone injections that season for tendinitis in the elbow. Extensive cortisone use can cause calcification to and weakness in a joint. That medical history, along with tens of thousands of passes in the interim, make Montana's return from this operation problematic.

Dillingham, in fact, said there was a 20 percent chance the operation would not be successful and a 10 percent chance the injury could be career-ending.

'Factual optimism'

"From what I understand, there certainly is that chance," Seifert said. "I'm going to think optimistic, as I've thought optimistically through this entire process. But I think this is even more of a factual optimism, from what I understand."

Montana's elbow began to both-

er him in early August. He experienced pain Aug. 3 in Berlin during an exhibition game with the Chicago Bears, his last game action of '91.

Upon returning to training camp in Rocklin, Montana felt more pain in the elbow and received a cortisone shot. It is believed he tore the tendon in his elbow on Aug. 13 when he threw a 40-yard pass in practice. Montana warmed up for an Aug. 19 exhibition game at Candlestick Park but felt more pain and did not play.

Montana rested the elbow until last week, when he threw short passes on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. When he lengthened his passes to 30 yards Saturday, he felt pain for the first time since August and stopped throwing.

Seifert said the 49ers would continue with just two quarterbacks on the active roster, Steve Young and Steve Bono.