

Community TODAY

After the Fall —

A Success Story is Written



Ever since his days playing for Piscataway High School, James Lewis has excelled on the football field.

A graduate of the University of Miami, he was a top-notch, Division I college football player for the Miami Hurricanes, where he was touted on the university's official athletic site as

a "physical tackler and athletic player at strong safety who closed his Miami career in the Rose Bowl against Nebraska." He highlighted Miami's Rose Bowl victory by returning an interception

47 yards for a touchdown. After playing professional football for the European National Football League and soon after signing with America's start-up Indoor Professional League, he suffered an extremely disabling injury that could have ended his days

on the playing field. But because of advanced orthopedic surgery performed by his team physician, Community Medical Center orthopedic surgeon Daniel E. Fox, M.D., Lewis is hoping to return to professional football.



LEWIS:

'I'm Really Glad I Put My Faith in Dr. Fox'

Talk about bad timing.

New Jersey X-treme franchise player James Lewis was playing in his indoor professional football league team's first game at the Continental Airline Arena when he felt something pop while running forward. He would soon learn that he had suffered a complete rupture of an Achilles' tendon.

"It was the first game of the first season, and we were playing Miami," Lewis, who is now 27, recalls. "Achilles' tendons tear, but in my sport it's almost always career ending."

Luckily for Lewis, he was in good hands, as the team physician for the X-treme was Dr. Fox, a board-certified, fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon who has extensive sports medicine experience. Two weeks after suffering the injury, he traveled to Community Medical Center for surgery to repair his completely ruptured tendon.

"James had the same injury that Lawrence Taylor (*retired New York Giants' linebacker and member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame*) had sustained, and that forced him to miss an entire year," says Dr. Fox, chairman of orthopedic surgery at Community.

Lewis recalls that after the surgery, he had to be completely immobile for three months to allow the tendon to heal completely. He then slowly began a physical therapy regimen to rebuild his strength, and today, a year after the surgery, he is pain-free and is once again training to play football.

"When I got hurt, my first thought was that I needed to go back to the University of Miami to see their physicians, because once you're a collegiate athlete, even after you leave the team, you still consider yourself under their care,"

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he says. "But I decided to put my faith in Dr. Fox, and I'm really glad that I did. What I did to my Achilles' tendon — that was really difficult to repair to the point where you can return to normal functioning. Dr. Fox did an amazing job, and he has been so wonderful, calling to check on my progress every couple of months."

Lewis, a Monmouth Junction resident who currently is working as a corrections officer, still has aspirations of returning to life as a professional athlete. "I still plan on playing football and am heading down to Florida for tryouts with the Tampa Bay Storm arena team," he says.

But he also knows that injuries can destroy the future of any athlete. "You work your whole life toward a goal, and in one second, you make one bad move and it can all be over," he says.

For Lewis, the Achilles' tendon repair performed by Dr. Fox has kept his football dreams alive. But for his 4-year-old son, who would love to follow in his father's steps as a star football player, he is hoping to influence him in a different direction.

"I'm trying to push him toward baseball," he says.



Daniel E. Fox, M.D., the chairman of orthopedic surgery at Community Medical Center, is shown here in his Toms River office amid MRI and X-ray images of the torn Achilles' tendon suffered by New Jersey X-treme franchise player James Lewis. Dr. Fox, the team physician for the X-treme, performed surgery at Community to repair Lewis's severely ruptured tendon, and today he is again in training for football.