

Skier Picabo Street already rehabilitating injured knee

■ **REHABILITATION:** Surgery will be performed once the swelling has gone down

By Jon Mossman
The Associated Press

VAIL, Colo. — Surrounded by flowers and gifts from friends and well-wishers, Picabo Street vowed the knee injury which abruptly ended her season will give her fresh motivation for the 1998 Olympics and beyond.

Street, 25, of Sun Valley, Idaho, tore ligaments in her left knee in a downhill training crash on

Wednesday here.

Although the season-ending injury will require surgery once the swelling subsides, Street already has begun rehabilitation.

The two-time defending World Cup downhill champion spent more than an hour Thursday at the Steadman-Hawkins Clinic and was encouraged by her workout.

"I did some motion exercises and rode the bike for about 15 minutes," she said from a bed in her hotel room, an ice machine nearby to aid the reduction of swelling.

"Picabo did a little bit of motion workout, which is great," said John Atkins of the Steadman-Hawkins staff. "It's a good start. We'll see how the rehab goes."

Atkins said the improved motion will help clean out the inner workings of the knee, so U.S. Ski Team surgeon Dr. Richard Steadman will be able to start with arthroscopic surgery and possibly avoid opening up the knee for a full-scale reconstruction.

Steadman, who plans to operate next week, predicted Street would be off snow for at least six months.

Street suffered a complete tear of the anterior cruciate ligament and partial tears of other ligaments in the knee, including the medial collateral. She tore the ACL in the same knee in February 1989.

"The difference now is that I'm on top, so I've got a long way to come back," Street said. "It'll be quite a challenge, but I think it will give me new motivation."

Referring to her earlier injury, Street said, "Now I know myself and my body so much better. When I got to the clinic (Wednes-

day afternoon), I gave my own diagnosis — full tear on the ACL, maybe my medial collateral, too, and some other things. And that's pretty much what it was."

Street, who also underwent surgery on both feet in June to remove bone spurs, was especially fond of one of her gifts — a fuzzy frog accompanied by what she called a "warm note" from Germany's Katja Seizinger, her main rival in downhill.

Street planned to be in the finish area for Friday's downhill race.

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