

Dallas players undergo surgeries

■ **NFL:** Cornerback Deion Sanders' playoff injury will be operated on today

By **Denne H. Freeman**
The Associated Press

IRVING, Texas — A year ago, the Dallas Cowboys were preparing for the Super Bowl. Now instead, they are preparing for or undergoing surgeries, including Wednesday's successful removal of bone spurs from running back Emmitt Smith's right ankle.

Today, it will be cornerback Deion Sanders' turn as a surgeon repairs the damage to his right orbital bone which occurred when he was tackled during the Cowboys playoff loss to the Carolina Panthers.

Offensive tackle Mark Tuinei underwent successful surgery last week to repair a torn ligament in his left knee which had hampered him most of the season. Tuinei was expected to be ready by train-

ing camp in July.

Defensive end Chad Hennings had both elbows scoped for bone fragments last Friday and should be ready for the regular season.

Defensive tackle Charles Haley, who had his second back surgery in 13 months last November, met with Dr. Robert Watkins in California to discuss his situation. Later in February, tight end Jay Novacek, who missed the season with back problems, will seek Watkins' counsel.

Rookie cornerback Wendell Davis had arthroscopic surgery Friday on his right knee to repair torn cartilage.

Defensive lineman Hurvin McCormack is expected to have rotator cuff surgery on his right shoulder on Feb. 23.

Smith, who underwent his surgery at Roosevelt Hospital in New York City, gained only 3.7 yards per carry this season, rushing for 1,204 yards on 327 carries and 12 touchdowns.

Trainer Jim Maurer said Dr. Bill Hamilton removed three bone fragments which Smith had played with during the season.

Smith will remain in New York until Friday and will rest for two weeks before he starts his rehabilitation work.

"We're shooting for trying to get him back for training camp right now," Maurer said. "It's a wonder he played as well as he did this year with the bone fragments in his ankle."

The ankle problem made Smith a half-step slow and negated his usual explosive bursts into the line. The Cowboys offense slumped to 24th in the NFL and was ineffective inside the 20-yard line and on short yardage plays.

Sanders got hurt while running a reverse in the second-half of the 26-17 loss to the Panthers. He was kept overnight in a Charlotte hospital for observation before being flown back to Texas.

Coach: Players suspected move after DeBartolo hinted at possible changes

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quarterback in NFL history to play in the Pro Bowl.

"There's no doubt the bulk of my success in the NFL has been due to Steve Mariucci," Favre has said. "I wouldn't be where I am today without his coaching."

The formal announcement of the coaching change came during a late afternoon news conference, but word of the change swept earlier in the day through the locker room where 49ers players had come to work out.

"It's a big surprise, a shock," cornerback Tyrone Drakeford said. "I don't know if it was something planned or a spur of the moment-type thing."

"From what I understand, Seifert is always under pressure to win the Super Bowl. It keeps mounting each year he doesn't win it. That's part of the business. You take it as it comes."

Certainly, Seifert's departure signals wide-ranging changes for the 49ers, whose season ended in a 35-14 playoff loss at Green Bay two weeks ago.

Defensive coordinator Pete Carroll, a candidate for the St. Louis Rams job, was passed over and the move appears to seal the fate of offensive coordina-

tor Marc Trestman, whose departure has been rumored after players grumbled about his play calls.

Defensive tackle Dana Stubblefield said the team expected changes after the loss to Green Bay and owner Eddie DeBartolo said as much in an address to the club.

"Everybody knew that around the locker room," Stubblefield said. "No matter if it was coaching staff or player-wise, personnel-wise, scouting-wise, something had to change. There was something in the mix that just wasn't right."

"We players knew that. We knew that something was going to happen. We didn't know it was going to be George."

"It's a cold day in January," said tackle Steve Wallace. "I'm left speechless. I don't know the reason. He's a great coach, a class person. It's a sad day for a lot of 49ers fans."

"They must feel that he has a great young mind to give him a position like that," Wallace said of Mariucci. "They must feel he has all the credentials. But he's going to be under a lot of pressure. He's going to be compared to Bill Walsh and George Seifert."

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