

Boys RB Smith hopes to play this week against Cardinals

IRVING (AP) — The grayish scar on Emmitt Smith's right hand starts just below the knuckle of his ring finger and stretches about 3 inches, almost reaching his wrist.

There's enough swelling that he can not completely make a fist. He often wears a soft cast, even when in showers. Wrapping his hand in plastic makes it difficult to scrub his left side.

But Smith discovered that by putting a washrag over the plastic he could stay clean and keep the cast dry. And, he figures, if he can solve that problem then there's got to be a way for him to be in the backfield Sunday when the Dallas Cowboys play the Arizona Cardinals.

"I'm going to be there," Smith said defiantly yesterday. "I'm taking the trip and I expect to dress. And I'm in uniform, I expect to play."

Smith suffered the first broken bone of his life on Oct. 8 when his hand got caught in the facemask of Minnesota defender he was stiff-arming during one of the longest touchdown runs of his career.

His hand began throbbing when he returned to the bench, but a quick turnover by the Vikings forced him back onto the field. He scored again on the next play, then went to the locker room for X-rays.

A plate and six screws were inserted the next day. Doctors said he'd be out 3-6 weeks. He's determined to play 12 days after the operation.

"I'm going to see what happens this week," Smith, whose 748 yards this season are fifth-best in the NFL and have moved him into No. 3 on the career rushing list, behind only Walter Payton and Barry Sanders said.

"I'm going to go through practice and see what I can do with my hand, whether I can catch, whether I'll feel some pain and how much. From that standpoint the question becomes whether I can deal with the pain without it interfering with the way I play."

"But if it's bothering me to the point I don't want to deal with it no more, then I may not fool with it. It's just that simple."

Smith is testing a padded glove similar to the one used by Tampa Bay's Warren Sapp. Comfort is his primary concern.

"It seems to be a good glove, like it can work for me," Smith said.

Smith has two things working in his favor: he's always worn gloves, so that won't be an adjustment, and he carries the ball in his left hand.

But there are some obstacles. "There are certain things I do with my right hand that has allowed me to be the back that I am, like

breaking tackles, utilizing my right hand as a shield," Smith said. "Now when I stick it out there, it's injured and if it gets hit it can be different."

Hockey teams often diagnose broken right hands as sprained left ankles to prevent opponents from going after the damaged area. That's not the case in football, where teams are fined for not fully divulging practically every nick and bruise.

So Smith knows that whatever protection the glove provides, it also will serve as a target for the Cardinals.

"Hey, that's part of the game," he said. "They'd be foolish not to go after it. But we'll see — and we will see."

"I'm going to be there. I'm taking the trip and I expect to dress. And if I'm in uniform, I expect to play"

— EMMITT SMITH
COWBOYS RUNNING BACK



Smith was in agony this past Sunday because he was not playing against Green Bay. It was only the fifth game he'd missed in his 10-year career; it ended up being the first time Dallas won without him.

"It made me sick, it really did," Smith said. "For the first series of the game, it was like I wasn't supportive. I was too busy sucking and licking my own wounds because I couldn't be out on the football field."

Smith's desire to return has helped him be a good patient. Knowing he had to keep the swelling down, he's devoutly kept his hand raised, even while sleeping. The stitches came out Tuesday and he's beginning to take off the soft cast at times, such as for Wednesday's practice.

"If we can continue to push the swelling out, I'm sure the flexibility and mobility will come back," Smith said. "Then, once they come back, it's a matter of strengthening the weak areas."

Smith held up his hand to demonstrate how close he can come to making a fist and how much he can twiddle his fingers.

Then he clasped both hands into a textbook interlocking golf grip.

"I can still do this," Smith said, smiling. "I'm thrilled about that."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Women swimmers host North Texas

After its first home win against the University of Houston, the Texas A&M Women's Swim Team is ready to dive into action against North Texas tonight at 6 in the Student Rec Center Natatorium.

First-year A&M women's swim coach Steve Bultman said he links tonight's meet will be beneficial in preparing the team for future competitions, because swimmers will be given the experience swimming the short-course meet the NCAA has adopted for the Olympic year.

"The pool will be set up for short course meters, and our goal is to get getting used to swimming the meters," Bultman said. "The

meet will be an opportunity and a chance for everyone to swim."

Men's swim team travels to Nike Cup

The Texas A&M Men's Swim Team will compete at the Nike Cup in Chapel Hill, N.C., today through Saturday.

The Aggies will compete against the following teams: Connecticut, East Carolina, James Madison, Kentucky, No. 18 LSU, No. 23 North Carolina, North Carolina State, Old Dominion, Syracuse, UNC-Wilmington and West Virginia.



NASH

A&M baseball team signs new players

Texas A&M baseball coach Mark Johnson announced Tuesday the signing of seven players during the early signing period. All of the signees are from Texas.

Four of the seven signees are pitchers: Kyle Parcus, a left-hander from Rosebud-Lott; Robert Ramsey, a right-hander from Austin; Chris French, a left-hander from Arlington and Brian Shallock, a left-hander from McKinney.

The other three signees are infielders: Erik Schindewolf from Klein, Kelly Johnson from Austin and Matt Alexander from Arlington.

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