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Surgical precision

McNair's injured back worse than initially expected

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) -- The ruptured disc in [Steve McNair's](#) back was found to be worse than expected during surgery Sunday, but the [Tennessee Titans](#) quarterback is still on target to return for an Oct. 31 game against the [St. Louis Rams](#).



Dr. Robert Watkins operated on McNair in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California, and Dr. Burton Elrod, the Titans' team physician, said Watkins found that the disc was fragmented larger than they had thought.

"When you get a fragment that big, I'm told it's like putting [6-foot-7, 320-pound Titans tackle] [Jon Runyan](#) in a Beetle bug," Elrod said.

Watkins, who also has operated on the backs of [Troy Aikman](#) and Joe Montana, repaired the disc, and McNair was resting comfortably.

Coach Jeff Fisher tried to reach McNair by telephone after the Titans beat the [Cleveland Browns](#) 26-9, only to get a busy signal. McNair, who had started 34 consecutive games before Sunday, will start his rehabilitation in Los Angeles before returning to Nashville on Thursday.

He injured his back during training camp and wound up missing two weeks of practice and two exhibition games with back spasms and stiffness. McNair started the Titans' final exhibition and their season opener in which he threw for a career-high 341 yards, but he apparently reinjured his back in practice Friday.

"We thought we'd get Steve by without surgery, ... but he was in too much pain and we couldn't treat him conservatively," Elrod

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