


Win Free Movie Passes Sports Tickets & more

ajc.com
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

 **PRINT THIS**

 Click to Print

VISIT WATKINS SPINE.COM

ajc.com > [Print Edition](#)

Bell shoots to return next season

By [Larry Hartstein](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Tuesday, January 20, 2009

The doctor who performed spinal surgery on Georgia Tech senior D'Andre Bell says there's a "very good chance" he'll be able to play next season.

Dr. Robert Watkins said the Dec. 18 laminoplasty — a procedure to fix the narrowing of Bell's spinal canal — went exactly as planned. Bell will start rehab in about a month, and his ability to complete some exercises at the highest level of difficulty will determine if he can play again, Watkins said.

"He doesn't have a neurology deficit, and his hands are functioning better after the surgery than before," said Watkins, who is based in Marina del Rey, Calif., and has operated on athletes such as the Indiana Pacers' T.J. Ford.

"I think it's just significantly positive, his chances of returning to play."

Tech's 6-foot-6 co-captain took a redshirt in hopes of playing next season. He's on track to earn his business management degree in May. If the rehab goes well, Bell will use his final year of eligibility while starting an MBA or pursuing a dual degree.

If he can't play, he'll look for a job in marketing or sales.

"I'm in a peculiar situation," Bell said. "I was hoping to play professionally and when I was done with that find a job. But I didn't put all my eggs in one basket."

Bell entered preseason workouts as Tech's best defender and one of its better midrange shooters.

Diving for a loose ball on Oct. 10, he collided with Zachery Peacock's leg and felt numbness, then tingling in his extremities. It was not the first time Bell had felt tingling, but it was the most severe episode.

The diagnosis was spinal stenosis, an abnormal narrowing in the cervical portion of his spine.

Watkins said he inserted four one-inch titanium plates that give Bell "a tremendous increase in the room of the spinal canal."

The surgery lasted six hours, and Bell stayed in the hospital four days. He recovered at home in Los Angeles, returning for the start of the semester.

A team captain along with Peacock and Lewis Clinch, Bell has been sorely missed: the Jackets are 0-4 in the ACC entering today's 7 p.m. against Boston College at Alexander Memorial Coliseum.

Tech could use his perimeter defense, his 15-foot jumper and especially his toughness.

"It's been very tough, very emotional," Bell said. "It hurts sometimes because you know what you can do and you know what differences you can make if you were out there."

With five top recruits on the way and just two senior starters, Tech should be a lot deeper next season. Bell is not worried about what his role might be.

"I will get in where I fit in," he said. "I think it will make our team better as a whole. I love it. I pray these guys are as good as they're praised to be."

Bell said he's handled this forced break from basketball a lot better than the injury that wiped out half his senior season of high school, when a stress fracture in his right foot ended his dream of becoming a McDonald's All-American.

"I was very bitter, very depressed. Literally I wasn't the same me," he said. "But I'm glad I had the chance to experience that because I learned a lot. I can't be just this one thing, a ballplayer.


"If I had that same mindset, I would not be graduating."

NEXT FOR TECH

- > Who: vs. Boston College
- > When: 7 p.m. today
- > TV; radio: FSSO; 790 AM

Find this article at:

<http://www.ajc.com/sports/content/printedition/2009/01/20/techhoops0120.html>

 Click to Print

[EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Win Free **Movie Passes** **Sports Tickets** **& more**