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Clippers basketball

Injured Clippers guard Chauncey Billups is practicing patience

He says he doesn't want to 'compromise all the hard work' he had done this summer by rushing his recovery from Achilles' tendon surgery. He has been cleared to take part in limited team drills.

By Broderick Turner

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it really hasn't been that difficult for 6-foot-3 Clippers guard Chauncey Billups to temper his excitement in training camp.

He has been excited to join Chris Paul in the backcourt with the starting team at practice during some drills and offensive sets. However, Billups has been low-key about this because he knows he isn't ready for full contact because he's not fully recovered from left Achilles' tendon surgery.

"I think if I was younger it would be tougher," said the 36-year-old Billups. "But I'm not fighting myself off at all because I know how severe this injury really was. And I'm not going to compromise all the hard work that I've put in all summer ... to get back a week earlier."

Billups tore his Achilles' tendon Feb. 6 in a game at Orlando and had surgery to repair it the Feb. 15.

He said all the talk about him returning from his injury in January or February was all media driven, and not anything the Clippers' doctors told him.

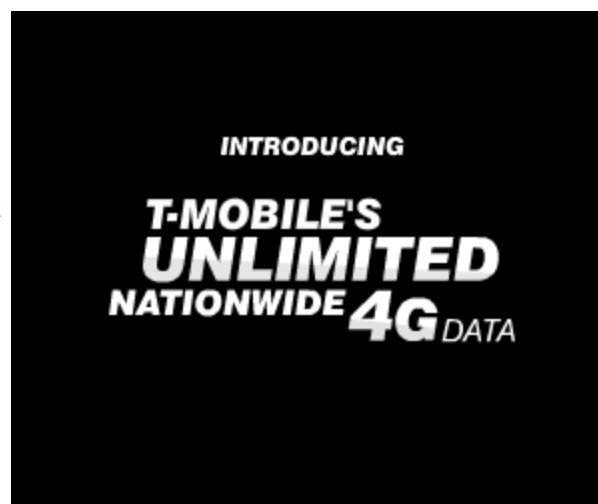
"My plan was just as soon as possible, as soon as I felt good," Billups said. "Obviously it's like a nine- to 12-month recovery and rehab period when you're supposed to return to play."

Billups has been cleared to take part in limited team drills.

When the Clippers start scrimmaging or doing physical drills, Billups goes to the sideline.

"I'm kind of at the end the last phase of my rehab, which is the explosive type of stuff," Billups said. "So I'm not quite where I need to be."

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Billups said he is running full speed and cutting. He just can't explode the way he wants.

But the Clippers have a deep team, with veteran players such as guard Jamal Crawford, small forward Grant Hill, guard Willie Green and swingman Matt Barnes, and they make it easier for Billups to be patient because he knows the Clippers are in good hands.

"That just gives me the opportunity to really take my time and be patient," Billups said. "I can come back when I feel good."

Second unit

After just four practices, it has been a seamless transition for the reserves to work together.

But when you have a bunch of unselfish veterans, Hill said, it's not hard to work as one.

"We've got some guys that know how to play," Hill said. "It's sort of a new environment for all of us with the concepts. We've kind of seen them all before, done them all before. But, yeah, for a team that has a bunch of new faces and [reserve] unit, for the most part, us coming together for the first time, it's going better than I thought at this point."

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