



# Classic Performance



## Sidelined Santos Seeks Return to Riding

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More than four months after an Aqueduct racing accident left Jose Santos with five fractured vertebrae and a fractured sternum, the Eclipse Award-winning jockey remains on the sidelines – but an innovative new therapy may facilitate his eventual return to the saddle.

Santos, 46, fractured his sternum and received compression fractures to the T-5, T-6, T-7, T-8, and T-9 vertebrae in a three-horse spill Feb. 1 of this year. The injury occurred when his mount, the 3-year-old filly For a Prayer, went down and suffered a fatal neck injury. The other horses and riders involved in the spill were not severely injured, although jockey Ramon Dominguez was briefly sidelined with bruising to the bone of his right knee.

Following treatment at New York's Jamaica and North Shore University Hospitals, Santos was fitted with a removable body cast and was released to the home of a family friend, where he remained before he was cleared to travel to Florida. Although doctors initially considered surgery to be a viable option, Santos declined in the hopes of riding again.

**Jockey Jose Santos is trying to return from his catastrophic injury.**

Photo: Barbara D. Livingston

Speaking from Miami May 17, Santos said he will begin a post-injury rehab regimen next week with his New York physician in order to build up the muscles around the area that was injured and return his body to the condition it was in before the accident. The rehab process will take approximately six-to-eight weeks. Santos will also undergo regular

treatments from a new therapy program called Nuromed, which is a pain-management method that the rider hopes will facilitate his return to the racetrack.

"I tried this method today and I wish I'd known about it two months ago," Santos said of the Nuromed machine, which delivers electric impulses to the body in varying degrees during treatment sessions. "I walked into the clinic in pain this morning and walked out pain-free."

Although Santos has committed to an extensive rehab program, his physicians fear insufficient bone growth around the fractured areas will limit, if not obliterate, the feasibility of a return to racing. Santos, however, remains optimistic.

"If my back is strong and I can ride, that's definitely an option," he said. "The question is, will the bones heal strong enough so that I can get back in the saddle? I don't know. I'm hoping this new treatment method will help."

"This is an exciting new therapy that Jose has started that will hopefully lead him to make the right decision about a return to riding," said Santos' public relations manager, Kelly Wietsma of Equisponse. "When you make a decision in pain it's going to be the decision not to ride, and if he can get through a non-invasive treatment that eliminates pain his goal is to get back to riding, that's what he loves to do."

An Eclipse Award winner in 1988, Santos led the nation in earnings four consecutive years (1986-'89). He has seven Breeders' Cup victories to his name, including the 2002 Classic with 43-1 longshot Volponi. Winner of the 1999 Belmont Stakes (gr. I) aboard Lemon Drop Kid and the Kentucky Derby (gr. I) aboard Funny Cide in 2003, he has led the standings at Saratoga, Belmont, Aqueduct, Gulfstream, Hialeah, and Calder. A native of Chile, he was presented with the George Woolf Memorial Jockey Award from the Jockeys' Guild in 1999 and won ESPN's ESPY Award as outstanding jockey in 2003. He has ridden 4,083 winners to date.

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