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Nick Malceski.

Photo: *Craig Golding*

## Malceski's amazing recovery

May 16, 2008

**THE decision, in the end, was simple for Sydney coach Paul Roos.**

**He couldn't find a single reason why Nick Malceski shouldn't play against Essendon tomorrow, so he made the selection, filed his team with the AFL, and with that, one of the most remarkable stories in Australian sporting medicine is nearly complete.**

**Just 13 weeks after rupturing his anterior cruciate ligament, and only 86 days after undergoing surgery to correct what is normally a season- ending injury, Malceski will run onto ANZ Stadium and resume a season which not so long ago, appeared over.**

**On February 22, Malceski underwent the revolutionary procedure of French surgeon J P. Laboureau - conducted by Australian surgeon Danny Biggs - known as LARS (ligament augmentation and reconstruction system), to repair his torn ligament with a durable industrial-strength synthetic fibre.**

"When we spoke to Nathan (Gibbs, the club doctor) and Matty Cameron (the physiotherapist) and got him medically ticked off, we probably couldn't find a reason not to play him," Roos said. "In the end you're looking for some reason why you wouldn't play a player and none of us could come up with a reason why we wouldn't play him.

"He was second in our best and fairest last year and had a solid pre- season before he did his knee, and he'd already played a couple of practice games. You couldn't not pick him after the way he trained. He's aerobically fit and his conditioning for footy is good.

"My role as the coach is to pick the best 22 every single week we go out and I have in the last four sessions he's had, and they have obviously been getting harder and harder as each session has gone along.

"With any player coming back from an injury like Nick has, a lot of it is confidence to allow yourself to get hit and twisted and Craig Bolton did him a favour today when he landed on his knee. That was nice of Craig, perhaps not in the script though, but Nick got up from that no problem.

"We're not out of the woods in terms of him getting through, not just this weekend's game, but many more games to come. I'm not going to be celebrating until the year is over and he's had a good season and his knee's gone well. It would be a great thing if it works, not just for Nick's case, but for anyone in sports medicine. To make a 12-month recovery become three, is just fantastic. It will be great if it works because it will revolutionise how we treat ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) ruptures, and they apply to every football code."

While it had been thought that Malceski would make his return to football this weekend, it was originally expected to take place in the reserves. However, Roos revealed he spoke to Malceski after Wednesday's training session and told him he was considering putting him straight back into the seniors.

"I spoke to him to give him an idea of what we were thinking if he got through and I think initially he was a little bit shocked that we would be thinking about him playing seniors.

"But today before he started training, he said he had his head firmly on playing in the seniors on Sunday. We're excited about at having him playing but we're not expecting him to set the world on fire on Sunday. We'll play him around 60-80 minutes off the bench."

Ed Barlow makes way for Malceski's return with Nick Smith and Luke Brennan dropping off the extended bench.

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