

ACL Comeback: Gia Trevisan

After tearing her ACL, Gia Trevisan pivoted from soccer to track, using PRP therapy and a strong support system to recover. Her story is one of resilience, adaptation, and trusting the process on the road to becoming an Olympian.

ACL tears are incredibly common among women athletes. But they don't have to stop us in our tracks.

VIS Mentor and Olympic track athlete Gia Trevisan didn't let her ACL tear keep her from sports. Instead, she turned setbacks into opportunities and changed her path from the field to the track.

Once a passionate soccer player for Slammers FC with dreams of Division I college soccer, Trevisan's journey took an unexpected turn when she tore her ACL during a high school game in the summer of 2007.

Treatment Plan

Instead of traditional surgery, Trevisan opted for platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy: a regenerative therapy that involves concentrating your blood's platelets and injecting them into the injured ACL to promote accelerated healing, reduce pain, and increase cellular activity and tissue regeneration.

A few years later, when lingering meniscus pain returned, Trevisan underwent another round of PRP treatments and a meniscus shaving procedure, which required six more weeks of recovery.

After her injury, Trevisan had to rethink her college options.

She saw herself as a soccer player with a lot of speed, and she decided to capitalize on that strength and transition into track and field.

Today, Trevisan is a World Championship finalist, Italian National Champion, Olympic finalist, and 2x All-American in Track and Field—a testament to resilience, determination, and the power of PRP therapy in her recovery journey.

Initial Feelings

Trevisan initially tore her ACL at a college soccer showcase in Texas. Focused on impressing college coaches, she didn't want to leave the field.

"I really wanted to be playing through the pain so I could get a scholarship somewhere," Trevisan said. "At the time, my coach didn't let me play the rest of the weekend because he knew something was wrong. So I really appreciate him for that."

Trevisan thought her athletic career was over. She thought that a surgery so young would make recovery too challenging.

"My mom was adamant about not getting surgery but trying PRP as she works in a hospital and sees the recovery from surgery and how daunting it can be," Trevisan said.

Trevisan's Road to Recovery

Beginning the Process

As the recovery process began, Trevisan trusted her mom's expertise and opinions around surgery and treatment options. Looking back, she wants other girls to know that it's crucial that we can trust coaches to not rush an athlete's return to play.

"I think as young athletes, we are so keen to want to be on the field all the time, and it feels like our life revolves around our ability to prove ourselves on the field," Trevisan said.

Building Strength

Trevisan went to physical therapy three times a week, where her therapist designed a thorough and specific recovery process. They focused on single leg strength and building up other areas of her body to support her knee. Trevisan also wore a brace for a few weeks while getting back into training.

"I felt as though I had a good timeline to play again, and I was also able to run before I could play," Trevisan said. "I tried to stay in shape on the track and that helped my recovery a lot. I think having a good base goes a long way."

Back in Action

When Trevisan started to return to the field, her first dynamic movements were running and covering ground in a straight line. She did unilateral strength work and exercises where she would pivot forward and back but not side-to-side.

"I had trusted the path of recovery for the few months in the lead up to play. If I had any pain, we'd navigate that and focus on rehab before I go to another level on the field of play," Trevisan said. "I would focus on certain movements on the field and try to be more aggressive over time."

I think there is definitely a build up to where you need to trust yourself and the support team around you.”

Return to Play

Trevisan’s return to play was made possible by her support crew. From her soccer coach to her physical therapist and doctors, she relied on those around her to guide her through the process.

“Mentally, I felt that I was very anxious to play and was a little impatient,” Trevisan said. “I know most athletes probably are in that position, but I knew my goal and knew that in order for me to get back out there, I had to wait. The most important part of this process is knowing that the people around you are the ones guiding you and they are professionals.”

She credits her club soccer coach, parents, and teammates for their support throughout the recovery process.

“I give a lot of credit to my Slammers FC club coach. He had a lot of faith in my recovery and really believed that I could be a great player. He was always giving life lessons at training and I really took them to heart,” Trevisan said. “My parents supported me at every step and helped me believe in myself. All of my teammates from my soccer team and high school track team were also all supportive of me getting back out there and knew the recovery would not be a linear progression.”

Lessons Learned

Trevisan took away three lessons from her injury:

1. Trust your support system.
2. Be flexible about the process because the path is not linear.
3. Focus on the positives and small wins every day.

From the physical therapist’s office to the Olympic Stadium, Trevisan shows us that obstacles can be overcome. She stayed focused, trusted her team, and navigated the complex recovery of an ACL injury.

“Sports really changed my life, and even if it’s not a sport or event that we want to do right away, we can learn to love it,” Trevisan said. “We can learn to fall in love with the process and not just the results. I think if I had been resistant to changing sports and finding my love for track and field, I would have never had the experiences I had, made life-long friends or become the person I am today.”

Above all, Trevisan was flexible. She used her injury as a springboard to focus on a new sport—and it paid off.