

## A.J. FOYT: HIS RECOVERY



Foyt outside his Houston home. The apparatus on his left foot is called an Ilizarov System, a unique device of tension mounted wires.

On September 23, 1990 during the Texaco-Havoline 200 Indy car race at Road America in Elkhart Lake, WI, A.J. Foyt was seriously injured. The brake pedal broke on his 1990 Lola as he approached turn one and the car sailed off the track plowing through a dirt embankment approximately 100 yards away.

*"There were no brakes so I had to make a snap decision. I started turning and I knew if I barrel-rolled it, there'd be nothing left. So I elected to go off at an angle, hoping to slow down but it just took to the air."*

The brutal impact sheared off the nose cone leaving Foyt's feet and legs exposed as the chassis' front end folded under as the car finally stopped.

Foyt, who never lost consciousness, tried to extricate himself from the wreckage but his feet and legs were buried in the dirt.

Dr. Terry Trammell of the CART Safety Team was one of the first on the scene. He said afterwards, "After dogpaddling out some of the dirt, I found his one foot, but I couldn't figure out how his knee could be where it was and his foot be where it was and still be connected. . . . Once we got it all dug out and could see the way things were laying, it was quite a relief."

*"I knew I was in serious trouble with my feet. I tried to pull them loose . . . I was hurting so bad I asked 'em (safety team), 'Can't y'all please do something for the pain?' And they said they gave me enough medication to knock out a mule . . . I told one person, 'Why don't y'all pick up a hammer and hit me upside the head with it . . . I wasn't joking. I just wanted to be knocked out unconscious. I've never hurt so bad in my life.'"*

Foyt was airlifted to Milwaukee County Medical Complex where a team of surgeons operated on Foyt to re-establish circulation in his left leg which was in danger of being amputated. Foyt's injuries included: a severely dislocated right heel, dislocated left tibia, broken left knee, crushed left heel and compartment syndrome (severe swelling) to both feet.

*"When they were talking about amputating my leg that night, that gave me a pretty good scare. I just couldn't see them having to cut one of my legs off. I don't know how I could've accepted that . . . When I signed the release for them to operate I said, 'I'm letting you operate to re-establish blood flow to my feet but not to amputate.'"*