Dr. Petre’s Achilles Non-Operative Rehab Protocol
Thanks To Dr Thomas Clanton, Vail CO for this protocol

Key considerations per Dr. Petre:

1. Avoid creating pain – discomfort is okay but pain should not occur and persist 3 days in a row. If it does, rest the patient until pain level is clearly decreasing. If it does not decrease, have doctor evaluate.
2. Avoid all passive motion into DF for 1st 6 weeks when coming out of cast/boot when treated non-operatively.
3. Weight-bearing has been shown in studies to improve strength of healing with no increase in re-rupture rate – just protect from any dorsiflexion forces, especially unexpected ones (therefore the importance of the boot with limiting of DF).
4. CKC exercises can be uncomfortable and fatiguing, but should not cause pain and/or swelling; if this happens back off the amount of stress.
5. Major risk of re-rupture occurs at 6 weeks to 4 months, especially when unprotected.
6. Do not expect an athlete to return to competitive situation any earlier than 6 months, and usually not until 9-12 months.
7. Expect some Achilles discomfort (usually insertional) when athlete first resumes competitive participation and the stresses that accompany such participation. Manage with routine anti-inflammatory measures. If necessary, rest and use patches (diclofenac, nitroglycerin).
8. Avoid over stretching the tendon repair. This will result in weakness and loss of athletic ability. It’s better for it to be too tight than too loose.

Weeks 8-12:

ROM
Retrograde edema massage, soft tissue mobilization, scar mobs, etc.
Joint mobilizations, no passive DF, active ROM in all planes and gentle active assisted motion (i.e. the player should be initiating all movement during this time period and particularly avoid DF above neutral to prevent stretching the repair)

Strength
Intrinsics
INV, EV, PF- light theraband, light manual resistance

Supplementary strength: quads, hamstrings, hip abd/add, rotators, gluts
Supplementary cardio: single leg rowing, biking, UBE

Pool
Aqua-jogging after week 3, no floor contact

Gait
Wean from crutches, continue to wear boot. Progress to full weight bearing in boot as tolerated.
Weeks 12-16:

ROM
Continue with ROM within limits
Mobilizations, assist to get DF to neutral if not already there (prefer to have 10 degrees DF by 8 weeks)
Start bike (very limited resistance and check that ankle does not go into excessive DF on the pedal)

Strength
Intrinsics
Theraband exercises – all directions and progress resistance as tolerated
BAPS ROM and proprioception/rhythmic stabilization
Manual resistance exercises, but cautious with DF resistance

Pool
Walking chest depth
Aqua jogging, no ground contact

Gait
Wean out of boot*
Weight shifting exercises, work on fundamentals of gait, etc.
Supportive shoe with heel lift (usually start with half inch lift and then drop to quarter inch after 2 weeks, eliminate lift after 2 more weeks or when patient comfortable

*Weaning Out of Boot
1st week – out of boot for 1 hour in the morning and 1 hour in the afternoon
2nd week – out of boot for 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon
3rd week – out of boot for 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours in the afternoon
4th week – out of boot completely
**Weeks 16-24:**

**ROM**
Regain full DF, beginning to push DF (within tolerance)
Joint mobs if indicated

**Strength**
Intrinsics, theraband program
Seated BAPS program
CKC(closed kinetic chain) exercises within tolerance
Seated heel raises, can add low weight, progress to double leg heel raises by week 12
Bike and gradually add resistance, start elliptical trainer as tolerated toward week 12

**Pool**
Pool walking, if underwater treadmill, begin incline to tolerance

**Gait**
Emphasize gait pattern as patient weans from boot, and weans from heel lift in shoe

**Months 4-5:**

**ROM**
Push DF if necessary, regain symmetrical ROM

**Strength**
Unlimited CKC progression if tolerated
Double leg heel raises to tolerance
Single leg balance progression

**Pool**
Squats, Lunges, Single leg heel raises
Fast Pace Walking
Eccentrics at shoulder depth

**Gait**
Walking on treadmill, incline
Begin water jogging, floor contact (underwater treadmill)
Start Alter-G if available with weight-bearing pressure started at 50%, add 10% every 4-7 days as tolerated

**Month 5-6**
ROM
Any remaining ROM gains

Strength
Begin single leg heel raises
Initiate eccentrics
  *begin with prone manual, progress to standing double leg heel raise with single leg eccentric lower to floor
Full CKC program
Lunges, Reverse Lunges, etc.
Initiate movement prep/functional warm-up program
Functional single leg balance exercises, add UE challenges (throwing)

Pool
Eccentrics chest depth
Cont. Running progression in pool with treadmill
Begin initial agilities

Month 6-7+

Strength/Gait
Agilities
Begin running progression
Progress weight in CKC program
Progress to sport activity