



Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist 'moving in right direction,' but has no return date

BY JUSTIN TASCH [Follow](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Friday, March 6, 2015, 6:51 PM A A A

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Henrik Lundqvist is excited by how well the Rangers have played in his absence.

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It's been a month since Henrik Lundqvist has played in a game after suffering a sprained blood vessel in his neck, but the Rangers goalie is feeling "pretty good" and has started facing pucks on low shots. He doesn't know yet when he'll be cleared for contact.

"It's hard," Lundqvist said Friday. "I know we're moving in the right direction, but we haven't set any date. Until then I'm just gonna focus on staying in shape and working on the ice. If I was unable to skate, it would've been a bigger issue, because I'd have to take a longer time to get game ready. Now I can skate, stay in shape and work hard."

Lundqvist said because he's been able to condition, he'll "absolutely" be close to game-ready once he's cleared by doctors and he feels he'll ultimately be fresher during the playoffs.

After the injury, Lundqvist played an entire game against the Panthers before the diagnosis. He has no second thoughts about playing in that game.

"The way I felt, I felt like I was ready to play," he said. "It's not something I'm second-guessing at all. Obviously after we did the evaluation and we talked about it, I think we all felt it was good that we caught this."

The now 33-year-old – his birthday was Monday – said he's missed playing the game but is excited about how well the Rangers have played in his absence. They've won 10 of 15 games since he's been out with backup Cam Talbot holding down the fort in net.

General manager Glen Sather was busy leading up to the trade deadline, acquiring defenseman and power-play specialist **Keith Yandle from Arizona** and depth center James Sheppard from San Jose. Lundqvist explained it's always tough to see teammates traded, but he's enthusiastic about the moves.

"I think we all feel excited about what's ahead here, and now it's about pushing ourselves to the limit here when it's time to go into the playoffs and be peaking at the right time," Lundqvist said.

Lundqvist spoke at the Helen Mills Event Space in Manhattan where the Henrik Lundqvist Foundation was hosting an exhibition for six goalie masks he'll wear once each designed by celebrity friends including John McEnroe, Tiesto, Jeff Gordon, Michael J. Fox and Mario Batali.

There's also one mask he won't be wearing: An entirely crystal-encrusted mask designed by artist Don Blanton, a neighbor of Lundqvist's.

The auctions for the masks began Friday with the proceeds benefiting his foundation and the Garden of Dreams. Bidding is taking place at www.HLundqvistFoundation.com/TheMask.

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