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SPORTS

The silver lining of Lundqvist's injury that helps Rangers' hopes

By Brett Cyrgalis

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Henrik Lundqvist
Photo: Bill Kostroun

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When Henrik Lundqvist went down with a sprained blood vessel in his neck in early February, it seemed as if the bottom was falling out of the Rangers' world.

Now, more than a month later, with Lundqvist still recovering, the team is in terrific position for the playoffs and the injury is getting spun into a positive.

"That's the way I look at it right now," Lundqvist said on Friday night before an event in Manhattan where six to-be-used masks, plus one encased in crystal, went up for auction, with the proceeds going to his namesake charity foundation.

"You can choose so many ways to approach this. For

SCOREBOARD

NHL

Rangers	(42-17-7)	3	F
Capitals	(36-22-10)	1	
Sabres	(19-42-6)	3	F
Maple Leafs	(27-35-6)	4	
Ducks	(42-20-7)	3	F
Flames	(37-25-5)	6	

COLUMNISTS

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me, right now I'm taking this as an opportunity to rest and I'm super excited to come back playing. I can't wait, but until then I'll focus on things I can control. I definitely think it can [help me] stay fresh down the

line."

Lundqvist, who turned 33 on Monday, had no clearer timetable for his return, saying, "It's hard to know when this is healing, so it's more for the doctors to take a look at it."

The Rangers' franchise cornerstone was injured on Feb. 2 in a game against the Hurricanes when his own captain, Ryan McDonagh, inadvertently lifted Lundqvist's mask with his stick and a Brad Malone shot hit him in the throat. Lundqvist said he neck snapped back so hard, that a blood vessel in the back of his neck was the one sprained.

"First week or so was little so-and-so, but that was more from the puck hitting it," Lundqvist said. "But after that I've been feeling fine, so it's just waiting for good results."

When Lundqvist was injured, he was checked out by the medical staff and stayed in the game. He then played two nights later against the Panthers, after which it came out the symptoms were not going away and that he could have suffered a stroke if he kept playing.

But asked if there was any second-guessing about the doctors' diagnosis, Lundqvist answered, "No.

"The way I felt, I felt like I was ready to play," he said. "So it's not something I'm second guessing at all. Obviously after we did the evaluation and talked about it I think we all felt it was good that we caught this because it's a unique situation. Different type of injury. I'm just glad they caught it and nothing really bad happened."

Lundqvist has been on the ice for more than a week taking shots, and even tweeted out a video of himself working with goalie coach Benoit Allaire earlier on Friday.

"Another day of quick feet workout," he wrote. "REALLY miss playing.. patience is key right now."

Lundqvist also said he "feels good," but wasn't admitting to any sort of target date for a return.

"I know we're moving in the right direction, but we haven't set any date for it," he said. "Until then I'm just going to focused on staying in shape and working on the ice. If I wasn't able to skate it would be a bigger issue it would take me much longer to get game-ready. But now I can skate and stay in shape. It's just the contact part I have to cut out."

The good news for Lundqvist is that when he does return, he doesn't have to be some sort of savior for a team in peril. The Rangers have gone 10-2-3 in the 15 games he has missed, and sit two points behind the Islanders for tops in the Metropolitan Division.

And with trade-deadline acquisitions Keith Yandle and Jimmy Sheppard starting to settle in, things seem to be falling into place for the Blueshirts.

"[I'm] excited to see what the new guys bring," Lundqvist said. "I think we all feel excited about what's ahead here. Now it's just about pushing ourselves to the limit so when it's time to go into the playoffs, we're peaking at the right time."

— Additional reporting by Dan Martin

FILED UNDER [HENRIK LUNDQVIST](#), [NEW YORK RANGERS](#)

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