



**AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Thursday, February 8, 2024**

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Nuts & Bolts: Back-to-back ends with a matchup against the Islanders **Chris Krenn (TampaBayLightning.com)**

Everything you need to know ahead of Tampa Bay's matchup against the New York Rangers on Wednesday.

When: Thursday, February 8 - 8:00 p.m. ET

Where: UBS Arena - Long Island, NY

TV coverage: TNT (check local listings)

Radio coverage: 102.5 MHz-FM, Lightning Radio 24/7

Where to stream it: TNTdrama.com

Lines from Wednesday's game (subject to change)

Nick Paul - Brayden Point - Nikita Kucherov

Steven Stamkos - Anthony Cirelli - Brandon Hagel

Mikey Eyssimont - Tyler Motte - Conor Sheary

Alex Barre-Boulet - Luke Glendening - Mitchell Chaffee

Defensemen

Victor Hedman - Darren Raddysh

Mikhail Sergachev - Erik Cernak

Emil Lilleberg - Nick Perbix

Goaltenders

Andrei Vasilevskiy

Jonas Johansson

Thursday's Matchup

The Lightning and Islanders are playing the first of three matchups this season and the first of two meetings at UBS Arena...The Bolts posted a 2-1-0 record vs. NYI last season, winning both contests at AMALIE Arena and dropping the lone game played on Long Island...Brayden Point (2-4—6) led all Tampa Bay skaters in assists and points vs. NYI last season and was tied with Nikita Kucherov (2-2—4) for the team lead in goals...Point has found the scoresheet in six consecutive games vs. NYI (4-7—11) and has recorded at least one assist in each of the six contests...Kucherov is riding a six-game point streak vs. NYI (2-7—9)...Steven Stamkos has picked up points in 16 of his last 20 contests vs. NYI (11-13—24)...Victor Hedman has recorded five points over his last six games vs. NYI (1-4—5)...Brandon Hagel has posted three points over his last three contests vs. NYI (2-1—3)...Anthony Cirelli has three points over his last four games vs. NYI (1-2—3)...The Bolts are 6-4-0 in their last 10 road games at NYI and 7-3-0 in the last 10 meetings overall...The Lightning are 56-44-6 with three ties all-time vs. NYI, including a road record of 24-27-2 with one tie...Vincent Lecavalier (23-23—46) holds the Lightning franchise records for career goals and points vs. NYI, while Stamkos (21-24—45) leads the way in assists.

Injuries

Haydn Fleury – Upper-body, day-to-day

Mikhail Sergachev – Lower-body, day-to-day

Tanner Jeannot – Lower-body, week-to-week

Austin Watson – Lower-body, week-to-week

The Road Ahead

Saturday, February 10 at Columbus Blue Jackets

Tuesday, February 13 at Boston Bruins

Thursday, February 15 vs. Colorado Avalanche

Lightning's Mikhail Sergachev sustains scary leg injury in return **Eduardo A. Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

NEW YORK — In recent days, as Mikhail Sergachev neared his first game in more than seven weeks, his smile was back.

The Lightning defenseman had been frustrated by how long it took to recover from the lower left leg injury he sustained Dec. 19, but he was invigorated by his return to the Lightning lineup. The team played its first game coming out of the All-Star break on Wednesday night at Madison Square Garden.

Sergachev's return took a sudden turn 27 minutes into the game with the Rangers. His night — and potentially his season — ended in a stream of emotion that was visible on the 25-year-old's face as he was wheeled off the ice, sitting up on a stretcher after suffering a devastating injury. His left leg had crumpled underneath his own weight as he awkwardly he fell to the ice during the Lightning's 3-1 loss.

"It's not fun," Lightning captain Steven Stamkos said of watching his teammate go down. "You feel sick to your stomach."

"It was terrible," echoed Lightning coach Jon Cooper, who was visibly emotional after the game. "I feel awful for him."

At the seven-minute mark in the second period, Sergachev was closing in on Rangers forward Alexis Lafreniere in the corner near the defensive zone right circle. Protecting the puck, Lafreniere sensed Sergachev's approach and braced for the hit, leaning into Sergachev as he made contact. Sergachev fell backward, his left leg twisting under his own weight as he became tangled with Lafreniere's left leg.

Sergachev writhed in pain, immediately clutching his left leg as Lightning athletic trainers Tom Mulligan and Mike Poirier ran from the bench across the ice to attend to him. While the trainers tried to stabilize Sergachev's leg, they quickly called for a stretcher.

The Garden fell silent as the entire Lightning bench emptied to be by Sergachev's side, many players taking a knee. Teammates Nikita Kucherov, Victor Hedman, Nick Paul and Stamkos surrounded him.

"To see him in such pain, it's hard and you feel for him and just pray for the best," Hedman said.

As Sergachev was wheeled across the ice, the crowd gave him an ovation and he covered his face with a towel, receiving well wishes from Rangers players on the way to the Zamboni tunnel. Sergachev lifted his right hand to the crowd before disappearing down the tunnel.

"In the end, you've got your biological family, but this is the people you spend pretty much your whole life with," Cooper said. "And so it goes beyond hockey, and he's a really tough kid. And there was emotions coming out. So, you really care for the guys. It was clear, like, the Rangers cared for him. They all cleared the bench. So it's slightly a bit more than hockey."

Sergachev missed the previous 17 games after he took a puck to the back of his left skate. Initially, it was believed he would only miss a week, but he ended up on long-term injured reserve.

Sergachev, who won his second Stanley Cups days after turning 23, is regarded as one of the league's top young defensemen. Two offseasons ago, the Lightning signed him to an eight-year, \$68

million extension that began this season, making him the team's highest-paid defenseman (average annual value of \$8.5 million).

Last season, Sergachev set a career high in points with 64 and tied his high in goals (10). But this season, as the team struggled early, so did Sergachev, who was a minus-15 in 33 games before his injury. But getting an extra 10 days off for the All-Star break helped, and he was excited to return with a fresh perspective, ready to help the Lightning make a playoff push.

"I thought it was kind of good for me to take a break mentally," Sergachev said Monday. "But then I started getting mad because at some point that wasn't getting better and it was kind of stale. And then I feel like the break and starting skating kind of helped. I started getting better and just feel good."

The Lightning clearly were rattled the rest of the night. Already trailing 1-0 when Sergachev was injured, they slogged through the rest of the second period and fell behind by two goals. Brandon Hagel's goal in the third cut the lead to one, but the Lightning couldn't score the equalizer, despite a late power play in which Hedman hit the post. After Cooper emptied the net for an extra attacker inside the final two minutes, New York's Jimmy Vesey scored his second goal of the night.

"I don't think anyone forgot about (the injury), but we just got to go out there and do it for him," Hedman said. "I think we had a great push in the third. I think overall, you look through three periods of play, I think we deserved points out of this game. Maybe the second (period) they were the better team, but I think overall, we had some unbelievable chances."

"You want to rally behind that, but we're humans first," Stamkos said. "And when you see something like that, like I said, it puts an uneasy feeling in your stomach. So it puts the game into perspective and we just hope he's OK."

This core group of Lightning players have seen such scary scenes before. Stamkos was stretchered off after breaking his right leg during a game in Boston in 2013, and he missed more than four months. And in Game 1 of the 2016 Eastern Conference final, goaltender Ben Bishop came off the ice on a stretcher and didn't return in the series, replaced by then-backup Andrei Vasilevskiy.

"Obviously, Sergy put a lot of time and effort to come back from his original injury and to see something pretty traumatic like that happen, from someone who has been through that, it's tough to watch," Stamkos said.

The early prognosis wasn't promising. Asked whether the Lightning should prepare to be without Sergachev for the remainder of the season, Cooper swallowed hard, then said: "I don't know. Let's ... let's not think that way now."

Lightning defenseman stretchered off the ice in first game back Erik Erlendsson (Lightning Insider)

NEW YORK – The game felt inconsequential on Wednesday.

Hockey, for one night, didn't feel like it was the priority.

Yes, the Tampa Bay Lightning were back in action after a 10-day layoff between games, facing the New York Rangers. Tampa Bay was looking to keep the momentum gained before the break rolling into the final stretch of the season.

Things were looking up for the Tampa Bay Lightning. They pulled themselves up into a playoff position after teetering along that line for the opening two-plus months of the season. The decimated defense corps was finally healthy and ready to be back together. Mikhail Sergachev, who had been absent for 17 games, was back and ready to return.

Sergachev, when on top of his game, is a difference maker at both ends of the ice. The 25-year-old defenseman was a key part of Tampa Bay's back-to-back Stanley Cup championships and three straight trips to the Stanley Cup Final.

Rested and motivated, Sergachev was in good spirits this week and ready to make a difference.

But the game, it can be cruel. It can be unfair.

Fourteen shifts into his return from a foot injury, Mikhail Sergachev had to be taken off the ice on a stretcher. Just seven minutes into the second period, Sergachev's season just might be over.

In a standard hockey play, Sergachev went toward New York forward Alexis Lafreniere to deliver a hit near the boards. But Lafreniere was ready, braced himself and dug in to not only absorb the hit, but push back against it. Sergachev took the brunt of the contact.

As Sergachev fell, his leg got pinned back. His ankle bent a way nature did not intend for it to bend. And the bulk of Sergachev's weight collapsed under him.

It was his left ankle. The same area of his body that kept him out for 17 games when he was struck by a puck. Sergachev's reaction was pure pain written on his face as he immediately reached for the knee and leg.

In the silent moments that followed, there was fright. There was concern. There was the unknown.

When the stretcher made its way from the Zamboni entrance all the way across the ice, that uneasiness in the pit of every stomach inside the building and watching on television became all too real.

Sergachev had his head in a towel, trying to hold back tears as he made his way off the ice. He was consoled by captain Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov as he was moved across the ice. Sergachev was surrounded by teammates, he was applauded by the Madison Square Garden crowd.

As Sergachev was at the Zamboni tunnel, he acknowledged everyone watching with a thumbs up while heading down a tunnel of uncertainty.

The game can be cruel.

“It’s not fun when you feel sick to your stomach,” Lightning captain Steven Stamkos said. “Obviously Sergy has put in a lot of time and effort to come back from that original injury, and to see something pretty traumatic like that happen – and I’m someone who’s been through that – It’s tough. It’s tough to watch.”

Stamkos was taken off the ice via stretcher on November 11, 2013. During an afternoon game in Boston, the Lightning captain took a slight hit from behind by Bruins’ defenseman Dougie Hamilton. It was enough to knock Stamkos off balance and send him flying into the net where he suffered a fractured right leg.

It took months of rehab before he finally returned to games in March of 2014.

Seeing a teammate taken off the ice, it’s never easy.

“It’s super tough,” defenseman Victor Hedman said. “Obviously been through it with a few other guys in the past. But now, Sergy’s first came back after missing extended period of time, to see him in such pain, it’s hard. You feel for him and just pray for the best, but obviously it’s not looking great.”

The game at hand is difficult to focus on when that happens.

Head coach Jon Cooper made sure to make his way to Sergachev before he left the ice.

“In the end, you’ve got your family, your biological family, but these are people who you spend pretty much your whole life with,” Lightning head coach Jon Cooper said. “So it goes beyond hockey. He’s a really tough kid. It was emotions coming out. You care for the guys. It was clear the Rangers cared for him. They all cleared the bench so it’s a little bit more than hockey when it comes down to things like that.”

The only update provided by the team on Wednesday was Sergachev was out with a lower body injury. From the looks of it – and it’s a bit premature to speculate too much without more information – Sergachev’s season might be over with just about 10 weeks remaining.

“Let’s not think that way,” Cooper said.

Watching Sergachev leave the ice like that clearly had an affect on the Lightning for the rest of the second period. Already down by a goal, Tampa Bay had just eight shot attempts the remaining 13 minutes of the period while the Rangers had 14. And New York scored its second goal, the marker coming with 2:14 left in the period.

The Lightning looked a bit out of sorts.

“You want to try to rally behind that, but we’re humans first,” Stamkos said. “When you see something like that, it’s like I said, it puts an uneasy feeling in your stomach. So it puts the game into perspective and we just hope he’s okay.”

Tampa Bay tried to rally. Brandon Hagel pulled the Lightning to within a goal at 5:29. Hedman had a late chance on the power play, taking the puck up ice and unleashing a shot that found iron instead of twine.

“I had lots of space and I trust my shot sometimes so I let it fly hoping it was going to have eyes,” Hedman said. “But no . . . post.”

In the end, between the long layoff and watching Sergachev leave the ice, the Lightning didn’t have enough in the tank at the end.

“We got a little bit tired,” Cooper said. “And let’s be honest, it’s great everybody gets the ten-day break or whatever we had, but when everybody’s coming out of the break, how about all the teams that come on the break be each other’s first game. They had a little bit more in the tank than we did at the end. They just made a couple more plays that we couldn’t make. I thought we got a little bit tired as that game went on. Everybody in the world complains about schedule. So I’m not the first one nor will I be the last.”

At the end of the night, the result felt inconsequential. The thoughts were focused on Sergachev.

Sometimes, the game can be cruel.

NOTES

Earlier in the day, when Sergachev was activated off long term injured reserve, Tanner Jeannot was placed on LTI to open up the cap space to add Sergachev to the active roster. ... Tampa Bay scratched D Calvin de Haan and D Haydn Fleury. ... Kucherov recorded an assist to boost his season totals to 32-54—86 (50 GP) and restore his one-point lead on Nathan MacKinnon (32-53—85 in 51 GP) in the Art Ross Trophy race. ... D Erik Cernak, who returned to the lineup as well, registered his 81st career point with an assist on Hagel’s goal. Cernak tied Milan Jurcina for sixth-most points by a Slovakian defenseman. ... Kucherov has four goals and seven assists during a five-game scoring streak. ... Hagel has points in four consecutive games. ... Tampa Bay had 19 shots on goal, 22 attempts were blocked and 20 attempts missed

MY THREE STARS

1. Rangers RW Jimmy Vesey – Two goals, plus-2
2. Rangers C Barclay Goodrow – Two assists, plus-2, four blocked shots
3. Lightning RW Nikita Kucherov – Assist, seven shot attempts

Lightning's Mikhail Sergachev stretchered off ice with lower-body injury vs. Rangers Peter Baugh (The Athletic)

Tampa Bay Lightning defenseman Mikhail Sergachev suffered a lower-body injury and will not return against the Rangers after being stretchered off the ice Wednesday in New York. Players from both teams left their benches and comforted him as the stretcher left the ice.

Sergachev skated toward Alexis Lafreniere midway through the second period, and the Rangers forward reverse-hit him. Sergachev's leg bent as he fell to the ice, and he immediately let out a scream of pain. Officials blew the play dead, and Tampa Bay players quickly gathered around their teammate. He remained crumpled on the ice for multiple minutes. The play took place near photographers, whom Tampa Bay's Erik Cernak tried to wave away with Sergachev down.

Sergachev was playing in his first game since sustaining a lower-body injury on Dec. 19 against St. Louis. He has 19 points in 33 games this season, and coach Jon Cooper stressed his importance to the Lightning in his pregame media availability. The 25-year-old was a part of Tampa Bay's Stanley Cup wins in 2020 and 2021.

"He's a good defenseman in this league," Cooper said. "I can't say enough about what he's done for us in his short time in this league. He's done a lot of winning and he's been a big part of us winning. ... There are a lot of teams that would be lined up to have a defenseman like him on their roster."

Sergachev recorded 10:22 of total ice time before exiting.