 

**AMALIE Arena Media Clips
Monday, September 25, 2023**

1. Where is Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy? – Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)

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Eduardo Encina (Tampa Bay Times)**

BRANDON — Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy has been conspicuously absent through the opening days of training camp, dealing with an unspecified injury.

Vasilevskiy practiced briefly on the first day of camp at the TGH Ice Plex on Thursday but hadn’t been seen on the ice during practice times since through Sunday. He didn’t participate in Sunday’s first camp scrimmage that featured of the team’s regulars. Backup Jonas Johansson and newcomer Matt Tomkins played in the scrimmage.

Coach Jon Cooper said Vasilevskiy was considered day to day.

“He’s been on a bit, and then he’s been off,” Cooper said. “He’s wrestling with some things right now physically. It’s early… so we don’t need to rush anything along with him. So when he’s ready to go, he’ll be out there.”

Asked whether there was concern that the injury could keep Vasilevskiy sidelined for an extended time, Cooper said, “Not as of now, no.”

Vasilevskiy’s absence comes on the heels of his recent details of lingering physical issues he tried to push through last season.

Following the Lightning’s first-round playoff loss to the Maple Leafs, Vasilevskiy said that from the 30- to 35-game mark in the regular season, he didn’t feel in sync with his body and “small injuries came out at the same time.” Last week, Vasilevskiy said he didn’t do much in the offseason, focusing on getting a mental break from hockey by spending time with his family, friends and cat.

General manager Julien BriseBois said that managing a workload like Vasilevskiy’s is an “ongoing process.”

“Sometimes it might be the number of games they play,” BriseBois said last week. “Sometimes it might be how we use them in practice and what they do behind closed doors. It’s managing all of that because it all adds up over the course of the season.”

Going into last season, Vasilevskiy led the NHL in wins for five years straight, posting a .920 save percentage and 2.47 goals-against average. Last season he had a 2.65 goals-against average and .915 save percentage in 60 regular-season games.

Over a stretch of 11 playoff series wins leading into the 2022 Stanley Cup final, Vasilevskiy had a sparkling 2.12 goals-against average, a .931 save percentage and seven shutouts in 62 games. But in the Lightning’s past two playoffs series — the 2022 Cup final loss to Colorado and last season’s series loss to Toronto — Vasilevskiy has a 3.58 goals-against average and a .891 save percentage.

Following an off day Monday, the Lightning open their seven-game preseason slate with four games over five days, beginning with back-to-back road games Tuesday at Carolina and Wednesday at Nashville. They then play home games on consecutive nights, Friday against the Hurricanes and Saturday against the Predators.

Cooper said Vasilevskiy wouldn’t typically see game action until the last three games of the preseason. The Lightning end their exhibition schedule with three games against the Panthers on Oct. 3, 5 and 7.

“That’s when he needs to get into a rhythm,” Cooper said. “We really don’t play him in the first four. So it’s those (final) three that we’ll navigate. Whether he splits one, plays two, something like that, that’s kind of been the plan. So we’ll see and go from there.”