

Parise to miss three months with knee injury

By Tom Canavan
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEWARK, N.J. — New Jersey Devils left wing Zach Parise is going to be sidelined three months with a knee injury.

The struggling Devils announced Tuesday evening that Parise underwent exploratory arthroscopic surgery on his right knee to repair a torn meniscus.

"The good news is that the meniscus is 100 percent intact," Devils president and general manager Lou Lamoriello said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press late Tuesday evening. "They didn't have to do anything to it other than stitch it.

It will be a 100 percent recovery and there will be no risk of anything down the road later and that's the most important thing."

Parise will be a restricted free agent after this season. Lamoriello noted the injury will not influence the team's thinking about re-signing him.

The surgery came with the Devils off to their worst start in 27 years in New Jersey at 3-9-1. The team has made the playoffs the past 13 seasons.

"Adversity is part of life," Lamoriello said. "As I said earlier, it's how you handle it and what you do with it. Right now, we just have to do what we are capable of doing. The players who are here have to step up and make the best of the opportunities they are going to get right now."

The teams' seven points is the lowest in the NHL and one has to wonder how long Lamoriello is going to continue with rookie coach John MacLean.

"Quite frankly we have to come together a little more and overcome what we are going through," Lamoriello said. "We have been working hard and we just have to work a little harder and work a little smarter."

Parise hurt the knee skating in August and has been bothered by the injury all season. He had three goals and three assists in 12 games.

The Devils sent Parise home from Los Angeles after a game on Saturday to have his knee examined.

Parise has been the focal point of the Devils' offense the past four

seasons with 31, 32, 45 and 38 goals.

In the gold medal game against Canada in the Olympics, the U.S. Olympian scored the game-tying goal with 24 seconds left in regulation. Canada won the gold on a goal by Sidney Crosby in overtime.

The announcement is the latest woe to befall the Devils this season.

Very little has gone right for New Jersey since it re-signed high-scoring left wing Ilya Kovalchuk to a 17-year, \$102 million contract in the offseason.

The NHL ruled the deal circumvented its salary cap and it eventually fined the team \$3 million and took away two high draft picks over the next four years, including a first-rounder.

The Devils can pick which sea-

son they give up the choice.

The deal, which was later reworked and approved at \$100 million over 15 years, forced the Devils to play a couple of games with less than 20 players on the bench because having more would have put them over the cap.

Since the season opener, New Jersey has struggled scoring and been beset by injuries to veteran forward Brian Rolston (sports hernia), young defenseman Mark Fraser and Matt Corrente (both with broken hands) and rookie center Jacob Josefson (detached ligament in the right hand).

The Devils will finish a road trip on Wednesday with a game at Chicago.

Lamoriello said the team will use the same lineup as it did in a 3-0 loss to Vancouver on Monday.

Moss situation another mess for Minnesota

By Jon Krawczynski
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MINNEAPOLIS — Brad Childress and the Minnesota Vikings have another big mess on their hands.

Randy Moss' abrupt departure was just the latest

in what has been a season long on drama and short on success for a 2-5 team that started with Super Bowl aspirations.

From Brett Favre's late arrival to training camp, through an NFL investigation into improper messages allegedly sent by the quarterback a few years ago and now with Moss' release, the Vikings have been plagued by distraction and now their season is in danger of spinning completely out of control.

"Every time I come to work I see the news trucks sitting out there," linebacker Ben Leber said. "I feel like something is going on. I roll in and keep my ears open."

It all started with another sum-

mer-long courtship of Favre, who again considered retirement after leading the Vikings to the NFC title game in January. Childress sent three of his highest-profile players to Favre's home in Mississippi in August to convince the gray-haired quarterback to make one more run.

Favre has struggled on and off the field this season. His 69.8 quarterback rating ranks 29th in the NFL and he has thrown 11 interceptions after being picked off just seven times all of last season.

He is also in the middle of a league investigation into allegations that he sent a game-day hostess inappropriate messages while both worked for the New York Jets in 2008.

Then Childress, with injuries to Pro Bowl receivers Sidney Rice and Percy Harvin, sent a third-round draft pick to New England on Oct. 6 for Moss, a player with a long history of clashing with management and coaches.

"Pull out your number 84 jerseys, man," Moss said at the time

to a euphoric Vikings fan base.

"I think this is going to be a fun ride."

More like a stunningly brief one. This ride didn't last much longer than an inexperienced cowboy atop a prized rodeo bull, and it may have inflicted just as much damage.

The latest headline-grabbing incident has put Childress in the crosshairs.

Owner Zygi Wilf declined to comment through a team spokesman and there is speculation that the coach, despite signing a five-year extension last season, could be in trouble if things continue to crumble.

"That would be somebody else's call completely," Childress said on Monday.

"I have to worry about this football team next week playing the Arizona Cardinals. That's plenty for me."

Childress has not seen eye-to-eye with Favre for much of the past two seasons, and Harvin became the latest player to ques-

tion the game plan when he remarked about the lack of half-time adjustments on Sunday in the 28-18 loss to New England.

The clumsy way the Moss ordeal unfolded has only increased the criticism.

Childress spoke to reporters on Monday afternoon, but did not mention his intention to cut Moss during an extended discussion of the receiver's performance. He presumably wanted to speak to his team about it first, and he told his players during a meeting right after his news conference.

That left a smattering of players, primarily Leber, to break the news to the media and try to explain the organization's motives.

"I don't know what's been going on privately or if there's been stuff going on behind the scenes, something I'm not aware of," Leber said.

"I'm not sure what the motivation was or what they're thinking, but it certainly is a surprise when you think you trade for

a guy a couple weeks ago and then release him a few weeks later."

Leber wasn't the only one scratching his head.

"Randy is a good friend of mine, it caught me off guard as well," left tackle Bryant McKinnie tweeted. "But this is not (in) the players control."

Even Tennessee Titans coach Jeff Fisher called it "quite unique."

"I don't know any more about it than what you know, but you don't give up a third-round pick for somebody to help you win and then just release him," Fisher said.

Childress didn't release a statement until nearly six hours after the news first broke.

The Vikings were off on Tuesday and he was unavailable to discuss the decision, including the motives behind it and whether he convinced Wilf, who signed off on adding about \$5 million to the payroll when they traded for Randy Moss.

Men's soccer

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"We got the ball to Smallwood on the outside, he sent in a good cross and everybody got in," Burnham said.

"The ball bounced around a little bit and Kenzie just flicked it on. I happened to be there and I put my knee on it. It wasn't anything special."

Warming called Burnham's effort fantastic and said several other players stepped up against the Leopards.

Junior Mark Fetrow — who is transitioning to a defensive mid-field role — won several key headers, and Warming said Henry was very effective and has made a lot of progress throughout the season.

The Lions not only picked up a road shutout, but they held Lafayette to zero shots in the second half after allowing just four shots in the first half. Penn State totaled 11 shots of its own for the game, with five on goal.

"We had better control in the midfield, we did a good job controlling the ball and getting it out wide to our outside mids and working the ball within the backs and

"I'm very pleased with the way our guys have responded and played on the road."

Bob Warming
coach

everything," the sophomore forward said.

"We were a lot better with our defense, we were more alert to what we needed to do and that helped us a lot in the second half."

The win brings Penn State's away record to 6-1-1, with a 4-1-1 standing in non-tournament road games a mark Warming said he was happy with after making it a focus for the year.

"We had only won four games in the last four years so to get the fourth win in one year was great," Warming, who had excellent road records at Creighton, said.

"It's paid off on the RPI, we're eighth in the country. I'm very pleased with the way our guys have responded and played on the road this year."

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Washington

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that it takes time both physical and mentally to get back into the groove of playing every day," Washington said.

Womack isn't the only Lady Lion recovering from an ACL tear. Freshman forward Talia East is working her way back from the same injury after hurting her knee in a high school all-star game on April 21. Washington said East is also on schedule and, barring any setbacks, should be ready to play at the start of Big Ten play on Dec. 30.

"We're pretty happy with where both of them are and we just want to make sure we let them get as healthy as they can, getting back into the swing of things," Washington said.

Reflecting on scrimmage

The Lions recently competed in a scrimmage on the road against West Virginia, which is ranked No. 11 in the pre-season Associated Press poll. Washington said her team competed and fought hard with the Mountaineers.

"I think that our defense is right where we want it to be at this point," Washington said. "Definitely still room for improvement, but the competitiveness, and the intensity and the aggressiveness that we want to see out of our defense is right there. I like the fight that we saw in our team."

The coach said the weakness the team has is it doesn't value the ball as much as it should, which she said comes with a young squad. She also said if the team gets more balance on offense, it will be more successful.

The Lions played that scrimmage without senior forward and co-captain Julia Trogele, who sat out because of a toe injury.

"We did a lot of good things as a team," Washington said. "For us, it's going to be about the team and the balance."

Sophomores improving

Now in her sophomore year, Washington said point guard Alex Bentley has matured a lot since her freshman season, in which she was named to the conference's All-Freshman Team. Bentley understands more of what her coach wants her to do

on the court, Washington said.

Bentley is Penn State's leading returning scorer, averaging 11.8 points per game last season. She also led the team in assists.

"I think she's matured to where she can understand what needs to be done," Washington said. "I think last year she couldn't understand what I was talking about, if that makes any sense. She couldn't do some things only because she couldn't see it. The game was moving too fast. Things were happening too fast. Now I think the game has slowed down for her some."

Washington also said sophomore center Nikki Greene is more comfortable in her second year. Greene averaged seven points and 6.2 rebounds per game last season.

"It took her the entire year to really just get comfortable being here, being in college, being on her own, playing in front of all these people, the expectations," Washington said. "It just took her the entire year. Some of that still lingers but she's much more comfortable in this environment. She's a lot more confident in herself as a basketball player."

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Brown

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defensive specialist Cathy Quilico said. "It's not that we don't feel comfortable giving the ball to anyone else, just with her experience, it's a comfortability thing. We set her because she's good in those situations."

And they give Brown the ball a lot.

The senior co-captain had to accept an increased workload this year with the graduation of Hodge, the four-time first-team All-American selection whose 2,142 career kills rank second in Penn State history.

Last season, Brown took 732 swings. Hodge, in comparison, had 1,197.

This year — with four weeks to go in Big Ten play — Brown has already tallied 722 attack attempts, by far the most on the Lions.

Senior middle hitter Arielle

Wilson is second on the team with 405.

"Ideally, you'd probably want to have a little more distribution," coach Russ Rose said. "But I think most teams are what they are, and you're going to give the ball to the player who has the best chance of scoring for you. And for us, I think Blair has certainly one of the better swings."

Quilico said she's not sure how Brown, personally, is handling her new role.

"You'd have to ask her, and how her body's holding up," Quilico said.

Brown said she's doing fine. In fact, she said she doesn't mind the increased workload.

After Friday's match — where she took a season-high 52 swings — Brown joked she was ready to do it again.

"I mean I'm willing to take the 52 swings," Brown said. "If she sets me, I'm willing to take them."

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Field hockey

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said not winning the Big Ten bracket would certainly be a blow to the team's NCAA hopes.

"It would be a big disappointment," Morett said. "Because I think that we feel as a team, we're 4-2 in the conference, we feel that out of the four games we won, we actually won them. With the two games we lost, we didn't even come close to playing Penn State field hockey."

Their last loss came at Ohio State back in mid-October, but Morett's team will come into the Big Ten tournament on the heels of a four-game win streak with its most recent victory being a 4-2 conference win at Northwestern last Friday.

It has been a while since the Nittany Lions won the conference tournament and the team hopes that changes.

The Lions won the Big Ten

"We're definitely going to put everything on the line."

Kelsey Amy
forward

tournament four straight years from 1995-1998, but haven't won it since and haven't been in the conference championship game since 2006.

Morett said it's definitely strange to not have won the tournament in such a long time. But the long-time coach said it's about time the Lions' drought comes to an end.

"We haven't won the tournament in such a long time," Morett said.

"I think we're due and I think we've got a team that's ready at this point in the season to get that done."

With each team in the conference getting a chance to show its worth, Kelsey Amy and the Lions know that when it comes to the

Big Ten tournament, teams come to play. She said the Lions can't afford to take any team lightly.

Especially an Indiana squad they edged 1-0 at home earlier in the season in one of the most physical and exciting games of the year.

"You get one loss and you're out so you play with that extra edge and you just don't want the season to be over," said Amy, the team's leading scorer.

"It's been so much fun this year, it's really been enjoyable so we're definitely going to put everything on the line and hopefully get our season to go as long as possible."

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Greenberg

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Jack said. However, the inability to strike a deal with the lenders after six or seven months, opened the bidding back up. Despite Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban showing interest, Ryan and Greenberg officially became owners of the team on August 12.

Jack Greenberg said in the back of his mind, he always knew Ryan and his dad would gain ownership.

"I knew what my dad had done in the minor leagues and the success he had," Greenberg said. "I knew if he could get the chance to do that at the Major League level, not only could he innovate a team such as the Rangers, but have success while doing it."

Current Penn State senior utility player Mario Eramo roomed with Greenberg last year.

He said Chuck Greenberg was a real nice guy and was happy for Jack and the entire Greenberg family.

The addition of Ryan and Greenberg wasn't the only big move the Rangers made during the season.

While driving to Pittsburgh, Jack said he received a text message from a friend saying starting pitcher Cliff Lee was traded to the Rangers.

"I wasn't expecting that," Greenberg said. "I was just expecting him to go to the Yankees. Cliff was obviously a huge reason why they got to this point."

Greenberg — who expects to graduate this semester and thus won't return to the Nittany Lions again — said he attended all three World Series games in Texas, including the decisive Game 5 in which the Giants won the title.

Despite losing the series, Greenberg said the team and fans had a lot to be proud of following the game.

Prior to this postseason, Texas never won a home game in the playoffs.

Now that the Rangers have had

postseason success, Jack said there's no reason they can't do it again.

"The prospects of having a sharp ball club with Josh Hamilton, Nelson Cruz and the core-type guys coming back, hopefully everybody understands that this is just the beginning," Greenberg said.

"The prospect of having a great team every year is definitely a possibility."

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