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1/2 PREGAME: Zach Parise to Make His Season Debut for Minnesota as Wild Host Panthers



By [Heather Rule](#) - January 2, 2018

Wild forward Zach Parise made headlines last week when he played with the Iowa Wild in his first game action of the 2017-18 season.

Now, he'll ring in the New Year with the big club after missing the first 39 games.

Parise, who's had injury issues the past few seasons, had a flare-up during training camp in September. It eventually led him to have microdiscectomy surgery on Oct. 24 and put him out indefinitely. The updates came in as he made his way back, when he started skating again (Oct. 29) and practicing with his teammates (Dec. 15).

Then he played a rehab game in Iowa last week, even tallying an assist.

In the first game of the 2018 calendar year, the home fans will be treated to his season debut with the Minnesota Wild (20-16-3) as Parise takes the ice in the game against the Florida Panthers (17-16-5).

The Wild officially activated the 33-year-old Parise from injured reserve on Tuesday morning, sending Zack Mitchell down to Iowa to make room on the roster. Parise scored 19 goals and 23 assists for 42 points in 69 games with the Wild last season.

The Wild will face a Panthers team that has won five straight games, starting Dec. 19, and outscoring opponents 13-6 with two shutouts mixed in. They beat the Wild in Florida 4-2 on Dec. 22 for the first match-up of the season between these two clubs. It was the second victory on the winning streak for the Panthers.

Ryan Suter and Daniel Winnik scored the goals for the Wild in that loss.

The Panthers may be on a run right now, but historically the Xcel Energy Center has not been kind to them. Vegas is the only other NHL team that does not have a regulation victory in St. Paul, and Vegas is a brand new team this year with just one game played at the X. The Wild are 8-0-2 against the Panthers at home (15-4-3 overall) for their longest point streak against all NHL teams.

The Wild are also 12-4-2 at home this season, earning points in 10 of their last 11 home games. They won both home games after the holiday break, with their last home loss coming Dec. 16 to Edmonton. Their 55 for 60 penalty kill on home ice ranks second in the league. The Panthers are scoreless on their power play during their current winning streak.

Last game, the Wild were shut out 3-0 in Nashville in the second half of a back-to-back series with the division rival. They've lost three of their last five games overall.

Wild points leader Eric Staal also leads the team with 50 points (20-30-50) in 69 games against Florida. Goaltender Devan Dubnyk is 7-1-0 with a 1.48 GAA and .942 save percentage in eight career games against the Panthers; Alex Stalock faced them earlier this season. Defenseman Matt Dumba sits at 99 career points looking to become just the seventh Wild blue-liner to hit the 100-point mark.

Blaine native and University of Minnesota product Nick Bjugstad has nine goals and 11 assists this season for the Panthers. They're led in points by Vincent Torcheck (15-21-36) and Jonathan Huberdeau (13-23-36), who's scored four goals over his last four games. Huberdeau scored a pair of goals against the Wild last time out, while Torcheck and Connor Brickley also scored.

Injury list:

- Nino Niederreiter (lower body), 4 games

Total man games lost: 93

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