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2/2 PREGAME: Niederreiter Likely to Return to Wild Lineup Against Vegas



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

The Minnesota Wild have played just two games this season with a completely healthy roster. They'll look to make it three with the hopeful return of Nino Niederreiter in Friday's home game against the Vegas Golden Knights.

Niederreiter has missed the last eight games with a lower-body injury. The winger hit the ice for practice on Thursday and didn't have any issues skating on a line with Eric Staal and Tyler Ennis. He's been out a total of 19 games this season after suffering a high left ankle sprain early in the year. He's still produced when he's been on the ice for 31 games, scoring 13 goals and six assists. He sits at 98 goals and 97 assists in his career.

The Wild (27-18-5) are back at Xcel Energy Center, so everyone knows it's pretty much an automatic win, right? For those needing to catch up, the Wild are 17-4-4 at home this season.

They'll face a Vegas team that's done better than many expected in its first season of existence. With their overtime victory in Winnipeg on Thursday night, the leaders of the Pacific Division set the record for victories for expansion teams in their first season with 34. They're an NHL-best 34-12-4 this season overall and 15-9-2 on the road.

But hey, the Wild beat them the first time around. They won 4-2 on Nov. 30 in St. Paul in the inaugural meeting between these two clubs. Staal scored a pair, along with Jonas Brodin and Mikael Granlund. The Wild will visit Vegas for the first time mid-March.

The Wild have won three of their last four games overall, while Vegas comes in having won four of five. This game marks the third on a six-game road trip for the Golden Knights. They're on the second night of a back-to-back, but a fast start will be key on either side. How important is the first goal of the game? Well, the Golden Knights are 22-1-0 when they score first.

Your move, Minnesota.

Nevada native Jason Zucker is tied with Staal for the team lead in goals with 20. It's the third time in his career he's reached 20 goals in a season, scoring 21 in 2014-15 and a career-high 22 last year. He'll look to keep his season-long point streak going, which now sits at seven games.

Eight games would be a new career-high.

In even-numbered milestone news, Ryan Suter needs one more assist to hit the 400 mark for his career. He leads the team with 26 assists this season.

In addition to Niederreiter, defenseman Mike Reilly will also get back into the lineup against Vegas. He's missed the past six games as a healthy scratch. With Reilly in, Gustav Olofsson will be out. Reilly has tallied seven assists in 31 games this season and is still searching for his first goal.

Playing Vegas always gives teams a chance to see how former player(s) are performing. Former Wild forward Erik Haula is fifth on the Golden Knights in points (19-18-37), and Alex Tuch has nine goals and 13 assists in 46 games this season.

Offensively, the Golden Knights are led by center Jonathan Marchessault with his 48 points in 47 games (18-30–48), followed by William Karlsson with 44 points in all 50 games (27-27–44) as their leading goal scorer. Left winger David Perron also has 44 points and leads the team with 31 assists.

Look for Malcolm Subban (11-2-1) in goal for Vegas since Marc-Andre Fleury got the nod in Winnipeg.

A note if you're going to the game (or just want to hang out in the area): In the middle of the Super Bowl hoopla this week, the Wild are hosting a pregame party across the street from the X's Gate 2 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Embrace the chilly temps, if you dare.

Injury list:

- None

Total man games lost: 102

GatG Game Preview: VGK @ MIN 2/2/18



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