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WILD

Biggest Wild Injury Concern Thus Far This Season: Dumba Is Out



Mandatory Credit: David Berding-USA TODAY Sports



By [Heather Rule](#) - December 18, 2018

Among the storylines this season for the Minnesota Wild, injuries haven't been a key factor. It's certainly nothing like last year when Zach Parise missed half the season and three players were injured in the third game of the year.

As the holidays approach though, the injury bug may wreak some more havoc with a Wild team already trying to claw back into the playoff picture.

The biggest concern right now is defenseman Matt Dumba. Head coach Bruce Boudreau announced after Monday's practice that Dumba will miss this week with an upper-body injury.

No matter how long Dumba is out, his absence will leave a void on one of the top blue lines in the league when it comes to offensive production.

It's still unclear how exactly the injury came about. Dumba got into a scrap with Calgary's Matthew Tkachuk 40 seconds into Saturday's game. Nothing obvious stands out in regard to an injury, and Calgary-native Dumba sat in the box for his five-minute penalty before he left the game for good in the first period after logging just six shifts and 5:37 of ice time.

(Fight) Matt Dumba vs Matthew Tkachuck Dec 15, 2018



In a game that Calgary ended up winning 2-1, there was a bit of old-time hockey going on. Dumba's fight was the first of three in the first period alone, with the others involving Matt Hendricks and Ryan Suter. The Flames were apparently still fuming from the last meeting between the two clubs, a 2-0 Flames victory in Canada on Dec. 6, when they took exception to a Dumba hit on center Mikael Backlund. The NHL deemed Dumba's hit was clean.

Now, it appears the Wild (17-13-2) could be without one of their top defensemen for an indefinite amount of time. It will be a big loss, no doubt. He leads all NHL defensemen in goals, after all.

Despite some of the defensive lapses Dumba has been known for in his career, those are becoming less frequent.

Plus, his cannon of a slapshot makes up for a lot.

Dumba is tied with Eric Staal for second on the team in goals with a dozen. He has 10 assists for a total of 22 points, tied for fourth on the team. Six of his goals have come on the power play, tied for the team lead with Parise, and he came into Saturday's game with 60 hits this season, second to Marcus Foligno's 88 hits.

Dumba scored a pair of power-play goals in the dominant win over Montreal. He also scored two in the 6-4 comeback win over Ottawa on Nov. 21. His trademark is his powerful slapshot from the point. Or the circle. Or wherever on the ice. If he fires the puck toward the net, get out of the way. It's like Fulton Reed territory – shoutout to "Mighty Ducks" fans – although I'm not sure about the 1-out-of-5 part on hitting the net.

It's been a solid year so far for Dumba. He had a seven-game point streak in November with five goals and five assists, tying the franchise record for the longest point streak by a defenseman when Suter scored nine points during a stretch in 2013. He was the first NHL defenseman to reach 10 goals in a season, the first time a Wild player has done that.



Michael Russo

@RussoHockey

Dubnyk on Dumba: "You saw even just in that (Calgary) game what we're missing. He's a big, huge part of our power play and plays extremely well in our end. He does everything. He's kind of our MVP so far this year. Any amount of games he misses is going to suck for us." [#mnwild](#)

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The 24-year-old is already coming off a career year last season when he scored 14 goals and 50 points. Note that it's mid-December and he needs only two goals to tie his mark from last season. In his fourth full season at the NHL level with the Wild, the first-round Wild pick in 2012 has improved his numbers each season. He's also had durability, playing 81, 76 and 82 games the past three seasons.

What's also interesting to think about is how valuable Dumba is to this team, when he could have easily been picked up by the Vegas Golden Knights in the 2017 expansion draft. Remember that Dumba was one of the players the Wild left unprotected (defenseman Jonas Brodin was on the protected list). But then-general manager Chuck Fletcher worked out a trade to second prospect Alex Tuch and center Erik Haula to Vegas in exchange for Vegas not grabbing another player.

Sure, losing Haula stung with his successful season last year that ended in the Stanley Cup Final, but keeping Dumba around has also turned out to be a good call.

With Dumba out, it will scramble the defenseman, likely putting Suter and Jared Spurgeon back together as the top pair, moving Greg Pateryn up with Brodin and adding veteran Nate Prosser back into the lineup to play with the youngster Nick Seeler in a Minnesota-boys defensive pairing. Prosser, 32, has played in two games this season, the last with nearly 12 minutes against Arizona on Nov. 27. Prosser has 341 career games under his belt, scoring 10 goals and 47 points.

OTHER INJURY NEWS

In other personnel news, Mikko Koivu has missed four games after a lower-body injury following a hit in Calgary. Flames player Mark Giordano was suspended for the contact. Koivu is expected to make his return Tuesday against San Jose, although the line combinations could be interesting because, in his absence, the Parise-Charlie Coyle-Nino Niederreiter line has lit things up pretty good.

Jason Zucker is also expected to be back after missing Saturday's game with an illness. So, the lineup was shaken up on the fly Saturday, moving Jordan Greenway up to the top line with Eric Staal and Mikael Granlund. Greenway scored his fifth goal of the season for the Wild's lone tally.

Most of the Wild's absences, due to illness or injury, haven't been a huge detriment to the team's success. Having 27 total man games lost doesn't seem like a huge number. Hendricks has the highest individual total by far, missing 11 games this fall with an injury. Other than that, most players have (knock on wood) been healthy or missed a game here or there.

Depending on how serious this is for Dumba, it could be quite the turning point in the season for the Wild. They need his shot at the blue line. They need him on the power play. They need him on the ice.

Wild's Boudreau talks Dumba's injury, Suter's fight and more



TIDBITS

- The Wild are 28-28-7 all-time against San Jose, going 16-10-4 at Xcel Energy Center. The Wild are 9-1-1 in their last 11 home games against the Sharks.
- The Wild's penalty kill has gone a perfect 12-for-12 over the past six games.
- Defensemen for the Wild have combined to rank first in the league in game-winning goals with five and second in goals with 25.
- Suter has 11 points in the past 11 games, including a stretch of five assists in the past three games. He tallied a season-high mark in ice time on Saturday at 29:49 to help make up for Dumba's absence.
- Wild points leader Mikael Granlund has five assists in the past three games and has 14 points (13 assists) in his last 11 games.
- The Wild are 11-10-1 when they allow the first goal and 6-3-1 when getting on the board first.

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