

## **November 13, 2003 – New York post Rangers' Win Comes at Price by Larry Brooks.**

### **Rangers 6 - Penguins 2**

Once again an Eric Lindros season is clouded by injury. This time, quite literally. For in just his third game back in the lineup after missing seven with a left chest sprain, No. 88 sustained what the Rangers are calling a scratched left cornea on a high-stick from Josef Melichar 6:38 into the first period of last night's 6-2 Garden victory over the Penguins.

Lindros, injured while battling for the puck along the offensive end boards, was sent immediately to club ophthalmologist **Dr. Mark Fromer**. While results of the examination will not be known until today, preliminary indications are that the oft-beset 30-year-old centerman will be out for a couple of weeks, minimum. It's unlikely that he'll accompany the team on its trip to Chicago, San Jose and Colorado that commences Sunday, a day after the Blueshirts play in New Jersey.

"It's pretty unusual," Glen Sather said in response to a question about the numerous injuries Lindros has sustained throughout his career. "I've never seen it happen to anyone else."

The Rangers responded well after Lindros went down, with Sather shuffling bodies, giving Martin Rucinsky and Jamie Lundmark unexpected additional ice time both used very well. But the injury might well prompt the Blueshirts - who were considering doing so, anyway - to put in a claim for hard-edged winger Jason Wiemer, unceremoniously placed on waivers by the Islanders on Tuesday. Calgary, San Jose and Anaheim, all of which are below the Rangers in the overall standings and whose claims would thus trump the Rangers', are believed interested but may not be willing to assume the remainder of Wiemer's \$1.6 million salary. The waiver period expires at noon.

Last night's game held little artistic sway. Without Mario Lemieux, sidelined by a hip injury, the Penguins are no more than a glorified minor-league team receiving major-league meal money. Marc-Andre Fleury, the 18-year-old first overall selection in the June Entry Draft, will likely be sent back to his Cape Breton QMJHL team by Christmas. By doing so, the Penguins will save the \$4 million in bonuses the netminder stands to earn were he to remain in Pittsburgh for the full season. But such a move will also save Fleury from bombardments such as the one he saw last night playing behind a defense that, farcically, included Steve McKenna.

But the plight of the Penguins does not diminish the Ranger victory. After all, the Blueshirts have lost routinely to feeble opponents over the last six seasons. They lost to the Penguins last March, in fact. This time, though, the Rangers took care of business to earn an essential victory.

"There is no easy game in the NHL anymore," said Rucinsky, who had a goal and two assists moving between Bobby Holik's and Petr Nedved's left wing. "We wanted to make certain not to give them any life, to get on top of them early and not let down."

Rucinsky moved around last night. Anson Carter, who scored a PPG that gave his team a 2-1 lead midway through the first, moved around. So did Jan Hlavac. Sather, annoyed at having his line combinations and personnel machinations questioned over the last week, said after the game that moving players from line to line had been part of the master plan all along.

"All lines should be interchangeable; people should be able to move from line to line and be able to play against different people," he said. "If you're ever going to be able to match lines, the easiest way is to match people, not lines. Preferably, that's what I like to do."