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**Messier, Gretzky together?**

By **ANDREW GROSS**  
 THE JOURNAL NEWS

(Original publication: November 18, 2003)

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Rangers captain Mark Messier will wait until today to announce whether he will play for the Oilers' alumni squad in Saturday's Heritage Classic at Edmonton's Commonwealth Stadium.

But there's not much suspense left.

"I hear he's playing," Wayne Gretzky said yesterday during a conference call to promote the outdoor event. "I haven't talked to him, but I hear he's playing. I don't know if he's for sure. I know (Rangers coach Glen Sather) has asked him — I read that."

The Rangers play Thursday at Colorado and host Ottawa Sunday at 5 p.m. Sather is coaching the Oilers' alumni in an exhibition that will precede a regular-season game between Edmonton and the Montreal Canadiens. Cablevision chairman James Dolan has already arranged a private jet for Sather, one that Messier also could board.

There are compelling pros and cons for whatever Messier chooses.

From the Rangers' aspect, it would be better to have Messier fresh for the Senators rather than having traveled such a far distance the night before. Plus, should an active NHL player be playing in an old-timers' game?

However, the Heritage Classic has become a major event in Canada, and Messier, who grew up in Edmonton and, like Gretzky, was a huge part of the Oilers' success.

"I think if he plays, it's something really special for the city of Edmonton and for hockey," Gretzky said. "If he doesn't play, I think everybody will also understand that, too. ... If he can play in this game, I think the people in Edmonton will just think it's icing on the cake. It will be like that special person who comes to a 10-year-old's birthday party."

Sather said no decision has been made, but Messier clearly wants to participate if possible.

"It's more about the game and promoting the game," Messier said. "It's a big event for hockey in Canada as well as the league. Obviously for me, it's a great opportunity to go back where I was born and raised. In a lot of ways, it's the obvious thing for me to do. But it's in the middle of the schedule, so there are logistical things."

**Notes:** The Rangers placed Eric Lindros on injured reserve, although he could still be activated for Thursday's game. Lindros, who has missed two games with a scratched left cornea, remained in New York, where he will be examined today by **Dr. Mark Fromer**, the team's ophthalmologist. Lindros' vision is still blurry. ... Defenseman Greg de Vries missed yesterday's skate with back spasms but should be able to play tonight.

*Send e-mail to [Andrew Gross](#)*

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