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Increased violence could force Stars Modano to retire

DALLAS (AP) — Dallas Stars center Mike Modano, who suffered strained neck ligaments after being sent head first into the boards last week, said yesterday the NHL is growing increasingly violent and if it does not change, we will leave the game.



MODANO

Modano, who also broke his nose and had a mild concussion after Anaheim defenseman Ruslan Salei cross-checked him from behind in Saturday's game, admits he is nervous about playing again and taking another hit. "It was a scary incident," Modano said, who was knocked unconscious and remembers waking to find doctors and trainers hovering over and yelling at him to try to move his arms and legs.

"To see it on replay ... and to see how close [the hit] could've been to hampering me or from keeping me from playing ever again ... it makes you wonder whether it's worth it to play in this game and in sports in general," Modano said, the bridge of his nose bruised and scraped.

Meeting with reporters after a light workout, the team's best offensive player said he still feels like he is "in a bit of a fog." Recent neurological tests showed he was recovering well, but Modano said he is not sure when he will play again.

If the career-ending or life-threatening violence doesn't stop, Modano said he will get off the ice for good.

"If things continue, I'm not going to play anymore," he said. "I've only got four or five years more (to play), then I'm done," Modano said. "I still have the rest of my life to live."

"Clean hard-hitting physical play" will always be an acceptable part of hockey, he said. But in the past two or three years, incidents of intentional violence have increased.

"When I started, you didn't hear much about concussions. Now it's evolved into an anything-to-win attitude, even if that

means taking out a team's best players," Modano said. "I've seen the Stanley Cup champions in regular-season scoring points and playoff scoring."

Colin Campbell, NHL president of hockey operations, warned last year that the league would crack down on dangerous attempts to injure — particularly hits to the head. The league is concerned about the growing number of concussions that have lined such headlines as "Sergei Fedorov's head injury" and "Kariya, Eric Lindros and LaFontaine in 1997."

Earlier this week Campbell said, "Our stance against the head remains very much in place. Such behavior will not be tolerated."

Still, Modano and teammate Darryl Sydor, who fractured his left eye socket in a fight with Anaheim's Jim McKenzie, NHL missed an opportunity to slap longer suspensions on the Mighty Ducks players and a message that gratuitous hits will not be tolerated.

"Do we have to wait for one to be paralyzed or for players come together and Modano said, whose doctor told him he was lucky he could walk much less play again.

The league suspended Sydor 10 games for the hit on Modano and will forfeit \$1 million in salary. McKenzie was suspended for four games and lose close to \$13,000.

Sydor, who joined Modano on the ice at Dr Pepper StarCenter he gets headaches and his vision occasionally blurry but feels he is not blind in his left eye.

"I was talking to my agent about it and I wonder if it's worth it," the defenseman Modano urged the Stars to seek revenge during today's game against Anaheim.

"I am calling on my teammates to set an example for players. I am looking forward to getting back on the ice and playing as soon as possible, but to getting even," Modano said, a statement released to the press and the media. "More importantly, I don't want anyone to get hurt on my behalf."

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Newsday Crossword

ACROSS
 1 Stadium walkway
 5 Story connector
 10 Loco
 14 General Bradley
 15 Teddy resembler
 16 Hand or foot
 17 Approach the runway
 18 Fall flower
 19 Audition tape
 20 Repeated Shakespearean tragedy?
 23 Maui music-maker
 24 Like Urkel
 25 Pay
 29 Pizza portion
 32 Give out
 33 Rhone feeder
 34 Ram's report
 37 Repeated Shakespearean tragedy?
 41 Dangerous crawler
 42 Madrid museum
 43 Top banana
 44 Oozing
 45 Easter event
 47 Bellowing
 50 Easter preceder
 51 Second revival of a Shakespearean history?
 58 Eye layer
 59 Bee and Em
 60 Kind
 62 Paddington, for one
 63 Derby distance

DOWN
 1 Go bad
 2 Latin 101 word
 3 It's long in fashion
 4 School-marmish
 5 A Little Rascal
 6 Sample the sherry
 7 Opposed to
 8 The same as before
 9 At a premium
 10 Spending plan
 11 Keeping ___ to the ground
 12 Lacking in courage

13 Expressionless
 21 Royal pronoun
 22 Photographer Adams
 25 Some vaccines
 26 Good Times star
 27 Like a Dali watch
 28 Had shad
 29 Tea holder
 30 Red, to Ramón
 31 Name in Burmese history
 33 Piece of cake
 34 Stock-market stat
 35 Somewhat
 36 Plot part
 38 Gift for Domingo

39 "All the Things You ..."
 40 Medit. country
 44 Epitome of aridity
 45 Self-confident
 46 Pop follower
 47 West Indies island
 48 Asunder
 49 The briny
 50 Explosive material
 52 St. Louis team
 53 "Dueling Banjos," e.g.
 54 Concerned with
 55 Ratio phrase
 56 Eve's counterpart
 57 Actor Idle
 61 Southern Italy's shape

REPLAYS by Richard Silvestri Edited by Stanley Newman

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ZIP.

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Agassi rejoins Davis Cup with McEnroe as captain

BASEL, Switzerland (AP) — John McEnroe is already paying dividends as the U.S. Davis Cup captain.

Andre Agassi said Wednesday he will play in next year's Davis Cup, quite a turnaround for the French and U.S. Open champion who said last March that he would not participate after his friend and team doctor George Fared was dropped from the squad.

McEnroe altered Agassi's decision. "I think he's going to be the best captain ever so far," Agassi said at the Swiss Indoors. "He'll help a lot."

"He'll bring a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of energy, a lot of experience. It's an advantage to have someone on your team with this kind of fighting spirit."

The addition of Agassi, the No. 1 player in the world, could become even more important because Pete Sampras has a serious back injury, and his status for February's first round is uncertain.

The United States will travel to Zimbabwe for the first round of World Group competition Feb. 4-6. Among the other pairings set

by draw yesterday, Australia, which ousted the Americans last year, will play in Switzerland.

Germany will be at home against the Netherlands. France will play in Brazil, the Czech Republic will host Britain, Spain is set against Italy, Russia will play Belgium and Slovakia is set against Austria. Australia will play France in this year's Davis Cup Dec. 3-4 in Nice.

McEnroe played on 12 Davis Cup teams, including five championships. He still holds six Davis Cup records and compiled an overall record of 59-10.

It was not just McEnroe's Davis Cup success that swayed Agassi. It also was the fact that the U.S. Tennis Association allowed the team to have some say in the choice of captain.

"To me, the most important thing was how the decision was made so the players had some say in some of the more important decisions such as who the captain is," Agassi said. "And I know John, the team will always make decisions as a unit, which is something you always hope for in the Davis Cup."

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