

RANGER TOP PICK FACES KNIFE

By LARRY BROOKS



Hugh Jessiman

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November 11, 2004 -- Hugh Jessiman did say that receiving an education and pursuing a degree were significant factors in his decision to return to Dartmouth rather than sign a pro contract with the Rangers this summer. That's good, because now the college junior is going to have plenty of time to devote to his studies without hockey to get in the way.

The results of Jessiman's exam with the Rangers' medical staff in New York Monday — in the aftermath of a right ankle injury he sustained Saturday night — were not good. An MRI revealed a displacement and tear of the deltoid ligaments that will require surgery tomorrow to be performed by Rangers physician Dr. Andrew Feldman. The injury almost certainly will sideline the Blueshirts' 2003 first-round draft choice for the remainder of the college season.

"The way it's been explained is that if all goes ideally, I'll be in a walking cast for 10 weeks after the operation, which will be followed by another six weeks of rehab," Jessiman said by phone from his house on the Dartmouth campus. "I'm trying to stay positive and optimistic that there's some way I'll be able to get back for the [March] playoffs, but realistically, that's a long way down the road.

"The good part from a physical perspective is that there's no long-term damage and that I'll be able to build up my upper body during the year doing work with weights."

Jessiman, the 12th overall selection in the 2003 Draft, is wearing a **"Game Ready"** box on his right foot to reduce the swelling prior to the operation. Given to him by Ranger medical trainer Jim Ramsay, it's a combination compression/ice system that was used by the professionals who competed in the World Cup.

"I'm going to do whatever I can for my team. I'll be around and give the guys my support," he said. "It's disappointing not to be able to be on the ice and help the guys compete for a championship, but I'm going to try and keep my head up and come through this a stronger person."