

Griffin hit in face, leaves game with concussion

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NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — Preseason All-America Blake Griffin's status was uncertain for No. 2 Oklahoma's game against Kansas on Monday night after he sustained a concussion in a loss to Texas.

Sooners coach Jeff Capel said Griffin would be held out of practice Sunday, but he won't know until game day whether his star player will be able to go against the 15th-ranked Jayhawks on Monday night in a game that will give one team the lead in the Big 12 title race.

"The most important thing is him and his future. You don't want to do anything to risk any further damage, so that's the most important thing," Capel said before practice Sunday. "We're going to proceed with caution with this and make sure he's OK.

"And we'll move on whichever way we have to, with him or without."

Griffin averages 22 points and an NCAA-best 13.8 rebounds and leads the nation with 22 double-doubles this season. He was hurt Saturday night when he caught an inadvertent shot to the face from the open hand of Dexter Pittman, Texas' 300-pound center.

Griffin sat out the second half and appeared dazed at times as he sat on the bench during the Sooners' 73-68 loss. Capel said he knew when he saw Griffin stagger off the court at halftime that his 6-foot-10 forward wouldn't be returning to the game.

"It looked like Lex Luthor brought the Kryptonite out and you saw Superman walking around there," Capel said.

It didn't get much better on the trip home.

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"After the game was over with and on the plane, he just looked tired. He looked really fatigued, and that was really about it," Capel said. "I didn't really bother him or ask him, 'How are you doing?' or anything like that."

Capel said he was somewhat encouraged by what doctors told him about an MRI that had been taken to get more information on Griffin's concussion, but more evaluations would have to be done Sunday night and Monday before a decision was made on whether Griffin would play.

He said he would not hold Griffin out as a precaution and that he would listen to what the doctors say and what Griffin says but "more so what the doctors say."

"When you have an injury to the head like that, you never know. You just don't really know," Capel said. "That's the tough part of it."

With top-ranked Connecticut having lost earlier in the week to No. 4 Pittsburgh, the Sooners (25-2) had a chance to move up to the No. 1 ranking for the first time since 1990 with an impressive enough victory at Texas. The Associated Press' new poll will be released Monday.

"I was a history major but I don't get into history or what that could've been," Capel said. "We lost, so that's the bottom line to me."

With Griffin out, freshman Willie Warren led the way with 27 points and six 3-pointers and the Sooners led 61-56 with 5 minutes to play before A.J. Abrams got hot to lead the Longhorns to the win.

"I was really proud of our guys and how we competed. Again not happy with the result because we expected to win the game," Capel said. "Even with Blake out, we expected to win the game."

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Oklahoma and Kansas (22-5) enter Monday night's game with identical 11-1 records in Big 12 play, carrying a one-game lead over No. 11 Missouri in the conference standings. The Jayhawks won last year's meeting in Kansas 85-55, with Griffin missing all but 5 minutes with his first of two knee injuries last season.

In both instances, he made a quicker-than-expected return and missed only one game.

The rematch could determine the regular-season champion and No. 1 seed in the Big 12 tournament.

"They're young, but they're talented. Those kids fight, they believe and they have a championship spirit about them," Capel said. "When you go through what that program went through last year of making the Final Four and winning the national championship and you return players ... they got to see what a championship mentality is like and what you have to do, and you can't buy that type of experience.

"That's carried over to this year, when a lot of people maybe thought they maybe wouldn't be as good or would struggle."

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