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- [Minnesota](#)
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- [Toronto](#)
- [NL](#)
- [Arizona](#)
- [Atlanta](#)
- [Chi Cubs](#)
- [Cincinnati](#)
- [Colorado](#)
- [Florida](#)
- [Houston](#)
- [LA Dodgers](#)
- [Milwaukee](#)
- [NY Mets](#)
- [Philadelphia](#)
- [Pittsburgh](#)
- [San Diego](#)
- [San Francisco](#)

- [St. Louis](#)
- [Washington](#)

|
[Scoreboard](#)

|
[Standings](#)

- [Regular Season](#)
- [Wild Card](#)
- [Spring Training](#)
- [2008 Final Standings](#)
- [2007 Final Standings](#)
- [2006 Final Standings](#)
- [2005 Final Standings](#)
- [2004 Final Standings](#)
- [2003 Final Standings](#)
- [2002 Final Standings](#)
- [2001 Final Standings](#)

|
[Stats](#)

- [Sortable Player Stats](#)
- [League Leaders](#)
- [Milestone Tracker](#)
- [Batter vs. Pitcher](#)
- [Sortable Team Stats](#)
- [Postseason & Interleague](#)
- [2009 Spring Training](#)
- [Winter Leagues](#)
- [Historical](#)
- [State Farm](#)

[Home Run Headquarters](#)

|
[Schedule](#)

- [2009 Regular Season](#)
- [2009 Postseason](#)
- [2009 World Baseball Classic](#)
- [3-Day Glance](#)
- [Team-by-Team Schedule](#)
- [National Broadcast Schedule](#)
- [Important Dates](#)

|
[Players](#)

- [Player Search](#)
- [Transactions](#)
- [Mobile Player Alerts](#)
- [Baseball Cards](#)
- [MLB Players Association](#)

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- [News Homepage](#)
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- [Noticias en español](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Perspectives](#)
- [News Archive](#)
- [2009 All-Star Game](#)
- [2009 Draft](#)
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- [History](#)
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- [Probables](#)
- [Commentary](#)
- [Official Info](#)

- [Events](#)
- [History](#)
- [Awards](#)
- [News Archive](#)
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Tests show mild concussion for Kuroda

Righty makes strides in recovery but will miss next start

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By David Ely / MLB.com

08/17/09 9:27 PM ET

LOS ANGELES -- The news surrounding Hiroki Kuroda's recovery from getting hit in the head by a line drive Saturday at Arizona continues to be positive.

On Monday, Dodgers athletic trainer Stan Conte told reporters that Kuroda suffered only a mild concussion.

"Nothing worse than that," Conte said. "A lot of his reaction times were normal, good indicator that things weren't really bad."

Conte said that on Tuesday that Kuroda would see a neurologist that specializes in concussions. On Monday, Kuroda had an initial CT scan to make sure he wasn't bleeding. The scan came back negative. Then Kuroda underwent what's called an ImPACT Test. The computerized software program was designed by the University of Pittsburgh and is used to help monitor how parts of the brain function and react.

"One of the things that happens in a concussion is that although the anatomy stays fine, the function changes," Conte said. "There's a chemical imbalance. The question is how do you test that and how do you know when it gets back to normal? And this test has been shown over the years to be able to do that." The test has been used widely in the NFL and NHL and Conte said that almost all Dodgers players (especially the catchers) go through the test during Spring Training.

The Dodgers were able to send in Kuroda's test results to the University of Pittsburgh, which showed that Kuroda suffered a mild concussion.

In addition to the two tests, Kuroda rode a stationary bike Monday to see how he felt with an elevated heart rate. Higher heart rates tend to cause more concussion symptoms, showing that the player is still

suffering from injury.

Kuroda got up to 110 beats per minute and had no symptoms.

Conte also said that Kuroda's status has improved and that Kuroda has "a little bit of a headache now and again."

Dodgers manager Joe Torre spoke with Kuroda on Monday and said that Kuroda seems to be comfortable.

"The greatest gift for me right now is that smile on his face," Torre said. "He feels a lot better than we all thought he would when it first happened."

Torre also joked that one of the effects of Kuroda's injury might be a heightened understanding of English. "When I asked some questions today in English for [Dodgers interpreter Kenji Nimura], he seemed to know the question before Kenji translated," Torre quipped. "I'm not sure what triggered over there. I'm not accusing him of anything."

Torre said Kuroda will miss his scheduled start on Thursday and he doesn't know who will take his place in the rotation.

One possibility is left-hander Scott Elbert, who was scratched from his scheduled start Sunday at Triple-A Albuquerque in case he's needed.

Although it doesn't seem that the Dodgers will place Kuroda on the disabled list, it's hard to gauge when the right-hander will return to the mound.

It's a matter of how quickly Kuroda can recover. And with head injuries, Kuroda has to be back to 100 percent before he's cleared to play.

"I've said this about four times today -- this is not a rotator cuff, this is not tendinitis," Conte said. "This is a brain injury, and he needs to be at 100 percent before he gets back out there."

David Ely is an associate reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

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