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It is safe to say that the St. Louis Blues were missing something in Game 2 of their best-of-7 series with the Los Angeles Kings Monday night.

The Blues were on the sour end of a 4-goal first period en route to a 5-2 loss.

This included a Mike Richards rebound goal just 31 seconds into the game in which Richards and winger Dustin Penner went untouched to the net to create the goal. 14 minutes later, Anze Kopitar scored a shorthanded goal after a steal in the offensive zone by Kings Captain Dustin Brown.

Jeff Carter added a goal minutes later, and Kopitar capped off the period with just 17 seconds remaining, scoring his second tally of the game.

“They scored four goals… it was pretty easy,” Blues Head Coach Ken Hitchcock said. “They [get] full marks. They checked us hard. They checked us hard and we coughed up the puck. We made mistakes.”

Justin Williams scored the other goal for the Kings at 1:26 of the second period while Andy McDonald and Matt D’Agostini both scored for St. Louis.

Blues goaltender Brian Elliott faced 16 shots in the first period but was forced to make just 4 saves the rest of the game after Williams’ goal.

The standing-room only crowd witnessed the Blues fall to a 2-0 series deficit in their Western Conference Semifinal Series.

“It was embarrassing, the work ethic we had as a team,” said forward T.J. Oshie. “That’s not the start we need, especially in front of the fans and in front of [Elliott]. He’s battled for us all year. For our team defense to be that poor… it’s embarrassing to do that in front of them.”

Murmurs of “something missing” could be heard as fans piled the exits and television crews headed to the Blues’ locker room.

‘Something missing’ can be a lot of things. It could be the fact that the team went 0-9 on the power-play and are now 0-12 in the series. They have also allowed 2 shorthanded goals in that time.

“Power-play is costing us in a big way,” added Hitchcock. “We’re going to have to address that again. It’s hurting us. Shorthanded goals build a lot of momentum and take away a lot of momentum. We’ve had two shorthanded goals [against] in two games. [It’s] taking away a lot of momentum and it’s careless play by us.”

The Blues’ power-play was 6-18 in their first round series with San Jose, posting a 33.3%.

So what’s missing from the power-play?

All of the signs can point to one key aspect of this team not playing the way that Hitchcock has come to expect; a puck-moving defenseman who can turn an opposing scoring chance into a breakout down the ice.

Sophomore defenseman Alex Pietrangelo was taken out of the series at 18:47 of the second period of Game 1. Kings rookie forward Dwight King pushed Pietrangelo in the back after the puck came to him behind the Blues’ net. Pietrangelo fell awkwardly into the boards and headed straight down the runway and out of the game. King was assessed a two-minute boarding penalty.

Pietrangelo skated with his teammates Monday morning before Game 2 but was listed as a game-time decision. Obviously, he did not play that evening.

How can one player make a difference in a game?

Pietrangelo was getting a lot of attention for the James Norris Trophy as the league's best defenseman before the award finalists were announced last week. He had a plus-16 rating and registered 39 assists, which was the most for any St. Louis Blue. He also ranked third on the team with 51 points.

Without Pietrangelo in the lineup, the Blues have lost a key player that is known for starting a strong transition up the ice. And let's not forget, Pietrangelo and forward David Backes are the two guys that constantly face the top line of the opponent.

To put it in a West Coast perspective, Hitchcock feels that the Kings would be in the same hole if their top defenseman were out with an injury.

"It's a big hole," he said. "Not a lot different if they [would have] lost [Drew] Doughty. Same thing."

But the Blues do not want to hang the series on whether or not Pietrangelo returns to the lineup.

"Petro is a big part of our team," said fellow defenseman Barret Jackman. "Good players go down and we've had some other good players go down throughout the year. Individually, especially in the back end, we have to step up and lessen the blow. We have to be better."

Captain Backes has called upon his teammates to step up their game in Pietrangelo's absence.

“We got one soldier down from a play in Game 1,” Backes said, “and rather than responding with desperation, urgency and that vengeance type of mentality, we came out flat and let them jump all over us.

“We’ve got battle levels that need to go up for every guy on the team and we just need to be better.”

The Blues and Kings will resume their series in Los Angeles Thursday night. Hitchcock feels that the extra rest will push Pietrangelo back in the lineup sooner rather than later.

“I think with a full two days off, hopefully he’s good to go [Thursday]” he said in the post-game press conference after Game 2. “Unfortunately, he couldn’t play [Monday]. But we need him back in the lineup."

One player cannot be the answer to the Blues’ second round woes. But finding that ‘something missing’ will be a lot easier with their top defenseman back in the lineup.

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