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In the midst of the NHL All-Star Break, the St. Louis Blues find themselves two points behind the league-leading Detroit Red Wings in the NHL point race. Yet, the Blues are just 20th in the league in goal-scoring (2.51 goals-per-game).

This might be due to the fact that the team has played without playmaking forwards Alex Steen and Andy McDonald for a combined 59 games so far this season. It seems that this problem may be resolving itself in the near future.

Andy McDonald, who was injured in the Blues' third game this season after a collision with teammates Nikita Nikitin and David Backes, traded in his red "no-contact" jersey for his usual yellow jersey this morning. McDonald has been out of the lineup with a concussion since October 13.

This does not mean that McDonald will be ready to go by the Blues' next game, which will be this Friday against the Los Angeles Kings at Scottrade Center. He is likely just a few weeks off from a return.

McDonald, who said that there is still no timetable for his return, has faced concussions in the past. Just last season McDonald missed 24 games in 2010-11 with a concussion.

Alex Steen, however, is not seeing the light of day as soon as McDonald. Steen, also out with a concussion, has not been in a red jersey since his injury but still does not feel ready to jump back in the lineup.

"There's nothing really to say about it," Steen said to Jeremy Rutherford of the St. Louis Post Dispatch. "You get off the ice and right now, you just wait and see how it is. I'm not going to diagnose myself every minute of practice or every minute of the day. If I'm doing that, I'm not ready to go. When I'm ready to go, I won't be thinking about it. I'm just going to let it take it's

time."

There is a saying in St. Louis that the Cardinals baseball team has made famous: “Getting these players back from injury will be just like making a trade except you won’t have to give anything up.” How true is this?

As sick as St. Louisans are of hearing this, it may be the truest in this instance. This team has been rolling since mid-November. This has been done without the help of McDonald, who was touted to be a top-line center for the Blues to start the season. Without Steen in the lineup, who still ranks 3rd on the team in goals-scored, the Blues are an amazing 8-2-3.

The Blues were not expected to be doing this well this late in the season. Some of the most trusted hockey websites and analysts picked the Blues to do well enough to compete for a playoff spot.

Let’s revisit some of these predictions, shall we?

Daniel Freedman, Bleacher Report: Projection: 5th in Central; 12th in Western Conference. Freedman adds that he doesn’t think that “the Blues are a playoff team right now.”

ESPN: “The Blues are good and big down the middle,” said John Buccigross. The panel of eight experts had just two different picks for the winner of the Central Division. Surprise surprise, it was Chicago and Detroit.

TSN: After calling the Blues one of the most improved teams in the league, TSN suggests that the Blues have the “potential” to be a playoff team. They also say that with McDonald (and Oshie) healthy, the fans should feel optimistic about playoff chances.

So, what is my point?

While most analysts expected the Blues to be a competitive team, none were expecting them to

be competing for the top spot in the NHL… and these predictions were made with McDonald and Steen healthy.

This team is exceeding expectations without two of their best players in the lineup every night. If these guys can step in and make a difference in the coming weeks, just think about how many more goals can be scored every night and how many more wins could come on the road.

Mix in the fact that Steen is a strong defensive forward who will help a penalty-kill that is currently ranked 19th in the league (81.7%).

As much as I agree that the aforementioned statement is usually a cop-out for sports organizations, it may be a very true statement in this situation. The healthy additions of Steen and McDonald could bolster this lineup well enough to give the Blues the advantage when they play 15 of their last 22 games on the road.

With the way that this team is playing, a big move is not needed anyway. Steen and McDonald may be all that the Blues need to keep this play up during the stretch-run of the regular season.

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