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When the star players start strapping the skates back on after returning from injury, the logical response on the ice is that the team will start racking up the wins.

This is not the case for the St. Louis Blues.

In fact, the wins were coming before the players returned from injury. On March 25, the Blues received a late-season gift when injured forward Alex Steen suited up for the Blues' meeting with the Phoenix Coyotes that evening. After missing 39 games with a concussion, Steen did not record a point but helped the Blues cruise to a 4-0 victory over the Coyotes in Glendale, Arizona.

Steen scored an assist in the next game, another shutout victory over the Nashville Predators. That would be the last time the Blues would see a victory since Steen's return.

Steen is not the only one to return from an extended injury in the past couple of weeks. Matt D'Agostini returned after missing 26 games with a concussion last Saturday, along with veteran forward Andy McDonald who missed six games with a shoulder injury. The game resulted in one of the worst losses for the Blues this season, dropping one to the league-worst Columbus Blue Jackets, 5-2.

What is more disturbing is how long the team has been without a completely healthy roster. The Blues climbed to be the top team in the league with a laundry list of injuries throughout the season (McDonald missed 51 games with a concussion; Kris Russell missed 27 games with multiple injuries; Roman Polak missed 5 games with a bruised knee and the list goes on). However, for the first time in 160 games played, the Blues had a completely healthy roster heading into the Columbus game.

What has been the result of having a healthy roster? The Blues are 0-2-1 since the return of

D'Agostini, McDonald and Polak last Saturday.

"This is what happens when you play with skill ahead of work," Blues Head Coach Ken Hitchcock said after Friday's 4-1 loss to the Phoenix Coyotes. "This is what happens when you don't want to put your work boots on and the other team doesn't have anything to do with it."

Ken Hitchcock has pinpointed this problem better than any fan, player or media member could. The ability to work seems to have faded away from this roster in the past week.

To dive deeper into this problem, let's take a look at who the Blues have needed to sit in the press box since the injuries have healed:

Saturday, March 31 vs. Columbus Blue Jackets (5-2 L)

09 Jaden Schwartz
23 Ian Cole
26 B.J. Crombeen
28 Carlo Colaiacovo
32 Chris Porter
75 Ryan Reaves

Wednesday, April 4 vs. Detroit Red Wings (3-2 OTL)

06 Kent Huskins
09 Jaden Schwartz
12 Scott Nichol
23 Ian Cole
26 B.J. Crombeen
32 Chris Porter

Friday, April 6 vs. Phoenix Coyotes (4-1 L)

06 Kent Huskins
09 Jaden Schwartz
12 Scott Nichol
23 Ian Cole
26 B.J. Crombeen
32 Chris Porter

Why do I bring this up? It is very simple; the skaters who are paid to work their tails off more than the rest of the roster are getting regular seats in the press box. The Blues' checking line has been offensive players who are relied on to pop in a few goals. Depth is never a bad thing, but the role players are being taken out of the game.

The Blues sent out a checking line consisting of Matt D'Agostini, Vladimir Sobotka and Ryan Reaves Friday night. While scoring depth has been distributed throughout all four lines, the checking line is simply not getting the results that they have gotten all season. A line of B.J. Crombeen – Scott Nichol – Ryan Reaves was notorious for crashing guys into the corners and lighting a fire under the Blues, but with the injured players returning and playing in the lineup, it is impossible to ask the scoring depth to do the same.

So what is Coach Hitchcock to do? The St. Louis media as well as the fans would frown on sitting scoring talent, but it may be the only way he can get that energy and drive back into the lineup. There is a reason that guys like Nichol and Reaves are playing in the NHL. They are there to fill the rolls of crashers and bangers. They are what get the fists pumping and the sticks banging from their team's bench.

If a team does not have energy and the will to win, they will not be successful. The Blues are witnessing this right now.

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