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What a difference a calendar year can make.

At this point one year ago, St. Louis Blues right winger Chris Stewart had registered 13 goals in the first 59 games played of the 2011-12 season. He had posted a total of 16 points, averaging .27 points-per-game. Stewart was seeing third line minutes, splitting time between playing with Patrik Berglund and Jason Arnott on the second and third lines.

After Stewart finished the season with a disappointing 15 goals and 30 points, he was unnoticeable in the playoffs. This resulted in head coach Ken Hitchcock scratching him in game two of the Western Semifinals against the Los Angeles Kings.

“We need more from him,” Hitchcock said before the game that put the Kings up 2-0 in the series. “It’s certainly not just based on one hockey game. We just need more. From that position on our hockey club, that third-line role, we need more tenacity, more determination, more second and third effort on the puck. We need all of that from that position.”

After the Blues were ousted in four games, Blues General Manager Doug Armstrong negotiated a deal with Stewart as both sides agreed to a one-year, $3 million contract extension. This contract was considered a one more chance contract, something that Armstrong was known for awarding in the past.

Stewart complied to the demands of his team. Spending time with the Czech Extraliga and the German Bundesliga during the lockout, Stewart did not stay away from the game. Stewart had a strict diet which helped him drop 20 pounds before the NHL season began. He estimated that his body fat percentage lowered from two to four percent.

“It’s the best I’ve felt in my life,” Stewart told reporters during training camp.

It's paid off. Through 18 games, Stewart has accumulated seven goals, eight assists and 13 points. Stewart scored on a top-shelf slapshot in the Blues' 2-1 win over the Columbus Blue Jackets Saturday night, giving him nine points in the last eight games.

He has been rewarded by Hitchcock as of late, playing with top-producers Andy McDonald and Alex Steen on the second line. In the last five games, Stewart has averaged 16:04 time-on-ice. This is quite the step up from his 10:47 average ice-time in the seven games he played during the 2012 playoffs.

With the announcement of rookie sensation Vladimir Tarasenko's injury, Stewart will be relied upon to keep up his high tempo play.

If he can, the Blues will finally be getting the consistent player that they traded for two seasons ago.