The regular season is coming to a close. Injuries will be a factor in the playoffs. The Detroit Red Wings, Chicago Blackhawks and Philadelphia Flyers are missing some key players, while the Pittsburgh Penguins are in the best shape they have been in the last two years!

Recent Additions

Jimmy Howard, Detroit Red Wings – Groin – Day-to-Day

Howard has been struggling with a groin injury off and on all season long. He has recently aggravated it again and is listed as day-to-day

Johan Franzen, Detroit Red Wings – Back – Day-to-Day

The Mule has missed the last two games with a back injury but is feeling better as reported by the Detroit Free Press Franzen expects to be back for the playoffs.

Darren Helm, Detroit Red Wings – Knee – Mid to Late April

Helm has a grade two MCL sprain and may miss the entire first round of the post season.

James Wisniewski, Columbus Blue Jackets – Concussion – Day-to-Day

The Wiz did not play Tuesday night after he developed concussion symptoms after a shot deflected up into his face on Sunday night.

Scott Gomez, Montreal Canadiens – Concussion – Day-to-Day

Plenty of speculation surrounding a potential buy-out is surrounding Gomez right now. Gomez was hit from behind by Buffalo's Tyler Myers and the hit resulted in a three game suspension. Gomez will not play in Wednesday night's rematch game in Buffalo.

{youtube}dkr7yn0kw1Q{/youtube}

Mathieu Darche, Montreal Canadiens – Concussion – Day-to-Day

Darche has missed the last 12 games for the Habs. He has an inner ear infection and possibly a concussion. Darche is at least another week away.

Nikolai Kulemin, Toronto Maple Leafs – Finger – Indefinite

Kulemin will join Joffrey Lupul and miss the remainder of the regular season with a broken

finger.

Slightly banged up and day-to-day

Paul Gaustad may miss the return of Radulov with a hand injury. **David Backes** of the St. Louis Blues did not break his foot when he blocked a shot on Saturday. Washington goalie **Tomas Vokun**
is bothered by his groin injury again.

Injury Updates

Nicklas Lidstrom, Detroit Red Wings – Ankle – Day-to-Day

Lidstrom has a bone bruise in his ankle. The Detroit Free Press reports he had a second X-Ray on Friday and confirmed there is no fracture. Lidstrom has missed three weeks but

returned to the ice on Monday. "That's encouraging, compared to how it was on Wednesday morning in L.A., when I had my skate on, and I couldn't stand on my foot. So that's an improvement, for sure, where I was able to skate out there and even pivot and do some turns." Lidstrom said. Mike Babcock said Lidstrom could be ready to return Saturday.

Vincent Lecavalier, Tampa Bay Lightning – Wrist – Indefinite

Lecavalier is only eight games short of achieving 1,000 games played milestone. With 10 games remaining in the season it is still possible, but as of last week he was still unable to shoot. Expect Vinny back this season, but the milestone may come next season.

Nicklas Backstrom, Washington Capitals – Concussion – Indefinite

Backstrom has not played since January 3rd but has finally been skating for seven straight days. Tuesday was a scheduled day of rest according to the Washington Post, and he will resume on ice work outs Wednesday as long as he remains symptom free. And assuming he remains symptom free he could soon be cleared for full practice and then contact. A potential playoff return is beginning to look like a possibility.

Craig Anderson, Ottawa Senators – Finger – Day-to-Day

The Sens starting goalie is very close to a return. GM Bryan Murray was suggesting he could be back by Friday. The Sens still hold onto the seventh seed for the playoffs and do not need to rush Anderson back, but he will be ready by next week for sure.

Taylor Hall, Edmonton Oilers – Concussion – Day-to-Day

After suffering a concussion at the hands of Calgary's Corey Sarich last Friday, Hall is recovering quickly. He participated in Tuesdays practice, no contact but skated hard and was taking shots. Jim Matheson spoke to head Coach Tom Renney who said "You almost have to be careful how you look at this fella, medically, sometimes you have to take the decision out of his hands. He had a good bike ride yesterday, took a baseline test. Both went well." Considering where Edmonton is in the standings it makes little sense to allow him to return unless he is 100% recovered as sustaining a second concussion could be devastating. However, Renney added "I wouldn't be surprised if he plays somewhere on our trip."

Mike Cammalleri, Calgary Flames – Upper Body Injury – Day-to-Day

Cammalleri has missed the last eight games with an undisclosed upper body injury. Flames GM Jay Feaster expects him to return before the season ends. The Flames sit two points out of the playoffs and will need Cammalleri back to push for a post season berth.

Mikko Koivu, Minnesota Wild – Shoulder – Day-to-Day

Michael Russo reports that Chuck Fletcher has confirmed that the Wild will have their Captain back on Thursday to play the Calgary Flames. Koivu has missed the last 15 games and 23 of the last 27. At one point in the season the Wild were the top team in the West, but have been in a free fall in Koivu's absence.

Travis Zajac, New Jersey Devils – Achilles – Day-to-Day

Zajac remains on the IR and has missed the last 36 games. He has been on the ice and is skating with the team. He was close to returning in Ottawa on Tuesday and could return for an easy game on Friday against the Leafs.

Rich Peverley, Boston Bruins – Knee – Day-to-Day

Peverley is traveling with the team for a Western road trip. The Bruins will play three games in four days in California and Peverley may make his return there.

Players close to making a return

Flames defenseman **Chris Butler** is about to return after missing 13 games with a laceration on his leg. St. Louis Blues had a full house as 26 players were in practice Tuesday including the injured **Alex Steen** (concussion), **Kris Russell** (concussion) **Matt D'Agostini** (head) **Andy McDonald** (shoulder), and **David Backes** (foot).

Back in Action

Pittsburgh Penguins welcomed back both **Sidney Crosby** and **Kris Letang** from concussions. **Andrei Markov** has returned to the Montreal Canadiens after missing almost two full years of hockey with knee injuries. **Martin Havlat** of the San Jose Sharks has come back hot with six points in the last three games. **Pavel Datsyuk** made his return to the Detroit Red Wings on Saturday and scored a goal. The Philadelphia Flyers defense is hurting but **Kimmo Timonen** returned last Tuesday and has three points in his last two games. The Carolina Hurricanes activated **Joni Pitkanen** off the IR on Wednesday after he missed the last 44 games. In addition to having Koivu back, the Minnesota Wild also have starting goalie **Niklas Backstrom** back who missed seven games.