

The IR: Updates on Garon, Steen, Enstrom and more

Written by Mike Schmidt

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Get The Stretcher (Latest Injuries)

Just a week after he returned to the lineup from a concussion and scored a pair of points in a thrilling home victory over Tampa Bay, [Evgeni Malkin](#) will be out of commission for one or two

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weeks with what's been deemed as an upper-body injury – possibly an issue with his shoulder. Thankfully, it's not a concussion.

Former first-round pick [Colin Wilson](#) was enjoying the best season of his career as a member of the Nashville Predators, but an upper-body injury could force him out of action for an extended period of time. While his shooting percentage of .269 is nearly double his career mark of .154, Wilson has certainly made strides as a player during his age 23-campaign and earned a significant amount of time on the power play as a result.

Fellow Nashville forward [Patric Hornqvist](#) is expected to miss two games with an upper-body injury. The loss of Wilson and Hornqvist is a major blow to a Nashville offense that already struggles to score with much consistency.

Injuries are wreaking havoc on the forward depth for the Dallas Stars. Star forward [Jamie Benn](#) is dealing with a wrist injury he sustained this past weekend. Gritty veteran [Brenden Morrow](#) is still out with a groin injury he suffered last week, and elder statesman [Ray Whitney](#) has been slow to return from a broken foot that took him out of the lineup on February 1. However, it looks like Whitney will return to action this week.

[Michael Grabner](#) is out for the foreseeable future with a shoulder issue that sidelined him over the weekend. There's no timetable for his return.

One Day At A Time (Day-to-Day)

[Mike Green](#)'s owners have to be more than a little frustrated with the once-dominant Washington defenseman. Green has been skating with the team as he tries to recover from a lingering groin injury. He hasn't seen action in a game since Feb. 28, and he hasn't scored a

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goal since Feb. 3. There are more questions than answer regarding Green's future fantasy value, making it hard to trade for him or trade him away.

[Radim Vrbata](#) has been out for almost a month with what Phoenix officials described as a lower-body injury. Now it has come to light he's dealing with a broken foot. The veteran winger, long a middling (at best) option for fantasy, emerged from relative obscurity to (somehow) score 35 goals and post a +24 during his age-30 season. Some might suggest he received more than his fair share of luck a year ago. Phoenix goalies posted a save percentage of .945 while Vrbata was on the ice, and his shooting percentage of .151 marked his career high by 37 points. However, aside from a predictable drop in plus-minus, Vrbata has registered 12 points in 15 games this season. His owners should hope he recovers soon, as Vrbata remains a valued member of Phoenix's offensive attack.

Underrated defenseman [Tobias Enstrom](#) has resumed skating after being knocked out of the lineup Feb. 15 with a shoulder injury. He should be back in about a week. Fun fact: Enstrom has as many 50-point seasons as teammate [Dustin Byfuglien](#), despite breaking into the NHL two seasons after his defensive partner.

Those who expected/hoped Ottawa's [Milan Michalek](#) would return to the lineup soon will have to wait awhile longer. His wonky knee is giving him problems, and it may require offseason surgery. A surprise 60-point scorer a season ago, Michalek may not be at or even near 100-percent for the remainder of the 2013 campaign. Simply stated, he's a very frustrating player to own right now in fantasy.

Speaking of injured Senators, netminder [Craig Anderson](#) is still dealing with lingering soreness as a result of a sprained ankle he suffered in late February. The consistently inconsistent netminder's dominance prior to the injury cannot be understated. He currently leads the league in save percentage by 20 points (.952 to .932) over San Jose goaltender

[Antti Niemi](#)

and his even-strangth save percentage of .952 is unmatched by any goaltender who has seen action in 10 or more games this season. Anderson's owners have to be worried the long layoff will lead to a drop in production. Time will tell.

No news is bad news when it comes to the status of veteran goaltender [Martin Brodeur](#). The Devils could certainly use their veteran netminder, as backup

[Johan Hedberg](#)

has floundered (.879 save percentage and just four wins in 13 games) while seeing regular action this season. There's no telling when Brodeur's bad back will allow him to return to the lineup.

Pull Off The Band-Aid (Returning To Action)

[Miikka Kiprusoff](#) has looked less than useful for fantasy purposes since he returned from a knee injury last week. Calgary seems poised to continue to roll with the 36-year-old veteran in net for the foreseeable future, but he hasn't shown he's worthy of regular playing time at any point in 2013. Only two goaltenders that have seen action in more than 10 games have a worse save percentage against even strength than Kiprusoff's .884 this season: St. Louis's

[Brian Elliott](#)

and Florida's

[Scott Clemmensen](#)

. Simply stated, employing Kiprusoff as a fantasy goalie is doing (much) more harm than good right now.

The Flames also saw underrated, two-way centerman [Mikael Backlund](#) return from a knee injury this past week. The 23-year-old former first-round pick looked like he was on the verge of breaking out prior to his early-February injury. He saw almost a little more than 14 minutes of ice time in his return to the lineup on Saturday and could prove useful for fantasy owners in deeper formats.

It looks like Tampa Bay netminder [Mathieu Garon](#)'s lower-body injury sustained last week isn't too serious. He should make a return to the lineup this week. Those fantasy owners who begrudgingly employ [Anders Lindback](#) can expect him to share goaltending duties with Garon moving forward, as the latter has been the better performer so far this season. However, neither is reliable enough to be considered a desirable or useful fantasy option right now.

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Columbus has activated forward [Brandon Dubinsky](#) , who's been out of the lineup with a knee injury sustained in mid-February.

[Brent Burns](#) will attempt his best Byfuglien impression when he returns to the lineup from a leg injury that has sidelined him since February 24. It seems Burns, who has yet to register a single point during the 2013 season, will see some action at the right wing position in addition to his normal position as a defenseman. There's no denying his ability to score goals, but it will be interesting to see how he adjusts to this change in role – especially on a team with so many other proven options at the forward position. However, things really can't get much worse for Burns, as fantasy owners drafted him to provide his typical goal-scoring production from the blueline.

Perhaps the return of centerman Alex Steen will help jumpstart some offensive production from the slumping [David Backes](#) . Steen is set to return from a shoulder injury that knocked him out of action in late February, and is expected to play alongside Backes and

[Chris Stewart](#)

. Backes has not met the high expectations of fantasy owners who selected him to be a versatile, multi-category contributor. However, it's important to recognize a few facts that have affected his plus-minus. Blues netminders are saving only .901 of shots while Backes is on the ice and Blues players are shooting only .542 while he's in the game. Furthermore, Backes's season shooting percentage of .056 is less than half of his career mark of .119. As a result, he sports a -3 after being +15 and +32 the past two years, respectively. Expect things to improve for him moving forward.