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Goalie goes extra mile for Blues

By Jeremy Rutherford
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Injuries to Blues goalie Jason Bacashihua have prompted the team to promote Chris Beckford-Tseu to back up Curtis Sanford.
(David Zalubowski/AP)

Chris Beckford-Tseu can thank the timing of injuries to Blues goalies Curtis Sanford and Jason Bacashihua for his first two call-ups to the NHL.

Beckford-Tseu is back with the club for the second time in two months because a shoulder and back injury suffered by Bacashihua occurred Friday night after the league had

closed its doors for the weekend.

The Blues, who placed Bacashihua on the injured-reserve list Sunday, might have recalled Patrick Lalime or Reinhard Divis from Peoria. But both of those goalies would need to pass through re-entry waivers, a 24-hour period, and neither could have been available to play in St. Louis before Tuesday.

So although Beckford-Tseu is playing out of his league - he's spent most of the season with the East Coast Hockey League's Alaska Aces - the 21-year-old will be the Blues' backup for tonight's game at 7:05 against the Vancouver Canucks at Savvis Center.

The situation is identical to the one in mid-December when Sanford suffered a hip-flexor injury on a Friday night and the Blues had to rush Beckford-Tseu to St. Louis as they waited for Divis to clear waivers. Divis did clear, and Beckford-Tseu returned to the minors.

Blues general manager Larry Pleau, who was in Peoria for the Rivermen's game Sunday night, said the Blues would wait until they knew the extent of Bacashihua's injury before making a decision on recalling Lalime or Divis.

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Lalime had allowed just one goal in four consecutive starts before surrendering five goals Saturday in a 5-1 loss at Houston. Lalime was pulled in the loss, but Pleau said: "He had a good game."

But for now, the backup job belongs to Beckford-Tseu. And while he has yet to play a minute in the NHL, he's shown he'll do anything to get here.

The first time Beckford-Tseu was called up, he made a 15-hour trip from Victoria, British Columbia, and joined the Blues just before the start of a game against Philadelphia. When he got the news Saturday night that he was returning to St. Louis, he caught a flight from Alaska at 9:30 p.m. and arrived around 9:30 a.m., just before practice.

"This one wasn't that fun either," Beckford-Tseu said. "But this is where you want to be, so whatever it takes ..."

In Alaska, Beckford-Tseu is 13-1-2 with a league-leading 1.97 goals-against average. He has also played in Peoria this season, meaning if he gets in a game with the Blues, he'll have played with all three teams in one season.

"Whenever I get a chance to play, it doesn't matter what jersey I've got on," Beckford-Tseu said. "I just want to be playing well and ready to go."

Blues coach Mike Kitchen said Beckford-Tseu "probably won't start a game. This will be a good opportunity for him to be a backup and get to see a couple of NHL practices."

Tkachuk practices

Keith Tkachuk rejoined the Blues on Sunday for the first time since breaking a knuckle Dec. 16.

"Felt better, it's still pretty sore, but it just felt good being out there," he said.

As far as returning to the lineup, Tkachuk said, "Hopefully it'll get better each day, and hopefully - we'll see - maybe next week or so."

Said Kitchen: "He's skating well. Handling the puck, I think it's pretty sore. It's probably good to be out practicing to keep the movement in it, but I'm not sure when he'll be back."

Brewer to have surgery


The Blues announced Sunday that defenseman Eric Brewer will have surgery "in the near future" on his dislocated left shoulder. Brewer will miss the rest of the season.

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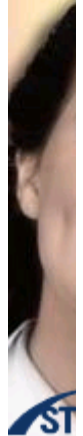
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