

Toews and Seabrook are sick of waiting around

By Chris Hine | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Jonathan Toews has heard the question often in the past three weeks: Do you think you'll be healthy enough to play?

And since Toews hurt his back Nov. 23 against San Jose, the answer has always been no. Each time he has to answer negatively, it gets a little harder.

"The frustrating thing is you keep getting asked the question and you feel like the next game is going to be the game you're getting back," Toews said Sunday. "There's only so many times you can keep giving yourself and others bad news."

There was some good news for Toews and the Hawks on Sunday, when he participated in the optional morning skate. He did not play against the Stars, however, making it nine consecutive missed games. The Blackhawks have gone 5-2-2 in the nine games since Toews went down, earning 12 of a possible 18 points.

The Hawks also were without defenseman Brent Seabrook, who practiced but missed his second consecutive game because of an apparent head injury. He appears close to returning on the upcoming three-game road trip. Both Seabrook and Toews traveled with the team on Monday.

"It is the type of injury that's really tough," Toews said. "You almost have to sit around and wait for it to heal and get better. Sometimes you feel good and all of a sudden you do some little movements here or there that seem to just fire everything up. So yeah, I guess in that sense it is frustrating."

Toews said last week that he would play through the injury if this were the playoffs. He said Sunday that was still the case, but for now he and the Hawks recognize that it's December, and it's important for Toews to fully heal before he returns.

"There's not a whole lot of things that any of our guys wouldn't play through," Toews

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The Blackhawks miss Jonathan Toews for many reasons, though one of the biggest is that the captain is one of the best faceoff men in the NHL. He's won 60.3 percent of the draws he's taken this season, while the Hawks as a whole are at 48.1 percent. Here's how the team has fared at the dot in the past nine games without him.

Nov. 25 at Anaheim

26.9%

Won 3-2

Nov. 29 vs. Florida

52.7%

Won 2-1 in shootout

Dec. 3 at Philadelphia

41.5%

Lost 3-1

Dec. 6 vs. Arizona

51.7%

Won 4-0

Dec. 11 vs. Dallas

44%

Won 3-1

Nov. 26 at Los Angeles

56.2%

Lost 2-1 in OT

Dec. 1 vs. New Jersey

44.9%

Won 4-3 in OT

Dec. 4 vs. Winnipeg

53.4%

Lost 2-1

Dec. 9 vs. N.Y. Rangers

50%

Lost 1-0 in OT

said. "And for myself in this case, I feel like it's something that when everything's on the line you suck it up and deal with whatever the aftermath is in the offseason.

"But in this case, we've got a long ways to go. The tough thing is almost just being extra cautious to make sure it's not something that will gradually get worse the rest of the season if we don't deal with it now."

Seabrook, who missed just his 13th game in the last 11 seasons Sunday, said he felt good and was irritated he had to sit out.

"It sucks. I don't like doing this," Seabrook said. "I haven't done it a lot over my career, so it's new to me and something that's weird, but with that being said I've got to take precautions and make sure I'm ready to go before I get back out there."