

Canucks

Continued from page B3

Hamhuis and teammates Roberto Luongo, also a member of the victorious Canadian squad, and Swedes Daniel Sedin and Alex Edler returned to reality as they skated for the first time with the struggling Canucks since leaving for the Winter Games. The injury-riddled Canucks, who had seven regulars in Sochi, are looking to end a seven-game losing skid against a St. Louis squad that had 10 players invited to the Games.

Vancouver (27-24-9) sits in ninth place in the Western Conference, a point behind Dallas and Phoenix, who are tied for eighth. St. Louis coach Ken Hitchcock is hoping his second-place Blues (39-12-6), who were represented by nine players in Russia, can elevate their game a higher post-Olympic level as they battle the front-running Anaheim Ducks for top spot in the West.

The contest will determine how much the Olympic rush can help returning players overcome fatigue. The journey back to Vancouver included flights from Sochi to Newark to Toronto and home.

"It worked out exactly to a 24-hour flight — 2 a.m. Sochi time (departure) and 2 a.m. Sochi time (arrival)," said Hamhuis.

While he and his Canuck teammates who were overseas have had little rest recently, Vancouver's remaining players have grown tired of their Olympic respite and are anxious to get back on the winning track after a strong start to their season faded.

"We didn't put ourselves in a very good position before the break, a bit of a slide," Hamhuis said. "These preparation days that we've had are going to be really important. (We have to) make sure our game's in order for this last stretch and get ourselves into the playoffs."

Luongo, who backed up Carey Price most of the time while he was in Sochi, said it was good to get back on the ice with his Canuck teammates after the long travel day. Despite his lack of activity in games in Sochi, he practised "pretty much every day."

The goaltender indicated he is eager to get back in the Canucks' net as they try to secure a post-season berth. All of the losses in the seven-game skid have come in regulation time.

"Obviously, we know what's at stake right now," he said. "We dug ourselves a bit of a hole. So we've just gotta come (Wednesday) with a fresh mentality, a fresh approach. We can't really do anything about what's happened. We've just gotta attack one game at a time right now and not worry about the standings."

But the Canucks do have some concerns about injuries. Centre Ryan Kesler missed practice due to a reported hand injury suffered in the Olympics.

Centre Henrik Sedin, who missed the Games with an undisclosed problem, is questionable. Coach John Tortorella hopes he can play, but Sedin has missed the past two workouts while attending to personal matters in Sweden. The Canucks' captain is due to return this morning and will be assessed then.

Defenceman Kevin Bieksa hopes to return from a foot injury that sidelined him for five games before the Olympics. He worked out Tuesday, but his return is not confirmed.

Defenceman Chris Tanev remains sidelined with an ankle problem.

Canucks coach John Tortorella said injuries have "ravaged" his club after it had some early success, and his players' demeanour has changed. But despite the uncertainty surrounding his team's health, it needs to rebound.

"No matter what happens, we have to get back to an aggressive style, a style with some strut and not be afraid to make a mistake," he said. "With the momentum changes, that's a huge thing we have to correct. We can't be afraid of a bad thing happening in a game and turning it into five or six (goals against) after."

Hamhuis said returning Olympians will have to see how they deal with fatigue. But he expects the experience will give players a boost.

"Whenever you get a chance to play with and against the best players in the world, it elevates your game physically and mentally," he said. "It's certainly a challenge all the time, but it was a really neat experience just

being in the dressing room with some of the greatest players in the game today. "Obviously, guys will be a little bit fatigued probably with the jet lag. We'll get over that as quick as we can.

"But I think being over there and having that experience, playing against the best in the world when the pace was so high and the pressure was big, any time you can get yourself in those situations, I think you only grow as a player. And to have so many guys involved will really help us."

Tortorella, who was not able to hold the mini-camp he wanted for Vancouver players who stayed because of the team's injury situation, said the Canucks need a tough game against a top club like St. Louis to address their inconsistencies. Although the remainder of the regular season holds much less incentive than the Olympics, Luongo does not expect to suffer a letdown.

"There's no (Olympic) hangover here," said Luongo. "I'm anxious to get back at it. There's a lot of work ahead of us."

But he will have to serve as a backup for at least one more game, because Eddie Lack is slated to start against the Blues.

Hitchcock, who served as an assistant with the Canadian squad in Sochi, indicated he was not overly impressed with Tortorella's support of Sweden over Canada, but downplayed it.

"To me, it's just, you're in Canada. I think you have to pay respect for where you coach," said Hitchcock. "I'm sure he did that in his apology (Tuesday). It's no big deal to us."

Hitchcock confirmed that he and his Team Canada colleagues read Tortorella's apology after the win over Sweden.

"We all read it together, so we saw it," he said. "It was sincere and he meant it, but we've passed on."

ICE CHIPS: The NHL began the build-out Tuesday at B.C. Place Stadium for Sunday's Heritage Classic between the Canucks and Ottawa Senators. . . . The Buffalo Sabres may soon be lifting the interim tag off head coach Ted Nolan and giving him an extension. The Sabres are also shopping G Ryan Miller.

A Faster Way to Save!

TAX-FREE SAVINGS ACCOUNT

2.25%*

Want a faster, tax-free way to save for a vacation, home renovation or a new car? Our TFSA products can help you achieve your goals.

Ask us for details about how to transfer your existing TFSA!

Kelowna Branch
1674 Bertram Street
Ph: 250.862.8008
cwbank.com

CANADIAN WESTERN BANK

*Rate subject to change without notice. Available in-branch only, on WestEamer TFSA Account. Interest calculated daily, paid monthly.

Member of CDIC

Aquassure
Accessible Baths

Accessible Bathroom Experts

ENJOY BATHING AGAIN!

Accessible Tubs, Walk-ins and Showers

Visit our Kelowna showroom at 1048 Richter St. or call 250-868-1220

Best Bath SYSTEMS

www.aquassure.com

{ your next amazing catch }

Trout Waters Fly & Tackle

- Group pricing for clubs • Quantity discounts
- Boats & accessories: North Fork Outdoors, Outcast, Scotty
- Top brand names • Patagonia clothing and wading for men & women
- Renowned customer service • Canada's best fly tying selection

NEW online store @ www.troutwaters.ca

#101-2340 Hwy 97N Kelowna **1-888-823-6633**
250-860-2262

patagonia Kelowna's Only Patagonia Store

A focus on excellence.
A commitment to the future.

Supporting B.C.'s young athletes

 Teck is proud to be the title sponsor of Cross Country B.C.'s skier development program. Through our partnership with Cross Country B.C., we are supporting excellence in sport and providing youth with experiences that will help prepare them for the future.

Come out and support these skiers at the Teck BC Championships on Feb 28–Mar 2, 2014 at the Telemark Ski Trails. For start times and more information, visit www.telemarkx-c.com

For more information on Cross Country B.C.'s skier development program go to www.crosscountrybc.ca

Teck