

Nicklas Backstrom Nearing Return

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Caps fans have seen quite a bit so far this season, such as **Alex Ovechkin** getting off to a career-best start, a bunch of prospects in the lineup, and hard-fought games against division rivals.

But Caps fans have yet to see veteran center, and alternative captain (Ovi's longtime "partner-in-crime" if you will), **Nicklas Backstrom** take the ice, as he has been sidelined due to a [nagging hip injury](#).

Before the start of the season, coach **Peter Laviolette** didn't have many answers on Backstrom's timeline.

"It's still listed as week-to-week," Laviolette said back in early October. "You guys see that he's not out here, yet. We've said that we're going to do the right thing and make sure that Nick is healthy, and I can't answer that one right now."

Even Backstrom was unsure of when he would return.

“It’s getting better and better,” Backstrom said back in early October. “I think after all we’re not rushing it. We’re looking at it long term, not short term.”

Now, 28 games deep into the season, it seems that all of this may change very soon as Backstrom is inching closer to making his long-awaited return to the lineup. Currently, Backstrom is taking it day-to-day as he has started to participate in practice, the first time he has done so this season. “I’m feeling good right now,” said Backstrom in a video interview with Tarik El-Bashir of The Athletic after today’s practice. “It was nice to get a practice in and actually take some line rushes too. Feeling better, progressing, another practice tomorrow so we’ll go from there.”

Without Backstrom, the Caps have missed a key component on offense, desperately lacking his assist-making ability and presence on the power play.

Last season Backstrom recorded [38 assists](#) in a span of 55 games, marking the ninth straight year that the veteran has earned at least 35 assists in a season. Furthermore, Backstrom ranks [33rd all-time](#) in the NHL in power play assists with 317.

When Backstrom does return to the lineup, the Caps will have more stability, as well as another experienced player that can help feed other playmakers. Backstrom’s return is also critical in helping to take the load off other veteran players who have carried more weight this season due to the many injuries and covid problems that have depleted the lineup.

It may take some extra practice, reps and a little bit more patience, but Caps fans can start to get excited as the anticipated return of Backstrom is starting to grow near, with the promise of certain impact once the center ultimately returns to the starting lineup.