This post was originally published at The Hockey Writers . Since Ken Hitchcock has taken over the coaching duties, the St. Louis Blues have moved up in the standings with a balanced offensive attack and all-around strong defense. The penalty-kill has improved dramatically and the power-play has shown signs of life. One problem of the Blues' game still seems to linger on. Games that are extended to shootouts are still hurting the Blues' point totals. After the final whistle for the overtime period blows, the Blues are 0-5 on the season.

Here are the stats for every shooter that the Blues have used in 2011-12 thus far:

T.J. Oshie 1-5

Alex Steen 0-3

Patrik Berglund 0-2

David Perron 0-2

Kevin Shattenkirk 0-2

David Backes 0-1

Matt D'Agostini 0-1

Jamie Langenbrunner 0-1

Combined: 1-17

So how has the opposing team looked in the shootouts against the Blues? St. Louis goaltender Jaroslav Halak (the only Blues goaltender to participate in a shootout this year) has stopped 10 of 17 shots, giving him a .625 save percentage. This puts the Blues in 19th place for save percentage in the NHL.

Obviously, the Blues are a mess in the shootout. What does this mean for the rest of the season?

The Good News

Evgeni Nabokov said it best after going 0-3 in the shootout in its inception year: "I guess the good thing is we don't have this crap in the playoffs," he said after a loss in Edmonton.

That is the good news. If the Blues can rediscover their winning ways and make it into the 2012

playoffs, they can worry about winning games in the way that they are coached; with that complete 200-foot game.

The Bad News

While shootouts do not matter in the playoffs, they sure do matter in the race to make the playoffs.

I know, I should be telling you something you don't know.

The not-so-obvious part is who are taking points away from the Blues and why it is important that they are doing it.

The division-rival Nashville Predators have beaten the Blues in two different shootouts. The Colorado Avalanche, who are only four points behind the Blues in the standings, have beaten the Blues in the shootout. The Minnesota Wild, currently just one point ahead of the Blues, have won a shootout matchup with the Blues.

These are games that the Blues need to close out in regulation. If that is not possible, the Blues need to steal that extra point more often. After all, getting one point when someone close to you gets two does nothing for your cause.

How to Improve

Coach Hitchcock is doing it. Now he just needs time.

The way to turn this problem around is to switch up the players in the shootout. T.J. Oshie is the only one who has scored a goal in the shootout this season, so he must continue getting the most chances. But the other two spots are interchangeable. David Perron and Kevin Shattenkirk have looked promising but more players need a chance.

Hitchcock is doing just this. He is yet to use the same shootout lineup in a game this season.

If Hitchcock just continues to work through his lineup, eventually he will get success. Someone on this roster is just waiting to get a chance in the shootout. Giving everyone a chance will eventually pay off.

Remember, Hitchcock led his Blue Jackets to six shootout victories in 2008-09 during their miraculous 2008-09 playoff run. If he could get 13 shootout goals out of that club, he can get this team to produce in the extra shots.