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Doan to get 2nd opinion on back

David Vest
The Arizona Republic
Nov. 10, 2006 12:24 AM

Shane Doan's sore back isn't getting better, so the Coyotes are sending their captain to a specialist for a second opinion.

The plan is for Doan, who missed Thursday's game against Dallas, to fly to California this morning for a consultation with Dr. Robert Watkins, a well-respected spine surgeon who also has consulted other pro athletes including Mario Lemieux, Troy Aikman, Randy Johnson, and Coyotes coach Wayne Gretzky.

"It just seems to me it's been lingering longer than a minor back injury," Gretzky said. "I just think for his own piece of mind it's good to go get an opinion from a guy with that credibility and good to go get a second opinion."

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Thursday's game was the fourth game Doan has missed this season. That's one more than he missed in the past three seasons combined.

The timing of the injury stinks for Doan on more than one level: First, the team is struggling to win games and needs him on the ice and in the dressing room. Second, Doan is in the final year of his contract and was hoping to put up career-best numbers to help his contract extension talks or a plunge into free agency next summer.

"This is an important personal year for him and his family and he doesn't want to go through a whole year of a nagging back issue," Gretzky said. "He needs to get this checked out."

Doan played Saturday and scored two goals in Phoenix's 6-4 victory over Los Angeles, but said he felt the injury the entire game.

Nevertheless, Doan said he doesn't regret playing hurt.

"I think I've got to try (to play)," Doan said. "My job is to play."

Ballard is back

Defenseman Keith Ballard returned from a monthlong injury hiatus wearing a glove with extra padding.

Ballard fractured a bone in his right hand on Oct. 9 while blocking a shot off the stick of Columbus center Manny Malhotra.

Despite the injury, Ballard said he wouldn't alter his shot-blocking mentality.

"I was in a vulnerable position when I got hurt and I was a ways away from the guy and it was a one-timer," Ballard said. "Had I just stood straight up, it would have hit me in the shin pads. But I dropped down to one knee. That's kind of what I do . . . So, I'll be hit again. Hopefully, with the added protection, it won't be so bad."

He also didn't alter his physical checking style and delivered two hard hits in the first period on Thursday.

Ice chips

The Coyotes, a source said, continue to talk with Buffalo about a possible trade for backup goalie Martin Biron, but Buffalo's asking price is too high.

Shane Doan
enlarge image

Shane Doan will turn to a specialist for a second opinion on his ailing back.

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- Center **Mike Zigomanis** (injured groin) played his first game since Oct. 23.
- Defenseman **Dennis Seidenberg** was a healthy scratch for the first time this season.

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