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644246 Buffalo Sabres

Amerks start early in victory over Hamilton

Written by
Kevin Oklobzija

Kevin's 3 stars

1. Brian Flynn, RW, Amerks ... Keeps on scoring; 1 goal 1 assist, plus-3.
2. Kevin Porter, C, Amerks ... 2 assists, solid in all zones.
3. David Leggio, G, Amerks ... 16-save first period helped set tempo.

HAMILTON, ONTARIO — If losing a shutout was the worst thing to happen to the Rochester Americans on Wednesday, then life isn't so bad.

Even goalie David Leggio wasn't overly upset that he lost his first shutout of the season — and sixth of his American Hockey League career — when Joonas Nattinen scored a goal with just 145 seconds remaining.

That's because winning was a whole lot more important. And since the Amerks were in complete control when Nattinen scored, the late goal didn't really tarnish the 4-1 victory over the Hamilton Bulldogs in the special school-day 10 a.m. game.

"Of course I wanted the shutout; I never want to get scored on, regardless of the score," Leggio said. "But I just wanted the two points, especially today with a morning game. If we lose at night, I'm grumpy for like two hours before I go to bed. If we lose today, I'm grumpy for like 15 hours."

The Amerks were instead all smiles as they headed for their bus shortly after 1 p.m., leaving downtown Hamilton in sunshine instead of moonlight.

Nick Tarnasky, Brian Flynn, Jerome Gauthier-Leduc and T.J. Brennan scored their goals, and they played another very solid 60-minute game to improve to 8-4-1.

The shutout for Leggio was the only thing that was really in doubt in the final 10 minutes. The only Bulldogs goal came after an Antoine Corbin point shot was blocked out high but caromed right to Nattinen above the right circle.

At least Leggio has experience in dealing with the disappointment. He said three times during his senior season at Clarkson University, opponents scored late third-period goals to steal shutouts. He finished with five shutouts; the NCAA leader had six.

But the present is all that matters now, and the most important facet on Wednesday was that the Amerks played well once they built the 4-0 lead late in the second period. Actually, they played quite well after Tarnasky's fourth goal of the season staked them to a 1-0 lead just 2:27 into the game.

The goal off a rebound of a Rick Schofield deflection was quite possibly the earliest goal ever scored in franchise history, coming at 10:11 a.m. That's not why it was important, however.

Democrat and Chronicle LOADED: 11.15.2012

644247 Calgary Flames

Sutter back behind the bench as interim head coach in Red Deer

Former Flames bench boss fires Wallin in bid to change message to middling WHL club

RED DEER

Brent Sutter is back behind the bench again.

Sutter, the owner and general manager of the Western Hockey League's Red Deer Rebels, fired coach Jesse Wallin on Tuesday and will take over on an interim basis — his first league coaching stint since he parted ways with the Calgary Flames last April.

"To be quite honest, it's not a good day at all," he said in Wednesday's Red Deer media scrum video posted on the team's website. "Jesse's a great, great guy. He's someone I've gotten very close with over the years, but he and I have had some discussion over the last period of time . . .

"I made a decision after discussions with Jesse to move forward in a different direction.

"Coaching, it's a tough racket and in Jesse's situation, No. 1 he is a very good coach, but the message just wasn't getting through to the players and I don't really have an exact reason why that has been the case. Jesse recognized it, too. The right thing is to make change.

"Sometimes in life it's never easy to do the right thing, but today is the right thing to do moving forward."

Wallin was at the helm of a Rebels team which has stumbled out of the gate to a 10-11-1-1 record, seventh in the WHL's Eastern Conference.

Sutter, the former coach of the New Jersey Devils and Calgary Flames, was a successful junior coach before heading to the NHL.

The 50-year-old form Viking, Alta., coached the Rebels to a Memorial Cup in 2001 and Canada to gold at the 2005 and 2006 world junior hockey championships.

Sutter then compiled a 97-56 record over two seasons with the Devils before joining the Flames.

Calgary went 118-90-38 in three seasons under Sutter before making a change after last season.

"I guess you could say right now that I'm the best option at this point in time, but we'll just see what happens," said Sutter, who will be searching for a permanent head coach.

It's entirely possible that guy is the man Sutter named as associate coach on Wednesday — Jeff Truitt, who was at the helm of the 2005 WHL champion Kelowna Rockets and was briefly the head coach of the one-time Edmonton Oilers American Hockey League farm team in Springfield.

"To bring him in — a guy who's very knowledgeable and has a real good understanding of the game — in that capacity is a huge plus for us," said Sutter.

"Having a guy who's available like that is obviously very important."

Bryce Thoma will stay on as an assistant coach.

"Now the onus is on the players," said Sutter. "It's thrown their way and they need to respond. We'll see what we have for character, we'll see what we have for a team and see what our leadership group is about.

"I want to be a team that's on its toes, a team that's responsible with and without the puck," he added.

The Rebels next play on Saturday, due to host Swift Current (7:30 p.m., Red Deer Centrum) a day before the Broncos visit the Calgary Hitmen (2 p.m., Sunday, Saddledome).

— With files from The Canadian Press

Calgary Herald: LOADED: 11.15.2012

644248 Chicago Blackhawks

Lockout helps Toews' mending process

Hawks captain says concussion effects lingered until 5-day stint at chiropractic neurology center last week

By Chris Kuc, Chicago Tribune reporter

12:36 AM CST, November 15, 2012

Jonathan Toews wasn't fully recovered from a concussion when he played during last season's playoffs.

The Blackhawks captain wasn't 100 percent healed in July. Or October. In fact, it wasn't until late last week that Toews was convinced he's completely over the concussion that caused him to miss the final two months of the 2011-12 regular season before he returned in the postseason against the Coyotes.

While Toews was symptom-free and had cleared all the NHL-imposed concussion protocols before returning to the Hawks' lineup, there were lingering effects from the injury that even the 24-year-old center didn't realize were affecting him. They included balance and eyesight issues that were discovered and solved during a five-day stint at an Atlanta-area chiropractic neurology facility last week.

"Even if you don't feel something and you think you're symptom-free, there's probably still something there that's kind of hindering you and affecting the way your brain works," Toews told the Tribune on Wednesday. "It was just a lot of eye-movement things. My eyes didn't track very well. They didn't look from one target to the next very well. My balance with my eyes closed and my head turned a certain way was terrible. (There were) little things that I would think were normal because I didn't feel something in my head.

"But (the chiropractic neurology work) got me back to Square One and I feel great. When I walked out of there I was definitely really tired because you're doing a lot of exercises that wear on you, but it's definitely a good thing."

Toews returned Saturday after spending time undergoing a battery of tests and corrective methods at the Carrick Institute at Life University in Marietta, Ga. The institute has treated other high-profile athletes, including the Penguins' Sidney Crosby, who has had his career threatened by concussions.

If there is a bright side to the NHL lockout that began Sept. 15 and continues to drag on with no end in sight, it's that the stalemate has given Toews time to recover fully.

"I'm feeling really good now," Toews said. "The one thing about this lockout that I've taken advantage of is dealing with that injury first and foremost. I was in Atlanta to treat things. I'm not saying there were any symptoms — I felt 100 percent. But every time you get hit in the head there are some lasting things there that maybe you don't notice.

"Everything I did down there helped me go back to ground zero and get back to where it was when I hadn't ever had a concussion. I'm feeling really good and confident that if I do get hit again it's not such a big deal."

Now that Toews has cleared this physical hurdle and the lockout continues, he's prepared to enter the next phase of his hockey career. He has begun to seriously consider playing in Europe until an agreement is reached.

"It's always on my mind, especially now since I got that out of the way and I know I'm 100 percent," he said. "We'll see what happens in the next couple of weeks. We're really getting to that point where enough is enough and if nothing happens then decisions have to be made. We've hung tight for long enough."

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 11.15.2012

644249 Chicago Blackhawks

Hawks' Toews nearing Europe decision

By Chris Kuc Tribune reporter

3:44 p.m. CST, November 14, 2012

The time is coming soon for Jonathan Toews to make a decision on heading to Europe to play during the NHL lockout.

Even as several of his Chicago Blackhawks teammates have begun playing overseas, Toews has waited while negotiations between the NHL and the

players' union on a new collective bargaining agreement have dragged on. With no end in sight to the lockout that began Sept. 15 and no formal talks scheduled, the captain is poised to join a European team.

"It's always on my mind," Toews said Wednesday after an informal workout with several Hawks teammates and other NHL players at Johnny's IceHouse in Chicago. "We'll see what happens in the next couple of weeks. We're really getting to that point where enough is enough and if nothing happens, then decisions have to be made. We've hung tight long enough so we'll see."

There are six Hawks playing in Europe: Patrick Kane, Bryan Bickell, Viktor Stalberg, Niklas Hjalmarsson, Michael Frolik and Michal Rozsival.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 11.15.2012

644250 Chicago Blackhawks

Hawks extend support for Olczyk youth hockey grants

By Daily Herald News Services

The Chicago Blackhawks organization will again partner with Blackhawks Charities and hockey analyst Eddie Olczyk to support the Eddie Olczyk Award, which provides grants to help offset the financial burden of youth hockey players and teams in Illinois.

In its inaugural year, the Eddie Olczyk Award issued \$25,000 in grants, raised through Blackhawks Youth Hockey Summer Camps, to individuals and families in need of assistance for participation in an Illinois sanctioned team or organization, sanctioned teams in need of assistance for tournament expenses, as well as Amateur Hockey Association of Illinois organizations in need of assistance to run youth hockey programs.

In order to be considered for the grant process, letters of inquiry must be received by Dec. 14, 2012. Complete information can be found on chicagoblackhawks.com.

"I'm truly appreciative of the support and combined effort John McDonough, Jay Blunk and everyone at the Blackhawks have given to making hockey available to anyone in Illinois that's interested," Olczyk said. "We had a tremendous response to the launch of the award last year and look forward to another successful year in working directly with the community."

A 2012 U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame inductee and native of Palos Heights., Olczyk also serves as the Head Instructor at Chicago Blackhawks Youth Hockey Camps. He is a veteran of 16 NHL seasons as a player, and now serves as the lead television analyst for Chicago Blackhawks games on Comcast SportsNet Chicago and WGN, and for national broadcasts on NBC.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 11.15.2012

644251 Chicago Blackhawks

With the NHL still locked out, players truck on

November 14, 2012, 10:50 pm

TRACEY MYERS

The NHL remains mired in a lockout, Day 60 coming on Wednesday. But for the AHL, the hockey world keeps on spinning. And for those Rockford players who would've been with the Blackhawks at some point this season, hockey and their lives are going on just fine.

Talks have gone quiet once again in the big league. And after things looked so promising early last week, when the league and NHLPA were talking nonstop, the outlook for NHL hockey is looking grim again. But for the IceHogs, as with the rest of the minor-league hockey organizations, games continue. Practices continue. Regular-season routine continues.

Hockey continues. And for them, it's not so much about listening to lockout rhetoric and speculation as much as it is focusing on their jobs.

"It has to be (the focus)," IceHogs forward Brandon Bollig said. "You can't take anything away from this league. It's very talented, especially right now. And if you don't have your mind on the game you'll be behind the 8-ball. It's unfortunate (about the lockout). But there's no room to focus on what's going on there. I'm lucky, along with a few other guys, to be playing right now instead of sitting around and doing nothing."

Guys like Bollig, Andrew Shaw, Ben Smith and Brandon Saad lost the chance to compete for a Blackhawks roster spot this season – at least for now. But in the hockey world, there's always a competition for something.

"In this lifestyle, you're always fighting, always competing for something. Even here in Rockford you're competing for power play, penalty kill and ice time," Smith said. "Being a hockey player, no matter where you are you have to bring your best. If not, someone's trying to pass you. We want to be (in the NHL), that's the goal. But have to bring compete and passion every day here."

Not only are guys enjoying their usual hockey routine, but they're getting that welcome distraction from lockout talk – which they're starting to avoid.

"We'll have a group chat going, and me and a few guys will read about it and stay informed. But that's mainly it for me," said defenseman Nick Leddy. "It's good to focus on a season down here and develop."

And, when the NHL season does resume, some of the potential Blackhawks can hit the training-camp ground running.

"That's the good thing. We can stay sharp and fine tune some things that got you to the NHL," Bollig said. "We're fortunate to be so close. If it starts up, and we're lucky enough to be called up, we're there and ready."

So while the NHL stays quiet, the AHL keeps playing. For these guys, the welcome routine of practices and games continues.

"We're hoping something gets done and it's something fair," Smith said of a potential collective bargaining agreement. "At the same time we're working on our games and hoping when the time comes, we're all playing good hockey."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.15.2012

644252 Chicago Blackhawks

Toews, Sharp and Keith considering their options

TRACEY MYERS

Talks between the NHL and NHLPA have once again stalled, as the league languishes in a lockout. And while some Blackhawks keep an eye on their European options, they're not quite ready to go just yet.

Jonathan Toews, Patrick Sharp and Duncan Keith are considering their options at the moment. But all have said they're not leaving this side of the pond for a bit. Toews said he'll see how things shake out over the next few weeks before deciding.

Sharp, who was eyeing Switzerland as a potential destination -- but not the same team on which Patrick Kane currently plays -- said via text he was "waiting to see what happens" before committing. Duncan Keith said today that "I'll go to Europe eventually," but will wait to make a decision. He said he didn't have any specific countries in mind at the moment.

Wednesday marked Day 60 of the lockout. And after meeting for hours of talks last week, the league and players' association have no new negotiating sessions scheduled as of now. In light of the stagnant communications, several NHL players signed with overseas teams today including Paul Stastny and Jason Chimera. At this rate, the number heading across the pond will likely increase in the coming days.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.15.2012

644253 Columbus Blue Jackets

Michael Arace commentary: NHL fans care less as lockout progresses

By Michael Arace

The Columbus Dispatch Thursday November 15, 2012 5:14 AM

Yesterday was Day 60 of the NHL lockout. With each passing day, folks who once loved hockey find it easier to do without it. If we are paying attention to the negotiations in New York, it is only in passing. There is not much happening on that front anyway.

The other day, the NHL Players' Association said the sides were close and the league said they were far apart. That fairly sums up the situation. It is whacked.

Here is the weekly report:

The last meeting was of a 90-minute duration on Sunday. As of this writing, there have been no plans to meet again.

The sides have fairly agreed on a 50-50 revenue split of hockey-related revenues.

The sides are close to agreeing on a more meaningful revenue-sharing plan, whereby high-revenue teams subsidize low-revenue teams.

The NHL is dug in on contractual issues. Among other things, it wants to limit the length of contracts and eliminate front-loaded contracts that circumvent the salary cap. Such contractual issues should not be deal breakers, but apparently they are.

The biggest unsolved question is who should "pay" for the lockout. In other words: They have settled on a 50-50 split, but this year's lockout-denuded pie already has shrunk by hundreds of millions — so, who will cover the losses?

They are close, they are far apart and they are whacked.

They have another week or so to strike a deal that would allow a Dec. 1 start and a 60-game season. Yet with each passing day, the threat of more canceled games looms. Already, a quarter of the season and the Winter Classic have been lost. Next up, they will kill another quarter season and, probably, nix the All-Star Game at Nationwide Arena.

As the pie continues to shrink, there is an increasing chance that hawkish owners will dig in and say, "Might as well kill the whole season and try to break the union like we did last time." And the players will dig in and say, "We're the ones giving all the ground, so let them come back to us."

Today, the players will miss their third paycheck. Most of them are not sweating it. They recently received escrow checks worth around \$200,000 apiece. Many of them have jobs and insurance. What, me worry?

There are nearly 200 NHL players skating around Europe. Among the Blue Jackets, Artem Anisimov (Yaroslavl), Sergei Bobrovsky (St. Petersburg), Nikita Nikitin (Omsk) and Fedor Tyutin (Moscow Atlant) are in the Continental Hockey League. Tyutin played his first game yesterday. Vinny Prospal (Budejovice) is playing in the Czech league. Brandon Dubinsky is playing for Alaska, an ECHL team based in his hometown of Anchorage. He suffered a broken finger the other day and is expected to miss up to six weeks.

R.J. Umberger is coaching at Ohio State. Derek Dorsett, Jared Boll and James Wisniewski are popping into Chillers and playing beer-league games. Dorsett is thinking of playing a light schedule in Ireland.

Cam Atkinson, Ryan Johansen and John Moore are among those playing for the Jackets' American Hockey League affiliate in Springfield, Mass.

The players are united and more or less willing to wait it out. As for the owners, some of them like the lockout because they are not losing money, so they're adamant about gouging the players; others are following the hardliners because they are just wired that way; still others are yachting because they will be printing money whenever the league gets back to work.

Their commissioner, Gary Bettman, is nothing but a front man. He does not have the power to protect the best interests of the sport.

This vacuum of leadership has sucked the game into a black hole.

Go ahead and take the rest of the year to argue over who is going to pay for the lockout. Take two years. It is apparent that the league is bent on a path to irrelevance and, at this point, fans are willing to cooperate. Most of us could care less every day. Mission accomplished.

Michael Arace is a sports reporter for The Dispatch.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.15.2012

644254 Columbus Blue Jackets

Blue Jackets: Broken finger to keep Dubinsky out six weeks

As a New York Rangers player under coach John Tortorella the past four seasons, Brandon Dubinsky was taught to fill passing lanes and block any shot possible. The Rangers did it so well last spring that it became a point of contention during the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Old habits die hard. They hurt sometimes, too.

Dubinsky, who joined the Blue Jackets as part of the Rick Nash trade in July, was struck on his right hand while playing for Alaska of the ECHL on Saturday in Anchorage.

He could miss up to six weeks because of a broken index finger.

"The good news is it's a clean break," said Kurt Overhardt, Dubinsky's agent. "The recovery shouldn't be too long. He has broken the same hand before, but in a different place, a different bone."

Dubinsky missed 13 games during the 2009-10 season because of the previous break.

Overhardt acknowledged the risk of players signing to play with other clubs during the NHL lockout, which is 2 months old today. Including Dubinsky, the Blue Jackets have six players who are playing with pro clubs.

"There's a trade-off here," Overhardt said. "There's a risk of injury, obviously. But Brandon wants to be ready to play hockey for the Blue Jackets. He knows that when it does get settled, he's going to have a huge role, a huge responsibility with that club."

— Aaron Portzline

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.15.2012

644255 Dallas Stars

Tom Gaglardi: Stars 'considering a lot of possibilities' in uniform redesign

MIKE HEIKA Staff Writer

Published: 14 November 2012 03:36 PM

Hey guys, been tied up with a lot of football and NASCAR and other stuff during the lockout, but I thought I would weigh in on the possible uniform changes.

I talked to owner Tom Gaglardi recently, and asked him a few questions about the process, and here's what he had to say:

"It's a process we're going through right now, and there's a lot to be considered. I can tell you this, we are considering a lot of possibilities and we're having really good discussion on the merits of all ideas."

"I'd like to wear our logo on our chest. That's something that appeals to me. I think it's the classic way to go, and I like classic things. We are one of the original 12 teams, and I do think that carries with it some history and weight, and that's also something I believe we should consider when looking at a possible change."

"I just want a jersey that's a classic hockey jersey. I want a jersey that looks like it could have been worn for 40 years. That's kind of how I see things."

"I think the current jerseys are attractive. I really don't have a problem with the style or the look. I don't like just the wordmark "DALLAS" on there. I don't think that's really unique or clever, but the actual jersey to me is a good looking jersey."

Gaglardi confirmed the team is looking at changing team colors, but didn't want to go beyond that. He cautioned that the discussions change every

day, and that there is a lot of positive on both sides (changing colors or remaining green, gold, black and white).

In talking to others in the organization, they confirm that a decision will need to be made by the end of December if the team wants to wear new colors for the 2013-14 season. They emphasized there is a little wiggle room with Reebok and the NHL, but that they have about six weeks to get this done.

Because this decision is so important, there is a chance they miss the deadline and then wait to get a new look for the 2014-15 season, but that is a small chance. It really appears they will get this done by the end of December.

To understand just how difficult a process this is, they have been looking at designs for the past seven months and have even seen some mock-up uniforms and still don't really seem that close to a final decision. On one side, there are people who understand just how difficult a change of colors will be to sell to the fans, and they know how much the fans love green. On the other, there is a group that believes if this organization was ever going to consider a change, now is the time. There are some who don't want to look back and believe that they failed to seize a golden opportunity.

Potential regret is playing on the minds of many _ on both sides of the discussion.

On the good side, there appears to be some thought that if they do go in a new direction with color, they still can recall old throwbacks and wear them _ and they seem to be comfortable with the possibility of having more than just two "kits," and could actually push the NHL to consider more specialty uniforms.

If you watch any NCAA football, you realize just how easy it is in today's world to come up with multiple looks.

On the bad side, there appears to be no appetite for fan input. They already have a lot of differing opinions, and the people making the decisions all are aware of what the fans think. They either interact with season ticket holders or they view fan blogs and websites.

As such, they will likely reveal these the same way they did the Mooterus and the current uniforms. You will be told when the decision is made, and that will be it. That's not unusual in the world of pro sports.

I'm a fan of allowing possibly five different looks and letting fans vote down to two or three on the website. The buzz created would be fantastic, especially at a dead time like this. That would also allow the team to have the final say, but the fans to eliminate what they feel are the worst ideas.

An added bonus might be discussion for possible specialty uniforms down the line from the ones that aren't selected.

But again, that does not seem to be an option.

I asked Gaglardi if this is a fan's dream come true. I mean, last year, he was just a guy who had hockey opinions, and now he's a guy who gets to possibly decide the look of an NHL team for years to come.

"It is fun, I understand how any fan would enjoy this," Gaglardi said. "But it's also really tough. It's a lot of responsibility, and a lot of pressure to make sure you get this right."

That sort of tells you the pressure on everyone making this decision.

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 11.15.2012

644256 Dallas Stars

Even phone calls stop between NHL, union

Posted Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012

NEW YORK -- Now the NHL and the locked-out players' association aren't even talking by phone.

With the lockout about to enter its third month, communications between the fighting sides have come to a halt with no clear sign of what the next step will be or when it will be taken.

"No, we have not communicated today," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Associated Press on Wednesday in an e-mail. "No meetings scheduled, and no plans to meet."

After four straight days of negotiations in New York last week, talks broke off angrily Friday night. Discussions resumed Sunday, solely regarding player contract terms, but that meeting ended after only 90 minutes.

The union contends that the NHL doesn't want to get back together yet.

"The players remain prepared to resume negotiations at any time," NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr said.

At this point, no decisions have been made to call off any more games, Daly said. So far, 327 games -- all those scheduled through Nov. 30 and the New Year's Day outdoor Winter Classic -- have been canceled.

Sutter is back

Brent Sutter is back behind the bench.

The owner and general manager of the Western Hockey League's Red Deer Rebels, Sutter fired coach Jesse Wallin on Tuesday and took over on an interim basis. Sutter is the former coach of the NHL's New Jersey Devils and Calgary Flames.

Star-Telegram LOADED: 11.15.2012

644257 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Valteri Filppula out 6-8 weeks with knee injury

By Helene St. James

Should the Red Wings be playing within the next two months, it will be without one of their top forwards.

Filppula has a sprained right knee and will miss six to eight weeks, a person with knowledge of the situation who isn't authorized to speak on the subject told the Free Press today.

Filppula was injured Tuesday while playing for Jokerit in his native Finland. He opted to go overseas to play soon after the NHL lockout began Sept. 16.

There have been no talks between the NHL and the NHL Players Association toward a new collective bargaining agreement this week, casting severe doubt on any possibility the league could be up and running in early December.

As for how the injury impacts the Wings: at the moment, it doesn't. If they start playing before Filppula, a top-six forward and key offensive contributor, is healed, they can take over his rehabilitation.

Players generally insure their contracts when playing overseas, but it's unclear whether the player's NHL team would have to start paying the player if the season starts and he has an injury dating to the lockout.

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Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.15.2012

644258 Detroit Red Wings

Wings' Valteri Filppula out 6-8 weeks with sprained MCL

By Ted Kulfan The Detroit News

Detroit — Maybe the Red Wings are beginning to hope the lockout lasts a little longer.

Valteri Filppula will miss six to eight weeks after spraining the medial collateral ligament in his right knee during Tuesday's game for Jokerit in the Finnish league.

Filppula had 21 points (six goals, 15 assists) in 15 games with Jokerit. He likely won't be ready to play hockey again until approximately Jan. 1.

Filppula, 28, had career-highs of 23 goals and 66 points (with 43 assists) for the Wings last season and is in the final season of his contract, with the chance to become an unrestricted free agent next summer.

Players have their NHL contracts insured when they go play in Europe. Filppula is set to earn \$3.5 million this season.

The Red Wings don't have any contact with their players during the NHL lockout.

Whether Filppula actually misses any playing time in the NHL remains to be seen.

Approaching the two-month mark Friday, the lockout shows no signs of ending with no negotiations planned between the leagues and players' association.

Detroit News LOADED: 11.15.2012

644259 Detroit Red Wings

Lawsuit: Former Red Wing, MSU star Kevin Miller owes \$1.6 million for devastating hit in Swiss league

John Agar | jagar at mlive.com

Kevin Miller shoots earlier this year during a Detroit Red Wings-Muskegon alumni game. File GRAND RAPIDS, MI – Former Michigan State hockey star and Detroit Red Wing Kevin Miller is being sued by a Swiss insurance company over a hit in a Switzerland league that ended an opponent's career.

Miller, whose brothers, Kip and Kelly, also played in the NHL, played for numerous teams, along with the Grand Rapids Griffins.

He injured a Canadian player during a 2000 championship game. Andrew McKim suffered a severe concussion and neck injuries.

Now, an insurance company is asking a federal judge to recognize the Switzerland court's \$1 million judgment against Miller, Grand Rapids attorney, Thomas "Mac" Wardrop said Tuesday, Nov. 13.

With interest and costs, the amount has grown to \$1.6 million.

Wardrop is representing Zurich insurance company, Allianz Suisse Versicherungs-Gesellschaft, seeking to collect from Miller for its costs.

Miller, meanwhile, filed a lawsuit against the Switzerland insurance company representing his hockey team. He contends the insurer agreed to pay the judgement.

The incident leading to the injury occurred during a championship game on Oct. 31, 2000, at Zurcher Hallenstadion. Court documents said Miller "jabbed (McKim) with the elbow on the rear upper side of the body."

McKim hit his head on the ice.

"When the injured party was 'checked' from behind, the doctor contended that – as when a person is run over by a car – the injured party initially suffered a whiplash-type blow to the head from behind, and then a massive strike to the front side of the face on the ice," a translated Swiss judgment said.

A message seeking comment was left at Miller's Williamston home. A Lansing lawyer who may eventually represent Miller declined to comment.

Wardrop, the attorney representing the Swiss insurer, didn't want to comment beyond what's contained in the lawsuit.

In court documents, he said that Miller defended the Swiss lawsuit, which resulted in a March 2010 judgment.

"Judgment was rendered and there is no defense to this action to recognize and enforce the judgment. No part of the judgment has been paid," he wrote.

"This Swiss judgment should be recognized and enforced in Michigan under the terms of the Uniform Foreign-Country Money Judgments Recognition Action, Michigan Statutes ... and through principals of comity."

With interest, he said his client is owed \$1.6 million.

"The Swiss judicial system is well known for its impartial tribunals and due process of law," Wardrop wrote. "(Miller) put on a strong defense in Switzerland to the Swiss complaint and was represented by Swiss counsel."

Miller maintained that Switzerland-based AXA Winterthur Insurance Company is responsible for the judgment.

A 2005 document from the company said: "It is hereby formally confirmed that Winterthur is responsible for the financial consequences of all judgments and costs arising out of ... the criminal proceedings and ... any civil proceedings relating to Mr. Andrew McKim's direct claim against Mr. Kevin Miller based on the accident of 31st October 2000."

Miller, relying on the agreement, presented the judgment demands to Winterthur, which declined to pay the judgment in full.

Miller sued Winterthur in state court, but the company had the case removed to federal court. Chief U.S. District Judge Paul Maloney, who presides in Kalamazoo, determined the U.S. court had no jurisdiction over Winterthur.

The Court of Appeals upheld that ruling, and said Miller could return to Switzerland to have the case heard.

"The burden on Winterthur would be heavy, as it has no presence in Michigan, and it would be forced to litigate a contract case created under Swiss law in the United States court system," the Court of Appeals said.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.15.2012

644260 Detroit Red Wings

Riley Sheahan's 'superdrunk' arrest draws support, anger from hockey community

Peter J. Wallner | pwallner at mlive.com

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – Riley Sheahan has support and detractors within the hockey community following his arrest for allegedly driving with a blood-alcohol content more than twice the legal limit.

The 20-year-old, the Detroit Red Wings top pick in the 2010 NHL draft who currently plays for the Grand Rapids Griffins, was arrested shortly before midnight Oct. 29 after he was pulled over by a Grand Rapids Police squad car for driving the wrong way on Ottawa Avenue, a one-way street.

Related: Red Wings prospect and 2010 top pick Riley Sheahan arrested for 'superdrunk' driving in Grand Rapids

Sheahan, who pleaded not guilty at an arraignment hearing in Grand Rapids District Court on Nov. 6, has his next hearing scheduled for Dec. 13. Because of his blood-alcohol level, he was charged under the state's new "superdrunk" distinction.

Readers have expressed concern for his well-being, anger at what happened, as well as sharing their opinions at how the Detroit organization should handle Sheahan going forward.

Some, such as Grambo21, think the Red Wings will provide the needed help and that Sheahan can overcome the arrest.

"Obviously he needs help. There is no better organization to help him out. The Wings are not going to give up on this guy, nor they should he has a bright future ... There have been alot of athletes with alcohol/drug problems who have become better athletes and people because of it."

That general view was shared by isphet, a reader who was not quite as conciliatory.

"Clearly a VERY stupid thing to do, but I think as a young guy he's entitled to exactly ONE second chance with the Wings' organization. He should be in BIG legal trouble, though. And he deserves every bit he is going to get."

Just because Sheahan is an athlete is no excuse, said honkyuk96, who thinks the Red Wings should stay out of the case.

"The organization should do NOTHING. He should be given a stiff jail sentence, fined, community service, two years probation and the loss of his drivers license for at least a year. Just because he's an athlete, doesn't mean he should be exempt from penalties any other 20 yr. old kid would be looking at. But of course there's politics and high powered lawyers that will save his hind end."

Karlander shared a similar view.

"Badly drunk in a car under the drinking age is not a good thing.

Sure, his attorneys and the Griffins will be pushing for community service and a fine, etc, etc, , but is that the right thing for these circumstances?"

The past was brought up by mules64, who pointed out the 1999 death of Steve Chiasson, a former Red Wing, who died in a car accident while a member of the Carolina Hurricanes. Toxicology reports listed his blood-alcohol content at .27.

"Clearly, he has not learned a lesson from his experience at Notre Dame. Riley should have a conversation with the widow of former Red Wing defenseman Steve Chiasson. She could explain to Riley the effects of drunk driving to her family."

Others hope the arrest will serve as a turning point for him. Wrote watchcaltwp:

"Clean up your act young man. Do the time get dry and take advantage of your God given talent and education."

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.15.2012

644261 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Valtteri Filppula out 6-8 weeks due to sprained MCL

Ansar Khan | akhan1 at mlive.com

Valtteri Filppula could be idled for up to two months, but might not miss many games, due to the lack of CBA progress. AP file Detroit Red Wings forward Valtteri Filppula will be out six-to-eight weeks with a sprained right medial collateral ligament, but he might not miss an NHL game, the way collective bargaining talks are going.

Filppula was injured Tuesday during Jokerit's 5-2 loss to Porin Assat in an SM-liiga game in Finland.

Players who opt to play in Europe during the lockout do so at their own risk. Most have their NHL contracts insured in case of injury.

Filppula, 28, is in the final year of a five-year, \$15 million contract with the Red Wings. He would be eligible for unrestricted free agency on July 1.

"If the season starts (soon), Val's not going to be available, but there's 250 other players taking that same risk," teammate Danny Cleary said. "Every time you go on the ice you take some sort of risk, even out here (during informal skates).

"Things happen in hockey. Obviously, the risk is higher if you're playing competitively as opposed to just skating. But, thank God it's only a sprained MCL. If the season starts (in January) we can still have Fil available."

The season isn't likely to start anytime soon. Six days of talks between the league and players union ended Sunday on a sour note as both sides were not close to agreeing on a number of contractual issues (contract length, age for free agency, entry-level contracts, etc.).

No further talks are scheduled. Players believe there could be another lull in negotiations. And it's only a matter of time before the NHL begins canceling December games.

"No news right now," Cleary said. "Sometimes they say no news is good news. But it doesn't seem that way right now."

Filppula has six goals and nine assists in 16 games for Jokerit.

He is the third Red Wing to be injured during the lockout.

Forward Cory Emmerton broke his right index finger when hit with a puck in his first game for SaiPa in the Finnish league on Oct. 12. He had surgery Oct. 17 and is expected to be idled until early to mid-December.

Center Darren Helm suffered a fractured orbital bone when hit with a deflected puck during an informal skate on Nov. 2. He hasn't resumed skating but said he will be available to play whenever the NHL resumes.

Forward Mikael Samuelsson, dealing with a sore knee, said he is staying off the ice as a precaution. Forward Patrick Eaves is skating but still experiencing concussion-like symptoms and hasn't been cleared to play.

"We've been struck by the lockout bug," Cleary said.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.15.2012

644262 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings scouting report: After showing steady progress, Jonathan Ericsson ready for bigger role

Ansar Khan | akhan1 at mlive.com

(MLive.com periodically will profile a Detroit Red Wings player while the NHL lockout lingers):

Jonathan Ericsson

Position: Defense

Age: 28

Height/weight: 6-4/221

How acquired: Selected in ninth round (291st overall) of 2002 entry draft.

Contract: Two years remaining on a three-year deal that has a salary-cap hit of \$3.25 million.

2011-12 stats: 69 games, one goal, 10 assists, 11 points, plus-16 rating, 47 penalty minutes.

Career stats: 232 games, 10 goals, 34 assists, 44 points, plus-5 rating, 197 penalty minutes.

What he's doing during the lockout: He's back in Detroit, skating with several teammates at a local rink, after spending a few weeks in Sweden, where he played in seven games for a pair of teams (Vita Hasten and Sodertalje SK).

Strengths: It starts with something that can't be taught – his size. He is fairly mobile for a big man and can make a good first pass. He is a good penalty-killer, where his long reach comes in handy. He is capable of logging a lot of minutes. He has a booming shot but rarely gets to use it. He can play right or left defense.

Weaknesses: He doesn't play an overly physical style, despite his size. Has had a tendency to get caught out of position and still commits too many turnovers.

2011-12 in review: Posted a career-best plus-16 rating. ... Missed 13 games with a broken left wrist (Feb. 28 to March 26), during which time the team went 5-6-2 and wasn't as sharp on the penalty kill (28-for-40, 70 percent). ... Led team's defensemen in giveaways (42). ... Ranked fourth on the team in hits (128).

2012-13 outlook: He hasn't played up to the level he showed during his surprise 2009 playoff run, but he still has a promising upside. He struggled in 2009-10 but has improved incrementally since then, posting a plus-27 rating in his past 158 games, after posting a minus-22 rating in his first 74 career regular season games. He has an opportunity to assume a greater role this season (if there is one), following the departures of Nicklas Lidstrom and Brad Stuart. Ericsson could end up playing on the top defense pair, with Niklas Kronwall. In any event, he should log more than 20 minutes a game for the first time in his career. He also will have a bigger role on the penalty kill.

Is Ericsson ready to play on the top defense pairing, and be matched up against the opposition's top line on a regular basis? Or should he play on the second pairing? With whom do you think he should be paired?

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.15.2012

644263 Edmonton Oilers

Eric next Comrie in line to play in NHL

By Joanne Ireland, Edmonton Journal November 14, 2012biglife

Vancouver – Eric Comrie's fate was sealed long before he was old enough to put up an argument, let alone a shutout.

Mike and Paul Comrie just plunked their baby brother in the net and started shooting.

"I would have only been four or five at the time, but they always needed someone to shoot on, so they stuck me in the net," Eric said before Wednesday's Western Hockey League all-star showdown with Russia in Game 5 of the Subway Super Series at the Pacific Coliseum.

"But I was hooked. I seriously think it's the position that's the most fun in sports. You're either the hero or the goat every night. There's so much pressure, but I love that."

Comrie backed up Edmonton Oil Kings netminder Laurent Brossoit in Wednesday's game, but could play the final game of the series at the Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre in Victoria on Thursday.

He has efficiently manned the net for the Tri-City Americans this season, compiling a record of 12-7-7-1 with a 2.42 goals-against average and a save percentage of .914, and will be in the 2013 NHL entry draft pool. It appears that he'll be the next family member to make it to the big leagues.

Eric is the half-brother of Mike, the former Edmonton Oiler who played 589 NHL games before a hip injury pushed him into retirement, and Paul, who played 15 games with the Oilers before a concussion knocked him out of the game. The two regularly check in with their goaltending protege.

"They're always texting me, giving me advice, trying to assist me with my game. I'm super fortunate to have that," said Eric, who spent his first nine years in Edmonton, then moved to California.

His dad Bill, the founder of The Brick furniture chain, was in Vancouver for Wednesday's game.

"These are the best players in the Western Hockey League," Comrie said, "and I'm looking forward to taking a lot back from this and gaining what experience I can and moving forward.

"There's always a huge learning curve as a goalie. It's about developing everything as you go on. You look at the older goalies in the NHL and they're really smooth because they've gained so much experience. They're able to read plays and get into position a lot quicker and, I think as a younger goalie, that's the main thing you have to work on."

After splitting the net with Edmonton's Ty Rimmer last season, Comrie took over the starting duties this fall and headed to the Super Series with the WHL's fifth-best goals-against average.

Don Nachbaur, the Spokane Chiefs head man in charge of the WHL bench for the series, said he didn't have a pre-game plan in place for his goaltenders on Thursday, but he wouldn't hesitate to hand the game over to the 17-year-old Comrie.

"I have no problems playing the young guy. He's been outstanding in our league and I'm pretty confident he can do the job for us," said Nachbaur.

Comrie, meanwhile, was going to spend his spare time picking up tips from Brossoit and Russian netminder Andrei Vasilevski.

"This is a huge honour to be here," he said. "I watched the '72 Summit Series on tape, and I've watched the Olympics, the world championships, the world juniors. I've watched a lot of games between Canada and Russia."

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 11.15.2012

644264 Edmonton Oilers

WHL squad needs to rely on 'instincts' to beat Russians

Head coach says limiting mistakes key to Super Series success for his team

By Joanne Ireland, Edmonton Journal November 14, 2012biglife

VANCOUVER — After a quick how-do-you-do and just one full practice session, the Western Hockey League's all-stars will pick up where their Canadian Hockey League peers left off.

The Canada-Russia Subway Super Series resumes tonight at the Pacific Coliseum with the first of the two games against the WHL's top players.

The Russians, who opened with two tilts against an elite Quebec Major Junior Hockey League squad then played a pair against a collection of the Ontario Hockey League's best, have won two of the four games.

The final game of the series goes Thursday in Victoria.

"It's tough. We've talked about it a lot in our meetings, and there's been a lot of Xs and Os, but really, we're going to have to rely on our instincts," WHL head coach Don Nachbaur said.

"If we go out there and start thinking the game through, I think the Russians will have the upper hand because they've played games together, they're more refined as a team. We have to manage the puck properly. If we have turnovers in key areas of the ice, we're going to pay the price."

Top Edmonton Oilers prospect Nail Yakupov has contributed four points in the four games for the Russian team and will again command attention tonight from the WHLers.

But Nachbaur, who tutors the Spokane Chiefs, said the challenge is that the Russians have four lines that can score.

"They're very structured, a very patient hockey team that waits for you to make mistakes then they pounce," he continued. "They can make plays in confined areas, but they have explosive speed if you give them wide-open ice. There are a lot of areas we have to pay attention to.

"But all these kids playing for us are the best players on their team. They've played in every situation."

Laurent Broissoit, one of five Edmonton Oil Kings on tonight's roster, will start in net.

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644265 Edmonton Oilers

Justin Schultz has "changed everything" for the optics of the Edmonton Oilers: NHL insider

David Staples

Justin Schultz has changed everything for the optics of the Edmonton Oilers: NHL insider MacIntyre of the Vancouver Sun: "Schultz's choice to go to the Oilers should be as refreshing to everyone outside Edmonton as it is heartening to long-forsaken fans there."

Iain MacIntyre has covered the Vancouver Canucks and the NHL for two decades now. He's seen the Edmonton franchise fall, but with the Oilers' signing of prospect Justin Schultz, he's seeing something else going on here: a franchise on the upward path and a kid who made a refreshing decision in his life.

In his Vancouver Sun column this week, MacIntyre wrote: "Edmonton is where Dany Heatley refused to be traded, and be grateful for small mercies. It's the city Chris Pronger couldn't wait to leave. It's where Mikael Nylander once agreed to be overpaid in free agency, then reneged when his wife saw a map or the weather report or both. Except for oilsands workers on furlough, Edmonton hasn't seemed anyone's destination of choice for a while. And then Justin Schultz chose Edmonton and changed everything."

Ah, good to see at least one honest man in Vancouver who isn't also bitter.

Many Vancouver Canucks fans reacted in anger when Schultz chose to sign in Edmonton over Vancouver, as seen by their booing of the young player this past weekend in Abbotsford.

But MacIntyre sees much to praise in Schultz's decision.

He writes: "Schultz chose the Oilers because there was a chance for him to play right away with a dazzling peer group. He chose Edmonton for the purest reason: the hockey. Some viewed him as a diva for spurning the Ducks. But at a time when we're cynically conditioned to selfishness and greed (see NHL lockout), Schultz's choice to go to the Oilers should be as refreshing to everyone outside Edmonton as it is heartening to long-forsaken fans there."

MacIntyre's take on the Schultz signing is also the correct take. Good to see an out-of-town voice with the generosity and perspective to recognize that.

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644266 Los Angeles Kings

THERE USED TO BE AN ARENA – BOSTON GARDEN

Posted by Bob Miller on 14 November 2012, 11:03 am

The Boston Garden, home of the Bruins, opened on November 17, 1928, and was demolished in 1997. Located on top of North Station which was the hub for the Boston and Maine railroad, it was built at a cost of \$10 million and the first team sporting event there was a hockey game on November 20, 1928, won by the Montreal Canadiens 1-0 over the Boston Bruins. 17,000 fans – two thousand over capacity – attended while other fans without tickets broke windows and doors and stormed their way in.

I used to see the Garden on television on the CBS hockey game of the week and I used to think how beautiful it looked. I saw it in person in 1973, when I broadcast University of Wisconsin hockey in the NCAA tournament, and my image was dashed. It was old and filthy but because it was built for boxing, everyone had a great view of the game and our broadcast location was outstanding. We were located in a platform hanging off the first balcony and were so close to the visiting bench we could hear the players talk with each other.

Some of the quirks of the Garden included the fact that the ice surface was nine feet shorter and two feet narrower than regulation. For that reason I always seemed to feel like I was racing to keep up with the action on my play-by-play. The teams also didn't sit on the same side of the ice but across from each other, and due to the smaller dimensions, the Bruins always seemed to tailor their teams to take advantage of that size.

The visitors' dressing room was small, hot and with questionable plumbing. There was no air conditioning in the building and twice in the Stanley Cup Final between the Bruins and the Edmonton Oilers the games were disrupted by power failures. The electrical situation was probably the reason that many nights I would be doing play-by-play on TV with a technician crawling under my legs to make an adjustment.

In spite of the shortcomings, the Garden had a great history of outstanding players and teams. In the modern era, I got to describe the exploits of Bobby Orr, Phil Esposito, Johnny Bucyk, Ken Hodge and Gerry Cheevers. Boston hockey fans are avid and boisterous and in the 70's liked to say, 'Jesus saves, and Esposito scores on the rebound.'

One of the great playoff series I had the pleasure of broadcasting was in 1976 between the heavily favored Bruins and the Los Angeles Kings. The Bruins shut out the Kings in Game 1, 4-0, but the Kings evened the series by winning Game 2, 3-2, on a goal by Butch Goring 27 seconds into overtime. Game 3 was in Los Angeles and the Kings won, 6-4, led by Marcel Dionne's hat trick – the first of his playoff career – and the goaltending of Rogie Vachon. Boston's Cheevers shut out the Kings, 3-0, to tie the series at two wins apiece heading back to Boston.

Game 5 in the Garden was a disaster for the Kings, who after taking a 1-0 lead, gave up the next seven goals and lost 7-1. Game 6 in Los Angeles was a must win for the Kings. I'll never forget the ovation the Kings got when they took the ice that night in spite of losing the previous game in Boston. The ovation lasted so long that referee Andy Van Hellemond told the singer to start the anthem or he was going to drop the puck. Unbeknownst to everyone was that Boston's Wayne Cashman had deliberately cut the microphone cord with his skate.

The Kings were behind 3-1 at the end of two periods but scored twice in the third on two goals by Mike Corrigan, the tying goal coming with just 2:12 left in regulation. The longest overtime in Kings' history, to that point, ended 18:28 into the extra period when Bob Murdoch passed to Bob Nevin, who then gave the puck to Goring, who crossed the blue line, cut to his left, and beat Cheevers with a shot just inside the left goal post and the series was tied, 3-3. Fans at the Forum that night will long remember the Kings streaming off the bench and carrying Goring off the ice on their shoulders, the first and only time I've ever seen that in a hockey game. On the air I was screaming, 'We're going back to Boston, we're going back to Boston for Game 7!'

A great sportswriter in Boston named Leigh Montville wrote a column titled "Kings of the Living Dead." He said Game 7 was the game no one in Boston thought would ever be played, and yet every time the Bruins think the Kings are dead, 'the Kings stick their fingers over the side of the coffin each time the lid is about to close. Two weeks ago the Kings were a curiosity in Boston, now it's time to be afraid of the L.A. Kings. Man should always be afraid of things that won't die.' Well, the Kings couldn't stay alive in Game 7 as Boston's backup goalie Gilles Gilbert won a 3-0 shutout.

The last event ever held in the Boston Garden was on September 28, 1995, a preseason game between the Bruins and the Canadiens. The Garden then sat vacant for two years before it was torn down and the land now serves as a parking lot for the current home of the Bruins, TD Garden. What can't be demolished however, are the memories of the great teams and players who once played in the "Gah-den."

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 11.15.2012

644267 Minnesota Wild

Wild searches for emergency goalie; "Russo Radio" this morning on KFAN

Michael Russo

Good morning. I'm up because I have an early-morning flight out of Philly. The Wild wrapped up a six-game road trip against the Flyers last night.

Sorry, that was just in my dreams.

I'm actually awake because I've been cramming for an exam, uh, I mean show-prepping. I'm filling in for Paul Allen this morning from 9-noon on KFAN (100.3-FM).

Please tune in. We'll be talking plenty of hockey, both NHL (my friend tells me the Wild are 8-4-3 in his simulated NHL13 season; FIFTH IN THE WEST!!!!) and Gophers. We'll be talking Vikings and Wolves, and maybe sprinkle in a little potshots at Jeffrey Loria, the besieged owner of the biggest laughing stock in sports, the Miami Marlins, who dumped almost \$164 million in payroll last night in a trade with Toronto. Nice of Loria to once upon a time ruin my Expos and now re-stock the Blue Jays.

Oh, Major League Baseball -- the pride and joy of Donald Fehr!

I've got some great guests lined up: at 9:15, Gophers defenseman and go-to quote Nate Schmidt; at 9:35, Aeros GM Jim Mill, who may be the busiest man in the Wild hockey ops department; in studio at 9:55-10:30 is former Vikings linebacker and now KFAN contributor Ben Leber; at 10:35, longtime former NHL forward and now NHL analyst, the well-spoken Ray Ferraro and from 11-11:40, I believe in studio, the first-ever Minnesota Mr. Hockey, Tom Chorske.

If you have any questions for any of the guests or for myself, you can obviously call the show OR leave me a question by following me on Twitter at www.twitter.com/russostrub OR leaving the question on my Facebook page, www.facebook.com/startribunemikerusso.

My plan is to particularly take calls during Leber's segment and Chorske's because they are extended segments.

I'll be back on with a blog later this afternoon after Gophers men's hockey availability, but they take on Wisconsin on Friday and Saturday at Mariucci. In addition, if you want to get a rare pro hockey fix, the Aeros host Rockford at 5 p.m. Sunday at the X.

Tickets are complimentary for season-ticket holders by calling your sales rep, and for all others, they're \$20 and can be purchased at the X box office, wild.com and Ticketmaster.

In for the game will be prospects like Charlie Coyle, Jason Zucker, Johan Larsson, Zack Phillips, Brett Bulmer, Tyler Cuma, Justin Fontaine, Chay Genoway, stud AHL defenseman and Bloomington's own Brian Connolly, David McIntyre, etc., etc. NHLer Marco Scandella, a 2010 second-rounder, will also be playing.

We'll find out from Mill on the radio of some of the injured guys like Chad Rau and Darcy Kuemper and why Matt Hackett has been so rocky. Mikael Granlund has been ruled out from the game with a sprained ankle, and Jonas Brodin unfortunately is out with a broken clavicle.

The Wild are doing a pretty neat thing, by the way.

Remember last year when the Wild had to hustle to sign an emergency goalie because Matt Hackett's plane was late? Hackett was to back up Josh Harding because Niklas Backstrom was about to become a papa.

In emergency situations, you can sign anyone with pro experience, so the Wild turned to a 51-year-old beer league goalie named Paul Deutsch. He tended goal in warmups, but Hackett just arrived for the game.

To keep from scrambling again (assuming the NHL someday returns), the Wild is holding a contest to find the team's next emergency goalie.

It had selected 11 goaltenders to compete in an on-ice audition before a panel of judges including Wild goaltending coach Bob Mason, Deutsch himself and Wild TV analyst and former IHL champion Mike Greenlay on Thursday from 7-9 p.m. at the X.

The 11 goalies selected to take part:

Tyler Brigl – 27, Saint Paul

Kevin Donohue – 23, Minneapolis

Ryan Ess – 31, Minneapolis

Shane Hudella – 41, Hastings

Amy Jones – 29, Brooklyn Center

Treye Kettwick – 29, Minneapolis

Mark Klaers – 44, St. Louis Park

Mark Ostlund – 24, Saint Paul

Alan Strahota – 27, Burnsville

Joshua Swartout – 24, St. Louis Park

Adam Timperley – 30, Rogers

I'm not rooting, but it'd be a pretty neat story if Jones wins.

Anyway, two finalists will be invited to take part in a shootout against celebrity shooters during the second intermission of the Aeros-IceHogs game Sunday. The goalie that does the best in the shootout will be named the Wild's next emergency goaltender, with the runner-up named next in line.

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.15.2012

644268 Montreal Canadiens

Cherry still preaches, but has no pulpit

By JAMES MIRTLE

Mothballed broadcaster waiting out lockout, unpaid, raring to get back on CBC

When we track down Don Cherry, he admits he has a few things to say.

Then again, since when is that new?

These days, however, the Hockey Night in Canada [<http://www.cbc.ca/sports/hockeynightincanada>] icon is lacking an outlet, as with Coach's Corner mothballed until the end of the NHL lockout, the

outspoken broadcaster has no pulpit and no one to preach his often controversial sermons to.

On this day, Cherry is relaxing patiently in the small basement boardroom of one of Toronto's largest office towers, drinking his third cup of coffee as a nearby HMV store fills up with his fanatical following for an afternoon autograph signing.

Two months until his 79th birthday, Cherry may seem smaller and frailer under his ostentatious suits, – made at great expense with curtain fabric from the local Fabricland – but his opinions haven't been scaled down with age.

On the lockout, in particular, he has more than a few words of advice for all involved.

"I think they're both at fault," Cherry said, refusing to take either the owners' or players' side in the dispute. "And the sad thing is nobody's going to win. And when it's over, nobody's going to be happy with the deal. They'll both be unhappy with the deal. Which is ridiculous.

"The players, I don't know who they're fighting for. Are they fighting for the past, are they fighting for the future or are they fighting for now? Because I know one thing, if I'm around 31 or 32, I'm getting a little nervous."

One aspect Cherry says he can identify with the players on is the fact that he, too, isn't earning a paycheck during the lockout.

On a year-to-year contract with CBC, he doesn't draw a salary when there aren't games – "MacLean gets paid, but I don't," he quips of sidekick Ron MacLean – but points to the out-of-work concession and arena workers as the real victims.

"They're the ones that really counted on it," Cherry said.

If you want to get the man known as Grapes worked up, however, bring up the Hall of Fame.

While he had no quibbles with the four forwards (Joe Sakic, Mats Sundin, Adam Oates and Pavel Bure) who entered as part of the class of 2012, he remains outraged that former coach Pat Burns and Team Canada star Paul Henderson continue to be snubbed.

"Pat Burns – it's an absolute shame they didn't do it," Cherry said. "I'm ashamed they didn't do it while he was alive. He's won coach of the year in three different cities, Stanley Cup – there's nobody that's done anything more. The players loved him."

As for keeping busy without any NHL games, that hasn't been a problem. Cherry attends three midget games a week near his Mississauga home with his son Tim, who works as a scout with OHL Central Scouting, and watches Toronto Marlies and junior hockey on television.

While he calls those midget games his favourite to watch – "there's no agents" – he also sees a sport with costs spiralling out of control.

"A single mother doesn't have a chance," Cherry said. "I've seen that. It's a sad thing. A player's good, but it's just too expensive."

Cherry's other pastime has, surprisingly, become posting small items on Twitter – a new medium that he has taken to with the help of friend and CBC producer, Kathy Broderick.

During the playoffs last year, the network became concerned there were a handful of Cherry imitators out there and wanted to counteract that by putting out their own account.

"They said 'we've got to protect ourselves,'" Cherry explained. "'So we want you in the playoffs to start a Twitter.' And I was, 'Come on, are you kidding?' I thought Twitter was for birds to tell you the truth."

Now, whenever Cherry feels a tweet coming on – as he did earlier this week when he posted battling a swarm of bees at his home – he picks up the phone and dictates to her.

("I don't do the iPods and all that stuff," he later helpfully explains. "I have no idea.")

The results end up on his @CoachsCornerCBC [<http://https://twitter.com/coachscornercbc>] account soon after that – although he never checks what people are saying back to him.

"Somebody told me it's over 90,000 [followers] now," Cherry said. "I'm sure there are some negative things, but I don't need that. I just do it. And I really

have come to enjoy it, which I never thought. I kind of got into it. I say different things now...

"I know I had some stuff that kind of upset a lot of people with the lockout. I can't remember what it was."

Despite approaching octogenarian status, Cherry isn't thinking about retirement. While he will scale some things back, such as the number of banquets he attends, he intends to be back on Coach's Corner for as many more years as they'll have him.

Until the NHL returns, meanwhile, he has his midget games, a 100-gallon goldfish tank, his dog (Blue No.4) and, parked in front of a big-screen TV, a nearly 50-year-old chair that he plans to spend fewer nights in if and when he goes back out on the road with MacLean and Co.

"Once you slow down, as Satchel Paige says, somebody's catching up on you," Cherry said. "So I just keep going the same. ... Maybe just being busy all the time keeps me going."

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Charities feel pinch of NHL lockout

By DAVID SHOALTS

With the league shut down, game tickets and autographed sticks and sweaters disappear from fundraisers

The people and businesses whose incomes are tied to the NHL are not the only innocent bystanders broadsided by the lockout – charities across Canada are feeling the bite as well.

For example, Darryl Patterson, chairman of the Metro Toronto Rotary Auction, says the lockout will cause a drop of at least \$10,000 from the \$96,000 raised at last year's event by five Toronto area Rotary Clubs.

The auction, which goes Nov. 23 and 24 and is broadcast live on Rogers TV, normally gets 20 per cent of its revenue from the sale of Toronto Maple Leafs tickets plus team sweaters and sticks signed by players. With the NHL shut down, there are no tickets available and few signed sweaters and sticks, a situation faced by many other charitable events.

"I'm sure that's happening across the board. We're just one example," Patterson said. "The main thing, of course, is the Leaf tickets. They always go for more than face-value. For example, a pair of tickets worth \$500 will go for \$700 or \$800.

"The same thing happened in the last lockout [2004-05] as well."

In last year's auction, 26 pairs of tickets with an average face-value of \$210 per pair were sold. The demand for them is high, Patterson said, because they are donated by season-ticket holders who give them for hard-to-get games like those involving the Montreal Canadiens.

Usually, the auction gets more than 10 autographed Leaf sweaters from donors connected to the players. This year, Patterson is expecting only about three and all are last season's model.

Thanks to the lockout, the third sweaters the Leafs planned to wear at the now-cancelled Winter Classic against the Detroit Red Wings, which are modelled on the team's uniforms from the 1931-32 season when Maple Leaf Gardens opened, are not available. They would have fetched a handsome return.

It is not clear why there are only a handful of signed sweaters, since the Rotary auction does not receive them directly from Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, the Leafs' owner, which is not allowed contact with players due to the lockout. While there were rumours the NHL Players' Association instructed its members not to sign team items during the lockout, a union spokesman said that is not the case. Players are free to sign anything they wish.

Patterson said they leaned on their donors a little more this year to make up for the loss of the hockey items. The value of the items they have for this

year's auction is about \$147,000, down \$7,000 from last year, but that, too, has repercussions.

"We're working hard to get other stuff to make up for that loss," Patterson said. "But we as a club suffer a bit of donation fatigue, where we have to go back to our contacts and ask for [more] items.

"It doesn't help to ask for more and it hurts other events when they are asked to donate to them, like our spring auction."

It is a situation faced in offices across the country. "I know the feeling," said Janette Bellerby, The Globe and Mail's project manager, marketing services, who runs an annual silent auction and garage sale that benefits the United Way. She will not have the usual three pairs of Leafs tickets, which means about \$1,200 less income for the auction.

"Oh yes, everybody fights over the Leaf tickets because they're really good seats," Bellerby said.

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Bulldogs keep players hot for NHL start

By Pat Hickey, The Gazette November 14, 2012

MONTREAL — Aaron Palushaj was feeling a bit nostalgic when the American Hockey League's Hamilton Bulldogs played at the Bell Centre last week.

"It feels like I'm back home," Palushaj said with a grin as he settled into a stall in the Canadiens' dressing room.

Palushaj is one of five Bulldogs who finished the 2011-12 season with the Canadiens, but the lockout is preventing him from adding to his National Hockey League resumé. However, the 22-year-old from Michigan is determined to stay positive.

"It's awful there's no NHL, but a lot of people don't have the opportunity I have to be playing hockey," Palushaj said. "Whether I play 15 games here, 30 games here, it's better than not playing hockey. If you're battling and competing at this level, you're going to be ready when the NHL starts.

"You look at guys playing in Europe or the guys who are at home and just skating, it's not the same as playing competitive games. The AHL is a great league. It's one of the better leagues in the world right now."

The AHL is better this season because of an influx of players with NHL experience. Many of them are still on entry-level contracts. There are some stars in the making in the Edmonton trio of Jordan Eberle, Taylor Hall and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, but the five Bulldogs players are still working on their bona fides. None of the players has spent a full season in the NHL.

The player with the highest profile is Kirkland's Louis Leblanc, the Canadiens' first-round draft choice in 2009. Leblanc's pro debut was delayed last season as he recovered from shoulder surgery, and he played 41 games with the Canadiens after starting the season in Hamilton. A high ankle sprain has limited him to three games with the Bulldogs this season.

There were some raised eyebrows when Leblanc started the AHL season on the third line, but it fits in with the organization's new development strategy. The Canadiens have projected Leblanc as a shutdown guy — think Travis Moen, Lars Eller and Leblanc as the third line in Montreal — and they want to see him hone his defensive skills.

"That's part of it," Bulldogs head coach Sylvain Lefebvre said, "but I also wanted to balance the lines a bit. Louis has scored two goals in the three games he played."

The player in the group with the most NHL experience is 25-year-old Michael Blunden, who has played 90 games with Chicago, Columbus and the Canadiens.

"I'm fortunate to be playing right now," Blunden said. "I got buddies back home who are bored training every day. We have a great young, energetic group, and I just want to help any way I can."

Blunden has no illusions about his role in the game.

"I'm going to play the same here as I do in the NHL," he said. "Crash and bang and make sure I'm solid defensively. I can chip in a lot more on offence (in the AHL) and I get to play the power play. I don't think anyone knows what's going to happen with the lockout. I just have to make sure I'm on my game."

The end of the lockout has become moot for forward Blake Geoffrion.

In the hours leading up to last Friday's game against the Syracuse Crunch, the 24-year-old Geoffrion described the opportunity to play in Hamilton as a "blessing in disguise." But his career could be in jeopardy after he suffered a depressed skull fracture in a freak accident after he was checked by Syracuse defenceman Jean-Philippe Côté. Geoffrion was struck in the head by Côté's skate and underwent emergency surgery at the Montreal General Hospital.

Geoffrion shed some light on the Canadiens' system under new coach Michel Therrien in his pregame comments.

"We're playing the same system they're going to play in Montreal, and that will help everyone here," Geoffrion said. "It's very, very different. It's a lot more aggressive, a lot more physical. Taking time and space away is more important and there's a lot more emphasis on pressuring the puck."

The timing of the lockout couldn't be worse for the oldest member of the Bulldogs group, 26-year-old Frédéric St-Denis. The undersized, undrafted defenceman took a circuitous route to the NHL, playing Canadian university hockey and in the ECHL and AHL before playing the final 16 games with the Canadiens last season.

The Canadiens were reluctant to expose St-Denis to waivers and took advantage of a loophole to sign him to an AHL contract until the lockout ends. That's the good news.

The bad news is that St-Denis is running out of time to make an impression.

The Bulldogs have five rookie defencemen, including highly touted first-round draft choices Jarred Tinordi and Nathan Beaulieu.

St-Denis said his challenge is not to try too hard.

"I felt a little pressure at the beginning of the season," said St-Denis, who has been paired with the freewheeling Beaulieu. "I have to have more composure on the ice and try not to do too much."

St-Denis is aware that there's no guarantee of a spot in the NHL when the lockout ends, but said he is benefitting from the coaching in Hamilton.

"Sylvain, Patrice (Brisebois) and Donald Dufresne have all helped me," St-Denis said. "I've learned more in one month than I did all last season."

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Lockout Tweetup: Fans express frustration

By Dave Stubbs, The Gazette November 14, 2012

MONTREAL — There's no way to accurately quantify the hockey fans whose lives have been touched in one way or another by the NHL lockout, which on Thursday enters its 61st day.

So last Friday, heading to the Bell Centre to cover the American Hockey League game between the Hamilton Bulldogs and Syracuse Crunch, I chose to do a low-key head-count of my own by way of social media.

A day before the faceoff, I wrote on Twitter: "Thinking I might get to a spot on Bell Centre concourse an hour or so before #Bulldogs game & invite interested fans to come say hi."

Forty minutes later, just to confirm I wasn't joking, I tweeted that I'd confirm late on game-day afternoon precisely where I'd be about an hour before faceoff, giving anyone interested a chance to drop by and still get back to their seat in time for the pregame warm-up.

The so-called tweetup wound up being in front of a white Ford — essentially a four-wheeled Habs sponsor's ad — parked between the arena-bowl entry points to Sections 103 and 104.

I arrived at 6:40 p.m., half-expecting to be a crowd of one, and was pleasantly surprised to find a half-dozen Twitter followers with passion to spare. Many more had tweeted and emailed me their feelings, ranging from moderate discontent to white-hot anger to resignation and apathy.

At the Bell Centre, I met students Nikki Vjih and Amra Kubat; professional musician Geoffrey Lang; federal government worker Dan Daoust and his fiancée, Stacy; and computer specialist Caroline Tardif, the high-bidder in The Gazette Christmas Fund auction to have dinner two nights earlier with myself and seven members of the Canadiens.

Alas, with NHL commissioner Gary Bettman unexpectedly speaking Friday at exactly 6:40 p.m. about the latest buckling of CBA talks and a Saturday early edition column that now required a hasty rewrite, I hadn't the time to leisurely chat with my visitors about the lockout.

So I quickly gathered Twitter handles and the following morning asked for all — except Caroline, with whom I'd chatted at length over dinner — to drop me their lockout thoughts by email.

From Nikki, by Twitter, before I received her email: "I'm trying to write my thoughts on the lockout and I just keep rage writing and having to erase it lmao"

The 20-year-old from Baie d'Urfé, in her second year of cultural studies at McGill, did find her voice Sunday evening:

"I've been tempted to just hit caps lock and repeatedly bash my forehead on the keyboard but decided using actual words might be more effective," she wrote. "So I'd say disappointment and frustration are my overriding emotions right now. The fact that this is the second lockout in just seven years speaks volumes to the fans and personally it makes me feel unappreciated.

"I feel like we don't matter. I'm passionate about the sport so they will never lose me as a fan but I think the disagreement between the league and PA is pretty ridiculous. It's upsetting and frustrating that we're potentially going to lose a full season over pure greed.

"If they want to salvage the dying relationship they have with their fans, they better come up with an agreement soon so we can at least get some games in this season because any hockey is better than none!

"It's unfortunate we're not able to see our Canadiens in the Bell Centre but last night made me realize there is a bright side to this lockout: more exposure for our baby Habs! Record attendance last night just means that we're all still passionate enough to support the Bulldogs. Anyway, it felt great to be back."

Earlier in the day, this was received from Amra, a 16-year-old Grade 10 student at St. George's School of Montreal:

"I am really disappointed there is no more hockey and it's a shame that the league and players can't come up with an agreement so we can have the game back," wrote Amra, who arrived in Canada 16 months ago from her native Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and some time ago became friends with fellow Habs fan Nikki through Twitter.

"I was really looking forward to a new season so that the Habs could fix up last year's disappointing one and, of course, I was looking forward to more hockey since I am a relatively new fan of the game.

"However, it was nice to finally watch some hockey again last night. As I was walking downtown before the game, Montreal felt alive again. Unfortunately, it was a rough evening for our baby Habs with Blake Geoffrion's injury and a 4-1 loss. I wish him a fast recovery.

"Looking forward to the next Bulldogs game here in February, unless the league and players put the key to the lock and the Habs start playing again."

The emails of Dan Daoust and Geoffrey Lang ran considerably longer, but both expressed a deepness of sentiment.

I've published their letters, with their photos, on hockeyinsideout.com, and welcome brief email and photos at my email address below; all will be considered for but not guaranteed online publication. Full name, age, hometown and occupation of the letter-writer are required.

It's safe to assume that passions uniformly run deep among fans who are missing their NHL fix, no matter that we'll never be able to firmly grasp just how many are pained by its absence — and how many simply couldn't care less.

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Pacioretty's off-season a hurricane

By Dave Stubbs, The Gazette November 14, 2012

MONTREAL — Max Pacioretty was in the Bell Centre last Friday night, a spectator about 10 rows up behind the visitors' bench for the American Hockey League game between the Hamilton Bulldogs and Syracuse Crunch.

The Canadiens star did his best to sit incognito, not that it worked to perfection; once recognized, a buzz went up in the stands and the team's leading point-scorer of the past season attracted the obvious attention.

"I tried to wear my hat low," Pacioretty joked this week. "But it was good to talk to fans and have a bit of a personal connection with them."

Of his prime location in the arena's lower bowl: "I didn't know that hockey could look that good. Even as a kid, I never sat in a seat that close to the rink. It's an unbelievable experience. The game looked so fast, especially on a smaller rink, having just come back from Europe. It's a really fast game, lots of action. I can see why the fans want so badly for us to play."

It's officially been three jerseys, 13 games and, as of Thursday, 222 days since Pacioretty last skated in the bleu-blanc-rouge of the Canadiens:

He wore the national-team sweater of the United States for eight games at May's IIHF World Championship in Helsinki; the blue and white (mostly) of the Swiss A League's Ambri Piotta for five matches in October; and now the black and white NHLPA-crested jersey worn in practice by locked-out players of the NHL.

Pacioretty's off-season, as it were, was one for the books: he represented his country in his first senior world championship; won the NHL's Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy; signed a six-year, \$27-million contract extension with the Canadiens while working himself into the best on- and off-ice shape of his life; was locked out by the NHL; flew to join his temporary team in Switzerland on the day he closed the sale of his house in Connecticut; weathered upon his return the dregs of Hurricane Sandy, the monster storm that pounded his parents and many of his friends; and had a Montreal-area home built for himself and his wife, Katia, a place in which they're unpacking boxes this week.

When you're a superb professional athlete, handsomely rewarded (when you're paid) for your gifts and work ethic and actively involved in a number of communities, you tend not to be still for too long. And it's why, as he waits for the resolution of a labour conflict that's out of his hands, Pacioretty refuses to sit idly beneath a black cloud.

On Monday, he joked that his new South Shore home was not yet equipped with Internet or television service, leaving him almost blissfully detached from grim lockout news.

It seems that an athlete of the cybergeneration, one with every conceivable technological gizmo at his disposal, can live quite nicely when he's unplugged.

"It's probably the best thing in the world," Pacioretty said of roughing it in the 21st century. "I think I'm going to cancel social media out of my life for quite a while and have maybe just an emergency-call number."

How long Pacioretty, who turns 24 next Tuesday, can resist the lure of high-tech remains to be seen. But on Monday he wasn't the least bit squirrely about not being hooked into satellite or cable TV or 24-hour high-speed web-surfing.

His car stuffed full, Pacioretty drove to Montreal from Connecticut last Friday, the day his new home was finished, hearing en route from Bulldogs forward Aaron Palushaj about that night's Bell Centre game.

Pacioretty took in the contest and spent the weekend shopping, getting organized and twice visiting injured Bulldogs centre Blake Geoffrion in the hospital, never getting to see his close friend Palushaj. Most of his and Katia's personal effects were scheduled to arrive here on Tuesday, "and that's when the real work begins," Pacioretty said.

Monday's hour-long practice in Candiac with a gaggle of teammates and others was Pacioretty's first on-ice session in Montreal since the Canadiens' April 7 curtain-drop. He wasn't overdoing it, careful not to aggravate a stubborn elbow injury that flared up in Switzerland.

"I'm feeling pretty good," he said. "The elbow is a nagging injury from Europe. That's why I came home: to get it better, get a bit of stuff done to it and hopefully be ready by the time the puck drops."

Pacioretty's three-week experience in Switzerland saw him play just five games and be scratched from three more because of a flu bug, his injury, the import numbers game, politics or any combination thereof, depending on your information source.

Pacioretty said Monday that should the entire NHL season be scrubbed by the lockout, "I would go back to Ambri and finish (the season) there.

"It definitely was a great experience. There are so many great guys on the team, that's why it was so hard to leave. But they run a business just like my body's a business right now. I have to do what's best for me and what was best at the time was to heal my injury in case the (NHL) season starts, so I could be 100 per cent.

"It was tough, getting injured like that. I still keep in contact with my teammates. I hope we get started (here) soon so that's in my rear-view, but if it does come down to us not having a season (in the NHL), I would go back."

Import regulations in the Swiss A League permit a team to dress just four outsiders per game; with Pacioretty, lowly Ambri had five, including two pretty well must-dress defencemen.

"It's tough to be in a situation like that," he said. "You might make people uncomfortable or play over someone who deserves to be in the lineup. At the end of the day, I had to do what's best for me, and coming home would best help me get ready for the (NHL) season."

The elbow, Pacioretty said, was a chronic injury, exacerbated by jumping from summer skating into Swiss practice with plenty of shooting that inflamed the joint.

"The only way to get the swelling down was to get a lot of rest and treatment so now I'm taking things a little slower with shooting pucks," he said.

Pacioretty returned to Connecticut from Switzerland 10 days before Hurricane Sandy slammed into the U.S. Northeast. His parents advised him to head to Florida, which he did.

"Who would have thought that going to Florida was a good idea with a hurricane on the way?" he asked.

Pacioretty returned from 25C temperatures on the beach to 10-plus centimetres of snow, the product of the wintry Nor'easter that roared in on the heels of the hurricane.

His parents lost power for 10 days, long-time trainer Ben Prentiss's gym was flooded and Pacioretty heard horror stories from his skating coach, who lives at water's edge in Brooklyn.

"He was the only one who got his car out of his flooded building, driving through four feet of water," Pacioretty said, the hurricane historic in its fury.

"It was really bad. New Yorkers are resilient people. They work and battle through everything and they're doing a great job cleaning up. But it's still a tragedy. Being so close to it, I know it's been really bad for a lot of people. I don't think anyone outside knows just how many were affected by this."

For now, it's drier and less snowy on Montreal's South Shore, where until further notice Pacioretty will be up to his hips in cardboard boxes, he and his wife unpacking in their adopted hometown where he hopes to be playing hockey again soon.

"I'm living on a mattress on the floor in my basement," he said, a lament of movers everywhere as furnishings arrive in their own sweet time. "And you know, it's not bad living."

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Both sides are wrong in NHL labour dispute

By Aubrey Kent, Special to the Gazette November 14, 2012

MONTREAL — The core of the National Hockey League labour dispute at this point lies in the "framing" of the problem.

Consider these two statements about the lockout:

1. Owners are demanding nothing but concessions.
2. Players are being offered more money than hockey players have ever been paid.

Both statements are categorically true, yet elicit vastly different reactions depending on who you are talking to. As much as we may like to demonize one side or the other in this affair, the reality is that both sides are telling the truth. The problem is that, for each side, their perspective has become the only perspective, and they aren't looking at the deal on the table through unbiased eyes. But, as they say ... perspective is everything.

Improper framing often leads to a failure to properly identify the true problem. The owners can't understand why the players would turn down so much money. The players can't understand why the owners want to strip so much away after helping to grow the game.

If you aren't sure where you stand on this issue (besides indifferent or fed-up), consider that the real sadness of this situation is that the NHL has never been healthier as a business. Since the last lockout, revenues have steadily grown at about 7 per cent per year, to about \$3.3 billion. It is instructive to look at where this tremendous growth has come from.

It has come from a variety of sources, mostly the following (in no particular order):

- Better worldwide marketing and media coverage (new rules, Winter Classic, 24/7, etc.).
- More arena-based revenue from new or renovated facilities.
- Strong revenue from once troubled franchises that the league worked hard to salvage (Edmonton, Ottawa, Pittsburgh, etc.).
- Stronger Canadian dollar.
- Higher demand for live-sport programming on all media.

Who gets the credit for the growth in the business?

The league is responsible for the first three items as it has made significant financial investments along with some smart business decisions. Market forces beyond anyone's control have dictated the latter two items, and while both parties have benefitted neither can take credit for them.

The players can't really claim to have contributed anything to the growth of the business. How much did they contribute to the \$850-million renovation of Madison Square Garden or the construction of Toronto's Air Canada Centre? They aren't doing anything different than players have been doing for decades. They do what they do, show up and play.

From the preceding paragraph it would be easy to side with the owners/league in this dispute. However, they are not an easy group to side with.

In hindsight, they really created the NHLPA monster that they are dealing with now when they agreed to be "partners" with the players in this revenue-sharing model. Due to this revenue-based partnership, the salary cap grew from \$39.5 million per team to approximately \$70.2 million in 2012-13 (if they were playing).

Consider that in 2004, the NHL rejected an NHLPA offer of a flat \$45-million team cap for the last seven years not tied to revenue. In doing so, they cost themselves hundreds of millions of dollars and a chance at a relatively easy negotiation this time around. They could have looked downright generous in raising the cap to about \$60 million per team in the current deal. Coming up \$15 million per team would be making them a lot of friends in the NHLPA as

opposed to what is happening now with what is, ironically, actually a more generous offer.

At some point, both sides need to walk a mile in the other's shoes to understand why this isn't working.

Aubrey Kent, PH.D., is an associate professor of sport management at Temple University in Philadelphia and founding director of the Sport Industry Research Center.

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Corey to enter Quebec Sports Hall of Fame

By Brenda Branswell, The Gazette November 15, 2012

MONTREAL — When the Canadiens were still playing at the Forum, Ronald Corey looked to the future, studied revenue figures and ultimately came to a conclusion — the club really didn't have a choice but to move.

Players' salaries had risen and the options for boosting revenue at the popular old venue were limited, Corey said in an interview this week.

He announced in 1991 that Molson Cos. Ltd. planned to build a new arena near Windsor Station.

Five years and three public hearings later, the Molson (now Bell) Centre opened to glowing reviews from Habs players and grumbling from some fans about its congested corridors.

"It was long," the former Canadiens president said of the process.

"I didn't see where the club's future would be if there wasn't the new building."

Corey's role as the big advocate for building the 21,273-seat arena downtown is one of his achievements noted by the Quebec Sports Hall of Fame, which will honour him in Montreal on Monday.

Corey will be inducted in the "builder" category at the ceremony, largely in recognition of his tenure as Canadiens president from 1982 to 1999.

Other sports figures being honoured include retired Los Angeles Kings forward Luc Robitaille and boxer Eric Lucas.

Canadiens games at the Bell Centre have sold out for years and an international trade publication recently ranked the building third among the world's top-20 arenas with 15,001 to 30,000 seats. It was based on concert and event grosses over the past year.

The building created a kind of new enthusiasm, Corey said, because other people could now get tickets.

The Canadiens' Stanley Cup victories — in 1986 and 1993 — and the Bell Centre are Corey's two very important legacies, said Pierre Boivin, who succeeded him as team president.

"He was definitely one of the initial visionaries in seeing the need for these new modern buildings," Boivin said.

The Bell Centre's location is one of, if not the best in the league, said Boivin, now president and CEO of Claridge Inc., a privately owned equity firm. The arena sits on top of a metro station and is situated where the west-end commuter train comes in. It's also connected to the underground city and is within walking distance to most business towers in the downtown core, Boivin said.

Corey is proud of the Stanley Cup victories and said credit must be given to all the hockey staff, including Serge Savard, who was general manager.

Corey also recalled the closing of the Forum as a magical evening and an event everyone talks to him about.

The Quebec Sports Hall of Fame also noted Corey's role in creating the Canadiens' alumni association.

"That was one of the things that means the most to me because I knew how much Maurice Richard wanted that — Jean Béliveau, Dickie Moore, all those people," said Corey, who also had a small room built for the retired players at the Forum.

"I think it brought the (former) players closer together," said Moore, a Canadiens' Hall of Famer. "We'd meet after the games and during the games, and we'd always chat.

"It's a wonderful feeling to be thought of after your career."

Corey faced his share of criticism in the fall of 1995 when he fired GM Savard, head coach Jacques Demers and assistant GM André Boudrias, and named former Canadiens players Réjean Houle as GM and Mario Tremblay as coach, neither of whom had experience in their new respective roles.

The firings came only five games into the season. Two months later, Houle traded Patrick Roy to the Colorado Avalanche after the goalie told Corey he had played his last game with the Habs. Roy was angry that Tremblay waited until after he had surrendered nine goals before pulling him from a game against the Detroit Red Wings.

For decisions like those, Corey said he assumes full responsibility.

"I let people evaluate that," he said. "It's done."

Now retired and about to turn 74, Corey still sits on the boards of a few companies. Family is what is most important for him, said Corey, who has two children and four grandchildren he often looks after.

A manager almost his entire life, Corey said he always tried to be fair and "close to my people — to be close to the floor, to know what was happening and make decisions."

After Corey stepped down as Canadiens president, employees thanked him for his service in a newspaper ad. As he recounted the story, Corey put his palm to his forehead still looking surprised and touched by the gesture.

"I will never forget that," he said.

"I only have good memories of the 17-1/2 years that I was there," Corey said.

"We had very good moments, very difficult moments, but (it's) part of the game."

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.15.2012

644275 Montreal Canadiens

Stu Cowan: Crosby, Recchi weigh in

By Stu Cowan, Gazette sports editor November 14, 2012

MONTREAL — As the National Hockey League lockout dragged on this week with no end in sight, Sidney Crosby and Mark Recchi both weighed in with their take on the situation.

"I don't think there's much negotiating going on," Crosby told reporters in Pittsburgh after skating on Tuesday. "I think as far as the proposals are concerned, it's just kind of at a standstill right now. Nobody's moving a whole lot on their side and I think that we've made steps to show that we're willing to negotiate. I don't think that's really happening on the other side.

"The desperation to play doesn't really seem like it's on their side," Crosby added. "I think there's a deal to be made, (but) I think negotiations have to be made if there's going to be a deal. If it keeps going like this everybody's going to lose, there's no way around it.

"Everybody's going to lose."

Meanwhile, former Canadien Mark Recchi told Kevin Paul Dupont of the Boston Globe that the longer the lockout drags on, the worse it's going to be for the players.

"My advice," said Recchi, who is now part owner of the Kamloops Blazers junior team, "is that the longer it goes, the worse (the offer) is going to get (for the players). Hey, I'm an owner, too, so I see both sides. We lose

money on our team, and obviously that's not the same, the money's not nearly as significant as in the NHL, but the business dynamics are similar. We've lost money every year we've owned it."

Here's what fans were saying about Crosby, Recchi and the lockout on The Gazette's hockeyinsideout.com website.

HardHabits says: "Everybody's going to lose. Take me for example. I lost 5 pounds of fat (and subsequently replaced it with muscle) since this lockout began because I drink less, eat better and exercise regularly as I don't waste my gut sitting on my ass drinking beer, eating snacks and watching hockey any more. My advice to Fehr and Bettman. Let's keep this strike/lockout going please. No hockey this season is OK by me. Thank you."

AllHailTheFlower says: "I'm surprised anyone still thinks Recchi is relevant enough to even ask his opinion of the lockout. I wonder how many rocks the reporter had to turn over before he found him."

frontenac1 says: "So Dr. Recchi gave up medicine and is now an owner who is losing money on his team in the junior league, and is now giving everyone business advice? What a Charlatan!"

Bripro says: "He obviously studied a minor in investment counselling, along with his PHD, at the school of not-so-hard-knocks."

Habilis says: "It's pretty interesting how all these former players keep speaking out. The mystery is how all the current players dismiss their advice so easily. He's not in the game anymore, he doesn't know how it is, right? Actually he does know, because he played for 10 or 15 years (or a hundred like Recchi) and he went through 3 stoppages including a full season. Learning from those who have done this before ... I know it sounds crazy but maybe it's worth a look."

icky pop says: "I will say that I am on the fence about who I support. I'm on the owners side, cuz I believe that players make too much money. But I lean on the fence to the players for the simple fact that the teams signed these contracts, and should honour them. I remember when Wild signed Suter and Parise, the general manager said that him and the owner talked about signing both players when their agent, same agent for both players, asked if Minnesota would be interested in both. I remember it being said "How can we afford not to?" and talked about it changing the face of the franchise, which it did. And let's not forget the Weber deal. I'm sorry, but all the signings this year just to have the owners take it back is crap. That's like if I got a job, and they told me that I'd get paid \$20 an hour, only to tell me a month later I'm only getting \$16 an hour. But I see the league bullying the players into taking less money by not letting them play. A lost season to an owner is nothing. Seriously, you think they care about one season when they are thinking long term gain. An owner can own his investment for the rest of his life. A player however is blessed if he can play until he is 40 or older. One season can ruin a player's career. Now imagine a second year of this lockout. The players will fold like origami. The teams have this in the bag. Molson is really the only owner I can think of that is being hurt terribly by this lockout. No beer and no hockey make Geoffrey an angry boy."

Flashback to Habs' 1992-93 season: As Canadiens fans wait and hope for an end to the lockout, they can relive the last year the Habs won the Stanley Cup at hockeyinsideout.com as we post game stories by Red Fisher from that season.

The Season That Isn't: Suffering Canadiens withdrawal? The Gazette has the answer with the ultimate fantasy experience as Habs beat writer Pat Hickey and Gazette techie Eric Tobon employ EA Sports NHL 13 to produce The Season That Isn't at hockeyinsideout.com.

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644276 Montreal Canadiens

Habs prospect turns heads in junior

By Pat Hickey, The Gazette November 14, 2012

MONTREAL — After a spell of springlike weather in late October, it had turned chilly in southern Ontario, and the atmosphere was particularly frosty in the visitor's dressing room at the Sleeman Centre in Guelph.

Windsor Spitfires coach Bob Boughner wasn't happy. His team had been leading the Sarnia Sting the previous night, but sagged in the third period and finished on the short end of a 5-2 count.

"We got together and had a frank discussion of what went wrong, about how we were getting away from the things we have to do to be successful," Boughner said.

Boughner was particularly hard on centre Brady Vail, who was the Canadiens' fourth-round pick in June's National Hockey League draft.

"I pointed out that the guy who was the No. 3 overall pick in the draft had three points and that was the guy (Vail) was supposed to shut down," Boughner said.

Boughner was referring to Sarnia's Alex Galchenyuk, who is regarded as the Canadiens' No. 1 prospect. Going into the Sarnia game, Vail had 16 points in 13 games and was actually one point ahead of Galchenyuk in the Ontario Hockey League scoring race, but he was shut out on this night.

Boughner said that early success might have been a distraction for the 18-year-old Vail.

"Brady can score, but his future in the NHL will be in a shutdown role," said Boughner, who played 630 NHL games as a defensive defenceman with six teams. "One of the things he's learning is that the points he gets are created from playing defence."

Boughner said he was happy that Canadiens general manager Marc Bergevin reinforced that point when he came to watch Vail in Windsor.

"Marc's a good friend and it was good that he could come here and say the same things I've been saying," Boughner said.

"The game I saw he had a goal and an assist and they won and he played well," Bergevin said. "But you can be an offensive player in junior, and at the next level you might become a third-line centre. We see where he's going to be, but they don't see it that way. Our job with people like Martin Lapointe and Patrice Brisebois is to sell that to the player. In Brady's case, he's a solid prospect and it's good to see him getting lots of ice and killing penalties."

Vail's emergence as an NHL prospect is surprising because he doesn't have the typical hockey backstory. He didn't grow up skating on a pond in the prairies and he's still learning about the Canadiens' history and tradition. He grew up in Palm City on Florida's east coast, where his father, Bob, is a real-estate developer and his mother, Sue, is a golf pro.

Vail's first skates had wheels, and he played in-line hockey for several years before hitting the ice at age 9.

By the time he was 12, it was obvious Vail had a talent for the game, but he had run out of competition. After he stood out as a member of a regional all-star team, Vail was offered a chance to play with the Compuware midget team in Detroit. He moved to Detroit with his mother and younger sister and spent three years in the Compuware organization.

"My parents sacrificed a lot so that I could play hockey," Vail said after he was drafted in June.

Vail lived with billets when he moved to Waterloo, Iowa, to play as a 15-year-old, and he moved to Windsor a year later. But his parents checked up on him regularly and his mother spent the past summer teaching golf in Detroit while Brady was training with former Windsor players.

"He's spent the past two summers here and that's helped his development," Boughner said.

Vail was a depth player in his first OHL season in 2010-11, but Boughner — who spent that season as an assistant coach with the NHL's Columbus Blue Jackets — remembers his final game that season.

"I came back from Columbus to see the (OHL) playoffs and Brady got a hat-trick in the game in which we were eliminated by Owen Sound," Boughner recalled.

Vail has improved with each season and, despite a recent slump, is averaging better than a point a game.

"I think I have a lot more potential," he said after that October loss in Sarnia. "I had two back-to-back rookie seasons pretty much with the USHL and my first year here. I thought last year was a little bit of a start and this season has been going pretty well and hopefully I can build on that."

Boughner said Vail has "separation speed" and the youngster said quickness and speed were two things he worked on in the off-season. He said he was disappointed that the lockout resulted in the cancellation of the Canadiens' rookie camp, but that has allowed him to focus on his junior season.

"I hope I can have a good ride here (and) hopefully win a couple of championships," Vail said. "I want to play at the highest level possible as soon as possible, but right now I don't have a timetable."

Vail did get introduced to the Canadiens' organization at a development camp a few days after the draft.

"I didn't know too much background, but I knew Montreal was a massive hockey city," Vail said. "After going there, you realize how big it is and how fortunate I was to go there."

Most analysts believe Trevor Timmins, the Canadiens' director of amateur scouting, and his staff hit a home run at the draft by selecting Galchenyuk and then being surprised when Sebastian Collberg, Dalton Thrower, Tim Bozon, Vail and Charles Hudon were available in subsequent rounds. Vail was picked 94th overall after being ranked 38th among North American skaters in the final Central Scouting rankings.

"I did think I was going higher, but it doesn't really matter," Vail said. "A great team picked me and that was the first step. It's up to me where I go from here."

Vail said the development camp offered a measuring stick against players from other leagues, like Bozon and Hudon. He also formed a bond with Galchenyuk, a division rival in the OHL.

"I would say it's a rivalry because he's on the other team," Vail said. "Usually my job is to shut down the top line, and that means playing against him. After the games, we're friends, and someday I hope we'll be teammates, but when we go on the ice now it's pretty much a battle."

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644277 Montreal Canadiens

Tweetup: Lockout taking toll on passion of fans

DAVE STUBBS The Gazette

There's no way to accurately quantify the hockey fans whose lives have been touched in one way or another by the NHL lockout, which on Wednesday was in its 60th day.

So last Friday, heading to the Bell Centre to cover the American Hockey League game between the Hamilton Bulldogs and Syracuse Crunch, I chose to do a low-key head-count of my own by way of social media.

A day before the faceoff, I wrote on Twitter: "Thinking I might get to a spot on Bell Centre concourse an hour or so before #Bulldogs game & invite interested fans to come say hi."

Forty minutes later, just to confirm I wasn't joking, I tweeted that I'd confirm late on game-day afternoon precisely where I'd be about an hour before the game, giving anyone interested a chance to drop by and still get back to their seat in time for the warmup.

The meeting place wound up being in front of a white Ford – essentially an ad on four wheels – parked between the arena-bowl entry points to Sections 103 and 104.

I arrived at 6:40 p.m., half-expecting to be a crowd of one, and was pleasantly surprised to find a half-dozen Twitter followers with passion to share. Many more had tweeted and emailed me their feelings, ranging from moderate discontent to white-hot anger to resignation and apathy.

At the Bell Centre, I met students Nikki Vijn and Amra Kubat; professional musician Geoffrey Lang; federal government worker Dan Daoust and his fiancée, Stacy; and computer specialist Caroline Tardif, the high-bidder in The Gazette Christmas Fund auction to have dinner two nights earlier with myself and seven members of the Canadiens.

Alas, with NHL commissioner Gary Bettman unexpectedly speaking Friday at exactly 6:40 p.m. about the latest buckling of CBA talks and a Saturday early-edition column that now required a hasty rewrite, I hadn't the time to leisurely chat with my visitors about the lockout.

So I quickly gathered Twitter handles and the following morning asked for all – except Caroline, with whom I'd chatted at length over dinner – to drop me their lockout thoughts by email.

From Nikki, by Twitter, before I received her email: "I'm trying to write my thoughts on the lockout and I just keep rage writing and having to erase it Imao"

The 20-year-old from Montreal suburban Baie d'Urfé, in her second year of cultural studies at McGill, did find her voice Sunday evening:

"I've been tempted to just hit caps lock and repeatedly bash my forehead on the keyboard but decided using actual words might be more effective," she wrote. "So I'd say disappointment and frustration are my overriding emotions right now. The fact that this is the second lockout in just seven years speaks volumes to the fans and personally it makes me feel unappreciated.

"I feel like we don't matter. I'm passionate about the sport so they will never lose me as a fan but I think the disagreement between the league and PA is pretty ridiculous. It's upsetting and frustrating that we're potentially going to lose a full season over pure greed. If they want to salvage the dying relationship they have with their fans, they better come up with an agreement soon so we can at least get some games in this season because any hockey is better than none!

"It's unfortunate we're not able to see our Canadiens in the Bell Centre but last night made me realize there is a bright side to this lockout: more exposure for our baby Habs! Record attendance last night just means that we're all still passionate enough to support the Bulldogs. Anyway, it felt great to be back. ..."

Earlier in the day was received the following from Amra, a 16-year-old Grade 10 student student at St. George's School of Montreal. She's a native of Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina who arrived in Canada 16 months ago and became friends with Nikki, a fellow Habs fan, through Twitter:

"I am really disappointed that there is no more hockey and it's a shame that the league and players can't come up with an agreement so we can have the game back. I was really looking forward to a new season so that the Habs could fix up last year's disappointing one and, of course, I was looking forward to more hockey since I am a relatively new fan of the game.

"However, it was nice to finally watch some hockey again last night. As I was walking downtown before the game, Montreal felt alive again. Unfortunately, it was a rough evening for our baby Habs with Blake Geoffrion's injury and a 4-1 loss. I wish him a fast recovery.

"Looking forward to the next Bulldogs game here in February, unless the league and players put the key to the lock and the Habs start playing again."

The emails of Lang and Daoust ran considerably longer, but both expressed a deepness of sentiment.

I publish their letters below and welcome brief comment and photos at my address below (only by email, not by Twitter); all will be considered for but not guaranteed online publication. Full name, age, hometown and occupation of the letter-writer are required.

It's safe to assume that passions uniformly run deep among fans who are missing their NHL fix, no matter that we'll never be able to firmly grasp just how many are pained by its absence – and how many simply couldn't care less.

Twitter: @Dave_Stubbs

GEOFFREY D. LANG, 55, Montreal, professional musician

On Twitter: @geoffreydlang

Hi Dave. It was good to see you pre-Bulldogs game on Friday, thanks for letting us know your whereabouts!

I have to tell you – it was great to be back at the Bell Centre again to see hockey. But it felt a bit like the “kissing your sister” scenario; you’re going to the NHL arena see pro hockey (sort of).

I, like many of us, grew up a Habs fan. I vividly remember seeing my first game at the Forum in the spring of 1968 (just before the renovation took place), having to peer around the vertical support beams that ringed the arena. I’ve cheered them since, having lived and died with every win and loss – especially in the playoffs, when I was in my teens and 20s.

As an adult, I still look forward to every game. As a professional musician, there are many instances when I’m out working at the same time a game is being played, so I look forward to getting home (at whatever hour) to watch the game that I’ve pre-recorded, fast-forwarding through the commercials and intermissions (except for Coach’s Corner), many times fighting sleep to get to game’s end.

Segue to the Lockout 3.0.

As a hockey (not just Habs) fan, I’ve watched the quality of the NHL game diminish on many levels. The median player talent level has been diluted through expansion; the ever-evolving rule book has softened the game’s intensity and the NHL’s attempt to “grow” the game is misguided.

(One of the fundamental prerequisites to grow anything is that the environment has to be fertile enough to support the growth. Last time I looked, the desert’s environment is not great for growing much – including hockey.)

Dictionary.com defines “commissioner” as: “a representative in charge of a department” and “an official chosen... to exercise judicial authority.” Common terminology could also include “leader,” “director,” “boss,” etc.

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman is presiding over his third lockout. Unfortunately, it seems pretty clear that Mr. Bettman is not leading for the greater good of the NHL (in particular) and the game (in general).

What everyone directly involved with this dispute seems to forget is that the business of professional sports – in this case hockey – was developed for one reason, only: entertainment.

To succeed in the entertainment business, there’s only one major requirement: a devoted and loyal fanbase.

For the majority of us hockey fans, our eyes have glazed over with the fine details of the millions vs billions. I, for one, am very aware that the NHL owners and NHLPA are negotiating for their own livelihoods, which anyone and everyone is entitled to. However, the one commonality that the two sides have shared from the outset – and will always continue to share – is the need for regular folks to hand over their money, hard-earned or otherwise, to keep all of them in business.

The real gold sits with the currently disappointed and/or frustrated and/or angry fans, most of whom will be ready to dole it out again once (if?) this lockout is settled. To that, I say: “shame on us.”

Do I miss watching Habs games when I return from work at 2 a.m? Not as much as I thought I would...

DAN DAOUST, 25, Ottawa, federal government worker

On Twitter: @habsfansince87

I was raised a Habs fan, plain and simple. My father was a fan, his father was a fan. My fiancée has become a fan, much to my family’s delight. Growing up, there were only two seasons: getting ready for hockey season and hockey season.

As a kid, when it was game night, my parents would make sure they were home early from work so dinner would be done and we could catch the pre-game show. We never wanted to miss a minute of Habs talk, as it was hard to come by living in Ottawa. We would sit ourselves on the coach, put on RDS or CBC and hide the remote; no one was going to change the channel!

We never missed a game, it was the family tradition. I would put on my road-hockey goalie gear, stand in front of the TV (wearing my jersey, of course), and pretend to be Patrick Roy making saves, diving all over the living room.

Those childhood memories mean so much to me. Hockey was my life, my hobby, my obsession. It made me happy, sad, laugh, cry, and throw things at the TV ... sometimes all in the same night!

Fast forward to now – I’m 25, engaged, a home- and car-owner... and little has changed. I still rush home from work to start dinner so my fiancée and I can catch all the pre-game talk. We put on our jerseys, start a fire, grab a beer, and we’re ready to go.

But now, that has all changed.

In one seemingly long, unending argument, the owners and players have taken away my life, my hobby and my obsession. Hockey talk at home and work is all the same topic: when will the season start? How much money do the owners want? Aren’t players overpaid? It’s not about last night’s big game, not about the big Habs win over Toronto or Boston, not about Don Cherry’s latest rant against P.K. Subban... It’s just “when will they play hockey?”

I’m constantly reminded that hockey is a business. The players, owners and media all repeat that rhetoric daily to whoever will listen. But sadly, that’s no consolation. Business or not, I don’t have my Habs. Yes, MY Habs. The team I have poured myself into since I was old enough to pay attention to a TV. A team I would watch at midnight during a West Coast game on a school night, or noon on a Sunday in mid-June. A team whose jersey I would wear to school or work after every win. A team I would travel two hours, at least once a year, to go see, and not complain at all if they lost. A team whose history and statistics are so engraved in my brain that I didn’t leave room for much else.

A team that has literally broken my heart.

Please, owners and players, get a deal done. Play for that kid who wants to watch every game after school with his dad, play for the people who may not be around next winter. And not to be selfish, but play for me.

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644278 Montreal Canadiens

1992-93 Habs season flashback: Flyers dominate Habs at Forum

RED FISHER The Gazette

Apparently, there’s no place like home for the Canadiens – particularly when the Philadelphia Flyers are the opposition.

Consider these numbers, for example, in the wake of their 4-3 overtime loss to the Flyers last night, one which brings their 11-0-1 roll to a shuddering halt.

The last time they beat the Flyers at the Forum was on Nov. 7, 1987. Since then, their record against the Flyers at home is 0-5-3.

Until last night, the Canadiens had been 8-0-1 at home. Their last loss? Yeah, against the Flyers on March 18.

Is that enough to send the Canadiens back to the drawing board? Probably not, when it’s considered that after trailing 2-0 after the first period and 3-1 late in the second, third-period goals by Stephan Lebeau and another by J.J. Daigneault with fewer than three minutes remaining sent the game into overtime – only to have Kevin Dineen put away the Canadiens 48 seconds into the overtime.

He beat Mike Keane to an exquisite setup by Rod Brind’Amour and ... ta! ta!

The loss left several of the Canadiens dismayed – among them Patrick Roy, whose lifetime regular-season record is 0-6-6 against the Flyers. Another is John LeClair, who scored the first Canadiens goal and spent most of the night running into Mt. Eric Lindros.

“I guess we ran into each other six, seven times,” said LeClair. “Frankly, I don’t know why, because he’s a centre and I’m on the wing. I guess it’s because we’re both big, but he’s bigger than I am.

“You run into him,” sighed LeClair, “and it’s just like hitting a wall. On the other hand, it’s always nice to knock down a bigger guy, because the crowd reacts.”

LeClair was on a line with Brian Bellows and Kirk Muller, who assisted on two of the goals, including Daigneault’s game-tying longshot. He was there

as a replacement for Gilbert Dionne, who wasn't dressed, and caught everyone's eye as well as several thundering whacks from Lindros.

The Flyers went a long way toward locking up this game when they scored the only goals in the first period – from Claude Boivin and Brent Fedyk. Fedyk added a second goal late in the second period, after LeClair had scored.

"They played well, but I really thought we were gonna pull it out in the overtime," said LeClair. "I mean, the other guy (Roussel) made all kinds of stops, didn't he?"

So he did, among the 33 shots delivered by the Canadiens, including six by Lebeau, who was on the ice for the overtime goal. The reality, though, is that the Flyers deserved everything they got.

"Crazy, isn't it?" Roy asked. "I mean, how can I go 12 games without beating those guys. I thought I was going to do it tonight, but a lot of things happened.

"Like the goal by Fedyk in the first period," said Roy. "Short side, right? I thought it was going wide, but there was a big guy named Lindros in front of me. I was really surprised when I looked behind me and saw the puck in the net."

Did the Flyers catch the Canadiens in a deep doze until the Canadiens caught fire in the third? Was this a matter of the air going out of the balloon after a remarkable streak?

Was it more a case of the Flyers, locked in a skirmish for last place in the Patrick, elevating their game several rink-lengths?

In truth, it was an amalgam of all of them, along with Roy coming up somewhat short against a team which, for some reason, always has represented a formidable challenge.

In any assessment of what happened here last night, the only sure thing is that LeClair and Muller were the best of the Canadiens forwards.

"LeClair," said coach Jacques Demers, "showed a lot of character coming back with a goal after taking a big hit from Lindros."

What Demers could have added was that while LeClair and Muller excelled – and more – several of their colleagues missed the team bus.

There's another one waiting for them tomorrow against the Boston Bruins.

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644279 Nashville Predators

Nashville Predators' Kevin Klein signs with Danish team

Josh Cooper

Predators defenseman Kevin Klein has signed to play for the Herlev Eagles in Denmark, according to the team's website.

Herlev plays in the AL-Bank Ligaen, which is the highest league in Denmark. Klein will join four other Predators players in Europe during the NHL lockout.

A total of six have played overseas, though forward Craig Smith recently returned to the U.S.

Last season Klein, 27, notched a career-high 21 points. He also only had four penalty minutes over the course of 66 games. He notched four points in 10 postseason games.

Before the lockout, Klein signed a five-year \$14.5 million extension with the Predators.

Tennessean LOADED: 11.15.2012

644280 New Jersey Devils

Even Phone Calls Stop Between NHL and Union

Staff Writer

With the lockout about to enter its third month, communications between the fighting sides have come to a halt with no clear sign of what the next step will be or when it will be taken.

"No, we have not communicated today," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Associated Press on Wednesday in an email. "No meetings scheduled, and no plans to meet."

After four straight days of negotiations in New York last week, talks broke off angrily Friday night. Discussions resumed on Sunday, solely regarding player contract terms, but that meeting ended after only 90 minutes.

The union contends that the NHL doesn't want to get back together yet.

"The players remain prepared to resume negotiations at any time," NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr said.

At this point, no decisions have been made to call off any more games, Daly said. So far, 327 games — all those scheduled through Nov. 30 and the New Year's Day outdoor Winter Classic — have been cancelled by the NHL.

More could be coming soon if a deal isn't reached. It is believed that an agreement would need to be in place by the end of next week for the season to get under way on Dec. 1.

That is starting to look unlikely because of the mere fact that the sides are unable to find common ground on the big issues keeping them apart. It is more than just finances preventing a deal. The disagreements over player contract terms have emerged as just big an impasse.

The NHL wants to limit contracts to five years, make rules to prohibit back-diving contracts the league feels circumvent the salary cap, keep players ineligible for unrestricted free agency until they are 28 or have eight years of professional service time, cut entry-level deals to two years, and make salary arbitration after five years.

A few hours into last Friday's session, negotiations broke down over the core economic differences that separate the sides.

A lockout wiped out the entire 2004-05 season.

New York Times LOADED: 11.15.2012

644281 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout links: Wayne Gretzky still confident lockout will end by January

Charles Curtis

The Great One still has faith there will be an NHL season at some point this year.

On Oct. 1, we wrote a post linking to a story about Wayne Gretzky, who said he thought the lockout would end and a season could start by Jan. 1, when the Winter Classic was supposed to be held in Michigan.

Now, there's no more Winter Classic. There appears to be more animosity between the owners and players, plus no sign of any meetings anytime soon. But Gretzky is still confident.

Jeff Simmons of Sportsnet wrote about a Gretzky radio appearance in which he said, "My gut still tells me that over the next six weeks I think that they will get a deal done, and I think there's too many people that want to play, and I still see hockey being played come January for a 40- or 50-game schedule. Let's all try and stay positive."

Gretz isn't the only ex-player speaking his mind. Mark Recchi, who retired in 2011 and now is a part owner of the WHL's Kamloops Blazers, thought the players should take a deal now. He told the Boston Globe's Kevin Paul Dupont, "My advice is that the longer it goes, the worse [the offer] is going to get [for the players]. Hey, I'm an owner, too, so I see both sides. We lose money on our team, and obviously that's not the same, the money's not nearly as significant as in the NHL, but the business dynamics are similar. We've lost money every year we've owned it."

The ball may be back in the players' court after what deputy commissioner Bill Daly said yesterday.. Via Bruce Garrioch of the Ottawa Sun, Daly said, "We're done making proposals at this point."

In other lockout news:

- Current members the Rangers and Devils alumni are doing their part to help victims of Hurricane Sandy. Rangers forward Brad Richards tweeted that teammates Steve Eminger, Carl Hagelin, Brian Boyle, Ryan Callahan, Dan Girardi, Marian Gaborik and Marc Staal will join him for a fundraiser on Friday in Staten Island called Skating for Sandy.

Rich Chere of The Star-Ledger wrote about a charity game in New Jersey starring Devils coach Peter DeBoer, John MacLean, Sergei Brylin and Ken Daneyko. One of Gov. Chris Christie's sons will play as well. Chere also mentioned another game held by Devils RW Cam Janssen in Missouri for Hurricane Sandy first responders. St. Louis Blues players like Alex Pietrangelo and Barrett Jackman will play.

- The 2004-05 lockout is playing a role in the current work stoppage, with the owners and players struggling to trust each other according to the National Post's Sean Fitz-Gerald. "Both sides are reluctant to put their best offer on the table because of the history of negotiations," a source told Fitz-Gerald. That including the players side offering a rollback that ended up in the last CBA, along with a salary cap.

Star Ledger LOADED: 11.15.2012

644282 New Jersey Devils

Former Devils Sergei Brylin, John MacLean to skate in Sandy relief game

Rich Chere

A Devils alumni team that will include coach Pete DeBoer, Sergei Brylin and John MacLean, will face coaches from the New Jersey Colonials Travel Hockey Club Friday night at Mennen Arena in a charity game to benefit victims of Hurricane Sandy.

The game, set to start at 7 p.m. in the Morristown rink at 161 Hanover Avenue, will also feature Ken Daneyko, Grant Marshall, Bruce Driver, Dave Barr and others. Admission at the door is \$10 for adults and \$5 with a non-perishable food item for children.

DeBoer's two sons, Jack and Matthew, as well as one of Governor Chris Christie's sons, will skate with the Colonials' coaches.

DeBoer and his wife, Susan, suggested a benefit game and approached Colonials president Dede McMenemy. The event will collect monetary donations and food items to replenish local food banks and raise funds for the "Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund" and the Morris County Interfaith Food Pantry.

The Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund was founded by Colonials mom Mary Pat Christie. Ann Marie Manahan is president of the Interfaith Food Pantry. Both organizations are 501 (c) 3 Not for Profit.

Donation checks may be made payable to: New Jersey Colonials with Hurricane Sandy in the memo line.

Suggested items to donate include: Parmalat, powdered milk, canned meats and meals, low-salt soups, canned tuna or chicken, chili, peanut butter, nut butters and canned fruit, juices, cereal, granola bars, coffee, diapers (all sizes), formula, baby food. Frozen turkeys for Thanksgiving will be accepted.

Devils winger Cam Janssen will hold his own charity game to raise funds for Hurricane Sandy first responders.

The game, featuring NHL players Barret Jackman, Alex Pietrangelo, Brian Elliot, and St. Louis Blues alumni, will be played Saturday at the Hardees Iceplex in Chesterfield, Missouri.

Janssen, a St. Louis native, said he wanted to help people in New Jersey so he asked players he skates with in the offseason.

Left winger Harry Young has been re-assigned from Albany (AHL) to Kalamazoo (ECHL).

Star Ledger LOADED: 11.15.2012

644283 New York Rangers

Rangers to aid Sandy victims

Staff Writer

Brooks on Brad Richards and up to a half-dozen of his Ranger teammates will be on the ice to lead a pair of youth hockey clinics tomorrow in Staten Island for a fundraiser dedicated to aid victims of Hurricane Sandy.

Captain Ryan Callahan, Marian Gaborik, Dan Girardi, Marc Staal, Brian Boyle, Carl Hagelin and Steve Eminger are expected to join Richards at the Staten Island Skating Pavilion (3080 Arthur Kill Road; 718-948-4800) for a pair of one-hour sessions beginning at 3:30.

The donation is \$75. Proceeds will go to victims of the superstorm through the Cardinal Egan Fund. Registration for the event is available at vikingshockey@yahoo.com.

It's two full months tonight, yet the NHL season is only incrementally closer to starting up than when the league shut it down Sept. 16, and the sides are not negotiating. The NHL lockout went a third straight day without meaningful talks between the sides yesterday. No talks have been scheduled for today.

New York Post LOADED: 11.15.2012

644284 NHL

NHL talks on a downward spiral again

Frank Seravalli , Daily News Sports Columnist

SAY WHAT you want about Sidney Crosby, but every hockey fan - yes, even those in this town - can get behind what the Penguins' captain said this week about the NHL's 2-month-old lockout.

"There's no reason we can't figure something out," the NHL Players' Association's most visible player told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. "If it keeps going like this, everybody's going to lose."

For the fourth straight day Thursday, the NHL and NHLPA had no meeting planned. After what seemed like productive sessions over the last 2 weeks - including seven daylong bargaining meetings in a 9-day stretch - there is little silver lining.

The entire process seems backward at this point. After an entire week at the table, Sunday's final hourlong bargaining in New York was the shortest meeting between the sides, and reportedly the most hostile.

Where do they go from here?

A mediator has not been brought in. Deadlines are rapidly approaching. Players would have received their third paycheck of the season on Thursday. The league has canceled games through Nov. 30, but another cancellation could be on the way if a deal is not brokered before next Tuesday.

To have a Dec. 1 start date for a 68-game season, some 200-plus players would need to return from Europe for an abbreviated, weeklong training camp.

Considering that the two sides aren't even meeting - and don't have another session scheduled - Tuesday seems like a longshot. Sports Business Daily reported that the next set of games canceled would run up until Dec. 15. After that, the entire season could be on the chopping block, even though the league didn't cancel the 2004-05 season until February.

Latest Flyers Videos

Crosby is right: A deal is out there to be made. One report quoted NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly last week saying that the sides already agreed on 14 out of 17 issues on the table. The economics of the deal - the revenue share between players and owners - is the biggest hurdle. The sides are closer than ever on economics.

Once an accord is reached on the economics, such contracting issues as front-loading, 5-year term limits, free agency and arbitration will be on the table.

In 2005, after agreeing to the salary cap, the NHL largely gave in to players on contracting issues. The NHLPA was expecting something similar this time around. Yet, even after beginning bargaining aggressively in July, commissioner Gary Bettman made it known last week he is still driving a hard line on those issues, as well.

Bargaining is give-and-take. The owners are taking a larger share of the revenue pie, which is shrinking with each game they cancel. It would be wise to compromise on contracting issues, just so players can feel as if they are actually winning something.

Bettman promised his owners a home run with this lockout. There's no shame in returning with a sacrifice fly. A close win still counts. Right now, everyone is losing.

Simmonds returns

Wayne Simmonds' European adventure is over - for now, at least.

Simmonds, 24, left the Liberec White Tigers in the Czech Republic, citing family reasons in Canada, the team announced in a news release on Tuesday. He collected six points in six games with Liberec, in the same league as Jaromir Jagr's Kladno team, during his brief stay.

Simmonds' traveling partner and close friend, St. Louis Blues forward Chris Stewart, also left Liberec on Tuesday to return to the team they first joined in Crimmitschau, Germany. Stewart did not fare as well in Liberec, with one assist in five games.

Both Simmonds and Stewart skipped the team's exhibition game in Switzerland recently, and a rough translation of the news release suggests they did not exit on good terms. They reportedly were signed for the entire Extraliga season - or whenever the NHL lockout was settled, whichever ended first.

Simmonds could not be reached for comment on Wednesday. It is unclear whether he will return to Europe should the lockout continue. He racked up 20 points (eight goals, 12 assists) in 15 games combined in the Czech Republic and Germany.

Slap shots

Defenseman Andrej Meszaros, recovering from surgery to repair a ruptured Achilles' tendon suffered in August, skated in full equipment for the first time on Tuesday in Voorhees, N.J. . . . The Phantoms announced on Wednesday that they will become the Lehigh Valley Phantoms after moving to Allentown in 2014. . . . Brayden Schenn netted a natural hat trick on Wednesday for the Phantoms, playing against the Los Angeles Kings organization for the first time since his trade in 2011. The Phantoms (6-6) won, 4-1, over Manchester. Schenn leads the Phantoms with 14 points in 10 games. . . . Matt Read remains day-to-day with an ankle injury after blocking a shot in Sweden over the weekend for Sodertalje SK. He was joined by Flyers teammate Nicklas Grossmann, who signed a four-game contract with Sodertalje, his former club. Grossmann, coming off knee surgery and a \$14 million extension from the Flyers, previously had a hard time obtaining affordable contract insurance. . . . Claude Giroux (19 points) and Danny Briere (18 points) have both climbed into the top five in scoring in the German Elite League. . . . Max Talbot made his debut in Finland (Ilves Tampere) this weekend. . . . Ilya Bryzgalov was scratched as the third goaltender again on Wednesday for CSKA Moscow.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.15.2012

644285 NHL

NHL 'done making proposals;' Simmonds leaves Europe

Staff

The NHL and the NHL Players' Association appear to be in a deep freeze.

Bill Daly, the league's deputy commissioner, told the New York Times' Chris Botta that the NHL was "done making proposals. We'll see what they want to do."

Meanwhile, most NHL players are earning paychecks in Europe or in the AHL, and those that played in the NHL last year received escrow checks earlier this month that averaged over \$200,000.

We seem to be in a certified stalemate, folks, and there is no end in sight.

Happy holidays, fans.

There is, however, some good news for season-ticket holders: It looks like you're going to have a lot more money to spend on Christmas gifts this year.

Simmonds departs. Citing family reasons, Flyers forward Wayne Simmonds is leaving the Liberec Tigers and returning home, according to his team's website. It is not known if the racial taunts he received in the Czech Republic a little over two weeks ago had anything to do with his decision.

Simmonds' departure came on the same day of reports that eight fans _ who allegedly chanted racial taunts at the winger _ will be charged with disorderly conduct and defamation of a nation, race or ethnic group.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.15.2012

644286 NHL

Even phone calls stop between NHL and union

the_associated_press

NEW YORK -- Now the NHL and the locked-out players' association aren't even talking by phone.

With the lockout about to enter its third month, communications between the fighting sides have come to a halt with no clear sign of what the next step will be or when it will be taken.

"No, we have not communicated today," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Associated Press on Wednesday in an email. "No meetings scheduled, and no plans to meet."

After four straight days of negotiations in New York last week, talks broke off angrily Friday night. Discussions resumed on Sunday, solely regarding player contract terms, but that meeting ended after only 90 minutes.

The union contends that the NHL doesn't want to get back together yet.

"The players remain prepared to resume negotiations at any time," NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr said.

At this point, no decisions have been made to call off any more games, Daly said. So far, 327 games -- all those scheduled through Nov. 30 and the New Year's Day outdoor Winter Classic -- have been cancelled by the NHL.

More could be coming soon if a deal isn't reached. It is believed that an agreement would need to be in place by the end of next week for the season to get under way on Dec. 1.

That is starting to look unlikely because of the mere fact that the sides are unable to find common ground on the big issues keeping them apart. It is more than just finances preventing a deal. The disagreements over player contract terms have emerged as just big an impasse.

The NHL wants to limit contracts to five years, make rules to prohibit back-diving contracts the league feels circumvent the salary cap, keep players ineligible for unrestricted free agency until they are 28 or have eight years of professional service time, cut entry-level deals to two years, and make salary arbitration after five years.

A few hours into last Friday's session, negotiations broke down over the core economic differences that separate the sides.

A lockout wiped out the entire 2004-05 season.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.15.2012

644287 NHL

No progress in sight on NHL labor front

4 hours ago • Associated Press

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St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.15.2012

644288 NHL

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Tampa Tribune LOADED: 11.15.2012

644289 NHL

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Washington Times LOADED: 11.15.2012

644290 NHL

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Washington Times LOADED: 11.15.2012

644291 NHL

Sundin, Sakic, Oates and Bure enter hockey Hall

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

TORONTO (AP) - There is something missing from Joe Sakic's new plaque at the Hockey Hall of Fame _ and it's not because the printer made a mistake.

Among the list of his many achievements is no mention of his 21st NHL season, the one that was never played because of the 2004-05 lockout. With the sport back in another dark period brought on by another labor dispute, Sakic reflected on the year that never was on the day he took his place among hockey's greats.

"I lost a year of hockey," Sakic said Monday prior to the induction ceremony. "It would have been 21 years instead of 20. That's what you lose."

Fellow inductees Mats Sundin and Adam Oates were also in the NHL when the last lockout hit, while Pavel Bure, the fourth member of the class, was already retired.

Sundin never managed to win a Stanley Cup during his career and can't help but wonder what could have been had the 2004-05 season been played. His Maple Leafs were on a run of six consecutive playoff appearances before that work stoppage.

"It was awful," said Sundin. "I think it's devastating."

While all four of the inductees seem to have thoroughly enjoyed their induction weekend, the current lockout made it a more subdued affair than usual. They were to have been honored at Air Canada Centre prior to a scheduled Maple Leafs-Devils game Friday _ a missed opportunity in particular for Sundin, the longtime Leafs captain, and Oates, who grew up in Toronto.

Sundin is back living in his native Sweden now but the impact of another work stoppage hasn't gone unnoticed even from a distance.

"I think it's huge," he said. "The National Hockey League is kind of representing the game of hockey. It's the biggest representative of the game of hockey in the world. When the NHL is not going, people lose focus on hockey."

"For everybody that is involved in the sport, it's huge to get the guys back playing as soon as possible."

Added Sakic: "It hurts the players, it hurts the owners, it hurts the fans and it hurts the game."

The two men at the center of collective bargaining negotiations, commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr, both attended Monday night's ceremony. Bettman referred to "difficult times" after paying tribute to the inductees in a speech.

"All of us _ fans, teams, players _ look forward to the time the game returns," said Bettman.

The lockout was also a hot topic of discussion on the red carpet as members of the hockey world arrived for the ceremony. Hall of Famer Mike Gartner, who was active in the NHLPA during his playing days and later worked for the union, expressed concern for the sport.

"I think that one of the main dangers is that the fans and the game is taken for granted, that it's going to come back to the same health that it was before," said Gartner. "When you look at the last time that it happened, coming back to record attendance and record profits and taking a business that went from \$2.5-billion to \$3.3-billion in revenue, I think that tendency can be _ and I don't think it's consciously _ is to take all that for granted."

"I think that there's a real danger in it. I sense that there's more of a danger now than there was in the past."

Igor Larionov, another Hall of Famer who now works as a player agent, called for "common sense."

"I'm very positive it's going to be resolved in a matter of weeks, maybe two or three weeks," said Larionov. "You'll see the game back in shape and the players playing."

All four members of this year's Hall of Fame class were affected by a labor disruption during their careers _ Bure was playing for the Vancouver Canucks during the lockout-shortened 1994-95 season _ and it's reasonable to expect that trend will continue for some time after four work stoppages in the last 20 years.

Oates finds himself in a unique position because the lockout has delayed the start of his first season as a head coach with the Washington Capitals. He was hired on the same June day he found out he was heading into the Hall, making "for a pretty emotional 15 minutes."

The last season of his playing career came in 2003-04 with the Edmonton Oilers.

"I thought about (continuing to play) because I wasn't happy with my year in Edmonton, so I didn't really want to go out that way," he said. "I was considering it, but (the lockout) made it easy."

He doesn't harbor any regrets about being quietly ushered out of the game. In fact, it fit the personality of somebody who avoided the limelight by making his name as an excellent passer rather than a scorer.

"That's the kind of the guy I am _ a little bit understated," said Oates. "Actually Joe (Sakic) said it this morning: We're all understated guys, believe it or not."

Bure's career was ended prematurely because of knee injuries and he only ended up playing 702 NHL games, just slightly less than half as many as Sundin, Sakic and Oates. But he made the most of what time he had by scoring 437 goals.

He never dreamed he'd find a plaque with his name in the Hall and spoke with emotion during his induction speech.

"I think it's the biggest achievement you can get in hockey," said Bure. "The selection committee combines everything you've done for hockey worldwide, so for me it's a huge honor. It feels great."

For now, hockey at its highest level remains on hold.

Sakic works as an adviser to the Colorado Avalanche and is as anxious as anybody to see the NHL resume. Looking back, the pain of sitting out an entire season quickly went away when a new CBA was signed.

"I remember coming back that next training camp I was pretty excited to be back and playing the game," said Sakic. "You realize how much you miss the game."

Washington Times LOADED: 11.15.2012

644292 NHL

NHL and players' association not even talking by phone as lockout drags on

By: Ira Podell, The Associated Press

Jason Mulholland paints red hash marks at the Tampa Bay Times Forum in Tampa, Fla., on Sept. 27, 2012. The NHL hockey lockout continues.

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Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 11.15.2012

644293 Ottawa Senators

Lone Star sniper: Thriving Noesen gets chance to impress Senators brass

Like his contemporaries, Stefan Noesen had been hoping to make a firsthand impression on the Ottawa Senators during training camp.

by Allen Panzeri

Lone Star sniper: Thriving Noesen gets chance to impress Senators brass

Like his contemporaries, Stefan Noesen had been hoping to make a firsthand impression on the Ottawa Senators during training camp.

With fellow prospects Mark Stone, Mika Zibanejad, Jakob Silfverberg, and Matt Puempel, not to mention Shane Prince and Jean-Gabriel Pageau, all looking to crack the Ottawa lineup over the next year or two, competition was certain to be tough.

The 19-year-old Noesen has been to two development camps since being taken in the first round (21st overall) of the 2011 draft, so he's a familiar face around Scotiabank Place.

Nonetheless, with Stone, Zibanejad, and Silfverberg slated to be either in Ottawa or Binghamton this season, a year ahead of him, Noesen especially wanted to leave the Senators a personal forget-me-not before heading back to the Plymouth Whalers for his final year of junior hockey.

The lockout quashed that plan, obviously, but Plan B is going just fine.

Noesen, a 6-foot-2, 205-pound left wing, is doing a pretty good job of attracting attention during the first month of the Ontario Hockey League schedule, leading the Whalers in scoring with 12 goals and six assists (before Wednesday's game in Saginaw).

That start is not only his best in his four years at Plymouth, it also has him on pace to score more goals than assists for the first time. That has him scratching his head a bit, since he has always regarded himself as more of a playmaker than a scorer.

Last season he had 38 goals and 44 assists, and the year before he had 34 goals and 43 assists.

So having twice as many goals as assists, even though it is early in the season, is a novel feeling.

"I'm not complaining, but I'm not used to it," he said in an interview this week.

"I was talking to my coach (Mike Vellucci) the other day, and he said, 'Why do you see yourself as a playmaker?'"

"I said, 'I don't know — I thought that was my role.' And he said, 'Well, why don't you look at yourself as a goal scorer, too?'"

Vellucci, also the team's president and general manager, figures everything will even out as the season progresses.

"He's still making the same plays, the same passes," he said.

"He thinks the game as well as anyone I've ever had.

"It's not as if he's shooting any more. His linemates (Rickard Rakell and Tom Wilson) have just been unlucky. Goalies have been making great saves.

"And our power play has been pretty bleak, too, so that hasn't helped. We're getting a lot of chances but just not converting.

"I think it's just one of those things. And it's early, too.

"So I suspect by the end of the year he'll once again have more assists than goals."

Noesen will finally get his chance to audition for Ottawa brain trust when the Whalers visit Scotiabank Place on Sunday for an afternoon game against the Ottawa 67's.

You can be sure that general manager Bryan Murray and his top deputy, assistant general manager Tim Murray, will be all eyes.

In this age of the salary cap, teams can't afford to miss with their first-round picks. So they'll be anxious to see if Noesen is on the path to fulfilling those expectations.

The team is already high on him, however. In an interview with the Citizen earlier this week, Tim Murray said "only a bolt of lightning would keep him off" the U.S. world junior team.

Noesen is the type of player the scouting staff is charged with looking for: A tough, determined competitor who can help the team win, since that, obviously, is the bottom line in the NHL.

And that, said Vellucci, is Noesen's strong suit. He wants the puck.

"Sometimes he gets too into it, winning at all costs, but it's definitely a great asset to have," said Vellucci.

"He wants to count and he wants to be counted on. He wants to make the big hit, score the big goal, make the big play."

On the day of Noesen's draft, the caution flags were that his strength and conditioning had to improve, as well as his skating. He needed to spend some time in the gym, and add some speed to his skating, especially off the mark. Doing work like that requires that the player make a commitment, and some players never really get it, never understand the level of conditioning and strength needed to play in the NHL.

But everywhere Noesen turned, he got the same message.

He heard it from director of player personnel Randy Lee at the two development camps. He heard it from Vellucci.

He could see fellow draftees Stone and Mark Borowiecki turn themselves from late-round picks into NHL players through hard work.

And he heard it every day during his summer workouts with Dallas Star defenceman Trevor Daley.

A native of the Dallas, Tex., suburb of Plano, Noesen grew up under the Stars' influence.

Over the years, he has worked out with a number of players in the organization and credits them for helping him find the level of maturity he needed to have to be a player in the OHL.

Daley has helped him chart a path to the NHL.

"We'd have a sit-down after working out just about every day, and he'd tell me what I needed to work on and how you have to do the little things if you want to play in the NHL," said Noesen.

"Being around NHL coaches and players, it makes you want to bear down and work harder. No one wants to be just a good NHL player. Everyone wants to be a great NHL player.

"You don't want to have a career that only lasts five years. You want one that lasts for 10 years, or 12 years.

"To do that you have to look at the great ones and see what they do."

Vellucci agrees Noesen has grown and matured, but cautions there's a long way to go, that the process is ongoing.

"When he first came here (conditioning and strength) was a big area of concern, but in the summer between 16 and 17, he worked a lot harder," said Vellucci.

"He understood what it took to play in the OHL.

"But like any kid, he still has to take it to the next level. It's one thing to be in shape for junior, it's another to be in shape for the pros, and that's what I'm trying to teach all my players."

There have been some personal disappointments.

While some of his future Ottawa teammates (Stone, Zibanejad, Fredrik Claesson, and Jakub Culek) and present Plymouth teammates (Dario Trutman, Scott Wedgewood, J.T. Miller, and Richard Rakell) were playing for their countries in the 2012 world juniors, Noesen was unaccountably snubbed by the U.S.

It bothered him then and still bothers him.

"I've put it to the back of my mind," he said. "But it's still there."

As it turns out, the U.S. could have probably used him. The team ended up in the relegation round for the first time since 1999 and had to beat Switzerland and Latvia to advance to the 2013 world juniors.

Noesen used the snub as motivation and had his best season ever, and this time around, there's a good chance that he'll be on the 2013 team.

U.S. scouts have been to some of his recent games, a couple which, by his own admission, have been "stinkers." Still, it's difficult to ignore a player who is getting a point a game.

So he has his fingers crossed but is only modestly hoping that "maybe they'll take me along as a second- or third-line guy."

How the Senators squeeze all these young offensive players into the lineup — and even whether they all pan out as anticipated — will be one of the more interesting stories over the coming seasons.

While players such as Stone and Puempel will earn their livings by scoring goals, Vellucci sees Noesen's value in being an all-purpose player.

"To me, if you're going to play in the NHL, you have to get in the door first, and Stef can break in as a third- or fourth-line guy because he can do other things than be a goal scorer," said Vellucci.

"He can play on the penalty kill, he's good defensively, and he understands the game. He sees the game real well.

"He can give a coach some really good minutes on the third or fourth lines, and eventually I think he can graduate to be a second-line guy.

"But that's going to take maturity, conditioning, and strength — all those things."

Noesen's not worried about the pressure he'll face when he does get to training camp next season, nor about the competition he'll face.

He, and Stone, Zibanejad, and Puempel, have been to development camps together or played against each other for years, and they are all friends.

They know they each have to make their own way on to the team.

"I'm my own kind of player," said Noesen.

"Pumps — he's a goal scorer and he works hard. Stoner — he's one of a kind. He's a goal scorer and everything else. I see myself as more versatile. And it's all about what the team needs. We all bring different things to the table.

"It's going to be a great competition, but that's the whole point of it, for it to be a great competition.

"I don't see it as pressure. I see it more as a goal."

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644294 Ottawa Senators

Recchi "uninformed" when it comes to CBA: Chris Phillips

Is Mark Recchi angling for a job with the NHL or with an NHL team? Ottawa Senators defenceman Chris Phillips was wondering aloud about that possibility Wednesday, when asked about Recchi's comments that players should accept the NHL's latest offer to end the NHL lockout. Recchi, the now retired feisty winger who played 24 years in the league, told the Boston Globe Tuesday that from here on in, the offers are only going to get worse.

by Ken Warren

Is Mark Recchi angling for a job with the NHL or with an NHL team?

Ottawa Senators defenceman Chris Phillips was wondering aloud about that possibility Wednesday, when asked about Recchi's comments that players should accept the NHL's latest offer to end the NHL lockout. Recchi, the now retired feisty winger who played 24 years in the league, told the Boston Globe Tuesday that from here on in, the offers are only going to get worse.

"I guess I would say it's an uninformed answer, unless he's now tied in with ownership somewhere or wants to get involved with ownership and trying to take that side," said Phillips, the Senators player representative. "Unless you're on the calls and know what's going on all the time, I don't know what those comments are based on. Because he's not involved."

Phillips says it's possible that the NHL has already tabled its best offer, but he doesn't believe that's the case.

"It can get better for both sides," he said. "There has to be some give and take. There's obviously something in the deal that's a must for them that they're going to fight to the end for, and there are things in the deal where we feel the same way."

The Senators defenceman acknowledges there is some frustration among the players and that it's healthy for them to ask questions about what's happening.

Phillips is upset that the NHL is now trying to chip away at contractual issues such as the age of free agency, contract term limits and arbitration rights, but he's not as outspoken as Vancouver Canucks goaltender Cory Schneider.

Schneider told the Vancouver Province that even though the players are willing to drop down to a 50/50 split in revenues, owners "now want the most restrictive contracting rules in sport".

Schneider also doesn't buy Recchi's argument.

"(The lockout) is doing a lot of harm to them, too," he said. "It's mutually assured destruction."

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644295 Ottawa Senators

Senators' Chris Phillips rips Mark Recchi over CBA comments

By Don Brennan, Ottawa Sun

OTTAWA -

Mark Recchi knows not of what he speaks.

That, in a nutshell, is the viewpoint of Senators player rep Chris Phillips, who all but rolled his eyes when commenting on the ex-Bruins' "advice" for players to take the owners' offer now because it isn't going to get any better.

"I guess I would say it's an uninformed answer, unless he's now tied in with ownership somewhere, or wants to get involved with ownership, and trying to take that side," Phillips said Tuesday of Recchi, a respected NHL winger from 1988-2011 who now has shares in the WHL's Kamloops Blazers. "Unless you're on the calls all the time or know exactly what's going on ... I don't know what those comments are based on, because he's not involved."

As someone whose playing career included two lockouts, Recchi surely raised some eyebrows by seeming to side with the owners in the NHL's most recent CBA dispute. If he was still in a jersey and uttering those remarks, he'd be the only player appearing to publicly break from the ranks.

Union brothers would frown on that, to be sure.

Instead, as part-owner of a junior team, Recchi professes to see "both sides" of the debate. He says the Blazers have lost money every year since he's been involved and while it's a different level, the "business dynamics are similar" to NHL teams.

"The longer they're out, the revenues are going to go down and down," said Recchi. "So how are you going to get a better deal? Personally, I think the best time (to give in) is now."

Many observers of this mess would agree, but Phillips doesn't quite see it that way. He maintains that the owners, with commissioner Gary Bettman as their frontman, are following an agenda. Their final card in the high-stakes game of poker has yet to be played, he believes.

"There's obviously negotiating to be done," said Phillips. "So, yeah, it's going to get better. Of course it's going to get better. It's going to get better for both sides. There's got to be some give and take."

"There's obviously something in the deal that's a must-have for them, that they're going to fight to the end for," he added, referring to the owners. "And there's things in the deal we feel the same way (about). Is that where the give and take is? Maybe. So it could get better for both sides."

Asked if he senses some players are ready to cave, take the owners' offer and stop the bleeding while they can, Phillips hedged.

"I think everybody is frustrated," he said. "But again, guys that are saying that are not the guys that are there every day, and know what's going on. If you go and make a deal for the sake of getting a deal done, it's going to hurt a lot of guys, now and in the future."

He did say players are asking more questions about the situation all the time.

"And that's a healthy thing, to raise your concerns and ideas," said Phillips.

ICE CHIPS

If D Jared Cowen is indeed lost for the season because of hip surgery that is scheduled for Saturday, the Senators will feel the pain. "That hurts it, for sure," Phillips said when asked how much damage Cowen's injury would do to the team's blue line. "He's a guy that, although he was young, stepped up and played a lot of minutes for us, was a big part of our team. It's a big hole to fill." Lining up to fill that hole, should it be done from within the organization, will be Andre Benoit, Mark Borowiecki and Patrick Wiercioch. "It's really unfortunate with Jared, we could definitely use him here in Binghamton while this lockout is going on," Benoit told the Team 1200

Wednesday afternoon. "If they could figure it out and settle this thing, it would be interesting to see what happens from there." Indeed, Benoit, with his experience, could have the inside track. But because the Senators lost Matt Carkner and Zenon Konopka to free agency in the off-season — and because Cowen is their most physical defenceman — Borowiecki's chances of also sticking in Ottawa should improve ... While they cancelled the charity game in Thunder Bay because not enough locked-out players would confirm their participation, the trip to Northwest Territories is still on. Currently, 19 players are signed up, while Phillips plans on bringing along his nine-year-old son Ben for the experience. The group leaves Sunday and, after three games, intends on returning Nov. 22.

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644296 Ottawa Senators

Senators players: More down now that Cowen's out

By Don Brennan, Ottawa Sun

The loss of stalwart defenceman Jared Cowen for the season was just more bad news to a group of locked-out Senators who have already had enough of it this month.

Ottawa players who thought last week's marathon bargaining session between the NHL and NHLPA might lead to a settlement in the CBA dispute found out that even if the season is saved, their team will have to do without a key component as it attempts a return to the playoffs.

The 21-year old Cowen is scheduled to have surgery Saturday on a torn hip labrum that is expected to sideline him for up to six months.

"That hurts it, for sure," veteran defenceman Chris Phillips said when asked how much damage Cowen's injury would do to the Senators' blue line.

"He's a guy that, although he was young, stepped up and played a lot of minutes for us, was a big part of our team. It's a big hole to fill."

Like Cowen, Phillips plays left defence for the Senators, which means there will be even more responsibility on him to play well.

"It's going to give the opportunity for someone else to step in," said Phillips. "But there's no doubt (Cowen) will be missed."

When it was suggested that Cowen might not miss any NHL time at all given the conflict between players and owners seems to be headed for the cancellation of the 2012-13 season, Phillips, who is also the Senators player rep, replied:

"That remains to be seen. It's very quiet (right now)."

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644297 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL Notes: Dubinsky breaks right hand

Staff

Flyers defenseman Andrej Meszaros' rehab from his torn right Achilles tendon is going well while the lockout continues (see story).

Here are some notes from around the NHL:

Dubinsky breaks hand

The Rangers frustrated many opponents, the Flyers included, last season with their tenacity for blocking shots. It turns out that habit can hurt sometimes.

According to the Anchorage Daily News (via ProHockeyTalk), former Ranger and current Blue Jacket forward Brandon Dubinsky broke his right hand while blocking a shot on Saturday for the Alaska Aces of the ECHL.

While he is expected to miss at least a couple weeks with the injury, he isn't expected to require surgery.

Recchi glad he's 'not involved'

Former Boston Bruins (and Flyers) forward Mark Recchi is happily enjoying his hockey retirement, according to the Boston Globe.

"I coach my son's team a little bit, and that's it for me, hockey-wise," Recchi said. "As far as the lockout goes and everything, I'm glad I'm not involved, not playing."

As for Recchi's advice to the players? He said, "Get it right, then sign the thing for 10 years, get back to playing, and don't worry about it anymore. You don't want to go through this again in five or six years."

Stewart returns to Germany

After leaving the club to follow Flyers forward and close friend Wayne Simmonds to the Czech Extraliga team Liberec, Blues forward Chris Stewart has returned to the German Bundesliga's Eispiraten Crimmitschau, according to the team's website (via ProHockeyTalk).

Stewart had first joined the team with Simmonds in late September, but both Stewart and Simmonds left to join Liberec.

Stewart struggled with Liberec, having only one assist in five games, and decided to return to Germany where he registered 11 points in nine games for Crimmitschau.

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644298 Pittsburgh Penguins

Penguins Q&A: Defenseman Brooks Orpik

By Shelly Anderson / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The NHL lockout has wiped out training camp and more than a month of games in the 2012-13 season, but readers can keep up with the Penguins with an occasional question-and-answer session. Today, we catch up with Brooks Orpik, who is spending the lockout in his offseason home in the Boston area. It was an eventful summer for Orpik, 32, a defenseman who got married and didn't have abdominal surgery after having such an operation -- one on each side -- the previous two offseasons.

Question: You were 24 during the lockout that wiped out the 2004-05 season and did not play anywhere. How does this lockout, for you, compare with the last one?

Answer: I guess the biggest difference is just going into it last time you knew it was going to be at least half the season long. They were telling you that worst-case scenario it could be a couple of years if we really stuck to our guns and went against having a cap. This time, everyone was so optimistic with how successful the league has been. Guys thought that maybe we'd miss a little bit of training camp but that something would get done. We thought there was no way we would miss games and this time.

Q: You have been practicing with other locked-out NHL players at your old stomping grounds, Boston College, at rival Boston University and elsewhere. What is that group like?

A: That's one of the good things about the area. There's so many guys, whether they play for the Bruins or a handful of other guys from this area or guys [like me] who settled down here through college or relationships or whatnot. It really is a good group. We always kind of have a similar group here for August before I come to Pittsburgh. A lot of it is the same guys. And the [NHL Players' Association] has done a good job. They can put you in touch with whoever runs the skate in a certain city. We gave a lot of thought to going to Pittsburgh, but I think if I was in Pittsburgh, it would drive me more crazy not playing. It kind of takes my mind off of it a little bit.

Q: What are those practices like?

A: We've had Mike Grier, who retired a year ago, who has been nice enough to come out and organize and run all the practices for us. Every day's a little bit different. We usually have at least 10 guys. Those are on the bad days. We had the whole Bruins team there before late September, then some went to Europe. We do some type of drills for 40 minutes or so and some type of little game.

Q: How are you feeling physically?

A: I feel a lot better than I did the last couple summers when I had surgery. Looking back, I probably rushed myself after those surgeries. Now I'm at the point where I don't have to think about it that much. I do just preventative stuff. I'm beyond the point where I worry about it. Besides those couple of things, I've been lucky.

Q: What's one of the funniest hockey-related moments you can recall?

A: I had Marc Bergevin [now Montreal general manager] as a teammate my rookie year. He provided my entertainment. He was really big into his props, too. He might come out for practice with a wig on under his helmet. He was probably the funniest guy I played with. We were in Edmonton once in the hotel. They had a Christmas display. The bus was late, and we were bored, so he went and grabbed one of the presents under the tree of the display, wrote out a note, left it for [then-general manager] Craig Patrick at the front desk. I don't know what's in those things.

Q: What's your favorite meal?

A: It's homemade, a healthy version of chicken parmesan. It has a layer of prosciutto and a layer of eggplant. The wife makes it. We have it probably once a month.

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644299 San Jose Sharks

NHL, players can still minimize damage

Staff

When the NHL returned from a season-long hiatus in 2005, the list of adjustments to the game and givebacks to the fan base was a significant one.

In many markets, ticket prices were reduced across the board, or at least in certain parts of the arena. The hooking and holding that led to monotonous stretches of play was greatly reduced with a stricter enforcement of the rulebook. Shiny new streamlined uniforms were introduced. The league even revealed a sleek new silver and black logo, an update from the Halloween-themed orange and black emblem from yesteryear.

Eight years later, and in the middle of another labor war that's threatening the league as a viable business, it's hard to imagine what kind of bone the league and its players can throw to sports' most passionate fans when this mess comes to its conclusion. A full season is not an option, as the lockout has reached its 60th day and has again regressed into a staring match between league and union leadership. Drastic rule changes don't seem likely, and wouldn't be a good idea, anyway.

And, ticket prices? The chance there's an across-the-board reduction from any team is on par with Korean rapper PSY releasing a second international hit.

But, there is something they can do.

Rewind to December 5, 2011. On that day, NHL governors ratified a radical new plan to realign the league into four conferences, two of which would have seven teams while the others had eight. The Sharks would join the Canucks, Flames, Oilers, Ducks, Kings, Avalanche and Coyotes in a yet-to-be-named group.

Furthermore -- and more importantly, for these purposes -- it was announced that each team in the league would face its non-conference opponents twice a year, ensuring that every club would make at least one annual appearance in every other building.

At the time, the praise for the plan seemed unanimous from both management and players. Joe Pavelski said: "I think that, definitely, is good. Some guys play three or four seasons and you're like, 'I haven't even been here yet.' It would be nice to see each building once a year."

A little more than a month later, the plan was toast, rejected by the NHLPA. Pavelski cited increased travel and the fact that two conferences had just seven teams as compared to eight in the West Coast-leaning groups. The top four teams from each conference were to qualify for the postseason.

The realignment almost certainly won't happen this season, if there is a season at all. But the portion of the plan that sees every team visit every other team could, and should, still be on the table. There's still time for a 66-game season that sees each club play its current division opponents four times apiece, and faces every other team in the league twice.

It would be a small but significant token of appreciation in a league that is driven by the hardest of hardcore fans, and would help minimize the damage the two sides have already caused with this asinine game of chicken.

Want to see Zach Parise make his return to New Jersey after departing for greener pastures in Minnesota, Devils fans? No problem. We've got you covered.

Canucks supporters. Still hoping to get some revenge on the team that broke your hearts in the 2011 Cup Finals? Well, Brad Marchand, Milan Lucic and the big bad Bruins will be swinging through the Pacific Northwest.

Hoping for a chance to greet Stanley Cup champions Mike Richards and Jeff Carter, Flyers faithful, after your team traded away its young stars in order to sign an unstable goaltender? No problem, the Kings will be visiting the City of Brotherly Love.

And, finally, Sharks supporters – you've packed the HP Pavilion full night after night for more than 100 consecutive games. What do you get for putting up with yet another nonsensical work stoppage? You'll get a chance to see East Coast superstars Sidney Crosby, Steven Stamkos, Alex Ovechkin and Claude Giroux skate in the Bay Area.

Of course, for this scenario to have any chance at occurring, the league and union will have to figure out their numerous differences relatively quickly, including economics and contracting differences. Several prognosticators have marked December 1 as a potential start date for the league, and while that may be a bit ambitious now, a window does exist for the two sides to come to an agreement. In 1994-95, Gary Bettman's first lockout ended on January 11, and a 48-game season ran from January 20 – May 3.

Working backwards from that date means the league and union will have to get something done by next Thursday – Thanksgiving Day. Probable? No, but not impossible. And, in fact, a 66-game schedule could still be feasible if it includes an early December start.

For now, the clock continues to tick. And with it, a discouraged fan base that drives the business grows more and more apathetic.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.15.2012

644300 Tampa Bay Lightning

Bolts' prospect Johnson standing tall in making climb

By ERIK ERLÉNSSON

During the summer months, Tyler Johnson likes to squeeze in some pickle action.

One of Johnson's favorite activities when back home in Spokane, Wash., is to head out to the back yard of his parents house for a game of pickle ball – a racquet game that is cross between tennis and ping-pong played using a waffle ball on a small court.

After a long hockey season, it's a way to unwind away from the ice while still keeping sharp.

"It's an unbelievable sport," said Johnson, an undrafted free agent now in his second season with the Lightning organization. "It's a lot of fun."

Johnson had plenty of fun during his first season as a professional in helping Tampa Bay's affiliate in the American Hockey League, Norfolk, capture a Calder Cup championship. The 22-year-old finished his first season with 31 goals and 68 points – seventh overall in league scoring – was outshined in the AHL rookie class only by teammate Cory Conacher, who went on to win league MVP honors in addition to rookie of the year.

And just like Conacher, Johnson has often been overlooked because of his lack of size. At 5-foot-10, 183-pounds Johnson hardly towers over any of his opponents. But that's never slowed down his production as he's picked up where he left off from last season leading Syracuse – the Lightning's

new affiliate – with eight goals and second with 12 points, one behind Conacher.

"(Johnson) is very competitive," said Syracuse general manager Julien BriseBois, who also serves as Lightning assistant general manager. "He is a winner (and) also a fabulous skater with a great shot."

In junior Johnson helped his home town team, Spokane Chiefs, capture a Memorial Cup championship in 2007-08, where he was named Western Hockey League playoff MVP, before being a part of the gold medal winning Team USA at the 2010 World Junior Championship in Ottawa.

Despite the resume, he went undrafted and was unsigned even after attending to two NHL training camps – Minnesota and Phoenix – before the Lightning signed him to a free agent entry-level contract.

Now, if there were an NHL season taking place, he might be knocking on the door for a NHL job. But Johnson is not letting any of that affect how he goes about his business as he tries to keep improving in hopes of one day earning an NHL shot.

"I think even this year I have gotten smarter with the puck, smarter with my decisions with the puck and just being able to do that. So that's been good," Johnson said. "I've gotten stronger which is something that I've always needed to do and got heavier which I've never been able to do before up until this year. The summer was a good summer for me there is a lot that I've grown as a person as a player but there's still a lot more that I need to do and I realize that.

"(But) we are really just focused on playing our game here and winning games here and getting better as players and people; when it's our time it will be our time."

The Crunch players did get a small taste of what it would be like when it is their time when Syracuse faced Hamilton on Friday at the Bell Centre in Montreal. With a near sell-out crowd of over 18,000 fans, the atmosphere was certainly NHL-esque.

"It was unbelievable," he said. "As a hockey player growing up you hear stories about the history of Montréal and the passionate fans, so to be able to play in front of them it was just unbelievable. They were very, very loud and very, very energetic and it was a lot of fun. Obviously you want to say it is just like any other regular season game but it had a little different feel, a different vibe and everybody had that little extra jump in their step playing in front of 18,000 people."

Should he continue on the same path, Johnson might be playing in front of large crowds like that on a regular basis in the near future.

And wouldn't that be quite the pickle.

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644301 Tampa Bay Lightning

Five stitches and a black eye not enough for Lightning's Ryan Malone to consider using a visor

Posted by Damian Cristodero

So, there was Ryan Malone on Wednesday, the usual smile on his face as he skated with Tampa Bay Lightning teammates at the Ice Sports Forum in Brandon. But Malone also sported five black stitches in his right eyebrow and a can't-miss-it shiner under his eye.

"At least it didn't hit my eye," Malone said of being struck Monday by an inadvertent high stick from Marty St. Louis.

Malone does not wear a visor, and even an injury so close to his eye did not change his mind. As Malone said, the stick could have just as easily deflected off the bottom of the visor and into his eye.

St. Louis and Lightning captain Vinny Lecavalier have put on visors in recent seasons after facial injuries. But Malone was adamant.

"It's not something I worry about," he said.

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644302 Toronto Maple Leafs

How do professional teams draft the right athletes?

Kevin McGran

How do you evaluate the best players to draft? You'd have to be a pretty good evaluator of future performance. That's a difficult task.

Some look to talent, some to character, some to statistics for answers. In truth, there's no right way or wrong way.

But a group of elite sports executives — from hockey, basketball and the NFL — debated their way on Tuesday at the Prime Time Sports conference: Maple Leafs GM Brian Burke, Winnipeg Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff, Raptors GM Bryan Colangelo and New York Giants assistant GM Kevin Abrams.

Here's a look at some of their answers:

Q: How much do you rely on analytics?

Abrams: We hardly use it at all. It's an 11-on-11 sport. It's hard to say if a player does one thing on one team, he'd do it on another. He could be a 1,000-yard running back for Mike Shanahan in Washington, doesn't mean he could do it for anybody else.

Burke: I don't feel they add any value at all.

Cheveldayoff: We've developed internal analytics, not from stats, but from information (from scouts) we are taking ourselves and process that with some purpose.

Colangelo: I find myself in the middle, between the old-school way of scouting and the new-school way of looking at things. We, the Raptors, put about \$250,000 a year into the process. We dumb things down for the purpose of evaluation process of prospects and in terms of applying it to a game. I do believe analytics is a huge component to what we're doing. We've even got a camera system — six cameras installed above. I'm sure hockey will someday utilize this. The cameras take 24 shots per second. The amount of data mined from this camera data is incredible. If you look at a boxscore, you're looking at about 800 points of data. We're looking at 800,000 points of data per game. We're one of 12 teams with the system in place.

Q: When evaluating a player, what really are you looking for? Does talent trump everything?

Abrams: Talent is your starting point. But you're looking at medical history, character evaluations, word of mouth, psych evaluations and interviews. We'll use the results of the combine either to affirm or red-flag players.

Burke: Character. We place a great value on that. There is no substitute for raw skill. You can't match that with character, or coaching, or diet. That being said, a lot of great athletes never make it in a team sport. To me, over time, I think character is the ingredient of the stew that is championship teams.

Cheveldayoff: You can't replace skill. When it comes to the scouting side of things, there are two things: What he can see and what he can't see. What he can see: skill, skating, size. What separates the good teams from the bad teams is the amount of emphasis they place on what cannot be seen: mental toughness, attitude, do they have what it takes to win, the background, the parents, their motivation.

Colangelo: There's a checklist: talent, physical tools, basketball IQ, how they perform, how we anticipate they'll perform. Character. Emotional make-up. Marketability. Each component is part of the process. The toughest is what's inside a player. You can't see the heart, the emotional aspect of things.

Picking eighth, I passed on somebody I consider a top-five talent in the draft because we felt like he didn't have the right mental makeup. I passed on someone we thought was a top-three physical specimen because we felt he wasn't the right fit for our team and didn't have the right mental makeup.

Q: How useful are league-run combines?

Abrams: We use the information as a cross-check versus what we already have. The player's gotten good at training for the combine. A guy loses 20 pounds and looks faster. Our 15-minute interview, their answers are pretty

canned, but you can address issues a player might have had, get his side of the story. The best part is showing video, if he knows what other positions are supposed to be doing in a play, whether he understands the entirety of what the defence or offence has to do, or whether he's focused on his task. He knows his job and no one else's and speaks to what kind of versatility he'll have when he gets to the NFL.

Burke: We use it to buttress or repudiate what we've seen. Our primary scouting tool is still eyeballs. We go watch them play. The other stuff is just to doublecheck. We interview a bit earlier in the year.

Cheveldayoff: You have to do a lot of your work early in the season ... if you truly want to get down to what you can't see in a player.

Colangelo: Our combine has really become somewhat of a joke. Not all the players show up. The agents have controlled the process. It's gotten worse each year. The most important thing for us is talking to the players, going face-to-face, get them to show their personalities. I had one player tell me he wanted to fix computers, which is stunning given what his god-given talents were.

Q: How do you manage a War Room on draft day?

Colangelo: The decision of who you're going to select has happened long before the draft begins. The flow of the draft might change. You might move from Plan A to Plan B, or Plan D. It's a process that takes six months and gets more intense and electrifying. By two weeks out you want to have a pretty good idea what your direction is.

Burke: If you haven't done a whole lot of work before you get there, you can't make a deal on the floor.

Cheveldayoff: When you get to the draft floor, you will see banter, you will see the phone ring, talk of moving your pick. You never know what's going on in the minds of the other teams, unless you ask. You hear the cliché you can't believe the guy was still there when we picked. In some cases, that's true. The last draft, it was so deep, the order was all up in the air.

Q: How much does a poor draft pick cost a team?

Abrams: Our model is different because we don't have any place to incubate players. Once you draft them, they better grow up in a hurry because if they're going to be on your 53-man roster, you're going to need them at some point in your season. ... To miss on a draft pick is more of a missed opportunity than a financial loss.

Burke: The flip side of the coin on drafting is development. You can change your success ratio if you can develop players. If you have good coaching and a good farm system where you can turn these players into better players, then all of a sudden you look a lot smarter.

Cheveldayoff: The draft is the lifeblood of your organization. The only way to truly build your organization is through the draft. But it's a long process. You trust the instincts of your scouts. They're not always going to be right. There's injuries, there's illness. But if you do make a pick that isn't quite what you hoped for — well, a gentleman who helped me get in the business once told me you draft players, you don't adopt them. You have to understand if they don't turn out, move on.

Colangelo: Clearly the new CBA has put more importance on retaining your draft picks, but also making the right selections. We're in a business of instant gratification. You can't judge the success of the draft on draft night. ... If you do this long enough, you're going to have your share of mistakes. What you want to avoid is the major mistake: the Michael Jordan vs. Sam Bowie. Greg Oden vs. Kevin Durant. It's Ryan Leaf vs. Peyton Manning. Those are the ones that are catastrophic to an organization.

Burke: Yeah, and there's someone else's name on your door, too.

Q: What's your worst draft pick.

Abrams: The great lesson learned for us is we took a defensive tackle in the early 1990s out of University of Miami. We weren't convinced. But we allowed ourselves to make a decision that was based too much on need as opposed to a conviction.

Burke: We drafted a defenceman named Jason Herter who played at North Dakota. He had medical issues we didn't know about. (Vancouver's first round pick in 1989, eighth overall. Played one game in NHL.)

Cheveldayoff: I'll tell you in five years who it might have been, but I like to think I got a lot of scouts fired for the New York Islanders when they chose me (16th overall in 1988, never played a game in NHL).

Colagengelo: I had a draft selection in Phoenix, No. 22. I picked a kid named Casey Jacobsen (287 career NBA games) from Stanford and Tayshaun Prince went 23rd. (Prince is now eighth all-time in Detroit Pistons scoring.) I missed because we had Shawn Marion and felt Prince was more or less a duplication. But I made it up by taking Amare Stoudamire at No 9. And then a kid (Utah's) Paul Millsap went 47th (in 2006). And at 35, we took PJ Tucker. That was a mistake.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.15.2012

644303 Toronto Maple Leafs

Net plus for Marlies

LANCE HORNBY, Toronto Sun

This is the good kind of goaltending controversy to have.

With one test remaining in the Marlies' eight-game trip, coach Dallas Eakins can now pick from three goalies coming off of wins:

A confident Jussi Rynnäs with a record of 3-0-1. He won twice on the road and is looking more comfortable with the nuances of the North American game, such as fielding pucks.

An anxious Ben Scrivens, who had a strong third period on Thursday in Houston after some rough nights earlier in the trip and a warning to shape up from Eakins.

Mark Owuya is looking to build on his first win of the season from Saturday in San Antonio. He made a big third-period stop to preserve a win.

If only the parent Maple Leafs had this kind of dilemma more often.

"It's no controversy, we just have three goalies playing great," Eakins insisted. "Jussi will play in one of the three games this weekend (two at home after the trip officially wraps up Friday night in Hamilton), but I want to get Ben back in a game and I can't forget about Mark, who has worked so hard."

On Tuesday, Rynnäs was less than 24 minutes from taking a huge lead in the derby, up 4-0 on the host Oklahoma City Barons with a chance at his third shutout in four starts. But the Marlies' penalty parade, coupled with Edmonton's power-packed affiliate finally awakening for the 10:30 a.m. start, made for a crazy finish. The Barons unleashed Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Taylor Hall, Jordan Eberle and Justin Schultz, with 11 points in a five-goal burst. But Jake Gardiner's overtime winner rescued Rynnäs with 28 seconds to play in the 6-5 final.

Rynnäs made 31 saves, translating to a .938 save percentage and a goals-against average under 2.00.

If the NHL shakes off its lockout chains in a few weeks, the hottest Marlies goalie should have the best shot of staying with the Leafs, who will have a rusty incumbent in James Reimer. Or Leafs Nation might be embroiled in a new tempest, if general manager Brian Burke opts to bring in veteran help.

STOPS AND STARTS

Joe Colborne and Nazem Kadri went from press box banishment on Friday to huge roles in Saturday's win in San Antonio, then cooled a bit in Oklahoma City. Their only points among the six Toronto goals was Kadri's second assist. Each has been held to one goal in 11 games.

"If I've learned anything from going through my dry spell last year, it's to quit paying attention to the media," former Bruin first-rounder Colborne said. "I'm pretty good at staying away from the Internet. It's allowed me to keep focused and pay attention to what the coaches are telling me. What I care about is what my teammates and the organization think."

Assistant coach Gord Dineen was pleased to see five players get their first goal of the season in the past two games, Colborne, Kadri, Greg Scott, Jerry D'Amigo and Will Acton. Scott, who had 20 past year, now has goals in back-to-back games.

"You can see the frustration building and then finally, you see those guys get results," Dineen said. "I'm sure from this point on, they'll build off of that."

WELCOME BACK, MATT

There is a strong possibility Matt Frattin could play in Friday's game in Hamilton, six months since knee surgery put a halt on his promising development. Once he gets comfortable, the Marlies will likely give him prime ice time, as Eakins believes he and Jake Gardiner will get promoted first. Frattin was one of the few Leafs young guns make the most of the chance given him in 2011-12 and kept rolling with the Marlies until an unfortunate head-on meeting with a goal-post in the Western Conference final.

"Matt has an appointment with the doctor when we get back," Eakins said of the winger's final check-up from a specialist. "I don't want him having any indecision about his knee when he's playing out there."

FURIOUS TIME FOR LEAFS

The Leafs have agreed to fund the Toronto Furies of the Canadian Womens' Hockey League, a \$150,000 investment for uniforms and equipment through the next five years. MLSE has made vague promises to help women's hockey before, but this is putting money where its mouthguard is.

The Furies will play at the ACC this Saturday at 7:30 p.m. against Team Alberta, with free admission with appearances by Leafs alumni. The CWHL is a five-team outfit and Furies' players include Olympians Tessa Bonhomme and Sami Jo Small.

ICE CHIPS

Connor Brown, a sixth rounder this year from the Erie Otters, is tied for third in goals in the OHL with 16 in 20 games ... Freshman forward Tony Cameranesi has seven points in his first eight games for the Minnesota-Duluth Bulldogs. The fifth-rounder in 2011 happens to wear No. 13 ... Eakins was a bit miffed that winger Leo Komarov was given a one-game suspension for a hit to the head area of a San Antonio player on Saturday night. Eakins thought it looked worse because the glancing blow made the Rampage player's loose helmet pop off. The worse damage might have been on the follow-through when Komarov was still going full steam and almost took out teammate Mike Zigomanis.

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644304 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: The talking points

Sean Fitz-Gerald

NHL, players may have trust issues

In early December 2004, the National Hockey League Players' Association tabled what it believed was a "powerful" proposal. That was the word used by Bob Goodenow, then the union's executive director, as he discussed a radical offer that included a 24% rollback on existing player salaries as a means of reaching a collective agreement with the NHL.

The players had blinked.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman scrubbed the season two months later, and the rollback remained on the table, joined by a salary cap, the two words Goodenow had staked his name on avoiding. The rollback remained in place when the agreement was finally signed the following summer, with the NHL turning a best offer into a mere starting point.

Some experts believe that issue — call it a trust issue — could explain the lull in talks that has followed a hopeful burst of negotiating this month.

After staking an opening position on untenable soil in July, with a proposal that would see players reduced to 43% of hockey-related revenue, from 57%, the NHL moved to an even split of the pie. Players earned US\$1.883 billion last year and are unwilling to take the haircut an immediate drop to 50% would require, but they have more or less agreed to that percentage split.

"MAKE WHOLE"

Last week, The (Minneapolis) Star Tribune reported the NHL pledged to ensure existing player contracts are honoured — that US\$1.883 billion — with the money players lose on the percentage basically repaid in full. "The owners will pay them back, plus interest, and it would not go against their

share and the league is guaranteeing it no matter where the revenue of the league goes," according to one source quoted by the paper. That is a guarantee, over two years, of US\$211-million. "If the notion is they're honouring all the contracts and everyone is getting paid what they're supposed to be paid according to the letter of the contracts, that's not true and never has been," Donald Fehr said, as quoted by sportsnet.ca. "I don't know where that notion came from."

REVENUE SHARING

On Saturday, Hockey Night in Canada's Elliotte Friedman reported Donald Fehr added to the total he wanted to see in the NHL's revenue-sharing plan, pushing the total toward US\$260-million, which would represent a US\$20-million increase from the US\$240-million included in the union's first offer. In that offer, the NHLPA proposed a so-called Industry Growth Fund, where US\$100-million would remain at commissioner Gary Bettman's discretion. (As reported by The New York Times in August, the NHL's initial proposal earmarked \$190-million for revenue sharing.) Several outlets, including espn.com, have reported the NHL has agreed to boost its plan to US\$220-million, an increase of US\$70-million from the last agreement. On Monday, Steve Fehr described the two sides as being "fairly close" on the issue, even though the union recognized it was not going to get the system it truly wanted.

CONTRACTING ISSUES

Owners want player contracts capped at five years, with a mechanism within those deals to limit how much the value of those deals varies, year-to-year. (A player making US\$5-million in the first year could not make US\$1-million in year five, for example, which is a way to end the problem of front-loaded contracts.) Among the other highlights on the NHL's wish list: Unrestricted free agency moved back a year, to 28 years of age or eight years of service (from 27 and seven); and eligibility for salary arbitration moved back one year, to five, from four. One source has suggested the league is using these issues — which players view as critical — as a way to gain leverage elsewhere.

WHAT DOES GRETZKY THINK?

"My gut still tells me that over the next six weeks I think that they will get a deal done, and I think there's too many people that want to play, and I still see hockey being played come January for a 40- or 50-game schedule," Wayne Gretzky told Sportsnet 590 The Fan, in Toronto. "Let's all try and stay positive."

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644305 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL, players may have trust issues

Sean Fitz-Gerald

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644306 Vancouver Canucks

Vancouver Canucks coach Alain Vigneault can blame lockout ... for living in his parents' basement

By Iain MacIntyre

VANCOUVER — This is not a victimless lockout.

The harsh economic consequences of the National Hockey League's labour war was evident to those with a keen eye in Gatineau, Que., across the river from Ottawa, where spectacular fall foliage was juxtaposed for a few weeks this fall against the sad spectacle of a mighty man fallen.

Alain Vigneault — Jack Adams Award winner, winningest coach in Vancouver Canucks history, among the finest in his profession — was reduced to living in his parents' basement.

"A lot of people were saying: 'Boy, the lockout must really be affecting you money-wise if you have to go back and live with your parents,'" the 51-year-old coach said before arriving back in Vancouver for a weekend blitz of community initiatives involving Canucks coaches and managers. "For a while, it was a running joke. I was doing some renovations on my home and I had to move back in with my parents.

"I wasn't supposed to be here. Training camp was going to start and I would be in Vancouver and the renovations would get done while I was away. Then the lockout appeared and I was here and had to move back in with my parents."

Vigneault said Maurice and Loraine were happy to have their son back under their roof. He made his bed, put his toys away, helped with the chores.

"My mom is 79 and my dad is 77, so I think they both got a kick out of me living at home," Vigneault laughed. "There was a little more activity in the house. They seemed to be pretty happy about it.

"I'm really not used to being home (during hockey season). I've been gone now six years in Vancouver and a year in Winnipeg and two years before that in PEI. I haven't really seen the leaves change colours in Gatineau. I haven't seen that in a while, although I'm not crazy about the cold we were getting in early November. People aren't used to seeing me around, and it's as big a shock to me as it is to them."

Vigneault and his staff, scattered around the continent by the NHL owners' decision to shut down the league, is back together in Vancouver for a coaches' Town Hall Meeting Thursday night at the Langley Events Centre.

Associate coach Rick Bowness has flown in from his home base in Arizona. Assistants Newell Brown and Darryl Williams have travelled from off-season homes in California and Newfoundland, respectively, and goaltending coach Roland Melanson is back from New Brunswick.

They'll conduct practices for selected minor-hockey teams all day Sunday at Rogers Arena as part of the Canucks' Grassroots Hockey program. There will also be a visit to Children's Hospital and a dinner for the Special Olympics.

"Once hockey season starts, you spend an incredible amount of time with your staff," Vigneault said. "As much as we try keeping ourselves busy (during the lockout), that daily competitiveness we get making sure our team is ready and players are ready — and those are all relationships you build — waiting every day for that to come back is a little bit challenging. On a scale of one to 10, I'm looking forward to this as a 10. I really miss my players, really miss the whole environment around the team."

Like everyone else, Vigneault wishes the NHL was playing, but he especially misses the daily interaction with staff and players.

Personally, I miss Vigneault — his belly laughs during press conferences, candour and self-deprecating humour and the way he fumbles occasionally over his second language.

As Vigneault tried to explain how the Canucks have a legitimate chance to win a Stanley Cup if there's a season, he stumbled over the English adjective.

"Legit, lagit, how do you say it? (In French) legitime?"

"Legitimate."

"Exactly."

There are a pile of NHL teams in the United States that are probably quite content with an autumn lockout, either because they'll lose less money not playing or because they struggle drawing fans and TV audiences against football in the fall.

The highly profitable and well-run Canucks, however, are losing money and a chance to take another run at the Stanley Cup as their window to do so with a roster of core players in their late 20s and early 30s begins to close.

If there is a partial season and a compressed schedule, it's unknown whether the Canucks' age will be a factor, and how their lack of players in European leagues will affect their readiness to play NHL games on short notice.

Coaching will be vitally important but, ironically, there will be less time for it between games.

"Every team is going to be in new territory as far as the compressed schedule," Vigneault said. "But being where we are in Vancouver, it's always a lot more challenging than it is for teams out east."

"Every organization is going to need a tremendous amount of depth. You're going to need to play your bench. In situations where you get four games in six nights, you have to play all your people. That's the only way you can get by."

"If you play more than three games a week, then obviously practices will be shorter and there won't be as many, and you're going to have to do your teaching somewhere else. Everyone will have to adjust."

Vigneault sounded excited just talking about it. He seemed to enjoy answering questions.

"I swear to God, I miss you guys," he laughed when asked about the media. "I'm looking so forward to getting back and having one of those special pre-game press conferences with you guys. I can't wait to do that again."

Me, too.

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644307 Vancouver Canucks

NHL lockout: Jensen sticking in Stockholm

By Jason Botchford

He hasn't been scoring and that's fine with Nicklas Jensen.

So is spending the rest of the season in Stockholm. Good thing, because he doesn't expect he'll have much of a choice.

Jensen was once blindly optimistic. He didn't think an NHL lockout would last past September. He thought he'd still get a real shot during a real Canucks training camp. At worst, with his 6-foot-3 frame and soft hands, he'd get a long look. He'd give the Canucks something to think about and remember next fall when he'll be more polished, and they'll be more desperate to add cap-friendly deals. Wishful thinking.

To be fair, Jensen is 19 years old and from Denmark. He hasn't spent a lot of time exposed to Gary Bettman. Don't worry, he's learned.

"I went from not believing there was going to be a lockout to now, where I don't really believe there will be a season," Jensen said from Stockholm.

Any end to the lockout in the next few weeks will be followed by truncated training camps across the NHL. They will be compact, intense, and long on catering to veterans while short on opportunities for developing prospects like Jensen.

"I thought I'd be in Vancouver this year for that tryout," Jensen said.

"But now, with the lockout still on, I think I'm going to play out the season here (in the Swedish Elite League) with AIK."

"It makes the most sense, instead of going back trying for a week and coming back here. For me, I think I'm staying here, but nothing is ever for sure."

Jensen's dad, Toronto-born Dan Jensen, came up with the idea the Canucks' 2011 first-round pick would play in the Swedish Elite League this year. Jensen needed to learn to play a man's game. The Canucks warmed to it quickly. The SEL has 12 teams and is stocked with former NHLers and future impact players in any year, let alone when the NHL is shuttered, pushing more talent to Europe.

"It helps every day to prepare you for the eventual tryout I'm going to have in Vancouver," Jensen said of the SEL. "Every game is tough. It's worked out. It's definitely been the right choice to prepare me for the next level. I develop here every day."

"You play with men here. They are really skilled men who have been playing hockey for a long time."

Jensen surprised some of those men early. The raw rookie made it seem easy, scoring eight goals and three assists in his first 15 games. It was an unexpected start, but an important one for a player who is inexperienced but also the most recognizable name on his team.

"I got off to a great start, scoring those goals and it was great for me, especially for a new guy on the team," Jensen said. "You want to show what you have right away."

"Hopefully, I can keep that up."

Jensen is more comfortable in Sweden than he was in the OHL, where he played with Oshawa last year. His longest bus trips for away games are four hours long. His parents have already taken the hour-long flight to come to see him play. He's not alone. His girlfriend visits him in Stockholm during homestands.

"Stockholm is great," Jensen said. "There's a lot of things to do here. The people are wonderful and so are my teammates. I'm having a really good time."

On scoring goals, Jensen knew he was bound to run cold. He hasn't put up a point in five games. But working through slumps and inconsistency is the cornerstone of development.

And that's why he's in Sweden.

His AIK team is weak, with just five wins in 21 games. It sits 11th in the standings and has been out-scored 68-46. This can play in Jensen's favour. It allows him opportunities to have a bigger role in multiple areas on the ice.

"In the off-season, I wanted to get bigger, stronger, faster and I feel better on the ice from last year," Jensen said.

"But I want to work on everything. I want to work on my shot. I want to work on making offensive plays. But also, I want to have a main focus on my defensive work."

"This league is a challenge for me. Staying here, in the Swedish Elite League, for the entire year is not going to hurt me."

"I wouldn't mind that at all."

"But if they were ever to give me a shot at the NHL, I sure wouldn't mind that either."

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644308 Vancouver Canucks

Retire Bure's No. 10, says Larionov

By Ben Kuzma

Igor Larionov is called The Professor for good reason. The former Vancouver Canucks centre not only looks the part, the respected Russian has always been a student of the game and excelled at his craft with class and dignity.

He won three Stanley Cup championships with the Detroit Red Wings, is a member of the Hockey Hall of Fame and continues to shape young minds as a player agent.

Larionov represents Nail Yak-upov and Alex Galchenyuk, who were selected first and third overall, respectively, in the 2012 NHL draft, and is an astute judge of talent. His prize pupil was former teammate Pavel Bure.

As The Great Debate rages as to whether Bure should have his number retired by the Canucks to join Markus Naslund, Trevor Linden and Stan Smyl in the Rogers Arena rafters, it's not surprising that his former linemate believes that sheer electricity and notable numbers should account for the highest franchise admiration.

On Monday, Bure gave his acceptance speech in Toronto after being officially welcomed to the Hockey Hall of Fame. On Tuesday, Larionov gave his take on whether a Calder Trophy, back-to-back 60-goal seasons and helping carry the Canucks to within a win of a Stanley Cup championship merit a jersey retirement, despite Bure's contract-status circus and eventual trade from Vancouver.

"For his accomplishments here and for his dedication to the game in bringing so much fun and joy to the city in his playing days, I think he should be up there - no doubt," said Larionov, a special guest for Game 5 in the CHL's version of the clash of hockey titans to be played Wednesday at the Pacific Coliseum.

"When you decide to retire a jersey, it's a decision by the management and there have been a few guys buying and selling the team, and with new management, I know they're talking about that.

"It would be nice to have his No. 10 up in the rafters to be recognized as one of the greatest in Vancouver."

Nice is an interesting take. In this market, that can be applied to the manner in which captains Naslund, Linden and Smyl became fixtures in the community and worked tirelessly to support various charities.

It was nice to see them combine that devotion with their on-ice excellence. And there's the rub. The criteria for a jersey retirement varies from team to team, and being a good person can be as important as being a great player.

"Pavel is a good guy, a great guy," added Larionov.

"Sometimes he keeps everything to himself but in general he's very honest. As a player, he's always been there when the team needs him. Every night when he stepped on the ice, something was going to happen. It was like people were coming to watch a great actor."

Larionov first met Bure when the phenom was 16 and being schooled in the strict Red Army hockey system. With four years of high-end training, it was still amazing that a player from a different culture could adapt so quickly to the North American game with 34 goals and 60 points in 65 games during his rookie season.

Then came the back-to-back 60-goal campaigns.

"I knew right away he had a great future and that he was going to be special," said Larionov. "A player like that with the kind of calibre and skill and the flashiness would turn the city around, and he did it for many years. He scored a lot of highlight goals."

However, are seven seasons that produced 254 goals and 478 points in 428 regular-season games enough?

Phil Esposito isn't so sure. The Hockey Hall of Fame member had his Bruins jersey retired in 1987 because he won two Stanley Cups, two Hart and four Art Ross trophies in nine seasons with Boston.

"Bure was one of the best scorers I ever saw," said Esposito, who's also a special guest for the Canada-Russia junior series. "You've got to play seven to 10 years and do some things and big things - including winning. To me, it (jersey retirement) is the greatest honour you can get. The Hall of Fame is nice, but a lot of guys get into the Hall of Fame."

Hence, The Great Debate.

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644309 Washington Capitals

Jason Chimera signs with HC Chomutov in Czech Republic

Posted by Katie Carrera

On the 60th day of the NHL lockout, Jason Chimera became the seventh Capital to head overseas.

Chimera agreed to a deal with HC Chomutov in the Czech Extraliga that will allow him to return to North America whenever the lockout ends. The veteran winger was one of only a handful of players who remained in the Washington area over the past two months and was happy to spend extra time with his wife and two young children.

After weeks of practices, though, Chimera decided it was time to play games again according to his agent, Allan Walsh.

"There have been some other offers that have come his way, but I don't think he was ready to go earlier. He wanted to stay with his family and see how the negotiations were going," Walsh said in a phone interview. "Now he's not really caring how the negotiations are going, he wanted to get into games and he found a good spot. Whether he's over there for a week, two weeks or the rest of the year he's in good shape."

Chimera, 33, will join fellow locked-out NHLers Michael Frolik and Milan Jurcina, his former teammate in Washington, in Chomutov. During the 2004-05 lockout, Chimera played 15 games for Varese HC in Italy.

Negotiations have stalled between the NHL and NHLPA. The two sides last met Sunday have not scheduled any future sessions and more games may be canceled in the coming weeks. But Walsh said Chimera's decision was based on getting into game-shape not the status of the talks.

"We're at the point where, if there's going to be a season things will have to come together quite quickly," Walsh said. "The NHL has already said that once there is an agreement, training camp would be very short — six, seven days with no exhibition games. Players who have been playing games may have an advantage in that case."

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644310 Washington Capitals

Nicklas Backstrom scores hat trick in Dynamo Moscow victory

Posted by Katie Carrera

KHL action resumed Wednesday following a 10-day break for players to take part in the Karjala Tournament in Finland, and Nicklas Backstrom wasted no time in lighting up the scoreboard.

Backstrom recorded his first KHL hat trick, which included the game-winner in Dynamo Moscow's 4-3 overtime victory against Vityaz Chekhov. The Capitals center, who is now wearing No. 69 rather than No. 99, finished with 22 minutes 4 seconds of ice time and six total shots on goal in the contest.

The game also marked Alex Ovechkin's return to Dynamo Moscow's lineup after he missed three games with an illness. Ovechkin recorded an assist on Backstrom's first goal Wednesday and finished with nine shots in 27:05 of ice time.

Check out the full highlights and catch Backstrom's goals at 0:35 mark, 3:00 and 4:58:

In other news...

- The NHL lockout turned 60 days old Wednesday. What? You're not planning to celebrate the occasion? Unfortunately neither are NHL or NHLPA officials. The two sides haven't met since Sunday and there aren't any future sessions scheduled.

- Prospect Stanislav Galiev has been assigned to the ECHL's Reading Royals. Galiev, who is in his first year pro, started the year with the AHL's Hershey Bears but has recorded just one assist in nine contests and was a healthy scratch in three of the past four games.

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644311 Websites

ESPN / Back to the lockout: Now, where were we?

By Pierre LeBrun

TORONTO -- And now we bring you back to your regular scheduled programming, "24/7: NHL Labor Hell."

The Hockey Hall of Fame induction weekend gave us a nice respite from the soul-sucking reality of what's currently plaguing the NHL.

As we wait for bargaining to resume at some point between the NHL and NHL Players' Association, it gives us a chance to sit back and ponder where things are.

Three key areas remain a road block to a deal right now:

1) The core economic issue. The league offered \$211 million in guaranteed money last week in a revised "make-whole" provision, payable via one-year deferred payments (plus interest), money that would be outside the cap system in order to try to make players whole on existing contracts. The union feels the money isn't enough (as one union source said, try \$600 million instead). Instead, the NHLPA last week told the league it wants to guarantee that players on a whole don't earn a dime less than the \$1.883 billion in total salaries earned last season plus 1.75 percent in interest on top of that.

My take: On one hand, I'm on record as saying I believe it's more than fair for players to want to protect existing contracts as much as possible, especially given the appearance of some owners of rushing to sign contracts this summer in the veiled hope of getting a shave off those deals in the form of escrow in the new CBA. Having said that, I'm not exactly sure how NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr expects to protect that \$1.883 billion salary threshold in this new CBA. I mean, that figure alone is why the league -- which claims more than half its teams lost money last year -- triggered a lockout to begin with. The point of wanting the players to go down from 57 percent of hockey-related revenue down to 50 percent is to say that \$1.883 billion out of \$3.3 billion was too high for its industry. That's not to say players won't get back up to \$1.883 billion or beyond as league revenues grow in the next several years, but to try to guarantee that right out of the gates, at least to me, just won't cut it with these owners. To me, when push comes to shove here, if I'm the NHLPA I push the league for more money on "make whole" and cut my losses once I feel the league has gone as far as possible on that front. With each passing day, 50 percent of HRR becomes a smaller and smaller target as the business becomes more damaged.

2) Player contracting rights. This has become a much bigger issue over the last week than I would have ever predicted. My understanding all along in this process is that this was a bit of a red herring, in the sense that I always believed the NHL would stand down on some of its player contracting demands once the NHLPA signed off on the core economic issues, especially "make whole." And I still believe there is some level of flexibility in this area once/if the two sides agree on "make whole." But what we have here is the chicken and the egg. The league won't move on its player contracting rights until it has "make whole" figured out, and the NHLPA doesn't want to give an inch either on player contracting rights, feeling its willingness to go down to 50 percent of HRR at some point in the new deal is a large enough concession on its own. Several NHL players reached out to me via text messages over the last two days saying they are through-the-roof frustrated on this issue, feeling the league is giving them a take-it-or-leave-it option on their player contracting demands. Of course, that assertion frustrates the league, which says it wants the NHLPA to come back and counter in this area but instead says the union simply says it is not interested in any of it.

My take: If I'm the NHL, to try to get a deal done, I step down on wanting to move UFA eligibility to eight years' service or 28 years old (from the current seven/27), I step down on wanting to change the entry-level system or salary arbitration, and I give up on trying to limit terms on contracts to five years. The key areas I stick to my guns on if I'm the league: the 5 percent rule introduced in the Oct. 16 proposal, in which salaries from year to year can't go up or down more than 5 percent (this rule essentially makes the five-year term limit needless because it foils any attempt at front-loaded/back-diving deals); the Wade Redden/stashing-players-in-the-AHL rule; the Roberto Luongo back-diving rule (even if a team trades a player, if he retires before end of his deal, the original team that signed him to that contract gets nailed with his cap hit even in retirement). To me, those are the three rules that matter the most to the league because they deal with cap circumvention and, frankly, I'm not sure why the players would even care much about any of those three.

3) The damage of the lockout. NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly estimated the revenue losses at \$720 million when November games were canceled, and that doesn't include the carnage of the Winter Classic. And what remains unresolved -- and it becomes a bigger looming issue with each passing day -- is just how the NHL and NHLPA will agree to share in the pain of the damage caused by the lockout when it comes to adjusting the core economic language to a shortened season. No question the league

will see this as a 50-50 proposition, since both sides in the league's view are equally guilty of being unable to negotiate a new deal. But I suspect the NHLPA will make this an interesting issue by pointing out that it was the NHL that locked out the players and triggered this lockout. Fehr has set up the league for this moment by repeatedly suggesting since last June that the players would have been willing to play this season while CBA negotiations were ongoing. So yes, another hot potato in the offing, another hurdle to a deal.

Last week was not a total waste of time in New York City, the two sides getting closer on one key element to the deal: revenue sharing among teams. The league pushed its total money on revenue sharing to \$220 million, up from \$150 million in the last CBA, and while the NHLPA might still want to modify how the program is run, the money has the two sides in the same ballpark.

My take: As bleak as things look, one thing I learned after covering the last lockout in 2004-05 is that the breakthrough in talks can come completely out of nowhere with absolutely no apparent momentum leading up to it. Out of nowhere during a secret meeting between Bill Daly and Ted Saskin in Niagara Falls, N.Y., came the NHLPA's acceptance of a salary cap, which for better or for worse was the first step in finally reaching an eventual deal seven years ago. I suspect the same will hold true here. That without any obvious hints or signs, the two sides will finally find a trigger on the core economic issues, which will provide a domino effect for the rest of the deal.

The question is, how long do we have to wait for that moment to come?

I still think there's chance for hockey sometime in December. But don't hold me to it.

ESPN LOADED: 11.15.2012

644312 Websites

FOXSports.com / Friendships guide Setoguchi to ECHL's Reign

Jon Rosen

It was an eventful 2012 Winter Classic in Philly. See the action here.

When Devin Setoguchi stepped outside of Citizens Business Bank Arena on Wednesday after the Ontario Reign's morning skate, he hardly needed his neon green performance outerwear. It reached 80 degrees in Southern California's Inland Empire on the mid-November morning that the 25-year-old prepared to play in his third game alongside his new ECHL teammates, an 8-1 win over the San Francisco Bulls.

As a Taber, Alberta., native currently under contract to the Minnesota Wild, forgive Setoguchi if the California sunshine has clouded his travel preferences.

"We were on the road trip the other night to San Fran -- a seven-hour bus ride," the four-year NHL veteran said. "It was nice to be back, actually, on the bus and reminisce with good old stories passed back and forth. That was kind of fun."

He's referring to the familiarity of the players who comprise Ontario's roster, and of the collective experiences they shared of playing junior hockey with and against each other in the Western Hockey League. That the Reign is so rich in its Western Canadian background is the primary reason he chose to play in the ECHL, spurning opportunities in Europe and elsewhere.

"I know a lot of guys on the team, and most notably, five of them from around Lethbridge, and I'm from Taber, which is 20 minutes away," he said. "We work out and train together in the summer and skate, and I figured I might as well, if I was going to play somewhere, be with some of my friends and come and play like old times again."

The team's roster reads as if it was a mid-2000's WHL All-Star team. The top four scorers are alumni of the Kamloops Blazers, Portland Winterhawks, Tri-City Americans and Saskatoon Blades. There are seven Albertans on the team, all of whom were born between 1984 and 1987.

"Everyone pretty much has played against each other or played with each other at some point," said Setoguchi, who has three goals, five points and a plus-four rating in his first three games.

"Other than the Lethbridge guys, I've played with [Derek] Couture and I've played with [Chris] Cloud and played against [C.J.] Stretch, played against [Brady] Calla, played against [Dan] DaSilva. I've played against a lot of those guys. We pretty much know each other pretty well, so we're a pretty tight knit group."

He also gets to play alongside an old friend in Colton Yellow Horn, a Broomfield, Alberta, native who returned to the ECHL after two-and-a-half seasons of playing the Central Hockey League and five years removed from the conclusion of a junior career that saw him accumulate 153 goals and 349 points over five seasons with Lethbridge and Tri-City. Yellow Horn, listed at 5-6 and 174 pounds, scored his team-leading ninth goal of the season in Wednesday's win and saw some power play time alongside Setoguchi, though the two are on separate scoring lines.

He also served as the Reign's recruiter in landing the sniper.

"He was looking for a place to play, and I said, 'Well, maybe come down here and play a little bit here,'" Yellow Horn said. "He thought about it for a month there. He's staying down here, working out and training, so I think it was just the right time, right place for him, that we all end up playing here, and he had a place to come play with some of his old friends."

It was an easy decision for Setoguchi to make, and while the allure of playing with longtime acquaintances had its perk, it wasn't the only reason that drew him to the ECHL as the majority of locked out players hopped on planes overseas.

"Europe was always an option, but at the same time, if you can stay over here — and the hockey is good hockey — you've got to grind. You've got to skate. You've got to play," he said. "I'll tell you what, practices are pretty damn hard if you ask me. You only have 10 forwards going in a game. You get lots of ice. It's good. It's good for your conditioning, and good to get back and make those plays when you need to, and it's definitely helped out."

Two rungs below the NHL, the ECHL is not a popular league of choice for locked out players due to the general avoidance of taking someone else's roster spot — something Setoguchi has acknowledged. Though Ryane Clowe is skating with San Francisco, he is acting more as a coach while maintaining his strength and conditioning and has yet to suit up in a game with the Bulls. The other four locked out players currently in the ECHL — Joey Crabb, Brandon Dubinsky, Scott Gomez and Nate Thompson — play in Anchorage for the Alaska Aces.

Though he has appeared in only three games, Setoguchi was still able to pinpoint a handful of nuances of the league's style of play.

"Obviously, it's pretty physical," he said. "The difference might be guys aren't full grown men yet, or at the best that they have, but I think the difference between a lot of pro guys and a lot of minor league players is that attention to detail. Maybe the quick decision making, or just seeing something that develops, and maybe just getting rid of the puck when you need to instead of holding on to it. It's usually the little things that separate guys from the minors to the NHL. There's a lot of guys that if they got their chance, they could play. You never know. It's about being responsible enough to make the right play every time. And that's usually the difference, that NHL guys, they make the play right when they need to, and down here you can see it getting away from guys a little bit. But that's just the learning thing."

The lockout comes at an interesting juncture in Setoguchi's career. He failed to crack 20 goals in a full NHL season for the first time in his career, a missed mark that spoke more of Minnesota's offensive inconsistency than of major blemishes in his own game. It was also the first time since his 16-year-old rookie season with the Saskatoon Blades that he failed to play in a playoff game; in his previous seven seasons between the WHL and NHL he had appeared in 15 different playoff series.

But there's also the promise of a resurgent Minnesota Wild season once a collective bargaining agreement is reached. With free-agent signees Ryan Suter and Zach Parise joining a team that already had a group of intriguing prospects such as Jason Zucker and Brett Bulmer, there will be a much stronger primary and supporting cast at the Xcel Energy Center.

"It's definitely exciting," Setoguchi said. "It's disappointing that we couldn't get it started on time, but once we get back and get it going, obviously there's high expectations for our team, and for the players in the room, we know that. We just want to get back as soon as possible in order to play."

Yellow Horn and Setoguchi played together for five years in minor hockey before their paths split: Setoguchi went on to make a major impact early in

his career as a San Jose Shark, while Yellow Horn has continued to consistently put up goals and points throughout his career, which has taken him to Austria's Erste Bank Eishockey Liga in addition to the ECHL and CHL.

"I never thought we'd play again, for sure, in the professional leagues," Yellow Horn said.

FOXSports.com LOADED: 11.15.2012

644313 Websites

NBCSports.com / Ottawa's Cowen to undergo torn labrum surgery, likely done for year

Mike Halford

The Ottawa Senators might resume playing hockey this year, but it's unlikely Jared Cowen will.

The prized defensive prospect will undergo hip surgery to repair a torn labrum on Saturday, according to the Ottawa Sun. While he's expected to make a full recovery, the 3-6 month recovery period severely lessens Cowen's chances of returning this year.

The 21-year-old was hurt on Oct. 19 while playing for AHL Binghamton. The injury was initially diagnosed as minor but, after missing seven straight games and showing no signs of improvement, the decision was made for him to go under the knife.

It's a tough blow for the Senators, who expected Cowen to play in the top four this season.

The 6-foot-5, 230-pound rearguard played all 82 games last year — his rookie campaign — scoring 5G-12A-17PTS. He led all Sens defensemen in hits during the regular season, then upped the ante in a seven-game playoff loss to the Rangers, leading all skaters with 28 hits.

Bruce Garrioch of the Ottawa Sun speculates Sens GM Bryan Murray "may have to go in search of a blueliner to fill Cowen's gap" if NHL play resumes in the near future.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.15.2012

644314 Websites

NBCSports.com / Update: Filppula out 6-8 weeks with knee injury

Mike Halford

Last night, we passed along work that Detroit forward Valteri Filppula suffered a knee injury while playing for Finnish team Jokerit.

Today, the MRI results are in...and it's not good news for the Red Wings.

Filppula will reportedly miss the next 6-8 weeks with a sprained right knee, according to Helene St. James of the Detroit Free Press.

Based on an earlier report from MLive's Ansar Khan, it's believed to be a MCL sprain.

The news could be a serious blow to Detroit, especially if the NHL season resumes within the next two months. Filppula is coming off a career season with the Wings — 23G-43A-66PTS in 81 games — and had gotten off to a magical start with Jokerit, racking up 15 points in his first 16 games.

Contractually, there could be issues as well.

Filppula, 28, is in the final year of a five-year, \$15 million deal signed back in 2008. While it seems unlikely he'd struggle to find get an extension given how well he played in 2011-12, no impending UFA wants his "contract year" marred by a bothersome knee.

And let's not forget — if a player is injured while playing in another league during the lockout, an NHL club can suspend him without pay until he is fit to play.

NBCSports.com / Simmonds leaves Czech team as fans arrested for racist chants

Mike Halford

Wayne Simmonds' time in Europe has come to an abrupt end.

On Wednesday, Czech Extraliga club Liberec announced Simmonds and St. Louis Blues forward Chris Stewart had left the team — departures that, related or not, coincided with the arrest of eight fans alleged to have made racial taunts towards Simmonds during a Oct. 28 game between Liberec and Chomutov.

News of Stewart leaving the club actually broke yesterday, when it was announced he'd be rejoining German league team Crimmitschau, which he left in October to join to Liberec.

Simmonds' departure seemed to catch the Czech club by surprise. That's the impression one gets from a statement released by Liberec GM Cibora Jecha (WARNING: Sketchy Google translate ahead.)

The end of the engagement Wayne Simmonds and Chris Stewart, we did not expect. Their course of action was very substandard and also in view of the fact that both had an interview a few days ago with a new head coach Philip Pesianem with which discussed the current situation and their future with the White Tigers.

We also meet their wishes not to go with us to match European Trophy in Bern, with regard to new negotiations in the NHL. This unilateral decision by the two players, came at a time when the whole production team traveled to Switzerland for a game with the players, there was no negotiation or consultation. Their decision was communicated to us by telephone through an agent...

...The player [Simmonds] told us that is some serious family reasons forced to immediately return home to Canada, and thus end their engagement in Liberec.

In the case of the continuation of the NHL lockout is not excluded by Simmonds return to Liberec in the Czech Republic has ever had a valid contract. This option but does not seem too likely.

As for the eight Chomutov fans facing trial for "misdemeanor disorderly conduct and defamation," here's Greg Wyshynski of Puck Daddy:

They face a hearing on Jan. 9, 2013, in Chomutov District Court and could be sentenced to a maximum of three years in prison.

The Czech site [iDNES.cz] reports that the rowdy fans calls themselves the "Black Commandos", attending games in a black hooded sweatshirt and scarf, imbibing a considerable amount of booze before games.

(One of the accused fans, Radek Pribyl, said he had 10 beers and two shots but was only "mildly drunk" because he's "trained" for that level of consumption.)

Some of the fans claim they joined the "monkey" chants but didn't start them; others claim they didn't join them at all.

It should be noted that, last week, Simmonds told Yahoo's Nick Cotsonika he didn't plan on letting the racist taunts affect him.

"I've enjoyed myself since I've been in Europe, and I intend to keep enjoying myself," he explained. "That's definitely not going to keep me down. I can tell you that."

UPDATE: For more context on the situation, here's Cotsonika...

On Simmonds, Stewart: In addition to the incident, they caught Liberec at a bad time. Team struggled. Coach resigned. A lot going on.

Staff

Less than two weeks ago, I sat with Wayne Simmonds and Chris Stewart at the rink in Liberec, Czech Republic. We talked about the racist taunts directed at Simmonds. We talked about what it was like to play in Europe — not only as a North American, but as a black North American. We talked about how one incident and a few idiots would not ruin everything.

Wayne Simmonds seemed more upset that he wasn't told what was going on than with the taunts. (Y! Sports)"I've enjoyed myself since I've been in Europe, and I intend to keep enjoying myself," Simmonds said then. "And that's definitely not going to keep me down. I can tell you that."

Now Simmonds and Stewart have left Liberec, at the same time eight fans have been "charged with misdemeanor disorderly conduct and defamation of nation, race and other ethnic groups," according to idnes.cz.

Simmonds has returned to the Toronto area. Stewart has returned to Crimmitschau, Germany, where both of them played and had fun before joining Liberec. The team was surprised and is upset, especially with Stewart.

What happened?

The racist incident was part of it, but once again, only part of it. Simmonds had a legitimate family issue at home and hasn't ruled out returning to Liberec. Stewart had concerns about his role and how it would prepare him for the NHL. Liberec was struggling and changing coaches.

The whole story illustrates another negative of the NHL lockout: Players end up in places they don't know. European teams sign players they don't know — while not knowing how long they will have them. It doesn't always work out for either side.

"Liberec was a first-class organization," said Eustace King, the agent for Simmonds and Stewart. "But we believe we just caught them at an awkward time. They were going through a coaching change, there was an incident on the ice, and then when we took in all these factors, it was in the best interest for the players to leave."

[Related: Eight fans face jail for racist chant directed at Wayne Simmonds]

I could not reach Simmonds or Stewart for this column. But I can tell you what I heard and saw when I was in Liberec.

Simmonds actually seemed less concerned about the incident itself than with the context. He had experienced racism at the rink before. It had happened a little more than a year ago, when someone threw a banana on the ice as the Philadelphia Flyers played an exhibition game in London, Ont., about 2-1/2 hours from where he grew up in Scarborough. But this was different.

Chris Stewart felt he wasn't getting the chance to polish his offensive skills. (Getty)When those fans in Chomutov chanted "monkey," all Simmonds heard was "opice." He does not speak Czech, so he didn't know what the word meant. That was bad enough, but what's worse, no one told him about it during the game or even after the game. He learned about it on the Internet. He said when the Chomutov club wrote him a letter of apology, he learned about that on the Internet, too.

The Czechs were embarrassed. Let's give them the benefit of the doubt and say they had the absolute best intentions. As defenseman Ladislav Smid said then, they didn't want to make Simmonds feel uncomfortable. But their silence might have made him feel more uncomfortable. Simmonds later told Smid he should have told him.

Think about it. If you didn't speak the language, didn't know when people were mocking your race and didn't learn about it from the people who were supposed to have your back, how would you feel?

"We're in the eastern bloc of Europe," Simmonds told me then. "Obviously there's not a lot of black people floating around here."

And if you're Simmonds, no matter what you say, wouldn't you just be sick and tired of this by now?

Then there is the hockey. Right after I filed my piece on Simmonds and Stewart that day, I watched Liberec play Plzen – and lose, 8-1. The team looked awful. The coach resigned after the game.

When Simmonds and Stewart left Crimmitschau, the thought was that they would be playing at a higher level, at a top-notch facility and in a place that suited their physical styles. Liberec has a new, modern arena. It is also the smallest rink in the Czech Republic, which should encourage a more North American game.

[Nick Cotsonika: Simmonds rises above racist incident in Czech League game]

But in came a new coach, and a meeting with Stewart, and a communication breakdown – perhaps partly because of the language barrier. The coach said one thing; Stewart felt his message wasn't getting through. Stewart wants to be an offensive force whenever he plays for the St. Louis Blues again, not just a physical force. While Simmonds had four goals and six points in six games for Liberec, Stewart had only one assist in five games. He wasn't recapturing his form.

Simmonds and Stewart are longtime friends, and they came to Europe together for a reason. "The race factor I don't think had any drive in that," Simmonds said Nov. 2. "It was just that we weren't going to be used to our surroundings, and obviously we weren't going to know the language. ... I think that was a big driving factor in us coming over together, just to keep each other company and be comfortable."

Well, now Simmonds had a family issue on top of everything else, and he decided to go home. With his buddy leaving on top of everything else, Stewart decided to go back to Crimmitschau, where he felt more comfortable and he could also play with another locked-out NHLer – Clarke MacArthur.

In a translated statement on the Liberec team website, general manager Ctibor Jech called Simmonds' and Stewart's actions "very substandard." He said there was "no negotiation or consultation," just a phone call from King. Though Simmonds still has a contract with Liberec and has left open the possibility of returning, he said that "does not seem too likely."

Liberec feels the NHLers did not show respect, that they never would have done this to a North American club, that this was unfair. Maybe that is true. But so, unfortunately, is this: When you try something new, sometimes there are great adventures. Other times, there are unhappy endings.

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