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643420 Buffalo Sabres

Afinogenov earns prize spot in Sabres' Alumni Plaza over Hawerchuk, Satan, others

John Vogl

The Sabres' new Alumni Plaza has been a hit, with folks stopping by the French Connection statue to take photos during those rare days when there's a reason to go to First Niagara Center.

Another highlight of the plaza is the mural of all-time greats that extends across the walking bridge above the plaza. It's a who's who of Sabreland, with huge photos of 18 players running from the parking ramp to the arena. The players who made the cut are, in order:

Roger Crozier, Danny Gare, Jim Schoenfeld, Craig Ramsay, Mike Foligno, Dave Andreychuk, Mike Ramsey, Phil Housley, Alexander Mogilny, Pat LaFontaine, Dominik Hasek, Michael Peca, Chris Drury, Maxim Afinogenov, Ryan Miller, Jason Pominville, Thomas Vanek and Tyler Myers.

Wait ... Afinogenov?

Yup, the Russian who personifies "enigmatic" made the list of team legends. He beat out the likes of Dale Hawerchuk, Miroslav Satan, Don Luce and Rob Ray.

On one hand, there's a case to be made for Afinogenov. He spent nine seasons with the Sabres. He ranks 18th in team scoring with 334 points, including 200 assists. He was popular among fans, with his jersey ranking among the league leaders in sales during the rush to the registers from 2005 to 2007.

Then again, Afinogenov's time in Buffalo is almost equally as notable for the down times. He slumped while refusing to play a team game. He suffered mysterious concussions. He was run out of town after totaling only 16 goals during his last two seasons.

Satan, meanwhile, led the Sabres in scoring for six seasons. He's 10th on the team's all-time points list with 456, including 224 goals, which ranks eighth.

Hawerchuk is a member of the Sabres' Hall of Fame after putting up 385 points in 382 games.

Luce ranks seventh with 526 points, put up in 766 games, which ranks seventh in team history.

Ray played 889 games for the Sabres to trail only Gilbert Perreault (1,191), Ramsay (1,070) and Ramsey (911). He spent 14 years in Blue and Gold while establishing an unbeatable record of 3,189 penalty minutes.

Daniel Briere played a bigger role in the Sabres' success while Afinogenov was in town, but it's tough to put up a player who still skates for a key rival (and torments his old team with goals and points).

The mural tries to include all the eras of Sabres hockey, so it makes sense that Afinogenov could beat out Luce or Hawerchuk. His inclusion evens out the decades.

But Satan and Ray could be considered contemporaries of Afinogenov. It seems both have more credentials for a prized spot in Alumni Plaza.

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643421 Calgary Flames

Horak turns into red-hot sniper in Abbotsford

By Vicki Hall

Horak turns into red-hot sniper in Abbotsford

Roman Horak has seven goals in seven games for the Abbotsford Heat this season.

Bad roommates are a fact of life in the world of professional sports. Some snore. Some forget to put the cap back on the toothpaste. Some watch television at all hours of the night.

So Sven Baertschi figures he is one lucky cat for drawing fellow Calgary Flames prospect Roman Horak on the road with the Abbotsford Heat.

"It's always good to have another European buddy in the room," Baertschi says. "When you Skype with your family, it's not that weird. The American and Canadian guys always say, 'what are you talking about? That's such a weird language.'

"Both of us speak different languages, but I think it's fun to listen to him."

Baertschi indeed speaks Swiss-German. Horak is Czech. Neither can't understand a word the other says in his native tongue.

Regardless, the two are speaking the exact same dialect on the ice.

Assigned to Abbotsford because of the lockout, Baertschi has three goals and eight points in seven games. In other words, the top prospect in the organization is living up to expectation.

No one, however, predicted the defensive-minded Horak would share the team lead in scoring with Baertschi. But sure enough, the Chilliwack Bruins product is right up there with his roommate with eight points.

Even more impressive? the unassuming Horak is tied with Drayson Bowman, of the Charlotte Checkers, for the league lead in goals with seven a piece.

"I've used him on right wing," Heat head coach Troy Ward says of Horak. "I've used him on the fourth line. I used him the other day at centre when I sat Ben Walter. I've used him at left wing. I've pretty much played him everywhere, and he's still been able to score, and he's still been able to put up good numbers. On Sunday, after three games in three days, he led us with eight shots.

"He's in the zone right now."

Is he ever. Consider the fact Horak suited up for 61 games for the Flames last year as a relatively anonymous 20-year-old. At the end of training camp, the Czech centreman shocked the entire city last season by winning a spot in the opening-day lineup. Night after night, he suited up on the fourth line between a rotating cast on his wings.

In the end, he tallied three goals and 11 points in 61 games before finishing the season in Abbotsford where he collected just three two goals and four assists in 14 games.

So how in the world does he have seven goals in seven games?

"I don't know," Horak says. "I'm just trying to play the same way I always played. Sometimes you're hot. Sometimes you're in a slump. Now I'm hot, and obviously my teammates are helping me a lot. I appreciate that."

Did he change his diet over the summer? Mix up his off-season workout? Pack on some weight?

"Nope," he says. "I just did the same thing over the summer that I did last year. Maybe I'm just a year older and more experienced now. Maybe that's why I'm successful right now.

"But we're only seven games in, you know. I don't want to get too high."

As an NHL rookie last season, Horak remained even-keeled whether head coach Brent Sutter heaped on the ice-time or parked him in the press box. He followed orders at all times, played a responsible game and avoided coughing up the puck.

Before this season started, Horak realized the new coaching staff in Calgary probably had no idea how to label him. Is he a checker? A career fourth-liner?

Or something more?

"I would like to be a top-six forward," he says. "It's always up to the coaches where they want to put you, but you want to show them you can score the goals. So that's what I'm trying to do right now. Every time I get a chance to go out there, I'm trying to produce something. So far, it's been good.

"Hopefully I can keep it going."

On the surface, Baertschi and Horak have little in common when it comes to their playing style. Baertschi is pure offence. Horak is a much more complicated mix.

But don't go telling that to Ward.

"Roman and Sven are kind of like the same guy," he says. "Their temperament for success or failure is the same. Neither of them go too high or too low, and that's part of Roman's strength. He has good balance. He's had some chances where he probably felt like he should have scored and he didn't score, but it didn't seem to bother him or weight him down like it does for other players.

"He just keeps plugging along and has that hot stick."

Calgary Herald: LOADED: 10.31.2012

643422 Calgary Flames

Calgary Flames' draft choice Ryan Culkin learning from Patrick Roy

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By WES GILBERTSON

In case you're wondering, Patrick Roy hasn't mellowed much.

As a kid growing up in Montreal, defenceman Ryan Culkin was a big fan of the stingy, surly puck-stopper.

Now in his third campaign with Roy's Quebec Remparts of the QMJHL, the Calgary Flames' prospect can confirm the Hockey Hall-of-Famer is just as competitive as ever.

"I viewed Patrick Roy as one of my idols. He won four Stanley Cups. He's the greatest goaltender ever," Culkin said. "But then once you get to know

him, he's just your coach. He does a great job of developing young players. He's always really honest with his players. He never lies. He tells the truth right to your face."

No surprise there.

The title of Roy's biography — 'Winning. Nothing Else,' which was written by his own father — pretty well sums it up. And as the co-owner, GM and head coach of the Remparts, the Montreal Canadiens and Colorado Avalanche legend is still bringing that same attitude to the rink each day.

"It's not fun when you're in the doghouse," Culkin admitted. "But sometimes, you need that to wake up. And he's the best guy to do it."

Culkin hasn't given his head coach much to complain about so far this season.

After becoming Flames' property in the fifth round of the 2012 NHL Entry Draft, the 18-year-old has collected three goals and 11 assists in 14 regular-season games. His plus-10 rating is tied for the third-best mark on his team.

A testament to his impressive performance so far is Culkin was selected last week to skate for Team QMJHL in the 2012 Subway Super Series against Russia's world junior wannabes.

"Ryan is a good offensive defenceman. He plays well defensively, also," Roy said through the Remparts' communications staff. "He plays first-string on the powerplay and also first-string on the penalty-killing. He reads the play well and transitions well.

"He logs major minutes, too, because his cardio is above-average. He will continue to work on the strength of his shot and upper-body strength in order to accomplish his dream of playing in the NHL."

While Culkin repeatedly credits Roy's coaching as the biggest reason for his development at both ends of the ice, the 6-foot-1, 176-lb. rearguard says the Flames have also played an important role.

In his own words, Culkin was "quite shocked" to be selected last June, but he's proving the Flames' scouting staff made a wise investment.

"If they have the confidence in you to pick your name, then obviously you're doing something right," Culkin said. "When they drafted me and I went to development camp (in July), just playing with the talent on the ice was also

a big confidence booster. The speed was a lot faster. The decision-making was a lot faster. So when I came back to my junior hockey team, the confidence was a big help."

Culkin isn't exactly pegged as a can't-miss kid, but suddenly, Roy's stories from his NHL playing days don't seem so far-fetched.

"I would say the NHL dream is more of an NHL goal now," Culkin said. "I obviously know I have to get a lot bigger and a lot stronger, and I'm taking the next step in doing that in the gym after practice. I'm going to work my butt off as much as possible to make it to the NHL."

### THREE STARS

#### 1. G Jon Gillies

A freshman netminder for the Providence Friars, Gillies posted his first shutout on the weekend. The 18-year-old backstop has been fooled only 10 times in six starts and boasts a sparkling 1.72 goals-against average and .938 save percentage.

#### 2. C Roman Horak

His five-game goal-scoring spree came to an end, but the 21-year-old Czech centre has points in seven straight for the Abbotsford Heat, collecting seven goals and one assist in that span.

#### 3. LW Turner Elson

Not necessarily known for his offensive exploits, the Red Deer Rebels captain lit the lamp twice in Saturday's shootout victory over the Calgary Hitmen.

### FAST FACT

Before the Hamilton Bulldogs scored Sunday's game-winner with a man-advantage, the Abbotsford Heat had killed off 26 straight penalties to start the season. Their 96.4% success rate while shorthanded is tops in the AHL.

### SAY WHAT?

"So I guess in Rhode Island we have hurricanes #notinontario #hellosandy"

— Providence Friars freshman Mark Jankowski, a product of Hamilton, prepares for the big storm

Calgary Sun: LOADED: 10.31.2012

643423 Chicago Blackhawks

CSN airs 1994 Blackhawks, Maple Leafs classic

### NINA FALCONE

Comcast SportsNet will be re-airing Blackhawks Classics until the NHL lockout comes to an end. Tune in tonight at 7:00 p.m. for Game 4 of the Western Conference Quarterfinals against the Toronto Maple Leafs on April 24, 1994.

The lockout may have put a hold on the 2012-13 NHL season, but Comcast SportsNet is now bringing you the next best thing: mullets, perms, all-demin outfits, a hat trick and an overtime performance from Jeremy Roenick that is still idolized by hockey fans today.

The Blackhawks were down 2-1 in the series before taking the ice for their second-to-last time at the old Chicago Stadium for Game 4 of the Western Conference Quarterfinals, and the back-and-forth game that couldn't help but keep fans on the edge of their seats.

Gary Suter recorded a hat trick--becoming only the second defenseman in Blackhawks history to do so during a postseason game--that left Chicago tied with Montreal at the end of regulation.

"The atmosphere was electric, as was almost every game in the Chicago Stadium," CSN Chicago executive producer John Schippman said, who was in attendance at the 1994 game. "But it was different knowing if the Blackhawks lost, it could possibly be the last Blackhawks game ever played there.

"Back in 1994, the Blackhawks were still a top draw in the city, despite competing with the still popular Jordan-less Bulls. I think the die-hard fans really soaked in that game and entire season and playoff series knowing attending a game at the stadium was ending."

Just minutes into overtime, Roenick scored the game-winning goal that gave the team another chance to play at their home rink, providing fans with one of the most exciting goals in Blackhawks history.

"My favorite memory was after [Roenick] scored the goal," Schippman said. "It happened so fast after a turnover by the Leafs.

"But it wasn't so much the actual goal, rather the celebration that followed. Roenick dropped to his knees and slid down the ice, reminding me of a famous Theo Fleury goal from the 1980s when he was with Calgary."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 10.31.2012

643424 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Patrick Eaves still battling post-concussion problems

By Helene St. James

Eleven months after he was felled by a puck during a game, Red Wings forward Patrick Eaves remains bothered by postconcussion problems.

He can, at the very least, skate regularly with some of his locked-out teammates, something he wouldn't be able to do if the NHL wasn't mired in a labor dispute.

Eaves, 28, checks in regularly with a concussion specialist at the University of Michigan Hospital, but otherwise tries to lead as full a life as possible. He spent Sunday at Ford Field cheering on the Lions against Seattle, opting to watch the Tigers-Giants World Series game from home.

"I think it was a good idea to go to the indoors game," Eaves said.

Several times a week he joins the handful of Wings who have chosen to skate in Troy to keep up their skating legs during the lockout. Eaves enjoys the time, even if it's nothing like a real NHL-pace practice. He hasn't taken part in anything too intense since Nov. 26 of last year, when he was hit on the side of the head by a puck fired by Nashville's Roman Josi.

Eaves remains on long-term injured reserve -- which means he's the only Wings player getting paid right now -- and wouldn't be able to participate in practices if the season were under way.

So, every little step is progress.

"I feel OK," Eaves said. "It's hard to gauge out here. I don't feel close to where I was, though, quite yet. I just have to stay the course and be positive every day and have more good days than bad days. I still get headaches, and those I consider bad days."

Eaves likely will have company for the time being: Teammates Johan Franzen, Niklas Kronwall and Darren Helm all said they're not looking to play anywhere else during the lockout, which began Sept. 16 and shows no signs of ending.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 10.31.2012

643425 Edmonton Oilers

Hall gets green light to play for AHL's Barons

By Jim Matheson

EDMONTON - Taylor Hall is on his way to Oklahoma City to play for the Barons in the American Hockey League.

The 20-year-old forward has been given the green light to play — he could suit up for Friday's game against the Houston Aeros — after doctors in

Edmonton said his surgically repaired left shoulder can take some punishment in a game. He just needs to officially agree to an AHL contract.

Hall, who had 53 points in 61 games with the Oilers last season after notching 42 points in 65 games in his rookie season, signed a seven-year, \$42-million US contract extension with Edmonton in late August. He has spent the last six months rehabilitating his shoulder.

"Got served with my divorce papers today, officially off the IR," Hall said on Twitter.

Hall was an injured player on Sept. 15 when the collective bargaining agreement ended between the NHL and the NHL Players' Association expired, so he couldn't be assigned to the Oilers' AHL affiliate with teammates Jordan Eberle and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. They're operating off their two-way (minor-league, big-league) NHL contracts — Nugent-Hopkins at \$70,000, \$5,000 more than Eberle.

Hall will need to get a separate AHL deal. As of Tuesday, his agents from the Orr group were working on it. Once the contract's signed, Hall will play either Friday or Saturday, or in both games at home against the Aeros, the Minnesota Wild's AHL affiliate.

Will Hall be on the team bus, getting some sleep in one of 26 bunks for the 753-kilometre, eight-hour trip to San Antonio, after Saturday's game? Maybe. The Barons play the Rampage Sunday afternoon.

Will he be on a line with his Oilers teammates Nugent-Hopkins and Eberle? Probably not.

Barons head coach Todd Nelson has been playing Teemu Hartikainen, who has seven points, with Nugent-Hopkins and Eberle. He likes the big Finn playing on the line.

"Harty's got pretty good hands around the net," Nelson said of Hartikainen. "Lots of his goals come in tight, off secondary chances. He's also doing a heck of a job on the power play, in front of the net, mirroring the goalie."

Hall, who will wear No. 22 for the Barons, could play alongside centre Mark Arcobello instead, with Magnus Paajarvi on the other wing.

Will Hall, Nugent-Hopkins, Eberle or Justin Schultz ride the bus to San Antonio? What about Paajarvi? He played the entire 2010-11 NHL season in Edmonton and spent half of last season in the bigs.

"Two of them (NHL players) will probably be playing. I just have to think which ones to get Sunday off," said Nelson, laughing.

Eberle, Nugent-Hopkins and Schultz have all been targeted in the last few games by AHLers looking for their pound of flesh against NHL stars or players like Schultz, who leads the AHL in points with 12.

Nugent-Hopkins had some teeth dislodged or chipped when Mikael Granlund, the Minnesota Wild's best prospect, caught him with an errant stick.

Eberle escaped a serious injury when he was kneed by Texas Stars tough guy Antoine Roussel, who has 45 penalty minutes in seven games.

As for Schultz, he was worked over by a few Aeros players.

Defenceman Colten Teubert laid a licking on Aeros winger Brett Bulmer after the Schultz roughhousing and also hounded Roussel and fought him as well as payback.

"They really came after Schultz and finally our guys said enough," said Nelson. "A scrum ensued and Colten teed on Bulmer. He got him pretty good. On Sunday (against Texas), Jordan was going around the net and tried to sidestep Roussel and he got this knee out. Colten chased him until they fought.

"Granlund's was an accident off the draw against Nuge. Those things happen," said Nelson, who indicated Nugent-Hopkins would continue to wear the cage.

Nugent-Hopkins has eight points in seven games for the Barons.

Eberle, who has six points in seven games, popped a rib at the team's morning skate last Friday, but played both weekend games.

"He told (assistant coach) Gerry Fleming and (Fleming) told him to get off the ice. Jordan said he's had it before," said Nelson.

The Barons (4-3) sit in third place in the West Division of the AHL's Western Conference. They play the Aeros, San Antonio and Texas 12 times each in 2012-13.

"Last year, we played Abbotsford (the Heat, the Calgary Flames' farm club) eight times. This year it's four games. We only go there once (Nov. 9-10). We only play Chicago (Wolves, Vancouver Canucks' affiliate) twice," said Nelson.

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643426 Edmonton Oilers

Oilers' Hall cleared to play in OKC

Staff Writer

Oilers' Hall cleared to play in OKC

Edmonton Oilers' Taylor Hall celebrates scoring his winning goal in overtime against the Los Angeles Kings in NHL action at Rexall Place in Edmonton, Jan. 15, 2012.

Edmonton Oilers star Taylor Hall has been cleared by team doctors to play.

The 20-year-old forward, whose 2011-12 campaign was cut short by a shoulder injury that needed subsequent surgery, will likely suit up for the Oilers' AHL affiliate in Oklahoma City this Friday, when the Barons host the Houston Aeros.

Hall, who missed the Oilers' final 11 games last season and spent more than six months rehabilitating his shoulder, had been working out with the Barons in Oklahoma City while waiting for clearance to play.

He will likely play on a line with fellow Oilers stars Jordan Eberle and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins.

Hall, who notched 53 points in 61 games with the Oilers last season, signed a seven-year, US\$42-million contract extension with the Oilers in late August.

More to come ...

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643427 Edmonton Oilers

Did other NHL teams miss boat on Omark?

By Jim Matheson

Linus Omark is second in Swiss League scoring. OK, it's not the NHL, not even the AHL. But, he's still got 23 points in 16 games for Zug, the team former NHL winger Doug Shedden coaches. Jumbo Joe Thornton has 13 points in 15 games for Davos and his linemate Rick Nash has 14 points in 11 games, so while the Swiss League isn't the bigs, Omark is doing infinitely better than the NHL studs.

Omark plays on Zug's No. 1 line with Henrik Zetterberg and league scoring leader Damien Brunner, the Detroit free-agent signee who just had a spirited fight with a Kloten Flyers' goalie that you can find on YouTube. Omark is good enough to play with Zetterberg, which must mean something, no? They wouldn't stick a stiff with Hank, would they, just because both are Swedes?

I get it that Omark can't play for the Oilers. There's currently no room for him in their top six, not with Taylor Hall, Jordan Eberle, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Ales Hemsky (playing in Pardubice in the Czech Republic during the lockout), Sam Gagner (four points in four games for Klagenfurt in Austria) and Nail Yakupov (playing for his hometown team in the KHL right now) unless new coach Ralph Krueger would rather see farmhand Teemu Hartikainen in his first two lines because Hartikainen is 215 pounds and he'll lean on people. They desperately need more size there.

Omark has a healthy opinion of himself, not necessarily a bad thing, but he didn't always endear himself to the people making the decisions on when and where he played when he was here. He really is miscast any farther down the lineup because of his size and how responsible he is without the puck. He has to improve his speed through the neutral zone. But I have to say this: there's no way he can't play somewhere in a 30-team NHL, and I'm not his campaign manager.

He's got skill. Lots of it. And, he's tough to knock off the puck. Why can't he be as good as, say, Jiri Hudler, another smurf?

Couldn't Omark play in Phoenix especially after Ray Whitney signed in Dallas? Couldn't he play for the Islanders? Carolina? The Jets already have Kyle Wellwood, who's small, but what about Nashville? Radulov left. Andrei Kostitsyn left.

The Oilers, who still retain Omark's NHL rights, say they tried to trade Omark at the draft. Were they asking too much? Or did NHL teams want more of a book on Omark than 65 NHL games over two seasons? "I don't know if he's played enough in the NHL to get a real read on him. Is he just a shootout guy?," asked one NHL pro scout.

Surely a fourth-rounder for a point-a-game player in the AHL in OKCity, a player who is only 25, and a player who displayed some terrific passing skills at times here, wouldn't have been a reach.

Instead, Omark is in the Swiss League. I have to think some NHL team is noticing he's No. 2 in league scoring.

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643428 Minnesota Wild

Fehr in town to meet with players

MICHAEL RUSSO

The executive director of the NHL Players' Association said some players are beginning to worry about wages lost in the lockout.

Superstorm Sandy was wreaking havoc on the east coast of the United States Monday night, but as his wife, Stephanie, battened down the

hatches of their New York home, Donald Fehr was in Minnesota meeting with more than 30 locked-out NHL players at an Edina hotel.

"It's their contract, it's their futures, it's their agreement and it's their union, and I work for them," said Fehr, the executive director of the NHL Players' Association. "So I go wherever they want me to be. And when the guys say they want to have a meeting, I say, 'Sure, absolutely.'"

Fehr, the former head of the Major League Baseball Players' Association, and his constituency of 725 NHLers are going nose-to-nose with a steadfast league and 30 owners determined to immediately reduce the player share of what was a \$3.3 billion business from 57 percent to 50.

We're 45 days into the lockout, games have been canceled through Nov. 30, the Winter Classic is days from being axed, the league says \$720 million of damage already has been done and Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly told the Star Tribune on Monday that it "seems like we are back to Square 1. ... Not sure what we do now."

Considering the two sides have not met since Oct. 18 and no future meetings are on the docket, where does it go from here?

"I don't know the answer, and believe me, I wouldn't keep it to myself if I did," Fehr said.

As players, including several from the Wild who should have been playing the Washington Capitals on Monday night, filed into a ballroom for dinner, Fehr sat down with the Star Tribune to discuss a process that "the longer it goes on, the more frustrating it becomes."

On Oct. 16, the NHL, in an effort to play an 82-game season, proposed a 50-50 split and a "make whole" concept that would pay back players over time the 12.3 percent they see in salary reductions. The kicker was it would eventually be charged to the player share.

Fehr, arm-in-arm with 18 players, responded two days later with three proposals that gradually reduced the share to 50-50. The players wanted to be paid in full. They didn't address several other systematic changes proposed by the owners -- raising the age of free agency to 28, five-year-long max contracts, reducing entry-level deals to two years, among other things.

The league's negotiators walked out of the room.

Fehr, who was mentored by Marvin Miller -- the pantheon of labor lawyers -- in baseball, has fought his entire career against the salary cap. He succeeded in baseball, exemplified by a 1994 strike that resulted in a canceled World Series.

It has led many to speculate that Fehr's ultimate objective is to attempt to rid hockey of a salary cap that was achieved by the loss of the 2004-05 season. For the league, the salary cap is the equivalent to guaranteed contracts for the players, so going after the cap would surely result in an elongated clash.

But if Fehr isn't willing to go directly to 50-50 now, will he once revenues plummet?

"The more things change, the harder it becomes," Fehr admitted. "But I'm not going to talk about future contingencies in the event we can't reach an agreement. I'm not going to discuss what we might do in other proposals down the road.

"We would still like to make an agreement and to negotiate from the proposals that we've made."

But Fehr said owners want to cut the share immediately, "which has the effect of cutting the individual contracts, including ones they just signed" hours before the lockout.

"You've got to wonder how somebody can look at themselves in the mirror when they do that," Fehr said.

Fehr admits some players are starting to fret about lost wages and their careers being in jeopardy, and that's one reason why he was in Minnesota on Monday.

"But that doesn't mean you make a bad agreement because of it," said Fehr, who planned to gauge the players' pulse Monday night, inform them of what he felt was likely next and "remind them that a negotiation is a process of constant re-evaluation."

Asked if he would prepare players for the possibility of no season, Fehr said, "You prepare them for all eventualities. You always have a concern.

But I still would like to believe that the owners would like to operate the business."

Fehr's biggest frustration is the league won't return to the bargaining table despite the union's request to do with no preconditions. Daly says it's because the union won't respond to the league's Oct. 16 proposal.

"I can't make them. Haven't got a tank," Fehr said. "What we have to do is get back to the table and figure out a way to bridge it ... if they're willing."

Star Tribune LOADED: 10.31.2012

643429 Minnesota Wild

Careers threatened as NHL lockout continues

MICHAEL RUSSO

The previous lockout suggests aging veterans and unestablished players could end up losing their jobs.

Matt Cullen has played almost 1,100 games in 14 NHL seasons. Justin Falk has played 72 games in parts of three seasons. ¶ Cullen, who turns 36 Friday, is in the last year of a three-year contract with the Wild that is supposed to pay him \$3.5 million. Falk, who turned 24 three weeks ago, is on a one-year deal that is supposed to pay him \$825,000. ¶ The two players are on opposite ends of the career spectrum, yet are on similar fragile footing because of a lockout that threatens the NHL season.

Cullen knows he could get squeezed out because of younger, cheaper talent in the minors. Falk doesn't have a pile of money in the bank and knows he can't afford to sit idly as defensemen playing in minor-league Houston fly past him on the depth chart. Falk is on a one-way contract, meaning he can't play in the American Hockey League during the lockout.

Every locked-out NHL player is standing arm-in-arm with their union in a battle with the owners. But many standing up for their principles might be cruelly harmed by this lockout.

"There are guys here that this is going to snowball on," said Ray Ferraro, who played 18 years in the NHL. "I'm talking about veterans, and I'm talking about guys that have played 45, 100 games. They're in a bad spot, and there's nothing you can do now. Now you're hanging on to the train, and you just hope you don't get bucked off and you never get to play again."

Death to careers

Ferraro, an analyst for the Canadian sports channel TSN, isn't exaggerating. More than 240 players who played at least a game in 2003-04 never skated another NHL shift after the 2004-05 lockout.

That group included Hall of Famers Mark Messier, Ron Francis, Adam Oates, Al MacInnis, Scott Stevens and Igor Larionov, and such popular former Wild players as Darby Hendrickson, Cliff Ronning and Brad Bombardir.

"You're gone and you're forgotten and that's it," Cullen said. "It's sad, but lots of guys' careers ended with the last lockout and that'll definitely be the case this time. Guys are just going to be gone, vanished."

Former Wild winger Brian Rolston, one of 14 NHLers who have been part of three lockouts since 1994, looked as if he was given second life when he was traded from the Islanders to Boston last March.

He knows his career is likely over.

"I'm realistic. I'll be 40 years old," Rolston said. "If there's half a season, maybe somebody will be willing to sign an older player. But I'm not holding my breath. I'm content if I have to retire."

Still, Ferraro says it's a crime.

"When you walk into the dressing room and talk to Teemu Selanne, the day's a better day. Yet Teemu's not coming back if they miss a year," Ferraro said. "Daniel Alfredsson has left his guts on the ice for Ottawa for 17 years and he's going to go away?"

"There's a dissatisfaction to it."

Optimism abates

In 2010, Cullen signed in Minnesota to help make his hometown team a winner. The franchise is stacked with blue-chip prospects and made a statement by signing Zach Parise and Ryan Suter in July.

"Just when it looks like we can make a real run, I'm in the final year of my contract and we're sitting out," Cullen said.

Wild goalie Niklas Backstrom and forward Pierre-Marc Bouchard also have contracts that will expire if there is no season.

"I worry that this could be my last chance to play in a Minnesota sweater, and I might not get it," Cullen said. "And then who knows? I know how the league works, and it's a young league."

Falk and Matt Kassian, another Wild player on his first one-way contract, are just as uneasy. They can't play in Houston yet haven't been able to secure jobs in Europe.

"We're young and new to the league and at a stage where we need games," Falk said. "I need a season here. It's a tough situation. We stand together as a union, but there's such a variety of players -- guys on the bubble with one-year contracts that need games to play in this league."

"I want this to be a start of a career in the National Hockey League. It's hard not to worry this could do a lot of damage in my career. I need to keep progressing because there's always someone knocking on the door."

Added Kassian: "It's my first year to have an impact and make a statement, and then all of a sudden the brakes get put on you and not really by your own choice -- just by circumstance."

Standing firm

NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr knows some players have anxiety about the longterm ramifications of the lockout. Asked what he tells those players, Fehr said, "You remind them that this is a choice players make and they make it as a group. They don't make it as individuals."

"Having said that, I assume that of the 725 players, there will be the widest possible range of views and opinions and concerns. People voicing opinions and people venting is what you would expect and is what you want. We then say, 'What do we do about it and what do you think other players are prepared to do about it?'"

The 725 players want to remain unified. They want to trust everything Fehr says "for the greater good," Rolston said. "I hope that we stay strong even if it means I never play again."

But there are times worry sets in.

"As much as it's a team sport, you have to perform individually or you're going to get passed by ... and it's not long before you're out of the game," said Cullen who, like Kassian and Falk, spoke for this story before Fehr met with Minnesota-based players Monday night. "This is one of those things where you don't have any control, but it comes down to being respectful of the players and the game."

"You feel like if you speak out maybe something could happen, but that's never the case. It's best if we stay united, and this time guys have and kept their mouths shut. Maybe it's because that [hard-line] first owners' proposal [July 13] cemented us together."

'No, no, no'

But one wonders how long it'll continue, especially with the process' emotional roller coaster.

Two weeks ago, there was optimism a full 82-game season was on the horizon when it looked like there was a deal sitting there to be made. That quickly died when Fehr issued three proposals that Commissioner Gary Bettman didn't take seriously.

"Gary is cold and calculated," Ferraro said. "Fehr does the bemused guy really well: 'Isn't it interesting?' There's a real style to what he does. He never gets upset, he never gets riled. He's obviously a brilliant guy. He just continually says nope, nope, nope. The problem is, so does the other guy."

"Both [Bettman] and Fehr right now are showing extreme stubbornness that is a disaster to this process. They both work on the no, no, no principle. So if the deal is sitting there and there's no dealmakers to make it, then the deal really isn't sitting there. So the players have to decide, 'Are we really in this, and what is our end game?'"

Star Tribune LOADED: 10.31.2012

643430 Montreal Canadiens

Pat Hickey: Time to take back our game

By Pat Hickey

MONTREAL — Does anyone believe Canadiens owner Geoff Molson is happy to see seven more sold-out dates at the Bell Centre lost to Gary Bettman's irrational drive to turn a \$3-billion business into a \$2-billion business with the National Hockey League cancelling all games through November?

Does anyone believe Rogers and Bell are 100-per-cent behind a strategy that not only shuts down the cash cow known as the Toronto Maple Leafs, but also deprives them of content for their television, radio and mobile outlets?

How about those True North people who worked so diligently to bring hockey back to Winnipeg?

The problem is that we don't know what these folks are thinking because a couple of lawyers in New York have effectively silenced owners from expressing their views on a lockout being pushed by a couple of hardliners in Boston and Philadelphia.

Maybe it's time to take back our game.

Let's start over by establishing a new league. We have seven strong franchises in Canada that produce nearly 40 per cent of the record revenues in the NHL. Throw in Quebec City and a second franchise in southern Ontario and you have a solid base of teams that would sell out on a consistent basis.

Once you have established the base, you can start looking for partners south of the border. There are some obvious partners among the Original Six teams.

Count in the New York Rangers. The Dolan family has had its share of battles with the NHL head office and would give the new league a presence in the Big Apple. Detroit, which is located north of Windsor, Ont., is a good geographical fit, and then there's Chicago.

The Boston Bruins offer a traditional rival for the Canadiens, but owner Jeremy Jacobs and fellow hardliner Ed Snider in Philadelphia would have to accept the new business model for the league.

And what would that be?

Let's start with the idea that everyone deserves to make some money. There would be a salary cap set at \$60 million per team for a 10-year term. That's based on the average salary times 25 players. There would be no need for revenue-sharing because the ultimate makeup of the league would be based on Darwinian principles.

Bettman has often used poor performances on the ice as an explanation for poor attendance in some markets, but the model franchise for the new league will be the Maple Leafs, a team that draws capacity crowds despite going more than four decades without a Stanley Cup.

I've been in Carolina when the arena has been full and rocking for a Hurricanes game, but I've also been there when the building has been two-thirds full. It's not a sustainable market, and neither is Sunrise, Fla., Dallas, Columbus or Phoenix.

There isn't room for three teams in New York or two in southern California. Teams that have to offer deep discounts and gimmicky pricing — including free parking and all-you-can-eat promotions — don't fit the new model.

The 30-team league would probably shrink to 25 or 26 teams, but there's no reason why they shouldn't all be profitable.

There would be some games played in Florida. Tampa has solid ownership and a decent fan base, but one key to the new deal would be a series of snowbird specials in Sunrise. Each cold-weather team would play two "home" games in conjunction with its visits to Tampa. The games would be concentrated around the Christmas holidays and the March break, when there are Canadians in the neighbourhood and the new CBA would guarantee players at least two days of golf or beach time. The CBA would also require players to protect themselves with sunblock.

The new league would be governed by a commissioner chosen by the owners and the players. A good start would be to appoint Ken Dryden, who has been involved in the game on both sides of the aisle.

Similarly, disciplinary matters would be decided by an independent party. In cases involving injuries, both sides would be represented in any hearing.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 10.31.2012

643431 Montreal Canadiens

Moishes charity dinner sells for \$3,300

Dave Stubbs

Moishes lineup

Five days of bidding and 52 offers later, following a goofy tweet in which I challenged Canadiens' Colby Armstrong to tweet a photo of himself during an exhibition game, a whopping \$3,300 will be going to The Gazette Christmas Fund.

Six Canadiens, a popular former member of the team and I will soon be entertaining the highest bidder and their guest at a dinner at Montreal landmark Moishes, this following a charity auction that ended Tuesday at 11 am ET.

Every penny of the winning bid will go to The Gazette Christmas Fund, which for more than four decades has annually helped less fortunate Montrealers with a gentle, welcome hand during the holidays.

Go here for details and for the link to the bid page.

(For those who didn't bid, did so unsuccessfully or might otherwise like to offer a dollar or two to The Gazette Christmas Fund — every cent makes a difference in the lives of those who can use a hand — please go here to make a donation.)

Our thanks to all who took part in the bidding, to Moishes (especially co-owner Lenny Lighter) for their warm hospitality, and certainly to the players who have responded wonderfully to my request that they join us for the evening, which promises to be memorable in every sense.

It's amazing what one innocent tweet has produced, thanks to Colby Armstrong, Mathieu Darche, Josh Gorges and the players who have since pitched in. A little background follows:

Story behind the auction — or how good sports Colby Armstrong and Mathieu Darche scored a free dinner

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 10.31.2012

643432 Montreal Canadiens

Habs break out in 3rd for fantasy win

By Pat Hickey

CALGARY — Michael Cammalleri renewed old acquaintances Tuesday morning as he joked with his former Canadiens' teammates about being the only NHL player to be traded in the middle of a game.

But Cammalleri had little to smile about later in the day. The Canadiens handed his Calgary Flames a 4-2 defeat and Cammalleri was nursing a headache after he slammed into the boards late in the first period.

"He was coming to the net pretty hard and he lost his balance when he tried to change direction to reach for a rebound," Canadiens goaltender Carey Price said.

Cammalleri was able to leave the ice under his own steam, but he was taken to hospital for observation.

"We don't think it's serious, but you don't want to take chances with head injuries," said Flames coach Bob Hartley, who wasn't impressed with his team's third-period collapse.

"We played them even for two periods and then we gave up two goals early in the third," said Hartley, whose team enjoyed a 30-27 advantage in shots.

Tomas Plekanec snapped a 1-1 tie when he took a pass from Scott Gomez and scored at 3:31 of the third period.

Max Pacioretty scored what proved to be the winning goal at 7:27 when he hooked up with David Desharnais. The two collaborated on an empty-netter for Pacioretty's team-leading seventh goal of the season.

The Canadiens jumped off to an early lead after Jarome Iginla took a hooking penalty on the first shift of the game. That led to a power-play goal by Brian Gionta at 1:26.

Mikael Backlund got that one back when he fooled Price with a knuckleball when he hit a bouncing pass from Tim Jackman at 1:32 of the second period.

Jiri Hudler, who was signed as a free agent during the summer, gave the Flames a bit of hope when he cut the Montreal lead to a 3-2 at 12:51 of the third period, but the Canadiens limited Calgary to two shots over the final seven minutes.

The win was the seventh in a row for the Canadiens, who take a 7-2 record into Edmonton Thursday.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 10.31.2012

643433 Montreal Canadiens

Players to receive escrow payment on Wednesday

By Stu Cowan

Locked-out NHL players are expected to receive last season's escrow payment on Wednesday, according to a spokesman for the NHL Players' Association who spoke to The Canadian Press.

CP reports that players are due to be returned 7.98 per cent of what they earned last year, plus interest, on the same day they would have received their second paycheck of the season if there hadn't been a lockout.

The escrow payments will amount to about \$80,000 for every million dollars a player earned - before deductions. New York Rangers forward Brad Richards will gross approximately \$960,000 after being the league's highest-paid player last season.

Read more by clicking here.

Meanwhile, The Gazette's Pat Hickey writes that it's time for Canadians to take back our game and start over by establishing a new league. You can read his column by clicking here.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 10.31.2012

643434 NHL

NHL could shoot itself in the foot by cancelling Winter Classic

DAVID SHOALTS

It is hard to put a dollar figure on what the NHL will lose should it cancel the annual Winter Classic in the next couple of days - but that may be the least of the league's woes.

Two marketing and communications experts believe the worst aspect of the outdoor game being axed because of the NHL lockout is the long-term damage from ruptured relationships with sponsors and fans.

Since this is the NHL's second lockout in seven years, and the loss of the entire season for a second time is now a possibility given the stalled labour negotiations, there is a danger people from both groups will turn away and never come back.

"One of the bigger problems the NHL has with its sponsors is a lot of people remember the last lockout [2004-05] and if they go through another year

like that, people won't be as forgiving," said Bob Stellick, the head of Stellick Marketing Communications Inc., a Toronto firm which handles marketing, communications and media relations for major corporations and sports groups.

"If there's another year without hockey, they may ask, 'Why am I a sponsor?'"

The 2013 Winter Classic is something special: Long-time Original Six rivals, the Detroit Red Wings and Toronto Maple Leafs, at the University of Michigan's 115,000-seat stadium in Ann Arbor on Jan. 1. The anticipated sellout would set a world record for attendance at a hockey game.

Also in the mix is a two-week festival leading up to the game at Comerica Park in downtown Detroit, with two Wings-Leafs alumni games plus junior, U.S. college and high-school hockey events.

Since a great deal of preparation is required for the events, including building temporary rinks at the stadiums, the NHL would not practically be able to carry on with preparations and then cancel at the last minute because of the millions of dollars in costs and the logistics.

If the NHL cancels the game by Friday, it would forfeit only \$100,000 (U.S.) of its \$3-million rental fee to the University of Michigan.

Which why a decision to axe the game and winter festival is expected Thursday or Friday.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly did not immediately respond to a request for comment Tuesday.

John Collins, the NHL's chief operating officer who developed the Winter Classic into one of the biggest events on the league calendar (at least as far as the fans and sponsors in the United States are concerned), declined to be interviewed.

It is difficult to estimate the revenue the NHL will lose, as many of the event sponsors also have overall marketing deals with the league. Brian Cooper, the president of S&E Sponsorship Group, whose clients include corporations with NHL ties, told The Canadian Press he estimates there is about \$3-million in corporate sponsorships directly related to the Winter Classic.

When ticket, merchandise and other sales are added, the league is looking at the loss of at least \$15-million. While the host Red Wings get a share of that revenue, most goes into the NHL's hockey-related revenue.

However, David Carter, the executive director of the University of Southern California's Sports Business Institute, agrees with Stellick when it comes to the real damage.

"[Sponsors] are about using the backdrop of sports to sell products - and controversies, to include a sport going dark, drive them crazy," Carter said in an e-mail. "They have other avenues to reach consumers and you can bet they are determining how best to retrench.

The NHL has been trying to become a mainstream sport with the U.S. public for decades, wooing the casual fan with varying degrees of success. The Winter Classic is a hit in the U.S., and practically equal with the Stanley Cup final in the eyes of casual fans (even though technically it is just another regular-season game). Carter thinks the NHL is playing with fire here as well.

"By cancelling the game, both hard-core and casual fans will revisit their interest and future spending on the game," he said. "This, in turn, affects the rest of the industry because the more disenfranchised fans become the longer it will take for the NHL to rebuild its fan bases."

However, a person who was once intimately involved with NHL finances and played a large role in the 2008 Winter Classic in Buffalo thinks the league will be able to soothe its sponsors.

Larry Quinn, the former managing partner and minority owner of the Buffalo Sabres said the NHL spent a lot of time preparing its sponsors for a potential cancellation.

"I'm sure everyone's frustration level is high, but I'm also sure the league made them understand the parameters," Quinn said. "Any sponsor committed to the kind of dollars involved was certainly well aware and probably briefed by the NHL.

"My gut tells me they'll hang on to their sponsors."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 10.31.2012

643435 NHL

Shoalts: Winter Classic cancellation another step towards oblivion for the NHL

DAVID SHOALTS

The NHL will take another step toward oblivion in the next couple of days when it announces the annual Winter Classic is cancelled due to the lockout.

Oblivion may strike some as too strong a word, but that is precisely where this league appears determined to take its brand of hockey as far as the United States is concerned. The announcement about the biggest event on the NHL calendar in terms of marketing impact on the American public is expected to come on Thursday.

In this case, the decision is not one of those artificial deadlines NHL commissioner Gary Bettman likes to set in this labour dispute. He could hold off a few days, if he doesn't mind spending a couple hundred thousand more of the owners' money. If the NHL cancels by Friday, the lost deposit at the University of Michigan stadium is \$100,000 (all currency U.S.) and it climbs after that.

The league's agreement with Michigan does give it the right to cancel the outdoor game up to the day before Jan. 1, when the Detroit Red Wings were expected to play the Toronto Maple Leafs. However, as a practical matter the cancellation should happen by the end of the week because there is much preparation for the game, from building ice rinks at Michigan and at Comerica Park in downtown Detroit to preparing venues for the celebrations that surround the game and cost millions of dollars to complete.

Also expected to be cancelled, according to the Detroit Free Press, is the Winter Festival, a two-week event set for Comerica Park which was to play host to two Wings-Leafs alumni games along with junior, college and high-school games.

It's been two weeks since any negotiations for a collective agreement were held, and the NHL is stubbornly refusing to meet the NHL Players' Association because it claims the union will not negotiate off the owners' last offer, a frustrating bit of semantics. Semantics or not, there is no sign of any reason for the NHL to hold off on cancelling the outdoor game.

A lot of good will also vanishes with the cancellations, although this is not unusual for a league that loves to cut off its nose to spite its face. In the last five years, the Winter Classic has done more to attract casual fans to the sport through the game itself and the HBO television reality series 24/7 that chronicles both teams than any other event. Cancelling the game will tell those fans how much the NHL thinks of them.

But the striking aspect of this is that killing the event will hurt the NHL owners themselves more than it does the players. Most of the money from the 115,000 fans that were expected to pack the Michigan stadium and set a world record for attendance at a hockey game goes directly to the league, along with all the other revenue generated by the event.

The players are hurt in the sense that they are supposed to get 50 per cent or whatever share of NHL revenue they will if a new collective agreement is ever negotiated by these people. But the cancellation has a minimal direct impact on each of the NHL's 720 or so players. They will still get paid if they ever drop the puck again.

However, in the end both sides lose because this is the event that resonates with the casual U.S. fan the NHL has courted with varying degrees of success for decades. Once this game is gone, those fans may decide the 2012-13 season is lost and they'll be gone, too.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 10.31.2012

643436 NHL

Cynical NHL taking fans for granted

By James Gordon

Cynical NHL taking fans for granted

The Philadelphia Flyers and the New York Rangers line up for the Canadian anthem during the 2012 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic in Philadelphia early this year.

It's been a bad week for hockey fans, hasn't it?

Last Thursday was supposed to be the beginning of the end of the NHL's lockout, a day for the owners and players to put their heads down and come up with a deal to preserve an 82-game schedule.

Instead, both sides carried on with their hollow, spiteful war of words, to the intense anger or, increasingly, apathy of the fans who actually fund their business.

Various reports Monday once again suggested the league is only days away from cancelling the Winter Classic, its ratings darling, the top showcase for American spectators and sponsors and the crown jewel of a \$2 billion, 10-year broadcast deal with NBC in the United States.

This year's tilt between the Toronto Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings is supposed to take place Jan. 1 at the 115,000-seat University of Michigan stadium.

We'll get back to hockey in a second, after we talk about what a great week it's been for soccer fans here in North America.

While staring down the \$200 million payment it'll owe the NHL this year even if it doesn't get to broadcast a single game, NBC was also making strides in a different direction over the weekend.

The network announced it has secured the rights to broadcast up to 1,140 Barclays Premier League soccer games in the United States over the next three seasons at a cost of about \$80 million per year. And hey, those games will actually happen.

That deal follows moves by upstart network beIN SPORT to bring Spain's La Liga, France's Ligue 1 and Italy's Serie A to more screens in America.

Here's how NBC Sports Group chairman Mark Lazarus described the Barclays deal to the New York Times, while also discussing why the network dropped its bid for Major League Baseball rights: "Baseball is a good product, and we had an appetite for it at a certain level, but the price we're paying for the Premier League is a terrific value for us."

TSN and Sportsnet here in Canada seem to agree on the league's value. On Monday, both networks announced new deals to carry the Premier League for the next three years, to go along with their various rights agreements for the 2014 World Cup, 2015 Women's World Cup (taking place in Canada) and Euro 2016.

But who cares, right? Soccer is still a marginal sport here - especially European soccer.

Well, NBC, Sportsnet and TSN see something that many people who dismiss soccer as foreign and fringe in North America are missing: This is the most popular game on the globe, and it's growing.

Every year, it sinks its teeth into new markets, and while it may not be as Canadian as Maple Pie (or something), I'd bet a massive majority of the 250,000 or so immigrants who arrive here every year prefer it to hockey.

It's a low-cost draft pick that could turn into a star.

Barclays Premier League ratings are up 10 per cent on Sportsnet this year (to an average of 149,000), while TSN reported viewership doubled for Euro 2012 this summer versus the previous tournament, with 17.5 million unique visitors taking in at least part of the tourney across five Bell Media networks.

All that is to say nothing of Major League Soccer, which becomes a more polished and credible league every year. On the local level, the NASL will begin planting roots here in 2014.

And the NHL? Every day this lockout continues, the more Mickey Mouse it looks. Its stars are scattered across Europe as once-loyal customers start looking around for something else to take interest in.

Sure, revenues are up significantly since the last lockout, but the NHL has successfully stuck its foot out and sent that momentum sprawling awkwardly to the floor. Every day, resentment grows.

If the NHL follows through and cancels the Winter Classic (and eventually the sea-season), it will cause irreparable damage to itself and cede ground on the sports landscape it can ill afford to lose.

Maybe it starts when a fan here springs for the Sports-net World package instead of Centre Ice, or a fan there buys a Manchester City jersey instead of a Bruins one.

Yes, many people will flock back to the NHL. But many won't.

It took Major League Baseball 10 years to get even a sniff of the same attendance levels it enjoyed prior to losing the 1994 World Series to a player strike. Baseball eventually recovered, but it's already America's pastime. In many markets, hockey is already America's afterthought.

As this week's Premier League deals show, competition for fans' money and attention spans is only going to get more intense from here on out.

And all the while the NHL sits idle, twiddling its thumbs.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 10.31.2012

643437 NHL

NHL Lockout: Donald Fehr says league to blame for stalled negotiations

Mark Zwolinski

Player union head Donald Fehr says the NHL's salary cap remains off the table, despite talk he could bring the issue into the mix if the current lockout wipes out entire season.

"The more things change, the harder it becomes," Fehr said in a question and answer session with the StarTribune in Minnesota.

"But I'm not going to talk about future contingencies in the event we can't reach an agreement ... I'm not going to discuss what we might do in other proposals down the road," he said.

"We gave them three different approaches to have the player share fall over time. It's an eminently reasonable position, and their position seems to be to cut the share immediately, which has the effect of cutting the individual contracts, including one's they just signed a few weeks ago. And you've got to wonder how somebody can look at themselves in the mirror when they do that."

Fehr also steered blame for the current work stoppage towards the owners, saying the core issues remain the same, but with no movement from league, talks will remain in deep freeze.

"Well, first of all, why are we not playing? It wasn't a decision the players made," Fehr said. "We indicated from our first proposal they (the players) were willing to see their percentage fall over time. The owners first proposal went enormously backwards, so the movement they've made since then is from a proposal that nobody — not even them — took seriously to begin with.

"When we came in (August 14), we came in with a real offer from the beginning, what I had hoped for is a real negotiation. So far we haven't had it."

Fehr, who rerouted his travel plan to Toronto to avoid disastrous conditions from Hurricane Sandy in Manhattan, agreed that he is concerned about a splintering of the union as the lockout grows longer and longer.

"Yeah. ... But that doesn't mean you make a bad agreement because of it," he said.

Fehr was asked about potential league expansion as a solution to the lockout — a possibility that was first outlined in the Hockey News.

"We asked them if they have any plans for expansion, if it's even on the calendar or anything like that, and they've said no," Fehr said.

Ultimately, Fehr said he's discussed losing the entire season with the players, a worst-case scenario that must be approached given the deep freeze in the talks at the moment.

"You prepare them for all eventualities," Fehr said.

"You always have a concern. But I still would like to believe that the owners would like to operate the business. We'll see."

Toronto Star LOADED: 10.31.2012

643438 Ottawa Senators

Lockout leaves Ottawa native Bell short of options for work

By Allen Panzeri

When Brendan Bell decided to have hip surgery last May, he was thinking that maybe his timing would work out to be perfect.

By the time the former Ottawa Senators and 67's defenceman was healthy, probably sometime in December, there might be one or two NHL teams looking to fill a spot on defence.

Bingo. Back in the big time.

Or, at worse, maybe there would be a European team looking to bolster itself for the second half of the season.

But then the lockout came along and Bell found himself with no options at all.

While the lockout tends to focus attention on the game's superstars, such as Sidney Crosby and Jason Spezza, and the millions of dollars they stand to lose as more and more of the season is cancelled, players at the bottom of the food chain, like Bell, get hurt a lot more.

There are no jobs for them in North America, obviously, and they've been bumped out of jobs they might have had in Europe by players who would ordinarily be in the NHL.

That's already happened to a number of players, including 38-year-old Domenic Pittis of Calgary, who lost his job in Switzerland to NHL replacement players.

After winning a championship with Zurich last season, Pittis figured he'd be invited back, but he became expendable when NHL stars such as Spezza, Joe Thornton and Rick Nash sent in their resumés.

Bell's in the same boat, and he knows the score.

If it's a choice between, say, Erik Karlsson and Bell, who gets the job?

So Bell spends his time at informal and occasional practices with other NHL players, hoping, like everyone else, that the lockout ends soon.

"Someone like me, I would look for a really good job in Switzerland and they wouldn't really be too hard to find in most cases," he said Tuesday. "But this year they just don't exist, because they high-end NHL guys have those jobs.

"Initially, I thought this could work out really well. I could have the surgery, I could be healthy in December and teams might have openings.

"Teams might be low on defencemen and maybe I could slide in there, spend a little time in the minors and get back up.

"But everything is in a state of flux."

It's also not as if Bell, now 29, has made bags full of money in his career, either. He spent most of last season in the minors, with the American Hockey League's Connecticut Whale, where his salary was \$200,000 U.S.

As he continues his rehabilitation, Bell's hope is that the lockout ends just as he is ready to return. Landing an NHL job will be difficult, since there doesn't figure to be any openings through injury, so Europe will be his best hope.

When the replacement players come home, perhaps a spot will open for him.

"It's not one of those things where I want to see 'Did Not Play' on my career stats," he said. "It's really too bad that we're in this situation. I understand why we're here and I feel for the players' side of things.

"But it's just really too bad that it had to come to this. It hurts everybody and a lot of people are suffering because of it."

Meanwhile, Daniel Alfredsson said he knows as little as everyone else about where the dispute is headed.

"I haven't heard anything that would suggest that there are any plans to talk or negotiate right now," he said. "As far as if there's a timeline to get something done, I don't know. I think the league has a plan and they're following it.

"You want to stay involved in case something happens, but my life goes on.

"I've really enjoyed the time I've been able to spend with my family, so it hasn't been all bad."

#### NORTHERN EXPOSURE

John Chabot said Tuesday he's getting closer to his plans to bring locked-out NHL players, including the Senators players he's currently helping coach during their informal sessions, on an exhibition tour of northern Canadian communities.

"The players are very interested," he said. "I think now what we have to do is get the word out about what we're trying to do."

The plan would be to have a group of 20 NHL players travel together and split into two teams. Another 10 top players from the community would be added in. The first game would likely be in this area, said Chabot, to give them a chance to fine tune the concept.

He also has work to do lining up insurance for the players and sponsors to defray the travel costs.

Chabot, an Algonquin who played for the Montreal Canadiens, Pittsburgh Penguins and Detroit Red Wings and served as coach with the New York Islanders as well as the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League's Gatineau Olympiques and Acadie-Bathurst Titan, also works closely with First Nations communities, teaching life skills through hockey.

Alfredsson had only heard about it for the first time on Tuesday, but said it sounded interesting and that he'd "love to go up there."

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 10.31.2012

643439 Ottawa Senators

Senators forward Peter Regin returns after stint in Swiss league

By Don Brennan

#### NHL Labour Woes

Senators forward Peter Regin's stint with SC Langenthal of the Swiss National League B is over, according to the team's website.

It appears Regin, who had five points in four games for Langenthal, was a fill-in for Jeff Campbell, while the team's leading scorer last season missed the last two weeks with an injury.

Regin's play indicated he has fully recovered from the shoulder problems that have limited him to 65 games over the last two seasons.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 10.31.2012

643440 Ottawa Senators

Alfie could play in Ottawa next week

Don Brennan

It appears Daniel Alfredsson will be suiting up for a game in front of Ottawa fans sooner than expected.

The 39-year old Senators captain said Tuesday he has interest in joining a group of locked-out local NHLers that former coach and player John Chabot wants to take on a tour of northern communities to play in fund-raising exhibitions.

Before those wheels are put in motion, Chabot wants the players to play an exhibition game in the nation's capital, likely early next week. Money raised in that game would also go to charity.

"I just heard about it (Tuesday)," Alfredsson said of Chabot's idea to head north with players, likely to the Northwest Territories and/or Quebec, in early November. "There's no finalized plans yet, but I think it sounds really interesting. I'd love to go up there."

A small group of locked-out players has been trying to stay sharp by skating 3-4 times a week at Sensplex.

The regulars include Alfredsson (who generally only shows up 1-2 times per week), Chris Neil, Marc Methot, Chris Phillips, Zack Smith, Chris Kelly, Grant Clitsome, Brendan Bell and Craig Anderson.

At Chabot's request, they've contacted fellow NHLers to gauge the interest in both coming to Ottawa for the exhibition and then gaining some northern exposure. Apparently, the response has been positive.

"We want to get the bugs out before we go anywhere," said Chabot, who planned on contacting some of the bigger rinks in the area over the next 48 hours to see about availability. "Right now, it's getting a little exciting."

Chabot, who is looking for a sponsor to absorb costs on the junket, has received advice from Philadelphia Flyers centre Max Talbot, who organized a successful tour of pros last month in Quebec. In one game, Talbot had stars Carey Price and Marc-Andre Fleury as the goalies.

What players from that group jump on board with Chabot has yet to be determined.

"We're going to tweak it as we go along, as far as the game and players, but (if) we get 24 guys out for different organizations, then we're good to go," said Chabot, who acknowledged the presence of Alfredsson would make both the Ottawa exhibition and the northern tour more appealing to fans.

"Everybody wants to see NHL players," said Chabot, "but you get some of the top-name guys out there, just get three or four ... people are going to come watch.

"It's all going to be for charity. (The players) will be paying out of their pockets for their insurance, to make sure nothing happens untoward what they're trying to accomplish in the long term, so if you look at it, they'll be paying to play. We're going to reap the benefits through charity, and the First Nations kids in the north, where there are youth programs that have been implemented over the last 10 years since I've been trying to do it. They're going to reap the benefits of these type of games."

Meanwhile, Alfredsson hasn't received any indication of whether there will be a break anytime soon in the labour dispute between NHL players and owners.

"Honestly, I don't know where it's going," he said. "And I haven't heard anything that would suggest there's any plans to talk or negotiate right now, so right now it's just a deadlock.

"As far as if there's a time limit to get something done, I don't know. I think the league has a plan, and they're following that."

In the meantime, Alfredsson said he's getting a good taste of what retirement will be like.

"You want to stay involved (with what's happening in the dispute), but my life goes on, there's no question," said Alfredsson, who took in his son Hugo's tournament at Sensplex last weekend. "I've really enjoyed the amount of time I've been able to spend with the family, so it hasn't been all bad."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 10.31.2012

643441 Philadelphia Flyers

Frank Seravalli: What's NHL's rush to cancel Winter Classic?

Frank Seravalli

LAST WEEK, when the NHL canceled its entire slate of games for the month of November in order to free up arenas dates, the league reportedly sent an accompanying memo to clubs.

Before immediately relinquishing dates to booking agents, the NHL wanted clubs to hang on to them for an additional couple of days - you know, in case last-ditch talks with the players' association proved meaningful.

Devils 3, Phantoms 1

Flyers Development Camp

Flyers acquire Luke Schenn

We all know how that turned out. There are now eight additional dates available at the Wells Fargo Center next month.

We will have an even better idea how this 46-day-old lockout will turn out this week, since the NHL reportedly is set to bang the Winter Classic featuring Detroit and Toronto a full 2 months before the puck is set to drop in Ann Arbor, Mich., in front of the biggest crowd ever to witness an ice hockey game.

Before this lockout even began, many viewed the Winter Classic at Michigan's "Big House" as the NHLPA's biggest bargaining chip. The thinking is that the NHL would do anything in its power to make a deal and avoid sacrificing its biggest single-event revenue source.

Put simply, it's the only game the NHL can actually get viewers in the United States to tune into. Last season's Winter Classic at Citizens Bank Park averaged 3.75 million viewers on NBC; all six games of last spring's Stanley Cup finals between Los Angeles and New Jersey averaged 3 million viewers.

Add in the sold-out gate - which, with temporary seating, could approach 115,000 - along with crazy merchandise sales, sponsorships and the participation of a hockey-mad Canadian city for the first time, and you have an idea the type of rake the Winter Classic has been.

If the NHL were to ax the Winter Classic this week, as many reports have indicated, you can pretty much kiss the entire season goodbye.

For one, it would further reduce the amount of revenue available for players and owners to divide. With players taking an absolute reduction of revenue share regardless, receiving 50 percent (instead of 57 percent) of less is an even bigger bang to the wallet.

More important, it would represent an unwillingness on the NHL's behalf to bargain in good faith.

Canceling the Winter Classic at this point simply isn't a necessity.

According to an executed copy of the league's contract with the University of Michigan, as available in full on AnnArbor.com, the NHL has already paid \$100,000 toward the \$3 million venue rental fee.

Another \$250,000 is due Friday. Another \$1 million is due on Dec. 1, when the league would be given the keys to begin building the rink. A big chunk of the remainder is due on Dec. 28, just a few days before the Jan. 1 puck-drop, with some still due on Jan. 18.

According to the contract, the NHL can cancel the Winter Classic up until the day of the event, pretty much without penalty. With the exception of the \$100,000 paid up front, every dollar toward the venue rental fee is refundable.

I don't pretend to know the first thing about event planning, especially one of this magnitude, but I would think that a league that has put on five of these outdoor festivals already has this down to a science by now.

Yes, there are tickets that would need to be refunded - and fans need advance notice as to booking hotels and/or flights. And the alumni, college hockey, AHL and major junior games will need to be moved indoors from Detroit's Comerica Park. Still, a drop-dead date of Dec. 1 should give everyone - broadcasters, sponsors, and other league entities - plenty of time to make alternate arrangements.

One thing that may need to be canceled sooner rather than later is HBO's award-winning "24/7" series featuring the Red Wings and Maple Leafs, which usually begins filming in the third week of November.

But for the NHL to walk away from \$100,000 at the University of Michigan on Dec. 1 would be like one of us dropping a \$20 on a bad bet. You pick up the pieces and move on.

The Winter Classic is the NHL's marquee regular-season event, the time of year when most casual hockey fans actually believe the season starts. For the die-hard fan, it is a triumphant celebration of what makes the game great. To cancel the game this week would be a slap in the face to all - including the players - and a sign to start looking for something else to cheer for this winter.

Slap shots

NHL players received escrow checks from their respective clubs on Tuesday, a return of 7.8 percent of last year's salary that was held. For players such as Ilya Bryzgalov, who earned \$10 million, it was a whopping check worth approximately \$780,000 in pre-taxed income . . . The Czech Republic's ice hockey federation fined its Chomutov club approximately \$1,554 after its fans aimed racist chants at Flyers forward Wayne Simmonds during a contest on Sunday as a member of the Liberec White Tigers.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 10.31.2012

643442 Philadelphia Flyers

Eric Lindros among inductees into Philadelphia Sports Hall

By Sam Carchidi

Eric Lindros has turned into a business entrepreneur and is getting married in November.

But the years that made him famous in Philadelphia - as one of the most gifted and rugged players in Flyers history - are why he is returning to the area next week. Lindros will be one of the inductees into the Philadelphia Sports Hall of Fame on Nov. 8 at the Sheraton Society Hill.

"It's a special thrill," Lindros, 39, said this week from Ontario. "It's definitely an honor, and I'm awfully proud to be going in with that company."

Lindros, a six-time all-star and the league's MVP after the 1994-95 season, said he got extra satisfaction when the Flyers jelled during his third season in the NHL, reaching the 1995 Eastern Conference finals before losing to New Jersey in six games.

"The first couple of years, we had some moments, but we never made the playoffs," he said. "And then my third year, we knew we had a shot [at a Stanley Cup], and that realization did a lot to practices and games. It was a wonderful feeling."

Two years later, Lindros helped the Flyers reach the Stanley Cup Finals, collecting 26 points in 19 playoff games.

Concussions forced Lindros to retire after he spent the 2006-07 season in Dallas. He played 13 seasons - eight with the Flyers - and accumulated 865 points, including 372 goals, in 760 games.

Lindros was the NHL Players Association's ombudsman for two years before eventually working with several start-up companies as a consultant.

"I'm not a nine-to-five," he said, "but I have enough on my plate to keep busy and enjoy life. It's a nice balance."

Three months ago, he helped start a "virtual" store online (shop.ca), which sells more than 15 million items - from clothing to electronics - in Canada.

"I set up the connections to get more product on our shelves," he said, adding that the company soon will expand to the United States (shop.us).

When he's not involved in the business world, Lindros enjoys being on the golf course - his handicap is 7 - or spending time with family and friends at an eight-cabin fishing camp he owns in Lake Kipawa in Quebec.

Next month he is marrying a woman named Kina, a Montreal native whom he met through mutual friends in Toronto.

For Lindros, life is good. He is far removed from his final Flyers years and his very public feud with then-general manager Bob Clarke.

As for the NHL and its lockout, Lindros supports the players and says the owners have changed the language from the last collective bargaining agreement as it pertains to hockey-related revenue. (The owners' leaders disagree.)

Team fined. The Czech Republic ice hockey federation said it fined a club after its fans aimed racist chants toward Flyers forward Wayne Simmonds, who is playing in the top Czech league during the NHL lockout, the Associated Press reported.

In a statement Tuesday, the federation said the Chomutov Pirates were fined 30,000 koruna (\$1,554) by its disciplinary committee for the chants directed at Simmonds, who is playing for the Liberec White Tigers.

The chants came during a game Sunday. Fans chanted "opice," which means monkey, according to reports.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 10.31.2012

643443 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL players expect to get escrow checks

Staff Writer

TORONTO -- Locked-out NHL players are expected to get back last season's escrow payment on Wednesday.

According to a union spokesman, players are set to be given 7.98 percent of what they earned last year, plus interest, on the day they were to have received their second paycheck of the currently delayed season.

The escrow payments will amount to about \$80,000 for every million dollars a player earned, before deductions. For example, New York Rangers forward Brad Richards will gross approximately \$960,000 after being the league's highest-paid player last season.

Under the terms of the recently expired collective bargaining agreement, players had a portion of their salaries deducted throughout the season and placed into an escrow account. Once the final accounting for the year was completed, which ensured the correct percentage of revenue was paid out in salaries, players were refunded accordingly.

The escrow checks will be distributed at an important time, as the lockout is about to eliminate another pay cycle. Players also missed a payment on Oct. 15, but that would have only covered four days of the regular season. This week's checks would have included the first full half-month pay period of the season.

NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr met with a group of players in Minnesota on Monday night and acknowledged in an interview with the Minneapolis Star-Tribune that some of his constituents are concerned about lost wages that are mounting.

"That doesn't mean you make a bad agreement because of it," Fehr told the newspaper.

There have been no labor negotiations since Oct. 18, when the union countered a league offer with three proposals. Those were all quickly rejected by the NHL.

Since then, a league-imposed deadline to play a full season has passed, and the NHL cancelled all games through Nov. 30. The New Year's Day Winter Classic is also in danger of being called off if a new deal isn't reached soon.

Superstorm Sandy forced the NHL to close its New York headquarters on Monday and Tuesday, but deputy commissioner Bill Daly indicated that the weather didn't affect the bargaining process. However, no progress has been made this week.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 10.31.2012

643444 Pittsburgh Penguins

Former Penguins goaltender eyes career as a coach

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Brent Johnson is quick to admit that last season could have gone better for him.

A lot better, frankly.

His succinct assessment: "I had a subpar year last year, to say the least."

Johnson also understands that he's the guy most, if not solely, responsible for that.

It's no surprise, then, that he doesn't begrudge the Penguins' decision to sever their ties to him this spring, and to bring in Tomas Vokoun as Marc-Andre Fleury's goaltending partner.

But despite all that went wrong in 2011-12, when he had a 6-7-2 record, 3.11 goals-against average and .883 save percentage in 16 appearances, Johnson isn't ready to walk away from the game.

It doesn't matter that he's 35 years old or that he didn't receive any particularly promising expressions of interest from other clubs after becoming an unrestricted free agent July 1.

Johnson is convinced he still can be effective at the game's highest level and is hoping some team will give him an opportunity to prove it.

That is why he has been a regular at the Penguins' informal workouts at Southpointe the past few weeks, honing his game for any chance that might develop when -- OK, if -- the NHL lockout ends and teams fill out their depth charts for the 2012-13 season.

"I'm going to stay ready," Johnson said after the Tuesday session. "Just because my time's done here in Pittsburgh doesn't mean it's done everywhere.

"I'll just continue to stay ready. Stay sharp, as much as possible."

Johnson was Fleury's backup for the past three seasons and outperformed him at various points. But he sputtered throughout last season and missed a 17-game stretch for medical reasons, so management concluded he had to be replaced.

And made certain that Johnson knew early on that he no longer had a place in its plans.

"The great thing about the whole process is that everyone was up-front," Johnson said. "There was no 'Maybe, we'll see ...' It was good, and I truly, truly appreciate that.

"[General manager] Ray Shero is an absolute class act and he's always treated me with great respect, and vice versa, from me to him.

"I love this organization -- wish I could be a part of it, still -- but we'll see where the future road lies."

He's hoping, of course, that his future involves wearing an NHL uniform.

There's no assurance that will happen, however, so Johnson has spent at least a little time contemplating his post-playing options.

Not surprising, for a guy with his knowledge of the position and personable nature, he is interested in becoming a goalie coach, or, perhaps, in teaching younger players how to play goal.

To that end, he has been thinking about organizing a hockey school for aspiring goaltenders in the near future, ideally before the NHL comes out of its deep freeze.

"I've kind of been floating the idea of maybe doing a couple of hockey schools here in the area, specifically for goalies," he said. "If anyone from the team wanted to jump on board [and broaden the school's focus], that would be great, while we're all sitting here waiting.

"If [the season is canceled] or if I don't get a job, I kind of want to put my foot in the door with that kind of thing, just see how I am."

The excellent relationship he had with Fleury and goaltending coach Gilles Meloche -- "I want to continue that," Johnson said -- seemed to provide at least some of the impetus for him to consider a career teaching his job to others.

He also offered that "I think I have the brain for hockey," and there can be no question about his bloodlines.

He is, after all, the son of former NHL goalie Bob Johnson, who spent time with the Penguins, and the grandson of Hockey Hall of Famer Sid Abel.

Still, Johnson's emphasis for now is on keeping an edge on his game, on being ready to capitalize on any opportunity to extend his playing career that might present itself this winter.

"If something happens here [to end the lockout] in the near future where they call everyone back and training camp [begins] ... if I get a job, that would be just wonderful," he said.

"For my family, for myself, I want to keep going."

Post Gazette LOADED: 10.31.2012

643445 San Jose Sharks

San Jose Sharks' Ryane Clowe practices with ECHL team

By David Pollak

SAN FRANCISCO -- Sharks forward Ryane Clowe practiced Tuesday with the San Francisco Bulls, but for now is not ready to make the more serious commitment of playing with the ECHL team.

"That could happen," he said, "but I'm not saying I'll practice for a week or two and then I'm going to play."

Clowe said he contacted the team last week when the NHL canceled all games in November because of its ongoing lockout. Only a handful of his Sharks teammates have remained in San Jose, and he said he was looking for a more structured practice than the pick-up games they have been holding.

Clowe did note that he is in the final year of his current contract and that playing in the ECHL could be risky, presumably a reference to the chance of injury. Then he added that probably would be less of a factor than the status of negotiations between the league and its players.

"At the end of the day, you still want to try and play," Clowe said.

Other NHL players have signed with ECHL teams. The Bulls lost a three-game series in Anchorage last weekend to an Aces team with Brandon Dubinsky of the Columbus Blue Jackets, Joey Crabb of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Nate Thompson of the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The Bulls are playing their inaugural season at the Cow Palace. The team, whose next home game is Nov. 8, is 2-4-0-2.

San Jose Mercury News: LOADED: 10.31.2012

643446 San Jose Sharks

Clowe to stay in SF during NHL lockout

Staff Writer

While locked-out NHL players search for playing time around the world, San Jose Sharks wing Ryane Clowe is staying a bit closer to home.

Clowe told CSNCalifornia.com on Tuesday that he has agreed to a deal with the Sharks' ECHL affiliate San Francisco Bulls. The Bulls confirmed the deal to the Chronicle.

Clowe does not intend to play in games but will instead stay sharp by practicing with the Bulls.

Six Sharks are currently signed onto deals to play for European teams. Joe Thornton and Logan Couture for Geneve-Servette are playing in Switzerland, Douglas Murray in Sweden, T.J. Galiardi in Germany and Jason Demers and Tommy Wingels in Finland.

San Francisco Chronicle LOADED: 10.31.2012

643447 St Louis Blues

NHL players expect to get escrow checks today

Associated Press

TORONTO • Locked-out NHL players are expected to get back last season's escrow payment on Wednesday.

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The escrow payments will amount to about \$80,000 for every million dollars a player earned, before deductions. For example, New York Rangers forward Brad Richards will gross approximately \$960,000 after being the league's highest-paid player last season.

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The escrow checks will be distributed at an important time, as the lockout is about to eliminate another pay cycle. Players also missed a payment on Oct. 15, but that would have only covered four days of the regular season. This week's checks would have included the first full half-month pay period of the season.

NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr met with a group of players in Minnesota on Monday night and acknowledged in an interview with the Minneapolis Star-Tribune that some of his constituents are concerned about lost wages that are mounting.

"That doesn't mean you make a bad agreement because of it," Fehr told the newspaper.

There have been no labor negotiations since Oct. 18, when the union countered a league offer with three proposals. Those were all quickly rejected by the NHL.

Since then, a league-imposed deadline to play a full season has passed, and the NHL cancelled all games through Nov. 30.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 10.31.2012

643448 Tampa Bay Lightning

Bolts' Mikkelson to play in Sweden until lockout ends

By ERIK ERLÉNSSON

Brendan Mikkelson became the fourth Tampa Bay Lightning player to bolt for Europe during the NHL-imposed lockout, now in its seventh week.

The 25-year-old defenseman signed to play with Vasteras HK in the Swedish second division, according to Swedish website VLT.se, for the duration of the lockout. Mikkelson has been one of players regularly skating at the Ice Sports Forum in Brandon since the lockout began Sept. 16.

According to the report, Mikkelson was recruited by former Calgary forward Mikael Backlund, who played with Mikkelson while the two were in the Flames' system.

"I have very good references about him, especially (Backlund)," Vasteras general manager Niklas Johansson said. "His reference was the deciding factor."

Other Lightning players in Europe include defenseman Victor Hedman (Russia), forward Adam Hall (Germany) and goaltender Anders Lindback (Finland).

With all NHL games canceled through the end of November and no scheduled talks between the league and players' association, more are expected to head overseas. That includes former league MVP Marty St. Louis, who has said he would look to Europe by mid-November if there was no progress in the labor negotiations.

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 10.31.2012

643449 Tampa Bay Lightning

Tampa Bay Lightning D Brendan Mikkelson will play for Vasteras in Sweden

Staff Writer

Defenseman Brendan Mikkelson is the fourth Tampa Bay Lightning player to head overseas for the duration of the NHL lockout. Mikkelson will play for Vasteras in Sweden's Allsvenskan league, one notch below that country's elite league.

Here is the link to Vasteras' announcement. It is in Swedish:  
<http://www.vik.se/index.php/alag/nyheter/21-nyheter/2770-nhl-back-klar-foer-vik>

Mikkelson, 25, had a goal and three points in 41 games last season for Tampa Bay after he was acquired in January from the Flames for center Blair Jones.

He joins defenseman Victor Hedman (Astana Barys in the KHL), forward Adam Hall (Ravensburg in Germany) and goaltender Anders Lindback (Ilves Tampere in Finland). Center Nate Thompson is playing for ECHL Alaska in his hometown of Anchorage.

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 10.31.2012

643450 Toronto Maple Leafs

Joffrey Lupul headed to the KHL despite 'foreigner' rule

JAMES MIRTLE

According to Joffrey Lupul, he is off to the KHL to play with Avtomobilist.

According to the KHL's own guidelines for signing locked out NHL players, however, the Toronto Maple Leafs winger doesn't appear to be eligible to play there.

Avtomobilist Yekaterinburg is currently one of the worst teams in the league, with just three regulation wins in 21 games and few recognizable names.

(Branislav Mezei may be the "biggest name" among the few former NHLers on the team.)

Very few North American players have signed in the KHL since the start of the lockout, at least in part because of some guidelines that make it hard for "foreign" players to play for Russia-based teams.

"Our clubs have been granted the opportunity to enter into contracts and place on their main rosters no more than three NHL players, and the previously established limit of 25 players per team may be exceeded by the addition of these players," KHL vice-president Vladimir Shalaev said last month. "For Russian clubs, only one of the three NHL players may be a foreigner (non-Russian), and this player must meet one of the following criteria set down to ensure that only top-level foreign players come to play in the Kontinental Hockey League."

Those criteria include playing 150 NHL games the past three years, experience in the KHL, representing their country internationally the last two years or being a Stanley Cup winner, finalist or major individual award winner.

Because of some pretty catastrophic injuries, Lupul has only skated in 143 NHL games and doesn't meet any of the other criteria, despite putting up 25 goals and 67 points in 66 games last season with the Leafs en route to his first all-star game appearance.

A KHL spokesman said it is possible to waive the strict definition of the rule in some cases, which likely apply to Lupul given his injuries are what kept him out of 150 NHL games.

As long as he gets the all clear, he will become only the fourth North American locked out player in the KHL, joining Joe Pavelski, Ryan McDonagh and Evander Kane.

As for why Lupul picked bottom feeding Avtomobilist, my guess is he has a relationship with head coach Igor Ulanov, who played a couple of years in Edmonton and has some connections in that city.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 10.31.2012

643451 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: Maple Leafs' Joffrey Lupul to play for KHL club

Kevin McGran

The number of unemployed locked-out NHLers would appear to be dwindling.

Maple Leafs winger Joffrey Lupul is among the latest in a wave of NHLers heading to Russia in the wake of stalled collective bargaining talks.

Patrick Kane scored his first goal in the Swiss league Tuesday as almost 20 NHLers have headed across the water since the NHL and NHL Players' Association last exchanged proposals.

Now, according to the NHLPA, 191 NHLers are playing in Russia and Europe — including five Maple Leafs — and with about as many assigned by their teams to AHL rosters, just who is locked out?

The NHLPA boasts about 720 members and the number of players working out in North American arenas trying to keep fit is dwindling.

The skate in Toronto, which had nine players last week, had only five on Tuesday: Matthew Lombardi, Mike Komisarek, Jay McClement, Tomas Kaberle and Daniel Winnick.

Two other regulars at that skate are Phil Kessel and Mike Cammalleri.

Kessel, Cammalleri and Komisarek all told the Star in the past few days that family commitments mean they will probably not pursue overseas deals.

Some NHLers who have remained home are pursuing goodwill exhibition games. There was a game on the weekend in Chicago in support of Ronald McDonald House.

Locked-out Winnipeg Jets are planning a fundraiser for a local hospital. Locked out Senators are considering something similar.

But Europe is a strong draw.

The Leafs' Clarke MacArthur had been part of the Toronto skate, but has since signed in Germany to play in Division 2. Cody Franson is in Sweden. Lupul joins Mikhail Grabovski and Nikolai Kulemin in Russia.

Some have been critical of NHLers heading to Europe during the lockout, since they're seen to be taking jobs of other players.

"The owners are all working," said Buzz Hargrove, the former leader of the CAW and former ombudsman of the NHLPA. "It's people taking advantage of their skills. I think that makes a lot of sense.

"This is not a strike where the players are shutting down the league. This is the owners locking the players out."

As for the AHL, that league boasts 18 players who played a full season in the NHL last year. Taylor Hall (shoulder) of the Edmonton Oilers will make that 19 when he is cleared to play for Oklahoma City. He'd join Jordan Eberle and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins on a loaded Barons team.

As well, Leafs forward Matt Frattin (knee) is working out with the Marlies on rehab and will join the minor-league team when he is medically cleared.

The 29-year-old Lupul had 25 goals in 66 games before being sidelined with an injury shortly after Randy Carlyle took over as coach of the Maple Leafs.

The forward has signed a deal with Avtomobilist Yekaterinburg of the Kontinental Hockey League.

Avtomobilist Yekaterinburg has lost five in a row and sits in last place in the KHL.

Toronto Star LOADED: 10.31.2012

643452 Toronto Maple Leafs

Leafs notes: Joffrey Lupul signs with KHL

By Lance Hornby

Getting the youngest of the locked-out Maple Leafs ice time is vital of course, but their best forward needs his game face on should a shortened season be played.

So it should be seen as good news for the club that left winger Joffrey Lupul is getting back in uniform for the first time since separating his shoulder in March — even if Brian Burke can't comment.

Lupul will join KHL team Avtomobilist, a last-place outfit based in the southwestern Russian city of Yekaterinburg. He was the Leafs' most consistent performer last season with 67 points in 66 games and right on the tail of fellow all-star game participant Phil Kessel in team scoring until the injury.

Lupul, 29, was a finalist for the Bill Masterton Trophy, recognizing perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication to hockey after returning from a career-threatening back injury a couple of years earlier.

"I'm shocked the lockout has gone on this long," Lupul told the Toronto Sun in a phone interview Tuesday night from California. "But I'm a hockey player and I want to play. The KHL is the second-best league in the world, but really right now it is the best."

Most of the Leafs' projected top six forwards are now moonlighting during the lockout.

Mikhail Grabovski is with CKSA Moscow, with eight points in 12 games, while Nikolai Kulemin has five in 11 starts with Metallurg. Clarke MacArthur is just getting started on a second division team in Germany.

New Leafs forward James van Riemsdyk could join a Finnish team now that the lockout appears set to drag through November, but likely won't get to play centre, where Toronto coach Randy Carlyle was thinking of trying him with Lupul and Kessel.

Leo lovin' T.O.

A lockout and a stint on the farm were not in Leo Komarov's plans when the Finn made the move here. But Poulin has no reason to believe rumours Komarov will head back to the KHL if the lockout goes into the New Year.

"I can't be 100% sure of a lot of things with all our players in a year like this," Poulin said. "But I can tell you that right now he's enjoying it, there's a smile on his face and everyone on the team he's touched is better for it."

"Our European scout Jari Gronstrand has built a nice relationship with him. He was ready to commit to North America."

The 25-year-old Komarov played well with Joe Colborne and Carter Ashton in Toronto's last game, a 5-4 win in Hamilton on Friday.

Fratтин fightin' back

When Matt Frattin slammed heavily into an empty net on the goal that insured his team a spot in the Calder Cup final, it was the kind of play that showed why the tough winger could have made the jump from Ricoh permanently this month.

Unfortunately, that goal against Oklahoma City in last May's conference final was Frattin's last appearance of the 2012 playoffs, right to the present. He required major shoulder surgery and is only now cleared for contact with the Marlies.

It's unlikely he'll play as soon as this weekend's two games in Abbotsford, B.C., but Toronto plays three-in-three against the AHL's Texas teams the week after.

"It's even noticeable in practice, how much he's elevated his game," said Maple Leafs vice-president of hockey operations Dave Poulin. "He's worked out a lot in order to get back and has his legs working well."

Loose Leafs

Sixth-rounder Connor Brown is getting ice time with 15-year-old OHL sensation Connor McDavid in Erie. "Riding shotgun with a player like that is huge," Poulin said ... Sam Carrick, a rookie pro squeezed out by the huge numbers of forwards with the Marlies, has a goal in four games with the ECHL Idaho Steelheads. That's where ex-Marlies captain Ben Ondrus now plays ... The Leafs have high hopes for Minnesota- Duluth freshman forward Tony Cameranesi, who has two goals and an assist in six games ... Goalie Mark Owuya should get in his first game for the Marlies this weekend, while the Leafs look at finding the No. 3 man a spot somewhere in the ECHL.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 10.31.2012

643453 Toronto Maple Leafs

KHL grants exception for Leafs' Joffrey Lupul

By Michael Traikos

According to KHL standards, Joffrey Lupul is not a so-called "top-level" player.

The Toronto Maple Leafs forward did not play 150 games in the last three NHL seasons. He has not represented Canada at an international event in the last two years. And he was not a Stanley Cup finalist or a recipient of an individual award.

But the KHL, which set the above criteria in accepting foreign-born rental players to Russia during the NHL lockout, decided a point per game forward who tied for 26th in scoring last season was still good enough to play for the worst team in the league.

"They granted an exception because of his All-Star Game appearance," said Lupul's agent Peter Semonick, who added that his client's decision to sign with Avtomobilist Yekaterinburg was based on wanting to play in a competitive environment. He is the fourth North American-born locked-out player — Joe Pavelski, Ryan McDonagh and Evander Kane are the others — to join the KHL.

"He missed the final month of last year and had back issues a couple of years ago and missed a lot of hockey," Semonick said. "He wants to get in and stay in game shape, so for him it's not a matter of money, it's a matter of getting on the ice and trying to get back the time that he's lost."

With Avtomobilist, getting ice time should not be a problem. The team finished with the worst record in the KHL last season and is once again at the bottom of the standings with four wins in 21 games this year. In that respect, having played for the fifth-worst team in the NHL last season might help Lupul fit right in.

"He's probably going to get a lot of ice time," Semonick said.

Lupul scored 25 goals and had a career-high 67 points in 66 games for the Leafs last season. He was a co-captain at the All-Star Game and was nominated for the Masterton Memorial Trophy, which recognizes "perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to ice hockey."

The 29-year-old reportedly had several options to play in Europe, but his agent added that "there's a difference in quality" in the KHL, where Leafs teammates Mikhail Grabovski (CSKA Moscow) and Nikolai Kulemin (Magnitogorsk Metallurg) are also playing.

"There's always trepidation in going over to a foreign land to play hockey," said Semonick, who added that Lupul does not personally know head coach Igor Ulanov or any of his teammates, which include just one North American-born player.

"You know the stories about some of the stuff that goes on in European hockey and players not being played. So there's always those issues, but we're pretty satisfied that this is a first-rate organization and a really nice city that will treat him right."

National Post LOADED: 10.31.2012

643454 Vancouver Canucks

Vancouver Canucks' Manny Malhotra could be a lockout casualty

By Elliott Pap

Manny Malhotra remains optimistic the NHL and the players will get a deal done.

In a worst-case scenario, where there is no NHL season, could Vancouver Canuck centre Manny Malhotra become a casualty?

Malhotra doesn't have a contract beyond this year and he'll be 33 in May. Following the last lockout, a total of 121 players who appeared in 40 or more games during the 2003-04 season never appeared in another NHL game when play resumed in 2005-06. Malhotra had 18 points and was minus-11 in 2011-12, a season hampered by his gruesome eye injury of March 2011.

"I haven't looked that far down the road," Malhotra said Tuesday following another lockout skate with the UBC Thunderbirds. "I remain optimistic that something will get done and we will have some sort of season."

Malhotra's optimism seems rooted in his conviction the NHL will end the lockout on its own timetable no matter what the players offer unless, of course, they completely capitulate.

"It's pretty evident to us they're on their own agenda and this is going to end when they feel it's going to end," said Malhotra, a member of the players bargaining committee. "It's frustrating and sad, really, that running a \$3.3-billion industry they only have one idea and one tactic as to how to get a deal done."

Malhotra scoffed at a comment made Monday by deputy commissioner Bill Daly, one in which Daly said it's clear to the league that if the players "wanted" a long lockout, they certainly have been "successful in creating an environment" to achieve one.

"We see right through it," Malhotra responded. "They realize they've got some incredibly bad press over this and they're feeling pressure from the fans knowing they are at fault for creating this lockout, they are at fault for locking us out and they are at fault for taking hockey away from everybody. They're just trying to spin it in their favour and trying to make themselves look like the good guys."

Meanwhile, forward Jannik Hansen has signed with Tappara of the Finnish Elite League and is scheduled to play his first game on Thursday. He is only the second Canuck to suit up for a European club. Fourth-liner Dale Weise is in the Dutch League.

The announcement, on Tappara's website, looked like this (via Google translator): "Tappara acquired another NHL player. Danish Vancouver Canuck Jannik Hansen ... comes to Tampere today."

Hansen told CKWX radio that it was just a matter of getting in some game action and that Tappara will cover his insurance. "It's a good league and I get a chance to play some hockey, that's what it's all about," he said.

It appears Tappara, which is based in Tampere, could use some help as it sits 11th in the 14-team league.

Hansen, 26, was scheduled to make \$1.35 million with the Canucks this season. He had 16 goals and 39 points in 2011-12 and was plus-18.

Vancouver Sun: LOADED: 10.31.2012

643455 Vancouver Canucks

From home cooking in Denmark to elite league in Finland for Hansen

By Ben Kuzma

VANCOUVER — At least Jannik Hansen always had a plan.

While most of his teammates have wondered aloud what their NHL lockout options might be and just when to pull the European playing trigger — outside of winger Dale Weise who decided earlier this month to play for the Tilburg Trappers of the Dutch elite league — Hansen was expected to play in Europe if the lockout dragged on. After skating in Winnipeg, where his wife is from, the Vancouver Canucks winger went home to his native Denmark and will now play for Tappara of the Finnish elite league. He's expected to debut Thursday.

And, as expected, with the lockout now wiping out games through Nov. 30, getting some home cooking in his native Denmark and elite playing time in Finland was an easy decision.

"Very convenient to go home, stay with my parents and eat some home cooking," Hansen told reporters. "I haven't had that opportunity in eight years, so that would be a nice part."

Aside from playing, Hansen wanted to make sure he was in Europe when the Danish national team attempts to qualify for the 2014 Sochi Olympics. The process starts in February.

Hansen has played for the Danish national team at the world championships and at the junior level, competed in both Division 1 and main tournament play in the world junior and under-18 world tournament. In the 2005 world junior event, he had four goals in five games.

Hansen, 26, is coming off a career high 16 goals and 39 points and had one goal in five playoff games against the Los Angeles Kings. A fixture on the third line, the versatile winger has two more seasons at a \$1.35 million US salary cap hit and will be a key ingredient on that alignment as the Canucks try to fill the centre void on the third line.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 10.31.2012

643456 Vancouver Canucks

Stay-at-home Canucks could suffer in condensed season

By Jason Botchford

Jannik Hansen is heading overseas to play with Tappara of the Finnish elite league, just the second Canuck to make the decision to head to Europe during the lockout.

Jannik Hansen may be the second Canuck going to play in Europe, but, unlike Dale Weise, his announcement didn't get any laughs.

That's because Hansen, who will play in Finland, is the first Vancouver player to sign on for some elite hockey overseas.

Sorry Weise, not even Daniel Sedin could hold back chortling when asked about the Dutch hockey league you're in.

Even at two, however, the Canucks have the fewest NHL players in Europe. The league average is six to seven. Three Western Conference contenders, Detroit, St. Louis and San Jose, have at least 11.

That's a significant core of players who will have had a month or two of professional games under their skates if hockey starts in December.

And that threatens to be something of an advantage over the Canucks, who, even with a level playing field, tend to start seasons shuffling, often like they're in potato sacks.

"We always talk about how you can practice as much as you want, and you can spend as much time as you want in the gym, but nothing compares to game speed and nothing will prepare you for game speed except games," Manny Malhotra said.

"Those guys playing over there, definitely have the edge, in terms of staying sharp with their skills. Their cardio will be up there. They will be sharp and in the game."

CUP FINAL FATIGUE

There are reasons why the Canucks have so few players leaving the continent.

For one, go back to the 2010-11 run to the Stanley Cup final. Many of the regulars logged 107 games played, including playoffs. The grind left them

emotionally stale and physically bankrupt. Their offseason was down to two months.

And last year, even as they continued regular season success, the Canucks never looked fresh. They had a worse-for-wear feel, playing like a team which never fully recovered, and ultimately disappointed.

So, when the lockout became a reality, many of them were more than willing to take another month off without games.

#### FAMILY FACTOR

In addition, this isn't the youngest team in the league. Their priorities have changed. They have families.

Many of them have two kids or more. Many thought it was a no-brainer when given a choice of shipping off to Europe or staying home and being a father.

"It's funny, because things change after you spend four or five months with your kids every day," Roberto Luongo explained. "When you leave for a couple of days, it becomes really hard. They miss you at home a lot.

"I'm at the point in my career where I've been in the league a long time. I have two young kids. My daughter is in preschool.

"For me, to pick up and go over there for a few months by myself is not worth leaving my family, not in the big scheme of things."

Luongo is skating a couple days a week in Florida. Malhotra is here with a handful of Canucks who have stayed on in Vancouver.

One of them, Cory Schneider, is considering Europe. He may have an opportunity to play in Switzerland. But the Swiss league is about to take an extended break, and he's not likely to pull the trigger on any deal until the second week of November.

"It is a big commitment to go over there, especially if you are going to pick up the kids and move them, get them into schools over there," Malhotra said. "Guys have their own reasons, but this is home for us. This is where we are comfortable.

On that, Daniel added: "Maybe we like it too much here."

#### 'PEAK PHYSICAL CONDITION'

The lack of movement overseas hasn't concerned the Canucks brass, who point out three of their players are injured and can't go, Alex Edler, Ryan Kesler and Jason Garrison. Another two possible contributors, Zack Kassian and Chris Tanev, are playing regularly for Chicago in the AHL.

"Our players are extremely professional and we expect they'll be peak physical condition," assistant general manager Laurence Gilman said.

But even if the players are in their "peak" condition, there remains an increased injury risk going from shinny three times a week to the NHL regular season. Especially with nothing more than a weeklong training camp to ramp up.

Without Europe, the best practices the Canucks have had in a couple of months are the ones this week with the UBC Thunderbirds hockey team. Working out with CIS players is a wonderful give-and-take concept that gives the Canucks a chance to skate with a full team and scrimmage too.

But it's light years from the NHL.

"It's up to us as players to push ourselves," Daniel said. "The players at UBC are good players, but obviously it's not the same pace as an NHL practice."

If there is a shortened, condensed season it promises to do two things. One, it will put stress on players who travel the most. Hello, Vancouver. And two, it will make the start to the season more important than usual.

"The [European] players will have an advantage," Daniel conceded. "But they're only going to have it for a week or two. Once training camp starts, we're going to have our team here. We'll practice hard and we'll be ready.

"Last year, Henk and I played only one preseason game. So, I don't think that's going to problem."

Yes, the Canucks sat out their vets for most of the preseason last fall. That got them off to 9-9-1 start.

In a 60-game season, that's one-third of the year.

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643457 Vancouver Canucks

NHL lockout: Canucks' Hansen had a plan

By Ben Kuzma

Jannik Hansen has gone home to Denmark and is set to play for Tappara of the Finnish elite league. He wanted to be in Europe when the Danish national team begins its attempt to qualify for the 2014 Sochi Olympics, a process that starts in February.

At least Jannik Hansen always had a plan.

While his teammates have wondered aloud what their NHL lockout options might be and just when to pull the play-in-Europe trigger — outside of winger Dale Weise, who decided earlier this month to play for the Tilburg Trappers of the Dutch elite league — Hansen was expected to play in Europe if the lockout dragged on.

After skating in Winnipeg, his wife's hometown, the Vancouver Canucks winger went home to his native Denmark and is expected to make his debut for Tappara of the Finnish elite league on Thursday.

As expected, with the lockout wiping out games through Nov. 30, going home and getting elite playing time was an easy decision.

"Very convenient to go home, stay with my parents and eat some home cooking," Hansen told reporters. "I haven't had that opportunity in eight years, so that would be a nice part."

Aside from playing, Hansen wanted to make sure he was in Europe when the Danish national team attempts to qualify for the 2014 Sochi Olympics. The process starts in February.

Hansen has played for Denmark at the world championship and at the junior level, competing in both Division 1 and main tournament play in the world junior and under-18 world tournaments. In the 2005 world junior event, he had four goals in five games.

Hansen, 26, is coming off a career-high 16 goals and 39 points and had one goal in five playoff games against the Los Angeles Kings. A fixture on the third line, the versatile winger has two more seasons at a \$1.35-million-US salary cap hit, and will be a key ingredient on that alignment as the Canucks try to fill the centre void.

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643458 Washington Capitals

Ovechkin misses game with bronchitis, Backstrom records first KHL goal

Katie Carrera

Alex Ovechkin may have missed Dynamo Moscow's game Monday because of bronchitis and a high fever but that didn't keep him from signing autographs for legions of his hometown fans. (Seriously, look at the line, as photographed by Sovietsky Sport.)

Yahoo Sports' Nicholas Cotsonika is in Russia and he documented the scene as Dynamo Moscow fans waited for an opportunity to meet Ovechkin. An excerpt follows and you can check out the full story here.

The announcement came during the second period of Dynamo Moscow's game against Dinamo Riga on Monday night: Ovechkin, the locked-out captain of the Washington Capitals, would be signing autographs on the second-floor concourse during intermission. Even though it was a one-goal game, the stands emptied immediately. The fans lined up behind metal barricades. They leaned over the third-floor overhang, knowing they would have no chance to meet him there, but a better chance to see him.

They waited.

And then there he was, surrounded by three guards, wearing his white No. 32 Dynamo jersey and stylishly ripped jeans. Ovechkin waded through the crowd and waved. He took a picture with a kid in a wheelchair. Then he signed, and signed, and signed, and signed. Little kids. Old ladies. Grown men. He signed hats and scarves and shirts and jerseys. He signed pictures and programs and whatever else a marker could mark.

During Ovechkin's absence Monday, Nicklas Backstrom recorded his first KHL goal and helped Dynamo Moscow claim a 3-1 win over Dinamo Riga. Video of the goal is below.

Washington Post LOADED: 10.31.2012

643459 Washington Capitals

Marcus Johansson signs with BIK Karlskoga in Sweden

Katie Carrera

Marcus Johansson has signed with BIK Karlskoga in the second-tier Swedish league Hockey Allsvenskan, according to the team's website.

Johansson, who returned to Sweden in early October, is the sixth Capital to sign overseas since the lockout began back on Sept. 16. Alex Ovechkin and Nicklas Backstrom are both playing for Dynamo Moscow in the KHL, Brooks Laich is in Switzerland with the Kloten Flyers in Switzerland, Wojtek Wolski is in Poland with KH Sanok and Michal Neuvirth is in the Czech Republic with Sparta Praha. (Check out our full list of where the Caps are during the lockout.)

From BIK Karlskoga, via Google Translate: (s/t Värmlands Folkblad)

Washington Star Marcus Johansson has for some time been training with Färjestad, but now he's ready for the game with BIK Karlskoga. Agreement is a so-called short-term contracts and Marcus practicing with the team for the first time in today's warming. If the insurance issue has time to dissolve, so does Marcus already in tonight's game against Troy / Ljungby.

22-year-old, who played in Malmo, Farjestad, Skåre, Hershey Bears and Washington Capitals are a skate skilled two-way center that is round in most ways. Fine hockey sense, good technique, aggressive in his game, working home and produce objective and above all assists. Has a good shot and epitomizes a team player. Welcome to BIK Karlskoga, Marcus!

Johansson spoke with Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet about the signing and you can check out a translation by Malin Andersson over at Japers' Rink. From that translation, come a few more details of Johansson's contract with BIK Karlskoga as well:

Johansson is playing for free but the club will pay for his insurance. The insurance cost is \$5,000 dollars per month according to BIK Karlskoga's Club president, Torsten Yngvesson. The contract is for two weeks, but in theory it could last all season according to Johansson's agent Gunnar Svensson.

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643460 Washington Capitals

NHL lockout 2012: Fears becoming reality that season could be lost

By Stephen Whyno

They can't be this stupid, this short-sighted, this selfish, this greedy. Hockey fans are wondering that as an NHL lockout could cancel an entire season for the second time in nine years.

Already 326 games have been wiped out, and the fact is everything in 2012-13 could be lost.

"It has the same feeling as seven, eight years ago. [Owners] try the same system that they did that time, exactly the same way than that time," Philadelphia Flyers defenseman Kimmo Timonen said. "It seems like they

have this attitude that they're going to do exactly what they did eight years ago."

Before the lockout began Sept. 15, the prevailing opinion was that even if games were missed, this wouldn't be like 2004-05. Ex-Washington Capitals right wing Mike Knuble in late August called it highly unlikely because "that would be just absolutely crazy."

Yet logic is not in charge. It might be worth considering that, even if crazy, losing this season is becoming a distinct possibility.

"I wasn't there in '04 and '05. There's a lot of things that you can look at that differentiate the two situations," Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews said. "But at the end of the day, it's the same ownership group, and it's the same commissioner. You can't rule that out."

During the past few months of negotiations, it has proved hard to rule anything out.

The NHL's first offer included lowering the players' share of hockey-related revenue from 57 percent at the end of the last collective bargaining agreement to about 43 percent, which amounts to a 24 percent pay cut. And the NHL Players' Association's last foray into negotiating included three proposals that were rejected within 15 minutes.

Then, last week, the November schedule was canceled. Once time passed to complete an 82-game season, the league pulled its most recent offer off the table. Commissioner Gary Bettman said at that time that making a deal "may get more difficult."

Players' already bitter feelings toward the owners' process worsened.

"As has been proven over time, they're just on a timeline and they're waiting to see how much they can squeeze us for," Toews said. "I don't know what's going to happen in the next week or so, but as players, we've stood up, we've stood together this whole time. We've worked very hard at trying to negotiate. That's as much as we can do at this point."

Players have noted time and again their desire to play, first under the old CBA while talks continued and then again last week as several pointed out that if a deal is reached sooner rather than later, those canceled November games could be put back on the schedule.

That's not likely to happen because the sides haven't even taken part in formal negotiations since Oct. 18. Still, NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr doesn't want to talk yet about an entire season going by the wayside.

"I hope that's premature discussion, and we certainly hope it isn't true," Fehr said. "As a personal matter, I don't see any reason for it. But I didn't see a reason to begin to talk about a lockout last January. And I didn't see a reason to make a proposal off the bat for another 24 percent in salary reductions or any of the rest of it."

But the players and owners are seemingly stalled. The Winter Classic could be canceled Thursday, according to reports, which would take away the NHL's signature regular-season event.

Fehr said anyone could argue that NHL has been on a similar path as the NBA, but basketball ensured the resumption of the season in time for Christmas Day a year ago.

"Right now it doesn't look too good," Blackhawks forward Patrick Kane said of losing this season. "Hopefully, they can put something together and try to get a season in."

Even in hopes that the sides could bridge the gap and get a deal done, Timonen echoed Toews and Kane's sentiment that "it doesn't look very good" right now that there will be a season at all.

But not every player has that sense of doom, at least yet.

"My stance on it is that I'm trying to remain highly, highly optimistic right now," Anaheim Ducks forward Bobby Ryan said. "And in the short period of time. It's so hard to speak for it because things can change in a day."

They can have a great meeting and then all of a sudden the optimism comes back and it's strong."

If this impasse lasts long enough to get the players and owners there, it wouldn't be unfamiliar territory. But after the last lockout, the "new NHL" with Sidney Crosby, the shootout and rules to improve the game enticed fans to come back.

It stands to reason that might not happen this time around.

"When you cancel a whole month of games, it's not a good sign for us, it's not a good sign for the fans," Timonen said. "I hope they have a big say and that they put a lot of pressure on us and the owners, saying that, 'OK, we're not coming to games if this is not done by whenever.' ... As a fan I would start looking for something else."

Fehr and players are quick to point out that the lockout itself should have been a last resort instead of a negotiating tactic. The same goes for canceling games.

But an entire season would be another nuclear winter for the sport.

"I hope that it's a worst-case scenario," Ryan said. "And I highly hope we don't get there."

Washington Times LOADED: 10.31.2012

643461 Winnipeg Jets

Time's right for Jets Wheeler to take flight

By Ken Wiebe

Blake Wheeler simply got tired of waiting for the lockout to end.

So after his wife Sam gave birth to a baby boy just over a week ago, the Winnipeg Jets right-winger seriously started looking at his options overseas, ultimately deciding to sign a deal with EHC Red Bull Munchen of the German Elite League.

"It's time to get moving," Wheeler said in a telephone interview from Minneapolis. "Munich is a great city, the DEL is a good league and all of that made it a good opportunity to keep developing, skill-wise and get back into game shape, which is probably the most important thing. "I have quite a few buddies that I've played college with (at the University of Minnesota) that are over there and playing well. It helps your comfort level. It should be a really good experience. I'm excited."

Wheeler won't have much time to ease into the lineup though.

"I won't really know what to expect until I get there. I'm going over Wednesday and playing already on Friday," said Wheeler. "I'm throwing myself into the fire, which is a good thing. I'm excited to compete again. There will be some familiar faces, but for the most part, it'll be a new team. Hopefully, I can gel as much as possible with those guys, start winning and get things going in the right direction."

Wheeler, 26, is coming off a breakout season that saw him produce 18 goals and a career-high 64 points in 80 games that left him tops on the Jets in scoring.

"It just got to the point where this is a big year for me and I just don't want to sit around and not be doing anything. It is a contract year for me" said Wheeler, who is scheduled to become a restricted free agent on July 1. "My goal is to help those guys and do the best I can over there. If the NHL gets resolved, then I'll be in game shape, ready to go and hit the ground running. If not, it's going to be a great experience. It's pretty much a win-win."

Wheeler was among the players to suit up in the Defending the Blue Line charity game in Minnesota on Sunday in what was his first real action since the Jets ended their season in April.

"It was a lot of fun to play in front of fans again," said Wheeler, who had a goal and three assists. "I was almost a little nervous going out for the first shift. It makes you miss it even more, when you go out there and compete a bit and fans are cheering. It makes you remember what you're missing. Like we've said all along, hopefully sooner than later, we can get back out there at the MTS Centre."

Winnipeg Sun LOADED 10.31.2012

643462 Websites

ESPN / Caps net another star in the making

By Scott Burnside

HERSHEY, Pa. -- Get your atlas out. OK, now draw a line from Rosenheim, Germany, to Belleville, Ontario, to Windsor, to Kingston to North Charleston, S.C., to Reading, Pa., to Hershey, Pa.

Now you have a sense of the path taken by a young netminder named Philipp Grubauer.

You may not have heard of the Washington Capitals' 2010 fourth-round draft pick -- yet.

But the self-composed, well-traveled Grubauer is already turning heads at the AHL level, and the Capitals, awash in young goaltending talent, may soon find themselves in the enviable position of having a glut of goaltending prospects if Grubauer keeps up his current level of play.

Now the challenge is finding enough ice time to ensure the development of Grubauer, while the rest of the young Washington netminders continue on a desirable arc.

In a perfect world, the 20-year-old Grubauer would be splitting time at the AHL level with veteran Dany Sabourin, learning the ins and outs of being a professional netminder and perhaps challenging to be the Bears' go-to guy.

But we all know hockey is not a perfect universe and last season's NHL playoff sensation, Braden Holtby, was returned to Hershey with the NHL in lockout mode, which means Grubauer was initially dispatched to Reading of the ECHL.

But when Holtby got his bell rung in a game last week, Grubauer returned to Hershey and was outstanding for the Bears in an overtime loss in his first AHL start.

Holtby, who remains out of action as the team cautiously watches his recovery, remains the poster boy for seizing the moment.

When injuries to veteran Tomas Vokoun and another former AHL standout, Michal Neuvirth, necessitated Holtby's promotion to NHL action late last season, he responded in spectacular fashion.

The 23-year-old native of Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, with the curious pregame routines and nervous ticks was the starting netminder when the Caps opened the playoffs against the defending Stanley Cup champion Boston Bruins. He was the catalyst to the Caps' seven-game upset of the Bruins, a series won in overtime on the road. He very nearly replicated that performance in the second round, as the Caps were edged in seven games by the top-seeded New York Rangers. In 14 postseason games, Holtby turned in a .935 save percentage and 1.95 GAA.

It was a performance not lost on Grubauer.

"Of course I want to have that opportunity. I want to play in the NHL," Grubauer told ESPN.com this week.

Since leaving junior hockey, where he played with three teams, Grubauer has relished working with longtime goaltending coach Dave Prior and former NHLer Olaf Kolzig, who joined the Caps' coaching staff a year ago.

"They've helped me so much," Grubauer said.

The reports from Prior and Kolzig have been glowing, as well.

Washington GM George McPhee said Prior has been enthusiastic about Grubauer's maturation and evolution as a netminder.

"Dave Prior told me this guy is even better than we thought," McPhee told ESPN.com. "That's all good news."

The constant moving around has been difficult in terms of putting down any kind of roots: "It kind of sucks to move around like that," Grubauer admitted. But he is embracing the idea of competing with other talented youngsters for a chance to play.

"That's what makes you better," he said. "That's what gets you to the next level. Always work hard and be ready."

It's a level that appears to be getting closer all the time.

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ESPN / Cameron Schilling stands out in Hershey

By Scott Burnside

HERSHEY, Pa. -- The American Hockey League season is in its infancy and there's still hope for an NHL season of some kind (although that hope diminishes with every passing moment), but already it's clear the infusion of young NHL talent at the AHL level is changing the dynamics of the games.

"I think the easiest way for me to explain it is every night, instead of playing against a fourth line, you've added a top line of guys that are probably NHL-ready and maybe a pair of D [defensemen] that are NHL-ready," Hershey Bears co-coach Mark French said.

"There are no easy games, no easy periods. It's certainly upped the level of competitiveness that we've seen."

One of the ongoing dilemmas for those NHL-ready players is staying focused and not lamenting what might have been, what might be, while they bide their time on the long bus rides that dominate the AHL schedule.

Among the handful of Hershey Bears who might have been on the Washington Capitals' opening day roster -- and certainly someone who can expect at some point to get a call to 'the show' when and if the NHL reconvenes -- is defenseman Cameron Schilling.

An undrafted collegian from Miami (Ohio), Schilling has all the tools that make GMs and coaches salivate: size at 6-foot-2, a heavy shot, good defensive skills and impressive speed.

"He jumps off the rink for you with his speed," French said.

"I think he's a little bit more aggressive this year. When he first came in from college last year, understandably so he was probably just trying to fit in and playing a very composed, controlled game. Since coming into training camp, you see a little bit more offense to his game, so he's trying to branch off a little bit that way."

Washington GM George McPhee said they have envisioned Schilling as the shutdown element in a pairing with a more offensive defender at the NHL level, but if Schilling keeps evolving, McPhee may have the luxury of pairing him with any style of player.

Schilling was born in Carmel, Ind., but spent much of his youth outside Detroit. He describes himself as a late-bloomer, so not being drafted wasn't much of a surprise to him.

As for pining for his shot at the NHL, Schilling seems pretty Zen about how this plays out for him.

The time with Hershey will give him time to focus on his defensive game, he said, especially given the competition's jump in skill compared to college.

"The guys are a lot more dynamic," he said.

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ESPN / Too many coaches on the ice?

By Scott Burnside

HERSHEY, Pa. -- One minute Mark French, one of the rising stars among AHL coaches, is barking out instructions to the American Hockey League Hershey Bears at a morning practice.

The next minute, there's Hall of Fame-bound Adam Oates, putting the players through their drills.

Do too many whistles spoil the broth or does it make for a tasty hockey stew?

The Washington Capitals are going to find out.

While it has been common for NHL head coaches to make regular trips to see their club's AHL affiliates play during the current lockout, the Washington Capitals have rewritten the book on lockout coaching etiquette by installing Oates as a co-coach at the AHL level.

They are the only NHL team to have done so.

Awkward?

Absolutely.

But will it work for the greater good?

If the classy manner in which both Oates -- hired in the summer to be the Caps' head coach -- and French -- the fastest man to 100 wins in AHL history -- have responded to the unusual circumstances, maybe everyone ends up coming out on top.

"It's been different, but it's been a tremendous opportunity to learn," said French, who is entering his fourth season as Bears coach, having piled up 144 wins and a Calder Cup championship in his first three seasons.

"On a personal level, it's given me and [assistant Hershey coach Troy Mann] an opportunity to understand what kind of stamp Adam's going to put on this organization."

Oates, of course, hoped to be standing behind the Capitals' bench at the Verizon Center after getting his first NHL head-coaching gig after three years as an assistant (one in Tampa and two in New Jersey, where he was part of a team that advanced to the 2012 Stanley Cup finals).

Adam Oates

Adam Oates expected to be behind the bench at Verizon Center at this point in the season instead of sharing coaching duties in Hershey, Pa.

It hasn't worked out that way, so he's in Hershey trying to make the best of what is a unique job-sharing situation, honing his skills and preparing for an NHL season everyone hopes is just around the corner.

"It's very different for both of us. I thought for [coach French], allowing me to come down here and work with him, I thought he has been very gracious and very professional about it and I appreciate that," Oates said.

"We talk a lot of hockey and I think that's probably good for both of us because we check each other."

As the lockout approached in mid-September, Washington GM George McPhee came to the conclusion that whatever short-term pain the jamming together of two coaching staffs in one place might produce, the long-term gain for Oates, his new staff and the Capitals was worth it.

The theory makes sense on a number of levels.

Although Oates has experience behind NHL benches, it's a significant jump to being a head coach at the NHL level, so McPhee wanted Oates to get as much head-coaching experience as possible with the lockout in effect. He also wanted Oates and his staff, former teammate Calle Johansson and Tim Hunter, to be on the same page.

"All coaching staffs use different terminology and expressions. They need to be speaking the same language," McPhee told ESPN.com this week.

The Caps under Oates also were looking to introduce new systems. Oates is the team's third head coach in the past year as Bruce Boudreau was dispatched 22 games into the 2011-12 season and replaced by Dale Hunter, who was captain of the Capitals when Oates was a player. Hunter returned to London, Ontario, after the playoffs, though, to the junior hockey team he owns and coaches with brother Mark Hunter.

Having Oates and his staff impart their systems to French and his staff and the rest of the Bears' players, a handful of which will be with the NHL club should the players and owners strike a deal, also was part of the plan.

French acknowledged that when Hunter took over for Boudreau, the Bears didn't really modify their schemes, which had been tailored to how Boudreau wanted his players to play.

"When the change was made and Dale came in, we kind of stayed with the same philosophy that held onto Bruce's systems. With Adam coming in and going to summer camp with him, we knew there was going to be a transition in the style of play. I think it's been a considerable advantage that we've had him here to instill that," French said.

"I think me and Troy would have muddled through it and put it into place, but it's probably sped up our learning process having him here, and obviously the players' learning process to put into play that we had a guy that's actually implemented those systems."

The delicate part for McPhee in charting this unusual course was how it would play with his AHL staff. As much as the AHL is a feeder league for

the NHL in terms of players, it is also a proving ground for NHL coaches. With his successes, French is a legitimate NHL coaching candidate and McPhee wanted to make sure the staff understood this wasn't about their competency but rather about preparing the NHL club the best way possible given the uncertainty of the lockout.

"My concerns, obviously, were how it would affect the coaches in Hershey," McPhee acknowledged. "That had to be explained and they understand now."

French noted that this is a chance for the coaching staff to practice what it preaches in terms of self-sacrifice.

"I think the understanding needs to be that our goal is, as an employee of the Washington Capitals, is to do what's right for that organization and I think there was a quick realization that this was what was needed. We ask our players to sacrifice and to be unselfish all the time; it's no different for a coach," French said.

"It's all in how we take it, and I'm still a young coach who has a lot to learn and I'm seeing a different perspective on the game that I believe improves myself as a coach."

The idea, of course, is that this is a short-term situation.

If the owners and players can find their way to a deal, the potential for a very quick turnaround to the start of the NHL season is great.

McPhee acknowledged they haven't discussed how this will play out if an entire NHL season is lost.

The down side is that there is a potential for mixed signals with two coaching staffs trying to get players ready for games.

"We just had a meeting with the older guys that all four coaches are trying to get on board, so we all have the same answer for them. So if any player went to any one guy, we're not confusing them with conflicting information. So we're trying the best that we can that we're all on the same page and trickle it down," Oates said.

The Bears are one of the AHL's most successful franchises with home crowds averaging nearly 10,000, and they have led the AHL in attendance for the past six seasons. The team is off to a modest 3-3-1 start, but the players aren't using the multitude of coaches as any kind of excuse.

"The more coaches, the merrier," defenseman Cameron Schilling told ESPN.com this week.

One of the team's rising young defensive stars, Schilling has been spending time with Johansson, who played 17 NHL seasons, working on his stick positioning and other intricate details of the defensive game.

"I think that's definitely going to help me develop," he said. "It's great having them out there."

Veteran forward Jeff Taffe signed an AHL contract this offseason and thinks the younger players should relish the opportunity to learn from the coaching talent that has been assembled, even if it's just for a short while.

"It just doubles the amount of people you can talk to and ask questions of," he said. "I think guys really need to take advantage of it."

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Players need to ask themselves: Is it worth it?

Jason Brough

Fehr and players

Even after the NHL canceled all games through November, NHLPA chief Donald Fehr maintained it makes sense for the players to hold out for a better deal from the owners.

"It's a five-or-six-or-seven-year agreement," Fehr told the StarTribune Monday. "Also, look at what's on the table [from the owners], there's a lot more that's on the table in addition to just player share. They're saying the things players got in the last agreement in return for the 24 percent rollback

[and salary cap], they have to take it back. [The players] lose ground in salary arbitration, they lose ground in free agency, lose ground in the entry-level system, contracts are limited in all kinds of ways that make them much less secure."

However, when asked if it would make sense to lose an entire season of salary – in 2011-12, total player compensation was \$1.873 billion – Fehr would only say that the league stands to lose an entire season of revenue, too.

The counter-argument is that an NHL franchise isn't an NHL player. The first has an indefinite life span and a value that's determined by the expectation of future revenues; the other has an average career length of four to five seasons and a value that falls to zero once that career is over.

In September, Mike Modano reflected on the season the players lost due to the 2004-05 lockout.

"At some point, we were sold a bill of goods," Modano told ESPN. "Everybody was buying it. Everybody thought, 'Let's not let each other down. Let's do it for the future of the game. Blah, blah, blah.' You're only in the game so long."

And he wasn't the only one to look back in regret.

Last November, Dave Andreychuk advised locked out NBA players to get a deal done as soon as possible: "In the end, it will be worse."

Last October, Bill Guerin concluded: "Burning a year was ridiculous."

So is Fehr doing the players a disservice by advising they hold out for a better deal that he's not even guaranteed to deliver? Sure, the NHLPA – which like an NHL franchise has an indefinite life span – may be stronger in the long run by standing up to the owners today, but if you're a current player, how much are you willing to sacrifice for the future of the cause?

Only the players can answer those questions. Perhaps money isn't the root cause of their dispute with the NHL. Maybe it's more about pride and fairness. Nobody likes to be extorted, even if paying the ransom is preferable on a non-emotional level to the alternative.

Fehr said he reminds the players "a negotiation is a process of constant reevaluation."

So, do they stay the course?

Or, is it time to...reevaluate?

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Alberta government on defensive after donation by Oilers owner

Jason Brough

2011 NHL Entry Draft - Round One Getty Images

The political fallout continues in Alberta after it was learned last week that Oilers owner Daryl Katz made a sizable donation to the provincial government's party in the midst of efforts to build a new publicly funded arena in Edmonton.

The Oilers have requested \$100 million from the province for the arena.

On Monday, opposition politicians insisted that Katz's donation was a clear attempt to buy favors.

"Let me connect some dots," Wildrose Party leader Danielle Smith said. "Given that a quarter of the government's election donations are said to be from a single source, and given that source wants \$100 million from the government for a hockey arena, and he sits on the board of a Crown corporation that invests \$70 billion of assets owned by Albertans, doesn't anyone in this government have a problem with that?"

The province's finance minister, Doug Horner, dismissed the accusations, noting that the government has already turned down Katz's request for arena funds and stands by its decision.

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CBA update: Daly says still "a large gulf to bridge"

Jason Brough

BillDaly

When the NHL tabled its 50-50 proposal two weeks ago, it was hoping the players would negotiate off the structure of that offer.

Instead, the NHLPA responded with three proposals of its own creation that the league promptly rejected.

At the time, commissioner Gary Bettman said it was "clear that we're not speaking the same language."

Monday, deputy commissioner Bill Daly expressed frustration with the way things have played out while providing little clue as to how negotiations might move forward.

"No new news," Daly told ESPN.com. "We withdrew our most recent proposal on Friday, and now we are spending time thinking about our next proposal and how best to get closer to a resolution. We hope the union is doing the same thing. Given the fact that the union refused even to discuss our last proposal, it would appear that we still have a large gulf to bridge."

The fact the two sides haven't even agreed on the structure of the next CBA doesn't bode well as it's yet another roadblock to the end of the work stoppage.

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YAHOO SPORTS / Pavel Datsyuk's wisdom, whimsy and wizardry on full display in KHL

Nick Cotsonika

MOSCOW – "What about Pasha?" the agent asked.

Pavel Datsyuk has been invaluable to CSKA Moscow both on and off the ice. (Y! Sports)Pasha? As in Pavel? As in Pavel Datsyuk, the Detroit Red Wings superstar?

Sergei Fedorov couldn't believe it. As the new head manager of CSKA Moscow, the fabled Central Red Army club, Fedorov had told Datsyuk months before to keep him in mind if there was an NHL lockout. But even though Fedorov was once a Detroit superstar himself, he never thought he would have a chance. He assumed Datsyuk would join one of his former teams, Ak Bars Kazan.

"What about him?" Fedorov asked the agent. "How's he doing in Kazan?"

"There is no Kazan."

"Yeah, yeah."

Fedorov still couldn't believe it. Sitting in his spartan office at the Soviet-era rink on Leningradsky Prospect, Fedorov was supposed to be talking to the agent about another center – the Toronto Maple Leafs' Mikhail Grabovski. It wasn't going well. Maybe this was a ploy.

"You're joking," Fedorov said.

"Nope. I'm offering you."

"I don't believe it, but let's talk about it."

[Nick Cotsonika: Russian fans rather see Alex Ovechkin

sign autographs than watch KHL game]

The agent explained why Datsyuk was not going to Kazan. Ak Bars had decided not to sign players who couldn't commit to the entire season. That

way, the team would not be disrupted if the lockout ended and the NHLers returned to North America.

This was serious. Datsyuk was available.

"I'm in," Fedorov said.

Now it was late October, and Fedorov couldn't believe his good fortune. It was a month-and-a-half into the NHL lockout, and CSKA was fighting for first place in the Tarasov Division of the Kontinental Hockey League. Datsyuk, the magician, had brought his full bag of tricks.

It's easy to see Datsyuk is a shining example for his teammates as well as Russian fans. (Y! Sports)Datsyuk used his unparalleled puck skills to weave through traffic with ease on the larger European ice surface. He set up the game's first goal, whipping a pass from the corner to the slot for Grabovski, his buddy, who ended up signing after he did. He scored CSKA's next goal, smacking in a rebound. Then he assisted on the eventual winner by Alexander Radulov, as CSKA beat Sibir Novosibirsk, 4-2.

But that wasn't all.

After the game, Datsyuk stood in the dressing room, surrounded by black-and-white pictures of the great players of CSKA's past – including his idol, a former Detroit teammate, Igor Larionov. He met with the Russian media.

A little while later, he walked into the front lobby, still wearing a red undershirt soaked with sweat. As one of his teammates held a camera, he signed a Red Wings hat and took a picture for a fan. It was his teammate's mother.

"Everybody," Fedorov said, "sort of kneel down towards his game, his attitude."

This was why having Datsyuk, even for an indefinite amount of time, was too good to be true.

There is his talent, of course. Datsyuk is both the most entertaining player and most complete player in the NHL, when he is, you know, playing in the NHL. He has here-you-see-it, now-you-don't moves. He also has you've-got-it, now-you-don't defensive skills. He has won the Selke Trophy as the NHL's best defensive forward three times.

In 13 games with CSKA, Datsyuk has 16 points and a plus-6 rating, averaging more than 21 minutes a game.

But Datsyuk also has tremendous marketing and leadership value, especially because Fedorov is trying to build atop CSKA's foundation, trying to turn the old Soviet powerhouse into a modern professional franchise for the future.

Datsyuk has so much charisma and character that his sense of humor and leadership skills shine in Detroit, despite the language barrier. But because he struggles with English, he still keeps a remarkably low profile for a player of his caliber. You have to know him to fully appreciate his sharp, self-deprecating wit. He leads by example.

[Nick Cotsonika: Evgeni Malkin enjoying 'special' time

as hometown hero in industrial Magnitogorsk]

Here, it all can come out in full.

He can play in front of his own people, who usually have to watch him on TV at odd hours. He can connect with kids.

"I like to play home, for Russian fans," Datsyuk said. "They miss us, too, because we play during the nighttime [in NHL]. Not everybody can watch and work. And I speak Russian language. It's easy for me. ...

"Lots of kids watching us. Sometimes they a little bit shy, but we teach them, 'Don't be shy.' "

He can speak to the Russian media. He can speak up in the dressing room. And he can still lead by example, showing the others what went into winning two Stanley Cups in Detroit.

"What I see off-ice, that's the Red Wings school, no doubt," Fedorov said. "Pavel's exceptional. Everybody saying, 'What you gonna do without Pavel?' My answer: 'We're gonna just die here without him.' We're gonna fight, fight, fight. But we're gonna die here without him."

Detroit is dying a little without Datsyuk right now, and Datsyuk is dying a little without Detroit. Asked if he missed Detroit, he did not hesitate.

"Yes," he said. "A lot."

What about it?

Datsyuk said he misses much about Detroit, but he's not following the NHL lockout closely. (Getty)"Hockey," Datsyuk said. "Fans. Locker room. People. It's tough a little bit. After over 10 years, you kind of change atmosphere, it's a little bit different."

Datsyuk has played for the Red Wings and lived in the Detroit area since 2001 – except, of course, for the '04-05 NHL lockout, which he spent with Dynamo Moscow. He has won a lot of games. He has made a lot of friends. He has made Detroit his adopted home.

He said he is not following lockout news.

"Remember, Russia is closed country," he cracked. "Nobody knows what's going on."

No Internet?

"No," he continued. "Too expensive in Russia."

Just Datsyuk being Datsyuk.

[Also: Detroit set to lose two-week hockey fest if Winter Classic canceled]

He turned serious.

"I can't do anything," he said. "Why I need know?"

If he knows, he will just worry. People will just ask him questions. He will just have to talk about it and think about it some more. There is no point.

"Save my time," he said.

But maybe that's why Datsyuk wanted to play here, so he wouldn't have to sit around, so he wouldn't have to dwell on it, so could make magic in another place he loves.

He said he isn't comparing the KHL to the NHL. He is just enjoying the hockey, playing with Russians against Russians for Russians for the most part, while learning about some young players he didn't know before.

He is having fun. You can tell by the way he plays.

"It's hard not to enjoy and play the way he plays," Fedorov said.

[Nick Cotsonika: Veteran NHL coach Paul Maurice starts all over as Russian rookie]

You can tell by the way he jokes. Does he like the big ice?

"It's too much skating," said Datsyuk, 34. "I'm not too young anymore. I need more energy."

Doesn't it help him make more moves?

"I have too much room," he said. "After I make a move, I have long way to skate to net."

You can tell by the way he smiles.

"It's awesome when you play at home," he said. "Always awesome."

Perhaps most of all, you can tell the way Fedorov smiles. Pasha? Fedorov still can't believe it.

"Everything has to do with me," Fedorov laughed, sitting in the same office where he met with the agent. "Of course, I am kidding. I happened to be at the right place at the right club at the right time."

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