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"We share in the tans' frustration that there isn't an agreement in place and we are doing the best we can with the things that are within our control. We appreciate the people that have kept their money with the team and we understand that, for differing reasons, some people have asked for a refund."

Hurricanes president and general manager Jim Rutherford

"It's difficult to hear, but at the same time, I can see their frustration. If that's how they feel they need to emphasize their frustration, then you can understand that. You want to see everyone support your team and support

the Hurricanes regardless, but we're in a situation where it's no fun for anybody and people have to make decisions with their money and their lives"

For hockey fans truly unhappy about the lockout, there's only one real way to hit both sides where it hurts: Demand their money back.

A few Carolina Hurricanes season-ticket holders have done just that, pulling their money from the team, including some of the oldest and most loyal.

Leigh Leclair had sat in the same seat for a decade. She understands the logic behind the first lockout, the one that wiped out the 2004-05 season. She can't fathom why the game is shut down again, so she decided to make herself heard.

"I figured one way to do it was to pull my money," Leclair said. "Not a whole lot of money, only one seat up in (section) 303, but I'm also a very loyal fan. It was just something that needed to be said. And I've taken a lot of flack for it."

Josh Hauser just wanted to go back to his 12-game plan in the upper deck from the full season tickets he bought in the lower bowl over the summer, a difference of about \$2.400.

When the team told him it wouldn't pay interest on his money if he reduced his commitment, he took all of it back.

"A horrifying experience," Hauser called it.

"We travel a lot and my wife is in grad school," he said. "We planned to sell a lot of the tickets. At no time did we ever imagine them holding onto thousands of our dollars indefinitely. They were very defiant, very insistent that we can't touch any of that money or we'd lose our seniority and benefits. We had no choice."

Even those who are keeping their money with the team are making decisions about how they support it in the future.

Randy Hill decided not to ask for a refund, but doesn't plan to renew when next season comes around, whenever that might be.

"I'm highly unlikely to get them again," Hill said. "I've been a season-ticket holder since Greensboro. Hockey's cheated on me twice. I don't know I really need to be going back."

The Hurricanes said one percent of season-ticket holders have asked for a refund. (The team does not disclose the size of its season-ticket base, but it is believed to have about 7,000 full season-ticket holders and about that many who purchase smaller packages.)

"We appreciate the people that have kept their money with the team and we understand that, for differing reasons, some people have asked for a refund," Hurricanes president and general manager Jim Rutherford said.

Hurricanes captain Eric Staal, meanwhile, empathized with the fans who have canceled their tickets and said he hoped to have a chance to win them back.

"It's difficult to hear, but at the same time, I can see their frustration," he said.

In August, when NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman infamously said, "We recovered well last time because we have the world's greatest fans," he was speaking from experience. The fans came back after the 2004-05 season was wiped out by labor strife, and most of them will again.

Not all of them, though. That much is becoming clear, from Dave Recht, an original Greensboro season-ticket holder, to Wayne Stephenson, a Raleigh native and self-described hockey convert. Both canceled their tickets and got a refund.

"Really what set me off was when I read that quote from Bettman, which I found to be rather condescending as a fan," Stephenson said. "My dispute is over the lockout itself. I think the folks in a front office you deal with on a day-to-day basis are as fine as they could be. It's just a matter of principle to me."

These hard-core fans have had enough. They've been toyed with, taken for granted and overlooked. They're no longer willing to see their dollars bankroll another lockout – even if their money is insignificant compared to the billions at stake, even if it breaks their hearts.

"It was worth it," Leclair said, "to make a statement."

All these fans ever wanted was a hockey season. Failing that, they'll try to send a message with their money, even if it's unlikely anyone will listen.

News Observer LOADED: 11.02.2012 643526 Columbus Blue Jackets

With no end in sight and the NHL lockout well into its seventh week,

By Aaron Portzline

With no end in sight and the NHL lockout well into its seventh week, the league is expected to cancel one of its marquee events today or Friday.

According to several reports, including ESPN, the NHL is poised to pull the plug on the Winter Classic, its annual Jan. 1 outdoor game that has helped league revenues soar from \$2.1 billion to \$3.3 billion during the previous seven seasons.

This year's game was to involve the Detroit Red Wings and Toronto Maple Leafs and be played at Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor, drawing a crowd of more than 100,000.

The NHL, which has canceled 26.5 percent of its regular-season schedule, has said the massive logistics of setting up a scene for the Winter Classic makes an early cancellation date necessary.

The league's other marquee event — the All-Star Game, to be hosted by the Blue Jackets at Nationwide Arena this season — will not be canceled today or Friday, sources have told The Dispatch.

During the last NHL lockout (2004-05), the All-Star Game in Atlanta was canceled on Nov. 3.

The NHL and NHL Players' Association haven't talked since the NHLPA made three proposals to the league on Oct. 17. The NHL dismissed all three in less than 15 minutes.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr spoke via phone yesterday, but no official negotiations are scheduled.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.02.2012

643527 Detroit Red Wings

Remaining Red Wings still in no rush to go overseas

By Helene St. James

Groans and eye rolls are common responses from the hardy handful of Red Wings still skating at Troy when asked if they're having any fun.

As tedious as running one's own hockey practices gets, though, there's little inclination to seek a job elsewhere, even as the NHL continues to pile on the bad news. It's expected that today will bring the cancellation of the 2013 Winter Classic, which the Wings were to have played New Year's Day against Toronto at Michigan Stadium. A week ago, the league expunged all games through November.

The lockout that began Sept. 16 is now 48 days old. Dozens of players are playing overseas, including Wings stars Henrik Zetterberg in Switzerland and Pavel Datsyuk in Russia, but doing so doesn't appeal to everyone, not as long as there's a chance the NHL will resume a 2012-13 schedule.

"If they will cancel the season, I would start to look at things," Johan Franzen said.

Franzen said he isn't likely to go to Switzerland because "those spots are probably taken by now. They don't take many foreigners in their league ... probably not Russia. But I don't rule out anything. The concern is the high taxes and my insurance."

Franzen and Niklas Kronwall are the most prominent Wings still in town. Neither has kids in school to worry about -- as does Todd Bertuzzi -- but Franzen and Kronwall do have hefty contracts. Including this season, Franzen, 32, has eight years and \$27.75 million left on his deal, while Kronwall, has seven years and \$33.25 million.

Kronwall said he "isn't looking for something right now, either." He has said if he does play elsewhere, it'd be Djurgarden, his old team in Sweden.

The younger guys still around aren't showing much eagerness, either.

Darren Helm said, "I feel like I've played a lot of hockey the past few years," while Justin Abdelkader sounded similarly reluctant. Both 25-year-olds just signed four-year deals over the summer.

Besides Zetterberg and Datsyuk, Valtteri Filppula is in Finland, Jonathan Ericsson in Sweden, Drew Miller in Scotland, Jakub Kindl in the Czech Republic and Jan Mursak in Austria. Kyle Quincey is playing for the Denver Cutthroats of the Central Hockey League.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.02.2012

643528 Detroit Red Wings

Winging It In Motown: 2002 was great draft year for Red Wings; 2001 not so much

By Graham Hathway

Any Red Wings fan worth his or her salt knows that the greatest draft in franchise history was 1989. If the goal is to get at least one NHL player out of each draft, acquiring Nicklas Lidstrom, Sergei Fedorov, Vladimir Konstantinov, Mike Sillinger, Bob Boughner and Dallas Drake should place it in the running for greatest draft ever.

But 1989 doesn't fit into our continuing series looking at the highs and lows of the team's 21-season postseason streak.

During their streak, the Wings have been hamstrung in their ability to draft a top prospect because of their low drafting position. And as a contender, the Wings also were always looking to trade picks for established players.

But drafting, in general, is a risk. The stud 18 year-old could be a gigantic bust, while the obscure Russian no one has heard of could turn out to be one of the most dynamic players in the game.

Just like 1989 doesn't fall within the parameters of this discussion, no draft after 2007 was considered here, because many of those players haven't had the opportunity to play a significant role at the NHL level.

**BEST DRAFT YEAR: 2002** 

In doing research on the last 22 draft seasons, one thing has caught my eye: the only first-round draft pick prior to 2005 who has had a real impact on the Wings was Niklas Kronwall (2000).

But 2002 was an interesting draft year. The Wings were coming off their third Stanley Cup in the last six years and had won the Presidents' Trophy, so they were drafting last in the first round. Not that it mattered, as the Wings had sent that pick to Buffalo in the Dominik Hasek trade.

So the Wings were left with their own second-round pick, and they flipped Aaron Ward to Carolina for the 58th overall pick, which they used to select Jiri Hudler. Five picks later, they acquired Tomas Fleischmann with their own selection. Then they swapped third-round picks with Nashville to land Valtteri Filppula. Later, the Wings picked up Derek Meech. And with the very last selection in the draft, they acquired Mr Irrelevant, Jonathan Ericsson.

In one draft, the Wings were able to pick up three everyday NHL players who would become big parts of their own team, one who was used to get Robert Lang from the Capitals (and turned out to be a decent player in his own right), and one who probably would have become a serviceable defenseman, had he been given a chance.

Hudler and Filppula were two-thirds of the Wings' best forward line last year, with Flip finally showing the offensive talent that was expected to go along with his defensive prowess. Hudler has the tools to be a consistent 20-goal scorer, although, at \$4 million per season, he's way overpriced. Ericsson, love him or hate him, is a fixture on the Wings' blue line and has the physical tools to be a good second-pairing defenseman. If he can ever work out the mental side of his game, he could be a steal.

Fleischmann was traded to Washington, along with two draft picks (one that became Mike Green), and is now playing with the Florida Panthers. Injuries and illness have limited him, but he has put up seasons of 51 and 62 points. Meech is a player who, had there not been a logjam on the Wings' blue line, probably could have developed into a decent third-pairing guy.

WORST DRAFT YEAR: 2001

This year saw the Wings lose to the Los Angeles Kings in the first round of the playoffs, which marked three consecutive years of the team failing to reach the third round.

Here is a list of the players that the Wings drafted in 2001. Raise your hand when you recognize one for his accomplishments in the NHL:

Igor Grigorenko

Drew MacIntyre

Miroslav Blatak

Andreas Jamtin

Nick Pannoni

Dmitri Bykov

Francois Senez

Together, those players combined for 71 games in a Red Wings uniform, all by Bykov in 2002-03. Beyond that, only MacIntyre played in an NHL game, appearing four games as a Sabre and Canuck.

Grigorenko was a highly touted prospect out of Russia who had his career derailed by a serious car accident that required four years of recovery. The injuries set back his career so far, he was never able to play in the NHL.

Jamtin appeared in nine games in the AHL. Blatak, Pannoni and Senez never saw action above juniors in North America.

Seventy-five NHL games (really 72 1/2 if you factor in the goaltending minutes of MacIntyre) from seven draftees. Almost every other draft year for the Wings has produced at least one contributor, even if it was as a defensive specialist. Some draft years are home runs, but 2001 was like striking out looking to end the World Series.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.02.2012

643529 Detroit Red Wings

Same Winter Classic should be reset for 2014 in Detroit

Gregg Krupa

The 2013 Winter Classic and associated festival of hockey planned for Detroit and Ann Arbor may well be the next big attraction the NHL cancels, perhaps today.

While the owners continue their hard line and the players try to stay in line, the damage wreaked by the NHL lockout is mounting.

Canceled games, disappointed sponsors and alienated fans. In his third lockout, commissioner Gary Bettman has seen it all. And Bettman and his staff almost certainly know what tactics they will employ to market their way out of another fiasco and win back the dollars of families and corporations.

The 2013 Winter Classic and associated festival of hockey planned for Detroit and Ann Arbor may well be the next big attraction the NHL cancels, perhaps today.

Among the first orders of business in burnishing the NHL brand ought to be a 2014 Winter Classic exactly as planned for 2013, with the Maple Leafs playing the Red Wings, some old fellows skating against each other once again, the minor leagues and college teams benefiting from the exposure and the businesses and residents of Downtown Detroit reveling in a festival of hockey.

The lure of the events planned is so strong in two countries that anything less in 2014 will be recalled as a betrayal of hockey fans from Detroit to Toronto, a 300-mile corridor between the metropolitan areas which includes

some of the most loyal fans in the NHL and a breeding and training grounds for its future players.

It was all a very good idea by a league that is capable of too few of them, and which will almost certainly suffer a loss of popularity from a lockout the owners and Bettman imposed on the players.

Classic is too important

The Winter Classic, despite the potential for bad ice, rain or frigid temperatures, is a centerpiece for the NHL. The game draws more interest than the All-Star Game, absent the actual selections, and NBC garners decent ratings for the holiday broadcast.

The game is also linked to HBO's "24/7," which offers fans a rare, continuous behind-the-scenes look at life in the NHL.

Losing the Winter Classic and associated events in any year reduces the marketing opportunities for the NHL and a chance to present an often misunderstood, sometimes maligned game in a positive light.

It filled the New Year's Day void left by the departure of the traditional college bowls.

It also catered to the desires of sponsors, like the title sponsor Bridgestone, to be associated with a popular holiday event that is well on its way to creating a tradition of its own.

Beginning today, by contract with the University of Michigan, the league must provide \$250,000 in addition to the \$100,000 non-refundable installment it already has made on its \$3 million rental fee.

It also becomes responsible for any costs to the university for preparations for the event.

Meanwhile, organizations like the American Hockey League and the Ontario Hockey League must finalize plans for where they will play the games currently scheduled for Comerica Park.

The financially-distressed City of Detroit also must begin making preparations.

For those and other reasons, there may be little alternative to canceling the 2013 Winter Classic as soon as today, even though the cancellation also serves Bettman and the owners as a bargaining chip.

But to cancel it without the simultaneous announcement that NHL officials will extend every effort to bring the same events to Detroit and Ann Arbor for the 2014 Winter Classic would be a grave error.

Some contrition needed

Clearly, the NHL takes its fans for granted when Bettman asserts as a matter of fact that they will return after the lockout because they are "the best fans in the world." Well, a lot of the best fans in the world are mighty ticked-off by now, especially in a city and region that have been required to do so much for the growth of the game.

Bettman and the other owners have relied on the Red Wings, a lot — used and abused the storied franchise, some would argue.

The Red Wings help grow the game in California, Texas, Ohio and the

Despite their natural rivals in the Eastern Conference and their location in the Eastern Time Zone, and what some asserted was a promise by Bettman to Mike and Marian Ilitch to move the Red Wings into the Eastern Conference in realignment talks, the Red Wings remain in the Western Conference, where their fans help to fill what otherwise would be half-empty arenas.

The excitement across the Detroit River all of the way to Toronto about participating in the Winter Classic and related events is considerable.

Maple Leafs fans are right to say this regular-season appearance in front of 115,000 fans live and millions more watching on television across North America is likely the biggest game for the traditional Original Six representatives of Anglophone Canada since their last appearance in the playoffs in 2004.

The Maple Leafs would be the first Canadian team to play in the Winter Classic.

It instilled a new vigor in the ancient rivalry between the two Original Six teams in adjacent geography, which has not been extinguished by the

NHL's scheduling tactics that serve its business goals and ignore its traditions.

With little new in the dispute between Bettman, the owners and the players Thursday — despite a conference call among the players in which some expressed frustration about the lack of negotiations, let alone progress toward agreement — it is likely all of the fun of the big game outdoors in Ann Arbor and the carnival of the sport in the redeveloping Downtown Detroit will be canceled.

It would be an acknowledgement of both the abused fans and its corporate sponsors for the NHL to express some contrition, if a cancellation is to be announced today, and to announce the full intention of providing the same events, in the same places, next winter.

Detroit News LOADED: 11.02.2012

643530 Detroit Red Wings

Detroit Red Wings' Henrik Zetterberg, Damien Brunner light it up in Swiss league

By Ted Kulfan

Red Wings forward Henrik Zetterberg's offensive numbers have soared since he and teammate Damien Brunner joined Swiss Elite League outfit EV Zug.

The chemistry between Henrik Zetterberg and Damien Brunner is working.

But in Switzerland, not at Joe Louis Arena.

Zetterberg and Brunner are shredding the Swiss Elite League since Zetterberg joined the league because of the NHL lockout.

Obviously the Swiss League isn't the NHL, but Zetterberg has a staggering 18 points (seven goals, 11 assists) in five games.

EV Zug, the team the duo plays for, is 4-0-1 since Zetterberg arrived.

Brunner, who the Wings signed as a free agent on July 1, leads the Swiss league with 24 points (nine goals, 15 assists) in 14 games.

Brunner, 26, is a 5-foot-11, 187-pound speedster who was never drafted. While working out with Red Wings right before the lockout set in, Wings players were impressed with Brunner's hands and speed and felt he could make an immediate contribution to the lineup.

Detroit News LOADED: 11.02.2012

643531 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings players realize season in serious jeopardy once Winter Classic is canceled

Ansar Khan

Now the NHL is on the verge of scrapping its premier regular season event, a game that's popularity has grown so much that a world-record crowd of 115,000 was expected to turn out for the Jan. 1 clash between the Detroit Red Wings and Toronto Maple Leafs at Michigan Stadium.

After the league scraps this spectacle, players believe the likelihood of the entire season being wiped out increases dramatically. The NHL and the players union remain far apart in collective bargaining talks that haven't even yielded a face-to-face meeting since Oct. 18. The lockout is approaching seven weeks, with no end in sight.

"It's fading," Red Wings forward Johan Franzen said of his hopes for resuming play anytime soon. "The longer it goes, the more likely there's not going to be a season.

"Losing a season is more disappointing than losing a game."

The NHL is expected to announce the cancellation of the Winter Classic on Friday, ahead of a \$250,000 non-refundable payment due to the University

of Michigan on that day. The league already has paid U-M \$100,000 of the \$3 million rental fee, with additional payments of \$1 million each due on Dec. 7 and Dec. 28 and \$650,000 due on Jan. 18.

The Red Wings have said the loss of the Winter Classic would result in the cancellation of the Winter Festival, a series of events slated for Comerica Park between Dec. 15-31 that includes college, AHL, junior and alumni games.

It still is possible for the NHL season to start before Jan. 1, even if the Winter Classic is called off. But, if the sides have no urgency to hash out a labor deal now, they are not likely to be highly motivated to reach a settlement in the weeks following the cancellation of the outdoor game.

Many believe this eventually will lead to the entire season being canceled, for the second time since 2004-05.

"It definitely doesn't help," Red Wings center Darren Helm said. "If they do cancel it, it's very disappointing and doesn't look good for the season to be played."

In addition to financial considerations, logistical issues (flights, hotels) and the time required to construct two outdoor rinks also factored into the league's need to decide on the fate of the event this soon.

"With the Winter Classic, there's so much preparation with the ice and events and vendors and everything that goes into it, this is something that has to be canceled six weeks in advance," Red Wings forward Justin Abdelkader said. "I think there's still optimism for the season to start. Hopefully we're not too far off. I don't think we are.

"We just got to get meeting again, get talking. Hopefully owners see the (need) to meet with us and still talk."

Detroit goaltender Jimmy Howard also isn't ready to write off the season.

"I'm still keeping faith that we're going to get something done, that we're going to be playing sooner than later," Howard said. "But at the same time, when you see them canceling a whole month at a time it makes you think twice about things."

The league said there is no chance of the Winter Classic being rescheduled for this season after it has been canceled. Many believe the game at U-M, with the Red Wings and Maple Leafs, and all or most of the Comerica Park events will be rescheduled for 2013-14, after a CBA is reached.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.02.2012

643532 Edmonton Oilers

Edmonton Oilers hockey boss Kevin Lowe addresses Bob Stauffer's "Wow" trade rumour:

**David Staples** 

Were going to have to make some touch choices and maybe move some players.

Lowe ready to move in order to grab one or two pieces Oilers need to contend

Oilers hockey operations boss Kevin Lowe was on Oilers Now with Oilers radio colour man Bob Stauffer on Thursday. A number of topics were covered including the "Wow" trade that Stauffer has been hinting about on his show, a deal that would presumably see the Oilers bring in what sounds like a veteran star in return for prospects and picks.

On the show, Stauffer, an Oilers employee and insider, suggested that no one for a second would contemplate trading any of the Big Four up front (Jordan Eberle, Taylor Hall, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Nail Yakupov), but with so many young assets, perhaps there was a way to expedite the process (by way of a trade) of turning around the Oilers.

"You're going into a game with lots of trump cards," Lowe said. "That's the only way you can make deals is if you have assets that are attractive to other teams. When you have assets then you can make deals.

"So, absolutely, we're at some point, whenever that is, we're probably not too far down the road, we're going to have to make some touch choices and maybe move some players, or a player, draft picks, to get a piece or two

that finishes off the formation of what you feel is a championship team. I mean, we need to get to the playoffs first (laughed) so you can't put the cart ahead of the horse, but no question. I don't talk to managers on a regular basis any more, that's Steve Tambellini's job, but I do know from my past experiences that we won't have a tough job selling anybody on anybody that we have in the event we're interested in a player on another team."

The new CBA could make it easier to make trades, Lowe added.

Defence and goal are question marks

Stauffer asked what the biggest question mark about the team going into the season.

"There's a number of them. Are we strong enough defence? Goaltending is a question mark, and I say that in all respect to Devan Dubnyk and Khabi (Nikolai Khabibulin). Khabi has been injured and he's approaching 40. He's given us stretches of strong goaltending but his health is one thing."

Dubnyk is trending upward, Lowe said, "but he's got to go out and prove it now if he's going to take over the Number One job."

"I'm not worried about their health."

Last Sunday in an Oklahoma City game, star winger Eberle was hammered with a knee-on-knee hit by a no-name AHL enforcer, Antoine Roussel. Roussel has not been suspended. Lowe didn't sound concerned that other teams might target the young Oilers aces, including Taylor Hall, who plays his first game on Friday night for OK City.

Said Lowe: "Now they're expected to win and they've got guys gunning for them, or rather teams gunning for them. I'm not worried about their health. They're all smart players and it's not as barbaric as it used to be and people might think. It's an incredible league, and it's that much better this year because everybody has top players down there, not just the Oilers...

"The most important thing is they're playing and they're competing at a very high level and they're playing together as a team. Not just the guys that everybody up here knows but the guys that we hope will play on the Oilers roster in the coming years... And that's critical because besides needing talent to win, you have to have cohesiveness, you have to have chemistry, understanding of one another, appreciation for one another, and that doesn't grow over night, you know. You've got to get in the battles, and it really takes the battles for everybody to have a better appreciation for one another

"I remember Jaroslav Pouzar, he wasn't very well accepted by the fans nor his teammates on the Oilers in those early years, and a lot of guys felt that he was just there because management the Oilers had decided to sign him and management was trying to force him on everyone, and it was kind of a weird dynamic, and we got into that series with Chicago and he got in a fight with Al Secord and all of a sudden Pouzar was everybody's best friend cause he dropped him. That's going to battle with one another. It's not just about fighting, you understan, but just getting to know one another, spending time on the bus, and it's really critical, so we really hope and feel that this experience that we're having right now with these guys playing together down there will be pay dividends down the road."

Stauffer suggested about nine guys would play in the NHL one day, listing the usual NHLers and top prospects.

Lowe added Chris VandeVelde and Tanner House. "The guys would be more role type players on an NHL team, but the fact that they're teammates of these guys, coming in, when they do get an audition at some point down the road, they're going to be less intimidated. They're going to be more comfortable, and who knows, maybe they morph into the line-up because of it

"In the Oiler world, it's the best of a bad situation."

Other matters: Musil, Gernat, Davidson

On the Oil Kings trade for David Musil: "I think the price quite frankly wasn't as high as I thought it would be...I think it's a fair price."

Musil would fill Mark Pysyk's roal on the team. "When you have a team this good you have to give it all the necessary tools."

On Martin Gernat's return: "Marty Gernat, we're kind of thinking a January timeline for his return but you never can tell with medical things."

On Brandon Davidson's testicular cancer diagnoses: "He was captain of Regina, great kid, great example of work ethic for a player and doing

everything possible to be a pro... He's been doing great down in OK City. ... We're all hopeful it won't be a long ordeal for Brandon and he'll be OK."

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 11.02.2012

643533 Edmonton Oilers

Oilers prospect diagnosed with testicular cancer

By Jim Matheson,

EDMONTON - Promising Edmonton Oilers' farmhand defenceman Brandon Davidson has testicular cancer.

The Oilers' AHL affiliate, the Oklahoma City Barons, announced the news Thursday.

Davidson, who cracked the Barons roster in his first pro shot after serving as captain of the WHL Regina Pats last season, will begin treatment immediately at The Peggy and Charles Stephenson Cancer Centre in downtown Oklahoma City.

Davidson (bdavy3) tweeted: "thanks to all my family, friends, fans and everyone for all their love and support. It goes a long way. I will be back and will battle through this."

He is expected to have surgery on Friday. Davidson has played six of the seven games the Barons have played so far this AHL campaign.

"Brandon's got an incredible attitude, and the good thing is they caught it early," Oilers GM Steve Tambellini said Thursday.

Davidson, 21, was the Oilers' eighth choice in the 2010 NHL entry draft, 162nd overall. He's moved well up the organizational depth chart since then

Other athletes who've had this cancer include cyclist Lance Armstrong, Toronto Maple Leafs forward Phil Kessel, Olympic gold medal-winning figure skater Scott Hamilton, PGA player Billy Mayfair and NFL punter Josh Bidwell. All continued playing after being diagnosed.

Kessel found out he had testicular cancer in November of 2006, in his first NHL season. He had surgery to remove his right testicle — the cancer hadn't spread anywhere else — and Kessel, then playing for the Boston Bruins, was back playing after a few weeks.

"Brandon's made a terrific investment in becoming more of a professional athlete off the ice the last couple of seasons," Tambellini said. "He's made major steps physically. I see him as a minutes guy, a two-way defenceman

With Davidson's diagnosis, the Oilers recalled former University of Calgary Dinos defenceman Teigan Zahn from Stockton (five points in six games) to give them seven AHL blueliners. They also summoned tough guy Cameron Abney from the ECHL club, who will ride herd with Taylor Hall, who will play his first pro game Friday since he had shoulder surgery seven months ago.

Jordan Eberle, Justin Schultz and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins have also taken some abuse in games over the last week. Kristians Pelss, the former Oil Kings' winger, was sent to Stockton with Abney's recall for the three games in three days stretch (two against the Houston Aeros and one in San Antonio).

Tambellini, who was flying to OKCity for the weekend games, said Hall would play Friday, take Saturday off, and would likely take the sleeper bus to San Antonio for the Sunday afternoon game.

"None of them (Eberle, RNH, Hall) will play all three games," Tambellini said.

Eberle may play Friday and Saturday and get the Sunday game off. Nugent-Hopkins, who is wearing a cage mask after some dental work to repair damage from a high stick, will likely take Friday off. The Barons had Mark Arcobello at centre with Eberle and Teemu Hartikainen on a No. 1 line at Thursday's practice.

RNH would play Saturday and Sunday.

Defenceman Justin Schultz, just named the AHL's Player of the Month for October, may have to suit up for the hat-trick of games, however. The team's only carrying seven healthy blueliners with Davidson out and Zaun

has never played an AHL game. Schultz has 12 points and is riding a seven-game point streak.

Hall will be monitored closely as well.

"We know Taylor would like to play 25 minutes, but Nelly (coach Todd Nelson) will bring him into the flow easily," Tambellini said.

Hall will definitely be rusty, not even having an AHL exhibition game under his belt, but he told the Oilers website that it was "a relief" to finally be thinking of playing a game since the shoulder surgery to repair labrum damage.

He's watched the Barons' games from the stands and won't be going into AHL action cold.

"It's not an easy league by any means. It doesn't get the respect it deserves." he said.

The Oilers' GM dismissed the idea of Hall playing centre in the minors, even if the NHL club might want to see that experiment in time.

"That's (centre) a way down the line issue. We just want him back and feeling comfortable," said Tambellini.

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643534 Edmonton Oilers

Oilers' prospect Brandon Davidson diagnosed with testicular cancer

Bruce McCurdy

Some real bad news mixed with the good from Oklahoma City today. This morning the Barons formally announced that defenceman Brandon Davidson has been sidelined indefinitely after being diagnosed with testicular cancer. Here's the entirety of the brief announcement:

rsz davidsonpressrelease Oilers prospect Brandon Davidson diagnosed with testicular cancer

Obviously the first concern is the person's health, with the player's career being of secondary importance at this moment. My heart goes out to Brandon Davidson, a real good kid whom I've had the pleasure of interviewing on a couple of occasions. One can only hope that this affliction has been detected early in the game, that treatments will be successful and that in time he will be able to resume his career.

rsz davidson Oilers prospect Brandon Davidson diagnosed with testicular cancer

Brandon Davidson meets with former Oilers' player development guru Billy Moores after a Regina Pats-Edmonton Oil Kings game last season.

Obstacles are nothing new to Davidson, although this one is scary. At the time of this announcement, Brandon was just kicking off a professional career that a few years ago was a long shot. Undrafted as an 18-year-old playing Midget AAA hockey, Davidson walked on to Regina Pats and not only made the team but became a mainstay and eventually, captain. His development had been slowed somewhat by family financial circumstances, but in the WHL he quickly emerged as an excellent thinker of the game with emerging physical skills that have consistently shown improvement from season to season, from one Oilers' camp to the next.

In an interview with the Cult of Hockey last year (I'd give a link, but I'm afraid it's broken at the moment), Davidson shed some light on his late exposure to elite-level hockey:

Not financial circumstances exactly. I'm not an only child, I've got two other brothers, they're playing hockey too, my parents each had a job, they were divorced ... it just wasn't in the cards for me at the time. Maybe that has a little bit to say about my late blooming, it made me stronger, made me a better person.

When he got sent back for a third, overage season in Regina, some thought the writing might be on the wall. Instead, Brandon seized the day, had an excellent season, and earned a three-year entry-level contract from the Oilers. Once a sixth round draft choice in his Draft+1 year, Davidson had worked his way into the top 20 of the Cult's summer prospect list. Now this.

For now, the recently-recalled Teigan Zahn will take Davidson's spot on the roster. I guess this solves the mystery of Zahn's recall yesterday.

I'm sure that all Oilers hockey fans join me in wishing Brandon all the best for a complete recovery. Get well, son.

\*ADD: This afternoon Brandon Davidson tweeted the following response to the many messages of support he has received:

Brandon Davidson @bdavy3

Thanks to all my family, friends, fans, and everyone for all the love and support. It goes a long way. I appreciate everyone who has reached ... out and given me the support. I will be back and I will battle through this. #MovemberForBD

With respect to that hash tag, it is ironic that Davidson's affliction be announced on the first of "Movember", a cause devoted to men's health issues. For more on this subject generally and on Davidson's situation specifically, I recommend this post by Neal Livingston at his fine OKC Barons' blog Tend the Farm.

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643535 Minnesota Wild

Granlund's AHL Rookie of the Month; Brunette: "One foot in the grave, one foot on the ice"

Posted by: Michael Russo

On the day Zach Parise was destined to be named NHL Player of the Month, the Wild instead must be satisfied with AHL accolades because of this stinkin' lockout that hit Day 47 today.

Mikael Granlund, the Wild's highly-touted 2010 first-round pick, was named AHL Rookie of the Month after his inaugural month as a North American pro. He is the top-scoring rookie forward in the AHL with 10 points in seven games and is plus-5.

Granlund's riding a six-game point streak into this weekend's series at Oklahoma City (Edmonton No. 1 overall pick Taylor Hall will make his AHL debut) -- highlighted by a four-point game in a 5-3 win against Texas.

Rookie Justin Schultz of Oklahoma City, the former Wisconsin defenseman that chose to sign with the Edmonton Oilers over finalists that included the Wild, was named AHL Player of the Month. So again: The rookie that was Player of the Month didn't win Rookie of the Month. I made note of that on Twitter. Funny tweet to me in response by a guy named @thegreatganzy: "@Russostrib it's like Beyonce losing to Taylor Swift at the VMAs and then winning video of the year."

Also, Nick Petersen, on an AHL deal with the Wild, was named ECHL Player of the Month. He leads the league with six goals and 14 points for Orlando.

Tonight: the Wild, if not for the lockout, would be hosting the defending Stanley Cup champion L.A. Kings before embarking on a six-game road trip tomorrow to Tampa, Boston, the Rangers, Detroit, New Jersey (Parise's homecoming) and Philadelphia. That's a bulk of frequent flier miles I'm missing out on!

I talked with Andrew Brunette today on the phone as he walked his golden retriever around Lake Elmo. Brunette, whose rookie year was my rookie year covering the league (1995-96) and who scored his first-ever goal at Miami Arena with me in the building (1996 with Washington), knows he very well could be done playing hockey.

He said he would still be interested in playing if there was the right fit, but he knows because of the lockout (with a big chuckle), "I've got one foot in the grave and one foot on the ice with the casket slowly creaking to a close."

Brunette, 39, who played two stints for the Wild, has scored 268 goals and 733 points in 1,110 regular-season games over 16 seasons. He is fourth in Wild history with 489 games, second with 119 goals, second with 55 power-play goals, fourth with 202 assists and fourth with 321 points.

"Bruno waited until he was almost 30 for his real chance, and he's going to go away? It's a shame, although he'll be OK financially because he drinks

the cheapest beer on the planet. He'll be fine," said Brunette's former Atlanta teammate Ray Ferraro.

I relayed that quote to Brunette and he literally laughed for like 2 minutes: "He's a quote a minute that guy. He's such a good broadcaster. He's very good at what he does."

Brunette said if he doesn't return, he would like to stay in the game in some capacity, whether it's broadcasting or working inside an organization.

Also, St. Paul has been awarded one of the 2014 NCAA regionals. You can read about that on Roman's blog here. Also, the Gophers open a weekend home-and-home series Friday night against Minnesota State. Roman touched on the Mavericks yesterday in his blog here.

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.02.2012 643536 Nashville Predators

Nashville Predators prospect affected by East Coast storm

Josh Cooper

Predators prospect Anthony Bitetto's mind has been on his hometown of Island Park, N.Y., the past few days.

He has thought of his parents, whose basement was flooded. He has thought of his uncle, who needed to move through sewage water up to his chest to get out of his house. He thought of his friend, who saw his car swept away.

Hurricane Sandy ravaged the Northeast on Monday and created widespread damage to the New York and New Jersey shorelines.

"I had three feet of water in my basement. That's a pretty tough thing to handle," Bitetto said. "I have aunts and uncles whose homes were destroyed, and neighbors and good buddies of mine who lost their cars. It's definitely a mess right now in New York."

Bitetto, a defenseman from the New York City area, was drafted by Nashville in 2010. He's currently in the middle of his first professional season with the Milwaukee Admirals.

During his down time for the past three days, he has been in contact with his family back home and glued to the television. He also set up an online fund for Island Park. Through Thursday afternoon, it had raised more than \$1.000.

"The town has always supported me through growing up, hockey-wise, always supporting and asking my family about me," Bitetto said. "At a time like this, I figured it was nice to support them for all the support they've given me. The firehouse is a huge problem. I think they're going to need some help and a lot of money will go to them."

On Twitter, friends and teammates have retweeted Bitetto's good deed.

"Everyone wants to help. Some people don't know how and they see that, and it's easy. Click on the website and do what you have to do," Admirals defenseman Jonathon Blum said. "It takes one click of a button to spread the word to thousands of people."

Conference call: Predators players at A-Game Sportsplex on Thursday left practice early to take part in an NHL Players' Association conference call.

The Predators players wouldn't comment on specifics of what was discussed, but they didn't lend any hope to the possibility of the lockout ending soon.

"We're willing to talk. We're trying to get a hold of them and set up a meeting, and they feel like there's nothing to talk about," defenseman Shea Weber said. "Hopefully they're willing to talk to us soon so we can get back together and get negotiations going."

Trick or treat: Some players took treats to Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt on Halloween night.

Weber dressed as NASCAR star Kyle Busch, forward Matt Halischuk was Fred Flinstone and forward Mike Fisher was a 1980s rock star.

"It's hard going in there seeing some of the kids and the situations they're in, but they seemed to be in great spirits," Weber said. "They were dressed up in great costumes. We are very fortunate to be here right now and in a good enough situation where we can try to cheer them up and put a smile in their faces in tough times."

Smith goes home: Forward Craig Smith returned home to Madison, Wis., this week after notching eight points in eight games with KalPa of SM-liiga in Finland.

"Although he was enjoying his experience, and doing quite well on the ice, he feels that skating and training in Madison is the best option for him to prepare for the upcoming season," Smith's agent Kevin Magnuson said.

"The KalPa team and management could not have been better, and Craig is very appreciative for the opportunity to have the tremendous life experience that he did."

Hornqvist moves on: Forward Patric Hornqvist's contract with HC Red Ice of National League B of Switzerland is over, and he is exploring options, according to his agent, Craig Oster.

Hornqvist notched 14 points in nine games with Red Ice.

Tennessean LOADED: 11.02.2012

643537 New York Rangers

NY Rangers' Michael Del Zotto signs with Rapperswil-Jona in Swiss A-League, joins Nash, McDonagh, Hagelin overseas

By Pat Leonard

"Del-Z" has signed overseas.

On Wednesday, defenseman Michael Del Zotto became the fourth Ranger to ink in Europe during the NHL lockout, announcing on Twitter that he was boarding a plane to Zurich, Switzerland, to join Rapperswil-Jona of the Swiss A-League.

The Ottawa Senators' Jason Spezza is also playing for Rapperswil.

"Michael was just looking for a place to get some competitive games in so that he is ready if and when the lockout ends," Del Zotto's agent, Mark Guy, said in an e-mail to the Daily News Thursday morning. "At his age, he wanted to continue his development, and the team in Rapperswil had injuries on defense, so they needed a replacement."

Del Zotto, 22, is a restricted free agent but remains property of the Rangers, even though the organization was not able to sign him prior to the lockout. His contract with Rapperswil covers his monthly insurance costs and allows a bit extra for expenses. Like all NHL players in Europe, Del Zotto will be released from his Swiss contract whenever the lockout ends.

The "Del-Z" nickname is a moniker bestowed by Rangers coach John Tortorella, who is frustrated by the lockout precisely because of how it impacts players such as Del Zotto.

The 2008 first-round pick had a strong rookie season in 2009-10, regressed and was demoted to the AHL in his sophomore season, then rebounded with a strong third season in 2011-12, posting a career-high 41 points for the Rangers.

Instead of continuing to coach Del Zotto and supporting his continued growth, Tortorella only can stand on the sidelines and hope all of his players, particularly the young and impressionable talents such as "Del-Z," are fending well on their own.

RANGERS PLAYING IN EUROPE

Michael Del Zotto (Rapperswil-Jona, Swiss A-League)

Carl Hagelin (Södertälje SK, Swedish B-League)

Ryan McDonagh (HC Barys Astana, Kontinental Hockey League)

Rick Nash (HC Davos, Swiss A-League)

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.02.2012

643538 NHL

Why Georges Laraque is leaving the CHLPA

## JAMES MIRTLE

Two months in, Georges Laraque is ready to pack it in as the executive director of the Canadian Hockey League Players' Association.

The endeavour essentially collapsed on Thursday amid a series of bizarre circumstances involving CHLPA support staff and allegations convicted fraudster Randy Gumbley was somehow involved in the union.

Junior hockey Canadian Hockey League Players' Association backers come into view

While Laraque maintains Gumbley was never involved – only that he had been working closely with his brother, Glenn Gumbley – he said the scandal made him realize junior players would be in better hands with one of the many union groups that have approached him to help the CHLPA in recent weeks.

Laraque, however, will remain with the organization until a suitable replacement is found.

"The cause is good," he said as part of a 20-minute conversation about his decision late Thursday night. "It's just that we're not experienced enough. We're not a strong enough team to do this. People have real jobs. It's a big project.

"It's better to give it to a real union [group] so they can do this. I believe in it. I think the right team could do this, especially after all that we've done. For those kids, we're not quitting. We're passing it on."

Earlier this week, Laraque had detailed how he sunk at least \$10,000 of his own money into the fledgling union and how it was a difficult choice to become involved at all.

When reached by phone on Thursday, he was already in Cape Breton, N.S., to meet with the junior team there for a certification vote on Friday.

"I didn't even want to do it at first," Laraque said, explaining how he was approached by a group of lawyers affiliated with the CHLPA in August. "I was a bit surprised they were asking me because I knew I wasn't the most qualified person.

"But they were telling me they couldn't find anyone to do this. People were saying it's a lost cause, people wanted money. But there's no money. And I knew if I did it, there wasn't a chance I could work my TV job anymore because they own a junior team."

Laraque ultimately lost that role with TVA in Quebec and was faced with the difficult task of working with a group of volunteers and pro bono lawyers to organize a complex union drive in nine provinces and the United States.

From the beginning, the organization's public relations front was haphazard and questionable, as an unusual spokesman based out of Montreal and calling himself Derek Clarke was in control of the CHLPA's email address, Twitter account and website.

With Laraque serving more as a figurehead and mainly just meeting with players, Clarke – now believed to be Glenn Gumbley assuming the name of another union volunteer – was taking media calls and making grand statements on behalf of the group.

That charade fell apart this week when the CHL alleged through the media that Clarke was actually Randy Gumbley, setting Laraque and Co. on a course that ended with two of their labour law firms leaving the cause late Thursday.

Laraque still isn't quite sure what happened. As far as he was concerned, the volunteer who actually was Derek Clarke – a mild-mannered telecom manager who had been onboard before Laraque signed on – was speaking to the media and not Gumbley, making claims by some outlets that Clarke didn't exist baffling to the former NHL enforcer.

Laraque appeared to realize Gumbley's last name was potentially toxic (even if it was the brother that was involved), however, as he claimed he didn't know it when questioned about "Glenn" by The Globe and Mail last week.

Instead, he provided the number for the mysterious spokesman who had been calling himself "Derek Clarke" all along.

"I don't know [everything that was happening]," Laraque said. "I'm doing this for free, I'm giving my time and energy. When people asked 'do you know about this?' I really didn't. The only thing I was telling people was that Derek and Glenn were never about the money. If this worked out, they were going to step aside to find [experienced] people to run the union.

"There was no money. That's why I have a hard time thinking someone would [abuse] this. I really thought someone from the outside did this to make us look bad. At the end of the day, it's better to give it to a real team because this project is way too big for us.

"I'm proud of what we've done and the time I put in. If I could go back, I'd do the same thing. Because I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't do it for money. There was no sponsorship; there was nothing."

Here are a few more points Laraque made on Thursday night:

- On what this fight was over: "I never said that the junior players were mistreated. I never said it wasn't a good league. The two things I said was that, one, the 18th months they have [to use their education plan] is unacceptable. It should be four years. They know that every player that plays junior hockey wants to play a couple years in the ECHL or the AHL to try and make it. It's unacceptable to have 18 months because you know they're not going to take that scholarship. The second thing is, the NCAA... If they change the bylaw, then the players could go there. They won't lose their eligibility, but the [CHL] are blocking it."
- Why he did get involved: "I thought I could be part of something that could change junior hockey forever. Help kids get an education. That's noble. That's the imprint I want to leave on hockey. I played in the NHL for 13 years. I fought all those years. Now I can do something positive. And helping these kids have their own union is a noble cause."
- On the CHL's resistance: "If the league would have listened to us and just worked on those two things, it would have been fine. The union wasn't trying to get everything but a couple little things... It was never about the money and [having a strike]. We could have done this without a union. But every time we sent a letter, they never wanted to talk to us. What they did was hire a private investigator, spend tons of money... congratulations they discredited the union working without professionals. That's why we have to hand it over."
- On the vote in Cape Breton on Friday: "Tomorrow I still have to go to the voting [for the Cape Breton team]. But obviously after what happened today... what do you think they said to [the players] after what happened today? But because it's scheduled, I have to go there. I'm going to go to the meeting and see. They're probably going to vote no, but it's okay. It's part of the process."
- On Glenn Gumbley: "I didn't hire anyone. Everyone was there from Day 1. Those people were there when I came in. But his brother was never involved. I've never seen him, I don't know what he looks like and I've never talked to him... Because his brother had a record with the CHL, it was easy to destroy the reputation of the union with that."
- On Derek Clarke: "Then after that people said Derek didn't exist. The guy didn't want to go on camera. He was uncomfortable. His wife saw that her husband 'is a ghost'; she saw that all over the news. How do you think she felt? The guy has a real job and he worked his ass off for this [union] for free just to help these kids' education and he has to endure that. So he had to go in front of the camera... He does that and then he gets criticized. Are you kidding me? It's not his job. It just shows a team of inexperienced people [can't do this] and you need a real team to do this. That's why, when I think about all of this right now, it's better to pass it on."
- On the CHLPA's failure: "We didn't have many people who wanted to work for free. So we had a really hard time communicating and translating our message across Canada. We didn't have enough people. It was hard to do. I put up about \$10,000 of my own money to help people with their costs. I didn't do this for money. But for a lot of people, that's hard to believe."
- On the future of the CHLPA: "I must have talked, no word of a lie, to about 700 players... The agents thought it was a great idea... It would have cost less [than minimum wage] to give [players] the four years extension of their education package. Education in Canada doesn't cost what it does in the States. It's cheaper to give that extension than have a \$500,000 payroll every year. When you look at what the guys wanted, was that really unreasonable? To make it a story about all they want is money, saying they are treated well, you were drafted from there, why are you complaining —

that's not what this is about. It's about education. For once. That's what it was all about."

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643539 NHL

Laraque leaves as junior-hockey union drive on brink of collapse

JAMES MIRTLE, SEAN GORDON and ALLAN MAKI

The drive to unionize junior-hockey players appears set for collapse, with the executive director of the scandal-plagued Canadian Hockey League Players' Association saying he plans to leave, and its high-profile legal help also quitting.

Late Thursday night, Georges Laraque, the former NHL enforcer, revealed to The Globe and Mail he intends to leave the association as soon as a suitable replacement can be found.

Junior hockey Canadian Hockey League Players' Association backers come into view

major junior hockey CHLPA threatens to sue clubs over 'sweatshop' conditions for players

"We need to pass it over to a real union," Mr. Laraque said from Cape Breton, N.S., where he is to attend a meeting with players on Friday. "We've had many unions that want to take it over, and I've decided we'll pass on all the progress we've made. It has to be a real professional that does this."

His sudden decision to leave comes after a brewing scandal that involves a mysterious recruiter, a hired private investigator and allegations a convicted fraud artist is involved with the organization.

The CHLPA cast itself as upholding a noble cause – one focused on negotiating better education packages for players on the CHL's 60 teams – but its approach in becoming certified across the country has prompted more suspicion than solidarity.

Stories emerged of a mystery man approaching teenage players in several markets, handing out CHLPA literature and calling himself Derek Clarke.

That situation played out recently in a northern Saskatchewan parking lot as three members of the Prince Albert Raiders walked out of their home arena and were asked if they would be willing to go to a hotel to discuss some business.

The players took the stranger's pamphlets but immediately handed them over to their team, prompting concern from the leagues.

"Our concern from the outset was finding out more information of who was behind this movement – how this came about, the people involved," explained Western Hockey League commissioner Ron Robison. "We asked about Derek Clarke and could not find any background information.

"Our first priority is the safety of the players. In that respect, we felt we had to find out who Derek Clarke was."

Doing so wasn't easy. After consulting its lawyers, the CHL hired a private detective, who snapped a photograph outside a Swiss Chalet restaurant of a disgraced former hockey coach and fraudster named Randy Gumbley – a man the players in Prince Albert would later say resembled the one who approached them.

The union claimed this was a case of mistaken identity and accused the CHL of sandbagging them with anti-union dirty tricks on the eve of a key certification vote, namely hiring private gumshoes to sniff around their activities and identify their organizers.

News of Mr. Gumbley's potential involvement prompted immediate repercussions. Two of the law firms providing pro bono advice – Vancouver-based Victory Square and Quebec City's Poudrier Bradet – have severed their relationship with the union.

"Given the context we've decided to withdraw from this brief," said Denis Bradet, a Quebec City lawyer who is listed on the CHLPA's advisory board. "It's a shame for the players, who should have the right to associate themselves in a union."

In light of the growing scandal, the question remained: Who, exactly, is Derek Clarke?

Several reports had emerged on Wednesday that he could be Mr. Gumbley, a former owner of the Streetsville Derbys, an Ontario junior team, who was convicted in 2009 of defrauding the families of several junior-aged players to the tune of \$90,000.

Last year, he received a suspended sentence and 18 months probation for selling players and their parents on a European tournament that was never held

But on Thursday, a different man named Derek Clarke stepped forward to show his identification documents and meet with TSN.

What he didn't provide was any further information as to his background or what his specific role is in the union. Mr. Clarke is listed as Quebec channel manager on the corporate website for JFC Solutions, a telecommunications hardware wholesaler.

His sudden appearance also didn't explain why the players – and Mr. Laraque, in an interview with TVA – identified photos of Mr. Gumbley as Mr. Clarke.

Mr. Laraque later recanted on those statements and told The Globe "I've never even talked to that Randy guy. I've never talked to him, I've never seen him, he has nothing to do with us."

Mr. Laraque, however, pointed out that the CHLPA does do business with Mr. Gumbley's brother Glenn – and the fact that Gumbleys bear a physical resemblance to not only each other but also to Mr. Clarke, which only adds to the confusion.

Glenn Gumbley has helped the association and arranged some of the group's legal staff, Mr. Laraque said.

"The CHL is doing this because they're trying to find a way to stop us and the only thing they could do is tell people we're associated with the wrong people. It's like if we said [convicted pedophile] Graham James is president of the CHL," he said.

The CHLPA later insisted in a press release that Randy Gumbley does not have "any official position" with the union.

But that's not quite the same thing as saying he has no position at all – TVA reported on Thursday evening that he is indeed involved and that his name appears on recruiting materials.

Though Mr. Gumbley is best known for his misdeeds in Ontario, he also has a colourful past in Montreal. According to court records he has faced a raft of lawsuits in Quebec since 1987 and also has a criminal conviction.

Before battles with the provincial power utility and a car financer in the 1990s over unpaid debts, court records show Randy Gumbley was sued in small claims court by a Montreal lawyer in 1987.

Mr. Gumbley filed for bankruptcy in 2000 with his partner – claiming a total of more than \$120,000 in debts – with a Mississauga, Ont., address in their paperwork.

Whether Mr. Gumbley is involved or not, one thing that is certain is the resulting kerfuffle has severely damaged the CHLPA's credibility at a delicate time for the union.

On Friday, the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League's Cape Breton Screaming Eagles are scheduled to vote to certify as a CHLPA bargaining unit, making them one of the first teams to join the movement.

Even with all that has gone on, Mr. Laraque still plans to attend, but he isn't optimistic his message will be heard.

"It's still a great cause," he said. "The guys, they need it, to improve their education. I don't want to quit for them, but there are too many things that have been done. That's why it's better to pass [the union] over."

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643540 NHL

All of \$430,000 donation to Alberta PCs now linked to Katz associates

The full \$430,000 donated by Edmonton billionaire and Oilers owner Daryl Katz to Alberta's Progressive Conservatives has now been linked to names directly or closely connected to him, according to public documents and corporate records.

Last week, The Globe and Mail reported that Mr. Katz donated \$430,000 in a single cheque to the Conservatives late in the spring campaign when the election hung in the balance. The donation was then divvied up under different names.

The maximum donation during election years in Alberta is \$30,000, though Elections Alberta has said some cheque-splitting is allowed.

The Katz donation is under investigation by Elections Alberta and on Wednesday Premier Alison Redford told the legislature that the report "absolutely" will be made public – even though Alberta law allows the results to be kept private.

Already, \$300,000 had been linked directly to Mr. Katz when the Conservatives filed their election finance disclosure last week. Mr. Katz gave \$30,000, Katz Group \$30,000, his wife, Renee, \$30,000, his father, Barry, \$30,000, and his mother, Ida, \$30,000. Another \$150,000 was donated by four of Mr. Katz's direct employees – John Karvellas, Paul Marcaccio, Bob Black, and Jim Low – and their companies.

The money was donated in the final week of the campaign, based on an analysis of Conservatives disclosure on April 22, the day before the election, and the final report dated Oct. 23. No donations connected with Mr. Katz appeared April 22 and the Conservatives at the time said their list wasn't complete because money was coming in late to the campaign.

The final \$130,000 – for the full \$430,000 donation – has been identified by Globe and Mail research of public documents and corporate records.

The \$130,000 also arrived late in the campaign, going unnoted in the April 22 disclosure.

Two more direct employees of Mr. Katz were identified, who gave \$75,000. Brad Gilewich, a director of Katz Group Properties, gave \$25,000, and Brad Gilewich Professional Corp. gave \$25,000. SPC Investments Ltd. gave \$25,000. The sole voting shareholder of SPC – Sawridge Prescription Centre – is Gerald Williams, who runs Katz Group's C&H, which develops real estate.

Mr. Gilewich declined comment. Mr. Williams didn't return requests by phone and e-mail for comment.

Mr. Katz, his family, and the first four employees have previously declined comment and a spokesman didn't respond to a request for comment.

Three other people closely connected to Mr. Katz were found. Last October, WAM Development Corp. sold land around the proposed arena for \$40-million to the City of Edmonton, which then gave first rights to acquire to Mr. Katz as part of the proposed \$450-million arena development deal.

In February, WAM became a development partner with Mr. Katz for the land north of 104 Avenue between 101 and 104 streets, on the ragged edge of downtown Edmonton, a barren expanse of parking lots, and a small casino.

Late in the campaign, three senior WAM executives donated \$55,000, which totals \$130,000 with the \$75,000 from the two additional employees of Mr. Katz's.

Durstling Family Trust gave \$20,000 to the Conservatives. Darren Durstling, CEO of WAM, is a trustee of the trust.

Scott Family Trust gave \$20,000 to the Conservatives. Guy Scott, a founding partner of WAM, controls the trust, which is one of three voting shareholders of WAM (along with Durstling Family Trust and the other founder, Peter Edger's family trust).

Laurie Anderson, senior vice-president of finance at WAM, gave \$15,000.

Phone calls and e-mails to Mr. Durstling, Mr. Scott, and Ms. Anderson were not returned.

While \$430,000 connected directly or closely with Mr. Katz came late in the campaign, another \$50,000 from associates of Mr. Katz was donated to the Conservatives at some point earlier in the election, as it was included in the April 22 disclosure.

WAM Development gave \$25,000, and Don Wheaton Ltd. gave \$25,000. Mr. Wheaton is co-owner with Mr. Katz and two others of Aurora Jet Partners, an executive jet company.

Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.02.2012

643541 Ottawa Senators

NHL to have 'talk' with Sens owner over comments

By Ken Warren and James Gordon,

Ottawa Senators owner Eugene Melnyk can expect to hear from NHL commissioner Gary Bettman. And it won't be to talk about the weather.

Melnyk broke the NHL's internal policy against individual team personnel speaking about the on-going NHL lockout and collective bargaining agreement negotiations during a Wednesday interview on Toronto radio station The Fan 590. Among other comments, Melnyk said, "we should be playing hockey by now. Everybody knows it, and we're not."

Bettman and Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner, are the only two league executives who have permission to speak publicly on lockout-related matters.

"The league has a long-standing policy against club personnel speaking on collective bargaining matters," Daly wrote in an email to the Citizen on Thursday night. "It's a serious policy and one that is well-founded in purpose and rationale."

Daly says, however, that the league employs "discretion" and "common sense" in determining whether specific comments cross the line. He says the league will remind Melynk of the policy, but so far, the Senators owner has not been fined or disciplined.

"We intend to talk to Eugene and understand the circumstances and context of his comments before determining next steps, which depending on their nature, are generally maintained as internal league matters and not disclosed publicly in any event."

In other words, if Melnyk is fined or even slapped on the wrist, it won't be made public.

While Melnyk's words weren't overly controversial, he came across sounding more like a passionate hockey fan than an NHL owner. He says fans don't want to play the blame game over the NHL lockout — they just want to see some hockey.

"I'm extremely disappointed, like any fan, of where we are," Melnyk said. "We should be playing hockey by now. Everybody knows it, and we're not. Everybody can fingerpoint all they want, but at the end of the day, I don't think anybody cares who's at fault. All they know if we're not playing hockey, why aren't we playing hockey?"

Melnyk was also asked about the apathy some youngsters who may not even grasp the issues behind the impasse are feeling towards the league.

"I think of these kids too, 14 and under, kind of thing, they don't even understand the concept of what's going on. All they know is, there's no hockey. So it's a huge disappointment. You know, this should not happen, but it did, and you gotta do the best you can and live with it and hopefully resolve it and get back to playing.

Melnyk also revealed he was a rabid baseball fan when he was younger, but after the 1994 strike that wiped out the World Series, he was "gone."

Now his baseball knowledge amounts to knowing "a guy named Rodriguez" and that he "makes a lot of money.

"I'm telling you, I couldn't name another player and I don't care."

Major League Baseball suffered a great deal at the time and needed 10 years to get attendance back to where it was pre-strike.

As for the Winter Classic, which is expected to be cancelled Friday, Melnyk said: "Well, I think it's an important part of the game. It's very widely, you know, it's got a huge, huge audience. It's extremely profitable for the NHL, which means its also profitable for everyone else. It is, you know, it has become a marquee event. It's something that I think is very very important to everyone to promote the game everywhere. I mean, it's a big, big deal."

Melnyk also said he didn't take advantage of the NHL's window that allowed owners and general managers to talk to the players.

"Personally, I didn't do any kind of outbound calls."

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 11.02.2012

643542 Ottawa Senators

Lockout inspires need for new daily routine

By Wayne Scanlan,

OTTAWA -- For everyone who follows hockey, a routine has been busted.

Night-time games, morning TV highlights of the night before. Fantasy pool updates. Newspaper and magazine features about players, teams, trades, transactions, the daily drumbeat of a hockey season. All have been shut down along with the first two months of the NHL season, with further cancellations expected.

Where there used to be vibrant talk of who's hot and who's not, there are forlorn hockey "insiders" talking about the non-negotiations between the NHL and the players' association.

Tragic.

To quote from Police's King of Pain lyrics:

(italics) There's a little black spot on the sun today.

It's the same old thing as yesterday. (end italics)

As hockey fans and media, we have to soldier on, for better or worse, without the NHL. As one door closes, another opens. We will find other television options, although personally, I took a big hit when the baseball season ended so abruptly. Classic movie channel, here I come.

There are limits to one's sense of adventure, sans NHL. For example, a brief list of things I will and won't do in the absence of NHL hockey.

I WON'T follow the day-to-day doings of NHLers in Europe. Do I care if Jason Spezza is a point-per-game player in Switzerland or that Joe Thornton is not?

Do I care if Henrik Zetterberg is the talk of the Swiss League or that Alex Ovechkin has made another provocative comment about the NHL, Gary Bettman or staying put in the KHL? No, I don't.

When the lockout is over, we will all get back to NHL business, and then we will take stock of rebels who don't return, if there are any.

I WILL seek interesting alternatives to cover.

In 2005, when the NHL was dark for the entire 2004-05 season, we were fortunate enough to be at one of the more interesting Memorial Cup tournaments. At the time, Sidney Crosby was a 17-year-old phenom with the Rimouski Oceanic (2.7 points per game during the QMJHL regular season), setting up an intriguing final against the dominant London Knights in a packed house in London. The one-line Oceanic were no match for the Knights, but the quality of play was high throughout. As luck would have it, the Ottawa 67's were also in the tournament, giving the event added significance in this region.

I WON'T watch NBA, although I'm told the Toronto Raptors are going to be better (could they be worse?). Sorry, but I can't watch a sport that requires 11 minutes to play the final 2.1 seconds. Raptors call time out. Commercial break. Players back on the court. No, wait, now the visiting Pacers have called a timeout. Worse than the NFL timeout frenzy before a critical field goal attempt.

I WILL watch more football, although I must say a lot of these games are one-sided duds. Monday night, I tried to watch some of the Arizona-San Francisco game, but quickly lost interest when it became clear the Cardinals did not belong on the same field as the 49ers. I was in the car, listening on the radio, when a colour analyst said that an Arizona field goal attempt could be a "turning point." The Cards trailed 24-0 at the time. He was joking. I WILL pay attention to the CFL playoffs.

I WON'T watch poker on TV. No matter how desperate I become. My youngest son declared the (latest) all-time low of the lockout the other day when the TSN Top 10 segment (on Las Vegas) was inspired by a TV poker moment. God help us all when poker inspires a sport channel's top 10 list.

I WILL walk more. There is no denying that skipping the daily auto commute to Kanata for Senators games and practices — twice daily on game day — has freed up time (up to 80-90 minutes of Queensway travel in a single day). It has freed up time to walk to neighbourhood stores and markets, leaving the car behind. On many of these walks, I have met up with an interesting person I vaguely remember from the last lockout — my wife.

I WON'T be playing out the Senators 2012-13 season or the seasons of the Leafs, Canucks, Oilers, Flames or Canadiens on EA Sports NHL 13, where some fans and media are simulating the schedule (that isn't) with mock games. You know, where there should have been real ones. If you catch me sinking this low, you have my permission to shoot me.

I WILL watch more youth hockey. During the last family-friendly NHL lockout, I had two sons playing competitive minor hockey. It was a rare treat to be able to watch entire games and to travel to out-of-town tournaments without NHL conflicts (also seen at local rinks this season, NHL hockey dads Daniel Alfredsson and Chris Phillips) There is only one minor hockey player left in the house and by the time this lockout ends, there may be none. Leaving even more walking time. Who knew the NHL could be so good for one's health?

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 11.02.2012

643543 Ottawa Senators

Melnyk: 'We should be playing hockey by now'

by James Gordon

Ottawa Senators owner Eugene Melnyk says fans don't care who's at fault for the NHL lockout, they just want to see some hockey.

Melnyk was on Toronto radio station The Fan 590 Wednesday, answering questions about the current work stoppage, the Winter Classic and the owners' window to contact their players.

"I don't even know how much I can say or not say other than on a personal basis," Melnyk explained. "I'm extremely disappointed, like any fan, of where we are. We should be playing hockey by now. Everybody knows it and we're not. Everybody can fingerpoint all they want, but at the end of the day, I don't think anybody cares who's at fault. All they know if we're not playing hockey, why aren't we playing hockey?"

Melnyk was also asked about the apathy some youngsters who may not even grasp the issues behind the impasse.

"I think of these kids too, 14 and under, kind of thing, they don't even understand the concept of what's going on. All they know is, there's no hockey. So it's a huge disappointment. You know, this should not happen, but it did, you you gotta do the best you can and live with it and hopefully resolve it and get back to playing.

Melnyk also revealed he was a rabid baseball fan when he was younger, but after the 1994 strike that wiped out the World Series, he was "gone."

Now his baseball knowledge amounts to knowing "a guy named Rodriguez" and that he "makes a lot of money.

"I'm telling you, I couldn't name another player, and I don't care."

Major League Baseball suffered a great deal at the time and needed 10 years to get attendance back to where it was pre-strike.

As for the Winter Classic, which is expected to be cancelled in the next couple days, Melnyk said: "Well I think it's an important part of the game. It's very widely, you know, it's got a huge, huge audience. It's extremely profitable for the NHL, which means its also profitable for everyone else. It is, you know, it has become a marquee event. It's something that I think is very very important to everyone to promote the game everywhere. I mean, it's a big, big deal.

Melnyk also said he didn't take advantage of the NHL's window that allowed owners and general managers to talk to the players.

"Personally, I didn't do any kind of outbound calls or anything like that."

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 11.02.2012

643544 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators forward Peter Regin passes shoulder test in Switzerland

Staff

It was a long way to go to test his surgically repaired shoulder, but for Peter Regin, it was worth the trip.

The Senators forward returned to Ottawa Wednesday from a two-weekend stint with SC Langenthal of the Swiss National League B.

Regin had two goals and three assists in the four games, but padding point totals wasn't as important to him as making sure he doesn't need extra padding when the NHL resumes play.

Regin had season-ending surgery on his left shoulder last January — an extremely disheartening injury given that surgery on his right shoulder ended his 2010-11 season.

Since showing all sorts of promise with three goals and one assist in six games for the Senators in the 2010 playoffs, Regin has been limited to just 65 games over the past two NHL campaigns.

"I took a couple of hits," Regin said of his brief time in Switzerland while speaking with reporters after locked-out NHLers had their hour-long skate Thursday at the Bell Sensplex. "That was probably the biggest thing out of these weeks, to feel that and be confident.

"It's been good here at the skates, but you guys have been watching, there's not a lot of hitting going on. So you don't really know until you get into battles, and it responded good, so that was perfect."

Regin knew his stay in the Swiss second-tier league wouldn't be a long one. He was there only as a roster fill-in for Jeff Campbell, the team's leading scorer last season.

"It was good," Regin said of the calibre of talent. "Obviously the imports mean a lot in that league. But there's a lot of young Swiss guys that are really good. Good skaters. It was higher than I expected, that's for sure."

Regin won't be staying in Ottawa for long. He'll be going back overseas to play in the "best league possible" as soon as he can.

"The problem is there's a national team break next week in Europe, so there's no hockey next week," he said. "But I have a couple of options I'm looking at right now. Depending on how it's looking with the lockout, but I'm probably heading back (to Europe) after the break."

And how's the NHL lockout looking to the 26-year-old Dane?

"We're all hoping," said Regin. "We want to play, and we want to play bad. It's very disappointing."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 11.02.2012

643545 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators owner Eugene Melnyk feels for fans as NHL lockout drags on

By Don Brennan

It would be among his worst nightmares, of course, but if hockey fans lose interest in the game as a result of the NHL lockout, Senators owner Eugene Melnyk won't be able to blame them.

He knows the feeling.

Speaking on the The Fan 590 Wednesday, Melnyk harkened back to the 1994 Major League Baseball season that ended in August because of a

players' strike. At the time, Melnyk said he was going to 40-45 games a season when he still lived in Toronto.

"I was like a crazy, crazy baseball fan," he said. "And after the strike, I was gone."

And now?

"I know there's a guy called Rodriguez who makes a lot of money," said Melnyk. "That's all I know. I couldn't name you another player. And I don't care."

Melnyk still has his keen interest in his horses — he owns the favourite, Bridgetown, in the Breeders' Cup \$1-million turf sprint Saturday at Santa Anita in suburban Los Angeles — while still trying to get his hockey fix.

He said he follows the AHL's Binghamton Senators and watches the ECHL.

"I've got five players on the Elmira Jackals (under Senators contracts)," he said, referring to the club's affiliate. "I bought the season package to watch (their games) on my computer.

"They jacked up the prices, five-fold, during the lockout," Melnyk added with a laugh.

According to Melnyk, corporate sponsorship has not deserted his Ottawa team during this crisis. Neither have the fans.

"That's one of the nice parts, seeing how much support we do get from them," he said of the sponsors. "They're all big players, and they all understand what's going on. They all have that same look of 'what's going to happen?' and you can't answer, because you don't know.

"But they have been supportive of us.

"Our season fan base, I could probably count on a couple of hands, of how many people asked for their money back. (The rest) said leave it there. All around, everybody's just being very, very supportive and are sticking with us, other than a few choice people."

"We've done extremely well on the corporate sponsorship side, in most areas."

Asked if he's concerned the loss of an entire season for the second time in eight years would result in corporations finding other avenues for their spending, Melnyk made reference to a \$250,000 fine from the league he'd face for speaking out of turn.

"I can't comment on that," he said.

He was also spoke about the number of employee layoffs already made by the Senators, and suggested there could be more in the future if the season is scrapped.

"We have a set policy that was put in place a long time ago. We did let go a substantial amount of people," said Melnyk. "Behind the feds, we are the second-largest employer in Ottawa. We're huge. It does make a difference to a lot of people, and we had to put a plan in place that would reflect that. It's sad. These are real people, looking for real jobs. We're very cognizant of that. We're trying to do our best."

"I'm not sure of the exact plan (going forward), but I do know there's a plan in place. You try to minimize (the job losses) as much as you can."

Melnyk said that like any fan, he's "extremely disappointed" over a labour disputed that has already wiped out the first two months of the season and next threatens to cancel the "big deal" that is the Winter Classic.

"We should be playing hockey by now ...everybody knows it .. and we're not," said Melnyk. "Everybody can finger point all they want, but at the end of the day, I don't think anybody cares who's at fault. All they know is we're not playing hockey. Why aren't we playing hockey?

"I think of these young kids today, 14 and under, they don't even understand the concept of what's going on. All they know is there's no hockey.

"It's a huge disappointment. This should not happen, but it did."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 11.02.2012

643546 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators among locked-out NHLers to play Cornwall tuneup for tour of Northwest Territories

By Don Brennan

Call it Hockey Night in Cornwall.

The first of a yet-to-be-determined number of tuneups for local locked-out NHLers — prior to their expected Nov. 18 departure for Yellowknife and more fundraising games — has been set for the Cornwall Civic Complex Monday at 7:30 p.m.

Confirmed participants so far are Chris Neil, Zack Smith, Marc Methot and Jesse Winchester, although more names will be released Friday morning during a press-conference at Big Rig Brewery, which has Senators defenceman Chris Phillips among its co-owners.

Asked if he would be playing, captain Daniel Alfredsson said "probably not."

Benefiting from the game will be the Cornwall chapter of the Max Keeping Foundation and First Assist, a charity that funds programs to benefit First Nations youth in fly-in communities.

"I think there's going to be an interest wherever we go," John Chabot, the former player who was looking for an available venue, said prior to the agreement reached with Cornwall. "There's going to be some naysayers, but that's part of the game, you know."

Chabot also said he's "very, very close" to finalizing details for a trip to Yellowknife which would see 24-28 players play two or three exhibitions in aid of First Assist.

"The only thing we (still) have to into place is our trip up there, to get the flight from here to Yellowknife," said Chabot, who has been running three-aweek informal skates for the locked out pros at Sensplex. "Everything else is taken care of."

Travel cost for the group is expected to be in the \$30,000-35,0000 range.

"There's good interest in people sponsoring, and helping out," said Chabot. "People in the provincial government have been very good in helping us, (saying) we have the contacts if you need it."

While the players are keen on spreading some goodwill and getting into their first game since last spring's playoffs, Chabot has also been selling them on the big-game hunting and fishing available in Deline, N.W.T.

"They caught an 82-pound lake trout a couple of years ago and the world record was a 74 pounder, out of the ice," said Chabot. "They've got fish that have been there for a long time."

Chabot has also been contacted about possible involvement by the people from the History Channel reality series Ice Pilots NWT.

"They said if the guys come up we'd like to fly them to Hay River, we'll put them on the show," said Chabot. "These are things that are byproducts of what we're trying to do. People are very interested in having the NHL guys there. They'll use that opportunity to benefit different things. Saying that, the players are game to do a lot of things."

Phillips, who has travelled all over the States and Europe to play hockey, never dreamed he'd get a chance to skate in a game in Yellowknife. He's never been there, but he does have friends in the Northwest Territories capital, and so joining the group headed north is appealing to the veteran defenceman.

"If It comes together, yeah, it's something I'm interested in doing," he said. "Hopefully the timing works out.

"It'll be an experience for everyone."

Phillips, who is also the Senators player rep, indicated there have been discussions taking place between the league and players.

"There's some small discussions going on right now but (I have) no update on them," he said. "Hopefully find out more (Friday)."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 11.02.2012

643547 Philadelphia Flyers

NHLPA hosts conference call to update membership

Tim Panaccio

The NHLPA held a conference call Thursday with both its negotiating committee and executive board, as the lockout is deep into its seventh week.

Don't get your hopes up. Nothing substantial happened.

According to a source on that call, the purpose was to update membership and assure that the players and the board all remain on the same page.

"Just an update on dialogue," the source told CSNPhilly.com.

It is believed the players are encouraging their board to return to the bargaining table. Earlier this week, union executive director Donald Fehr reiterated in an interview with the Minneapolis Star Tribune that attempts to resume talks have been rejected by the league.

Both sides do remain in contact with each other.

On Friday, the NHL is expected to cancel the Winter Classic.

A Board of Governors told CSNPhilly.com last month that the likelihood of losing the entire season increases dramatically once the Winter Classic is canceled.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.02.2012

643548 Phoenix Covotes

Bissonnette gets pranked

## By SARAH MCLELLAN

In case you missed it, a video of Calgary Flames forward Mike Cammalleri pranking the Coyotes' Paul Bissonnette has been making the rounds on social media. It even made an appearance on TSN's Sportscentre.

This happened at BioSteel camp at the end of August in Ontario. Bissonnette was trying to get access to a private property that had a gym and rink for players to use, but he was stopped at the entrance.

"I knew something was up right away," he said. "I was actually texting (Cammalleri) while it was going on. I said, 'Oh, I'm getting the run-around at the game.' He wrote back, 'No way. What's going on? I'm in the rink."

But Bissonnette was a good sport about it, getting out of his vehicle and even letting the attendant pat him down.

As for revenge?

"I'm not a big prankster but if something comes about and someone confronts me about it or I just think about it at the time, yeah for sure."

It's been almost a week since the NHL canceled the entire month of November games, and there still hasn't appeared to be any progress in talks between the league and the Players' Association.

This is what goalie Mike Smith recently had to say about the state of events:

"The way the NHL is working right now is they're following everything by what the NBA did, and that's no surprise to us. If they really wanted an 82-game schedule and they cared about the fans like the players do, I think they would have came with that proposal before they went so far away from the players that it took them a month to get back to the point they're at now.

"It takes everything away from the players. The players gain nothing by signing the agreement they have on the table right now. If we keep giving in every single time there's a new collective bargaining agreement up for negotiation, it's just going to keep going on like this. Six years from now they're going to want more money.

"Gary, obviously, he says he cares about the fans but in reality, if he cared about the fans that much he wouldn't keep taking away from the players to

try to put more money in the owners' pockets. It's sad because we want to play as much as the fans want to see us play. It's disappointing, obviously."

Smith still hasn't decided if he will go overseas to play during the lockout.

As expected, winger Radim Vrbata will return to the Czech Republic to play.

According to the BK Mladá Boleslav team website, Vrbata is supposed to arrive there on Tuesday and suit up to play in the following Saturday's game.

Coyotes prospect Mike Lee was named the ECHL Goaltender of the Week for Oct.22-28.

Lee, playing for the Gwinnett Gladiators, was 2-1 with a shutout, 1.00 goals-against-average and .955 save percentage. He was selected 91st overall by the Coyotes in 2009.

Arizona Republic LOADED: 11.02.2012

643549 Pittsburgh Penguins

NHL Winter Classic likely to be canceled

By Rob Rossi

The Winter Classic may get iced, but continued talks between the NHL and Players' Association provides slight hope for fans who want hockey played indoors this season.

The NHL is leaning towards canceling its annual outdoor game Friday. However, Day 47 of the lockout passed Thursday with deputy commissioner Bill Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr continuing their renewed dialogue.

Morning talks were expected to resume late in the afternoon, Daly said in an email. Neither the NHL nor the union provided details of the discussions, but Daly described talks Wednesday as "substantive" and union officials expressed guarded optimism about a possible return to the negotiation table.

NHL players conducted a conference call around noon Thursday. It was described as "routine" by Penguins players who practiced at Southpointe, but the players said union executives were not on the call.

Communication between the NHL and union was scarce for about two weeks before Wednesday. In-person negotiations have not resumed since the NHL rejected multiple union proposals Oct. 18. There aren't any planned.

The NHL is a week removed from cancelling the November portion of its schedule. About 26 percent of 2,460 regular-season games — including 23 Penguins contests — were purged.

Penguins players who practiced at Friday at Southpointe — Sidney Crosby, Matt Cooke, Pascal Dupuis, Chris Kunitz, Tyler Kennedy and club union rep Craig Adams — did not downplay the resumption of communication between the union and league.

Crosby reiterated his Monday prediction that the next three weeks were critical to avoiding a second lost season.

The NHL did not play in 2004-05 because of a similar labor dispute, though that one was over structural changes such as the implementation of a salary cap.

This lockout is mostly about division of revenue between owners and players and how to guarantee contracts.

Adams cited drug testing, travel and scheduling as part of "a million things that we've worked on, and we've definitely come to agreement on a lot of those things."

However, Adams described a second tier of disagreements on issues such as contract lengths and free-agency stipulations. The "big issue," he said, remains division of revenue.

Both sides agree to a 50/50 split, but owners want that ratio immediately, and players seek a gradual reduction. The previous labor agreement

provided players 57 percent of revenue that last season reached a record \$3.3 billion.

A new proposal from players is not forthcoming, Adams said. NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said owners' last offer, presented Oct. 16, is the one off which sides must negotiate.

A shrewd negotiation of the \$3 million contract with the University of Michigan will limit the NHL's financial responsibility if the Winter Classic is canceled Friday. The Classic is slated for New Year's Day at Michigan Stadium between the Detroit Red Wings and Toronto Maple Leafs.

The contract for that game was signed Feb. 8. It calls an NHL payment of \$250,000 Friday. However, the contract was worded so that the NHL will owe only \$100,000 if the outdoor game is canceled before or by Friday.

The contract also stipulates that NHL Entertainment can cancel the "any events, including the game" because of any work stoppage, including a strike or lockout, "due in whole or in part to a lack of collective bargaining agreement... even if as the result of intentional conduct by the NHL."

The last CBA expired Sept. 15. The NHL enacted this lockout upon that expiration.

Tribune Review LOADED: 11.02.2012

643550 Pittsburgh Penguins

Player rep Adams sees 3 tiers in NHL labor conflict

By Shelly Anderson /

The way Penguins forward Craig Adams sees it, there are three levels of issues that the NHL and the NHL Players' Association must work through before a new collective bargaining agreement can be hammered out and the owners end the ongoing lockout.

The key and well-chronicled sticking point is the tug-of-war over league revenues

A couple of rungs below that, Adams said, "there's a lot of stuff that I guess you could call less important, but it still affects the players. Whether it's drug-testing, issues like travel, scheduling, safety -- there's a million different things that we've worked on. We've definitely come to an agreement on some of those things."

Then there is a middle tier of issues.

Adams, the Penguins' union representative, said those are things that "people tend to brush aside, but it's very, very important, and that's the player contracting issues: the structure of entry-level contracts, free-agency, arbitration, maximum length of deals, things like that. That's probably not as important as the big number, but it's still very, very important.

"It's all tied in. If you want to have growth in salaries and have guys be able to have leverage in contract negotiations and flexibility throughout their careers, then you need to have some of those things."

Still no formal talks

The NHLPA had an afternoon teleconference for the players Thursday. It's believed it was simply informational, even though it came a couple of days after NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly had what he described as a "substantive" conversation with NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr.

The union wants to resume formal negotiations -- "We've been pushing for that now for a week, 10 days," Adams said -- but the league has been resistant.

So, like the fans, the players are searching for ways to be patient.

"I think you just learn not to get too high or too low," Penguins center Sidney Crosby said. "You just take whatever information you can get and just kind of wait and see.

"The only real high, or the only real point when you thought there was going to be a bit of a spark, was a couple weeks ago when there were four total proposals in four days. That was good. There was dialogue.

"I think that's all you really look for is good dialogue. It doesn't have to be settled in one day."

The NHL at that point had a proposal that included a 50-50 revenue split, but the players were dismayed by some of the details of the offer.

The union countered with three alternative proposals, all of which were quickly rejected by the league.

Player updates

Five Penguins skated at Southpointe, all forwards: Adams, Crosby, Pascal Dupuis, Chris Kunitz and Tyler Kennedy. ... Penguins defenseman Deryk Engelland assisted on the winning goal as RIHK beat Valerenga, 5-2, in the Get-Ligaen of Norway.

Post Gazette LOADED: 11.02.2012

643551 San Jose Sharks

NHL, NHLPA negotiations may resume

Kevin Kurz

According to multiple reports, the NHLPA on Thursday held a conference call with its executive committee as the lockout reached its 46th day.

ESPN's Pierre Lebrun reported that the call "reaffirmed the union's willingness to stick together and hang tough," but that the players want the union to get back in the bargaining room with Gary Bettman and NHL leadership.

On Wednesday, NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr spoke over the phone in a conversation that was labeled as "substantive" by Daly, who expects to hear from Fehr on Thursday. It's possible negotiations could restart, after the two sides have gone nearly two weeks without formal discussions.

Meanwhile, the league is expected to cancel the Winter Classic on Friday, barring a last-minute breakthrough in negotiations. The event is scheduled to take place on Jan. 1 at Michigan Stadium between original six teams Detroit and Toronto.

According to CSNPhilly.com, the "likelihood of losing the entire season increases dramatically once the Winter Classic is canceled," said a rep on the NHL's Board of Governors.

The NHL has already cancelled all games through the month of November.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.02.2012

643552 San Jose Sharks

Sharks owners likely want a season

Kevin Kurz

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman has threatened a fine of \$1 million to any team representative that talks about the lockout publicly.

KURZg.png

Due to NHL commissioner Gary Bettman's threat of a \$1 million fine to any team that speaks publicly about the ongoing lockout, no one outside of the Sharks' front offices or NHL Headquarters in New York knows exactly how the San Jose ownership group feels about the labor battle.

Publicly, and to no one's surprise, the NHL is presenting a unified front, although the notion that all 30 owners are fine with shutting down the league is absurd (as is the NHLPA's insistence that every one of the 700-plus players don't mind missing paychecks that will never be recovered).

It's been well documented that only eight NHL owners need to be in agreement with Bettman in order to deny any CBA proposal, although really, it's seven, as the broke Phoenix Coyotes are run by the league. Sharks defenseman Dan Boyle voiced his frustration about that structure in

early October, when his comments here were circulated coast-to-coast in various national and Canadian hockey publications and websites.

[RELATED: Boyle bothered by NHL owners' tactics]

CBC's Elliotte Friedman on Wednesday made his best "educated guess" as to the clubs that are considered the hard-liners, and are therefore holding up the bargaining process while they insist on getting as many givebacks (and money) from the players. In his estimation, they are: Boston, Anaheim, Columbus, Florida, the New York Islanders, Phoenix, St. Louis, Washington and Dallas.

Friedman went on to speculate that teams such as Tampa Bay and Nashville "want a better collective bargaining agreement, but recognize not playing is worse."

Which, I would hypothesize, is exactly how the Sharks' ownership group is viewing this thing.

As I've said in the past, the Sharks are a team that should be making money – or at least, losing much less. They are clearly run extremely well, selling out 110 consecutive regular season games. There are numerous team-sponsored community events for fans and season ticket holders throughout the year. They play in one of the loudest buildings in the league, and the atmosphere is electrifying. Fans don't have to sit through sales pitches for cheap merchandise at every stoppage of play, and there are no fat guys gyrating to Eye of the Tiger in the stands just to get an artificial rise from the capacity crowd (okay, so maybe that's a personal preference).

Most importantly, they have iced one of the most competitive teams in the league in the last decade, featuring eight straight playoff appearances and a hat trick of Final Fours.

The result? A self-proclaimed \$15 million loss last season, and, according to one source, more than \$60 million down the drain over the previous four years combined.

The Sharks deserve a friendlier collective bargaining agreement, centered around a lower salary cap. The lockout has become a necessary evil to achieve that, as the players' association has not shown much of a willingness to face the financial reality of a middle-of-the-road club like San Jose.

Shortly after the 2011-12 season ended, Sharks ownership, represented by Kevin Compton and Stratton Sclavos, sat down for a Q-and-A with the local media. We've referenced that discussion here a number of times in (including July 16), but it bears repeating that, according to them, revenues have not kept up with expenses, and Sclavos even admitted that seeing the salary cap rise as it has – to \$63.4 million last year – has been frustrating.

What's probably just as exasperating is that the Sharks aren't one of the teams to blame for where the league is now in terms of player costs. Sure, they've signed some cornerstone guys like Joe Thornton, Patrick Marleau, Dan Boyle, Brent Burns and Marc-Edouard Vlasic to big deals, but none of those were blatantly awful at the time they were inked. The Sharks have avoided the monster, long-term contracts that some clubs hand out like funsize Snickers bars on Halloween night.

In the league's most recent CBA proposal, it was revealed that if a player retired before fulfilling his contract, the team that signed him to that contract would be on the hook for the deal in terms of salary cap space. For example, if the Kings' Mike Richards decided to hang up his skates this summer, the Flyers would be burdened with a \$5.75 million cap hit through 2020 when Richards' contract expires, since they were the ones that originally signed him. Ouch.

Privately, the Sharks' ownership group and front office likely snickered in approval at such a clause, as it could potentially punish teams like Philadelphia for handing out such contracts that have driven up overall costs for everyone else.

But, getting back to the point – it's hard to imagine that the Sharks owners would be among those pushing for a "my way or the highway" approach that has so far been utilized by Bettman and his hard-liners. San Jose is coming off of its worst regular season since 2002-03, and an aging core is only getting older. Other local teams like the Giants, A's and 49ers are all at or near the top of their respective leagues, and all are competing for the Bay Area citizenry's discretionary income – which just got more expensive for Sharks fans, after a summer ticket price increase.

A lost season, on the heels of the previous lockout of 2004-05, could be disastrous for a number of teams, including the Sharks. Sure, the rabid fan base that packs HP Pavilion would likely remain, but there is much more to

generating income than ticket sales alone. It's the casual fan – the one attends three or four games a year, watches maybe a dozen more, buys the odd hat or t-shirt, and tunes in for the playoffs, that could look for other alternatives for their attention – and their hard-earned cash.

The players' association, at the moment, looks like it's playing the dangerous game of counting on internal strife to develop among the owners. Whether or not that occurs could determine if there's hockey, or if another season gets flushed away.

And if it's the latter that happens, every last owner and player will bear some of the responsibility.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.02.2012

643553 St Louis Blues

The puck has dropped in Peoria

By Jeremy Rutherford

PEORIA, III. • In the locker room of the Peoria Rivermen, the Blues' top minor-league affiliate, there's a large sign greeting players as they enter. It's an enlarged map that features the Rivermen logo next to the dot denoting the city of Peoria, and about 185 miles to the south is the Blues' logo hovering over St. Louis.

"The road to the NHL starts right here," the sign reads.

In a normal November, that is accurate. As the leaves turn shades of decorative orange, Scottrade Center turns a festive blue and yellow when the puck drops on the NHL season. But this autumn, with the league embroiled in a bitter collective-bargaining dispute with the players' union, the drive down Interstate 55 to St. Louis leads only to a dead end.

Games have been cancelled through November, and despite informal conversations between the two sides recently, there are no indications that the season will start soon. But for Blues' management, several of the organization's top prospects and fans looking for their fix, there is hockey being played somewhere.

Peoria's preseason game Oct. 1 was the first professional hockey game played in North America in 2012-13, and the Rivermen were back on the ice Thursday for their eighth tilt of the season. Although the team has struggled early with a record of 2-4-1, and the possibility of being called up by the parent club doesn't exist, players say they're thrilled to be on the ice.

"When I tweet something about a game, people are (asking) 'Wait, are you playing right now? Where are you playing?" said Blues defenseman Ian Cole, who was assigned to Peoria before the start of the NHL lockout Sept. 15. "They just don't really comprehend that there's more than one league, and the lockout isn't all-encompassing. It's fortunate for us. I'm glad I've got a place to play."

"I think we all feel fortunate that we do get to play hockey right now," defenseman Taylor Chorney said. "There's a lot of (NHL) guys that would probably take some pay cuts just to be playing right now. More than anything, it's nice to just have a job and get out there and play."

And play in front of important people.

In perhaps the only positive stemming from the lockout, NHL presidents, general managers, personnel directors and a plethora of scouts have extra time on their hands, and many have spent it watching the AHL. Blues GM Doug Armstrong and head coach Ken Hitchcock have been regulars in Peoria.

A year ago, the Rivermen averaged four or five NHL representatives a game. Last Friday, there were 17 in attendance, including newly appointed Columbus President John Davidson. Thursday night, there were 15, including first-year Montreal director of pro personnel Scott Mellanby.

"It's definitely (exciting)," Peoria forward Adam Cracknell said. "If the team is not playing well, you're not going to do well personally. (But) it's almost like a tryout every day, every game day, with all of the scouts and GMs here. You never know who's going to pick you up and who's going to see you. You want to play well every night for your team and it's going to help you in the future personally."

With several eyes in the sky, Peoria head coach Dave Allison has a challenge in front of him, preaching that team concept. But he said players' aspirations to impress NHL teams should make them work harder, leading to improvement.

"It's a great opportunity for people to show what they're capable of doing," Allison said. "You can't have it both ways, say that you want to play in the National Hockey League and then be overwhelmed down here. There are some non-negotiable attributes that you have to have every day to be successful. You've got to work and you've got to do it with support because we're not playing ping-pong here. We're playing a team sport. And it's hockey ... the puck is the same size everywhere you play."

Fans from the St. Louis area needing their puck fix have made the trek to Peoria to watch the Rivermen this season. And it hasn't gone unnoticed by the players, some of whom recognize the faces from back home.

"You see how much people care about hockey," Cole said. "Obviously they miss their Blues, but at the same time, they really love the sport and being part of the culture. You think, would NFL fans go watch a minor-league football team play? I don't think they would. I think we have the most passionate fans in the world, and that's why it's just unfortunate that we can't figure out this lockout sooner ... for their sake."

So while they're able to continue playing hockey and attract added attention, the Rivermen realize what's happening is not good for the game.

"Seasons like this have showcased our league," Peoria goalie and St. Louis native Mike McKenna said. "But the lockout is not good for anybody. Sports fans in St. Louis are very loyal but they also don't forget. I remember after baseball had their labor problems, people didn't come back to Busch Stadium, and that's a city that's die-hard baseball. The same thing happened after the (most recent) NHL lockout (in 2004-05). So I'm keenly aware how that may affect things.

"The Blues are a big draw when things are going well, but you're still not the Cardinals and you don't get as much leeway. We need to play hockey. We need to see the Blues on the ice. We need that to happen, and I hope it does soon."

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.02.2012

643554 St Louis Blues

Bettman fails to alter his legacy

BY JEFF GORDON

Gary Bettman missed a glorious opportunity to rewrite his legacy as NHL commissioner. He blew his chance to shed his label as the Architect of Doom.

By finding constructive solutions to the sport's serious financial challenges, Bettman could have ensured a more prosperous future for the NHL.

By avoiding a prolonged and destructive labor standoff, he could have propelled the league forward toward great relevance in the U.S. sports marketplace.

By guiding the owners through more peaceful negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement, he could have built upon his many successes in recent years.

The crackdown on interference violations in the ice paid big dividends. The reduction of clutching and grabbing brought more speed and skill to the sport

Officiating improved greatly. The league perfected the use of instant replay to review goals.

The league became far more proactive on player safety. It cracked down on blatant head hunting, stepped up player discipline and became a sports industry leader on concussion treatment.

The salary cap system created unprecedented competitive balance. While only a few NBA teams have a real chance to win the championship in any given year, most NHL playoff teams have a legitimate chance to make a run at the Stanley Cup.

The decision to move the U.S. cable rights from ESPN to the Versus Network proved prescient. The World Wide Leader in Sports was never going to make hockey a headline sport.

Versus morphed into the NBC Sports Network with the NHL as a cornerstone property. With the NHL Network also gaining a higher profile, the league is doing a better job of promoting the sport through television.

The tie-breaking shootout concept became a fan favorite, over the protests of many coaches.

The Winter Classic quickly became a hallmark event for the sport, broadening its appeal among casual fans. HBO's documentary-style coverage of the Classic lead-up explored the sport's mystique and bolstered hockey's image.

The NHL became much stronger at its roots. Canada regained a team for Winnipeg when the Thrashers moved out of the tepid Sun Belt market in Atlanta.

The Islanders finally escaped their woeful arena scenario on Long Island by recently agreeing to move to Brooklyn's new arena for the long haul.

The signs of progress almost seem endless. But we're not thinking about the good things right now.

Instead, hockey lovers are lamenting the latest NHL shutdown and the looming cancellation of the season's Winter Classic. This game at Michigan Stadium, in front of 100,000-plus fans, was going to be the central piece of a much larger hockey celebration in Greater Detroit.

This opportunity lost would add another black mark on Bettman's permanent record and remind everybody he is still running a Garage League.

Bettman's ill-advised negotiating posture has galvanized members of the NHL Players Association. The players braced for the worst. They were prepared to take a tough stance of their own -- and they trumpeted that intention by hiring hard-liner Donald Fehr to lead their group.

Hockey players aren't inclined to back down, especially when Bettman is doing the leaning.

"One of the things NHL owners love about NHL players is that you're willing to do whatever it takes for the team," veteran defenseman Sean O'Donnell told ESPN.com. "You're willing to block a shot, you're willing to fight a guy if it's going to pick your team up. Whatever it takes for the team. Hockey I think has the least individual element in it out of all the team sports.

"Well, I think what owners have to remember is that in this situation, this is a team of 700 or 750 players. Guys will sacrifice individually for the good of the team, not only this year's team but the team down the road."

The NHL ignored these clear signals and persisted with strong-arm tactics. The league opened with a draconian proposal, budged a little and then essentially shut down the talks with its take-it-or-leave-it approach.

As a result, we won't see the NHL resume play any time soon.

The impact of this latest player lockout will be profound. The fan base will erode dramatically in many markets.

Some owners will opt out of the business. A team or two could move. Dozens of players will see their careers end. Others may opt to remain in Europe, where the leagues run without interruption.

Much of the progress made since the last lockout will be lost.

Hockey will remain a fringe sport in this country, well out of the mainstream. The NHL will remain a sad example of how not to run a professional sport.

History will remember Bettman's regime as uneven at best. It didn't have to end this way.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.02.2012

643555 Tampa Bay Lightning

NHL's Winter Classic expected to be canceled Friday

Times staff, wires

Barring a substantial move by the league or the players association, the NHL is expected to cancel the Winter Classic today as the lockout hits its 48th day.

The move has been speculated for weeks, pegged partly to logistics. The league's payment plan for using Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor, where the Red Wings were scheduled to play the Maple Leafs on Jan. 1, calls for \$250,000 to be paid to the school today. Also, production for HBO's version of its 24/7 reality series chronicling the event and its buildup usually begins in early November.

Union lawyer Steve Fehr and deputy commissioner Bill Daly spoke by phone Thursday. The sides have not formally negotiated since Oct. 18, and no future sessions had been scheduled. The players' negotiating committee and executive board, and other interested players, held another conference call for updates.

The core issue remains splitting league revenue. Both agree the revenue split will be 50-50. But the league wants it implemented immediately, and the players, who last season received 57 percent, prefer it to be gradually phased in. Players also want existing contracts honored.

Players have said they are ready to meet any time to discuss anything. The league has said it will meet only if the players have a new proposal or will work off the one it presented Oct. 16.

"We want to get a deal done, but it's very, very frustrating," said Lightning wing B.J. Crombeen, a negotiating committee member. "What's just as frustrating as that is them telling the fans they want the game back, they're working as hard as they can, but they won't even meet with us. They won't even talk with us on anything."

Federal mediator George H. Cohen, who was involved in last year's NFL and NBA lockout negotiations, told ESPN.com that he had been in contact with both sides in the NHL labor situation but would not give details. Daly confirmed that but said Cohen had not been in negotiations because neither side believed that was necessary yet.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 11.02.2012

643556 Tampa Bay Lightning

Tampa Bay Lightning's B.J. Crombeen says league's actions don't match its rhetoric

Posted by Damian Cristodero

With formal negotiations between the league and Players' Association nonexistent since Oct. 18, with no resumption in sight and with expectations the Jan. 1 Winter Classic is all but canceled, Tampa Bay Lightning right wing B.J. Crombeen needed to let off a little steam.

His main target: the league for declining to meet with the players unless the union is willing to negotiate off the league's last proposal or will bring a new proposal of its own.

"We want to get a deal done, but it's very, very frustrating," said Crombeen, a member of the union's negotiating committee. "What's just as frustrating as that is them telling the fans they want the game back, they're working as hard as they can, but they won't even meet with us. They won't even talk with us on anything."

Asked if he saw any hope for the season to be saved, Crombeen did not offer his usual optimism.

"It's something you hope the switch turns and they actually begin to negotiate and begin to talk," he said. "I personally don't think it's a major gap. It's not like that last time when there was a salary cap coming. There's obviously differences, there's some things, but I'm fairly certain if they were wiling to negotiate something could get done fairly quickly. So, it's something where you try to hang on that hope, and hope it finally clocks with them, and they realize everyone wants the game to get back and get back quickly."

Crombeen is right when he says the sides don't seem far apart. Both agree the revenue split will be 50-50. The difference is the league wants it implemented immediately while the players, who last season received 57 percent of revenues, prefer it to be gradually phased in. Players also want existing contract honored. An immediate implementation of a 50-50 split

would mean, as it stands currently, a 12 percent pay cut for players, who took a 24 percent cut after the 2004-05 lockout.

"It's frustrating," Crombeen said. "They're taking a lot from us and are not willing to give us anything. We know we're going to have to give up certain things, and we've already shown that we're willing to do that. ... Like I've said numerous times, and it's been repeated numerous times in the media: we've been sitting there in New York. we've been telling them, 'We're in New York. We're in Toronto. Tell us when and where and we'll be there.' We're ready to meet but we're not really getting much traction out of it."

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 11.02.2012

643557 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL Lockout: Mathieu Schneider floats idea of capped escrow payments

Kevin McGran

The path to NHL labour peace — and a chance to save the season — is an idea that only number crunchers could love: a cap on escrow.

"If they're willing to cap escrow, there's something to talk about," Mathieu Schneider — Donald Fehr's special assistant at the NHLPA — told the Star on Thursday. "That would definitely be a step toward our direction, but that hasn't been discussed."

The two sides have no plans for face-to-face negotiations.

"The comment (from Schneider) is news to me, but the concept isn't," said NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly. "The subject has never been raised across the table to us, either in the form of a proposal or otherwise.

"It's just another way of addressing the 'make-whole' issue."

The idea of a cap on escrow has been an under-reported part of these negotiations, largely because both math and the definition of escrow are involved.

But we're stuck using both because Schneider's acknowledgment the players might continue to accept escrow — perhaps as the best way to make sure current contracts are fully honoured — provides a road map as to how the NHL and NHLPA might find the route between their hard-line positions.

"Escrow is a necessary evil under the salary-cap system," said Schneider. "But whether players' (salaries) are rolled back through the face value of the contracts, or through escrow, a rollback is a rollback."

Locked-out NHLers don't want any rollbacks. But rollbacks via escrow gives them a chance to get their money back. (The NHL, by the way, doesn't consider escrow to be a rollback, but that's an argument for thesaurus editors.)

Escrow is a percentage of a player's contract that is put aside every year. If the league hits revenue targets, the money is repaid. If not, the teams are due a share of the escrow. If the league exceeds revenue targets, the players get a share of the extra revenue.

NHLers, through the last seven years of their CBA, lost on average about  $3.5~\rm per$  cent of their salaries through escrow.

The NBA caps escrow at 10 per cent a year — no one can lose more than that. If there's not enough money in the NBA's escrow pot to pay players back what they're owed, the league dips into a benefits pool equal to 1 per cent of basketball-related revenue.

How the NBA's model could be tied to either the NHLPA's last proposal or the NHL's since-withdrawn proposal was not clear.

That's for the two sides to work out.

But it's an idea the two sides ought to pursue, says Schneider.

Both sides have offered each other a 50-50 split on revenue, but neither side liked the strings attached to the others' offer, creating this impasse.

"The owners want an immediate rollback and the players have felt all along that the contracts they signed should be honoured. It's as simple as that," said Schneider.

"The main issue now is: We expect the owners to honour the contracts. We've agreed to go to 50-50. When we get back to the table, what it's going to (come down to) is how do we allow the owners to honour the contracts and get to 50-50?"

So, open your spreadsheets and start doing the math. And bring a dictionary.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.02.2012 643558 Toronto Maple Leafs

Movember: Leafs Mike Brown raises prostate awareness

Kevin McGran

Maple Leafs hirsute winger Mike Brown shaved his hefty beard Thursday morning just so he could grow a new one.

"Feels great," said the winger in the barber's chair, wiping his freshly freed flesh at Mankind on Richmond St. "My skin can breathe."

Six months of growth fell to the barbershop floor in about 15 minutes.

"Movember" — a fundraiser for prostate research as well as a men's health awareness program — is held every November. Men are encouraged to grow a moustache to raise awareness.

Hockey players — locked out right now — are particularly fond of it, and this year many are competing against each other to raise the most money. Brown is facing Florida Panthers slugger George Parros with the loser having to wear a tie picked out by the winner.

"I've got to get the Toronto area on my team to get support," said Brown.

Fans can back their favourite player at movember.com. Last year, Canadians raised \$42 million for the cause, the world leader, according to Pete Bombaci, the organization's national director.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.02.2012 643559 Toronto Maple Leafs

Who is Derek Clarke, CHLPA spokesperson?

Kerry Gillespie and Daniel Girard

Who is Derek Clarke? Where is he? And why won't he come forward?

In a bizarre turn, the man who has been the most common voice of a group trying to unionize junior hockey players across the country has fallen under a shadow of media stories suggesting he may be Randy Gumbley, a former hockey coach twice convicted of fraud.

The group's Ontario lawyer, Michael Mazzuca, said those allegations are false and that Clarke would do an on-camera interview with TSN in Montreal on Thursday sometime between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to prove it.

No interview had aired by 5 p.m.

Mazzuca maintains that the allegations that the Canadian Hockey League Players' Association spokesperson is a man who defrauded young hockey players is a ploy to hurt the group on the eve of an important membership vote in Cape Breton.

The union released a statement Thursday morning, saying that Gumbley does not work for the association, but it did not provide any detail about producing Clarke.

"The CHLPA categorically denies that Randy Gumbley has any official position with the CHLPA," the statement said.

"The CHL hired a private investigator to find out who the union's supporters are. Under Canadian Labour Law policy, the employer is not entitled to know which players have applied for membership in the union—membership evidence is confidential as between the union and the relevant labour

relations board. It's convenient that this topic has been brought up two days before a certification is to take place in Cape Breton.

"The CHLPA's lawyers are reviewing the CHL's and WHL's involvement to determine which legal proceedings should be taken. This includes defamation and unfair labour practice complaints for unlawful interference in the formation and administration of a trade union.

"This issue is more than a smokescreen it's a high-handed union busting tactic to undermine the union in the eyes of the players. It's outrageous!"

CHL president Dave Branch said his organization hired a private investigator "to try to find out who Derek Clarke is" because of concerns from players about "late-night calls, blocked phone numbers, no names being given" by a representative of the union.

"So, from a security standpoint, having the best interest of our players in mind, we solely decided to secure professional services to see if we could not find out who Derek Clarke is," Branch said in an interview.

On Friday, Screaming Eagles players are set to vote on whether to join the union. So far, the association has signed up the Sherbrooke Phoenix players and say they have started the certification process for five teams in Alberta.

What has made this story increasingly strange is that Clarke himself — or even a photo of him — has not been made available by the association.

Branch, who is also commissioner of the OHL, said the CHL had made repeated requests to the union for information on who its representatives were and who was on its board, what their source of funding was and other details of the organization. None of those queries were ever answered, he said

"We never did find out who Derek Clarke was through our resources," Branch said. "All the happenings over the past 24 hours have been revelations to us for sure."

While Branch said the name Randy Gumbley "didn't come totally out of the blue" it was one of a number of names that came to the CHL's attention early in this process. Hiring the private investigator "was not to uncover any one person other than to try to determine who Derek Clarke was, or is," he said.

Branch rejected the suggestion from the union that the CHL was trying to find out who the supporters of the group was.

"That was never ever the case, never ever was done," Branch said.

Branch said the CHL asked to meet with the group and "get information as to who they were and none of that was ever provided.

"That was the first step and it just never was responded to."

Branch said "the No. 1 focus for us is to consider all legal options as to what we can do to make sure our players and their interests are best served and protected."

Asked if he's still open to meeting with representatives of the CHLPA, Branch said "based on what we currently know, I can't imagine that would ever happen."

He refused to elaborate.

In a phone interview with the Star on Wednesday, Clarke identified himself as a sales representative who has a side business in movie production. He said he was drawn to work with the association pro bono, like everyone else involved in it, because "we're all hockey fans."

On Wednesday night, TSN reported that it had spoken to Clarke on three different occasions, Oct. 19, 26 and 31.

"However the Derek Clarke we talked to on Halloween is different than the one we spoke to the first two times," says TSN sports reporter Dave Naylor.

TSN goes on to report that "the first Derek Clarke" told them he had a film production company in Montreal and "the second Derek Clarke" told him he was a sales rep for a manufacturing company in Montreal.

Also on Wednesday, TVA sports reporter Stephane Gonzalez showed Georges Laraque, president of the CHLPA, a photo of a man and asked him twice if the man is Clarke. Laraque replied "yes" both times. The photo is actually of Gumbley. After informing him about Gumbley's past, Laraque then says he has never seen Gumbley in his life and that Gumbley has nothing to do with the CHLPA.

While Clarke's background is a mystery, Gumbley's is not. He has at least two fraud convictions involving young hockey players.

Gumbley was given a suspended sentence on March 24, 2011 and 18 months' probation after being found guilty of fraud in relation to a European summer hockey tour. He was listed as the owner of Ontario Central Scouting. Young hockey players paid \$3,500 to travel to Europe and play in a tournament that never took place.

Before that, in 2009, Gumbley was sentenced to a month of house arrest and 11 months of curfew after pleading guilty to defrauding hockey players. In that case, he admitted to taking more than \$100,000 from nine parents, who believed they were paying for a year-round hockey to further their kid's potential to get a pro career.

Gumbley was once the owner of the Streetsville Derbys junior team and organized the Original Stars Hockey League for pros during the 2004-05 NHL lockout.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.02.2012 643560 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: Part-time goalies helping idled NHLers

Kevin McGran

The first time real estate agent and part-time goalie Greg Partchenko walked into a dressing room filled with NHLers, you could hear a puck drop.

"The first day, I walk in and I hear all the guys talking away and it goes silent," says Patchenko. "You can hear the guys thinking: 'Who's this guy?'

"I just said, 'Hi."

Big, burly and in his mid-40s, Partchenko put on his equipment, went out on ice and started what amounts to a part-time hobby as a goalie for NHL stars

"The next day Matt Stajan came to me and said, 'When we first looked at you we said, who the heck is this guy? When you got out there it was like, this guy can stop pucks."

That was a couple of years ago when Partchenko, 45, got a call from a mutual friend of Matt Nichol, the former Leaf trainer who runs a camp for pros in the summer. Like shinny players everywhere, they needed a goalie.

"(On Friday), we didn't have a goalie. It's not as fun," says Leafs forward Matthew Lombardi. "You need a goalie. It makes it better for us."

Now that the lockout has sidelined NHLers everywhere, Partchenko's regular two-week gig in August has stretched out a couple of months. He's gotten to know the likes of Phil Kessel, Mike Cammalleri and Dion Phaneuf.

"You're thinking, 'Are these guys going to take it easy on me, are they going to go hard? If I have feel like I'm having a bad day, do these guys want me to come back? Am I putting up enough competition for them?" wonders Partchenko. "At the end of the day, they go, 'Yep, you're doing all right."

It's been mostly Maple Leafs and Toronto residents like Cammalleri and Tomas Kaberle working out at the local rink — they're not at the Maple Leafs-operated MasterCard Centre anymore.

But there's no NHL-calibre goalies around the GTA, at least that they can find. James Reimer is the only Leaf goalie locked out, and he's been in B.C., where his wife is from.

So the players are thankful for the goalies they get.

"We're looking for goalies all the time," says Kessel. "When they come out, we really appreciate it. Not everywhere has goalies around. There's 60 in the league and so many are in Europe. There's just not that many around. I bet you at a lot of skates, guys are looking for goalies."

There's a bit of a rotation among the goalies working out at the Toronto camp. Team Canada women's national goalie Christina Kessler has been coming out lately, as well as some midget-aged goalies.

Andrew Cipollone, 16, of the AAA North York Rangers, was on the ice on Monday — skipping school in the process — for his first day with the pros.

"It was tough," said Cipollone. "A lot of fast shots. But gotta do it."

He enjoyed the 2-on-2 game at the end of the workout. "I made a big save on Lombardi."

His father, John, said missing the morning of school was worth it.

"It was a good experience for him," said the elder Cippolone. "How many times are you going to get a chance to stop shots from these guys?"

The NHLers aren't taking it easy on their new targets.

"You want to shoot the puck hard and get a chance," says Kessel.

"Those guys, they're taking our shots, we're trying to score, we're shooting the puck hard, no complaints. We love having them," says Lombardi. "The guys have been coming out. It's been awesome. I think they're having fun as much as us. We need them out there."

Partchenko, a Leaf fan, says he has a new appreciation for just how good NHLers are.

"They're hard, they're fast, they're accurate," he says. "I know why these guys are pros now. They shoot for the corners and they get them. I think I have the whole net covered because I'm a big guy. But they're still getting the shots in.

"You get to see how hard these guys practise and you get to see what these guys do. It is unbelievable. They're machines. They work out in the morning, then they hit the ice and then they'll go do yoga after. By the time I get off the ice, I'm gassed."

Partchenko also has some fond memories.

"They were doing breakaway drills," he says. "I gave them the glove side, and I was picking off their shots. Guys are getting frustrated. That was fun. When you know you're giving them one side, they go for it and you get it, that's great.

"Every time I get on the ice, it's like it's every kid's fantasy to have NHLers shoot at them."

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.02.2012 643561 Toronto Maple Leafs

Junior hockey union drive succeeds in Quebec

Kerry Gillespie

The head of Canada's first junior hockey team to join a union says he welcomes the help in making his players' lives better.

"This organization understands the decision of those kids and respects their decision," says Ronald Thibault, governor of the Sherbrooke Phoenix. Sufficient numbers of his players have signed membership cards to join a group that aims to unionize junior hockey players across the country.

The Canadian Hockey League Players' Association says it wants to become the official representative for 1,300 players on the Canadian Hockey League's 60 teams so it can negotiate fairer wages, better working conditions and improved post-hockey schooling packages.

Thibault says the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League provides very well for its players already but, "if somebody wants to help us out and make it better for the kids then they're welcome to come."

The association's attempts to unionize players have not been so universally welcomed by other teams or the CHL.

In Cape Breton, where Screaming Eagles players are expected to vote on Friday about whether to join the association or not, the team issued a statement seemingly designed to discourage players.

"We do not believe that any third party can provide programs and support better than what the Screaming Eagles and other league teams currently voluntarily provide to our players," the statement says. "In the coming days, we will continue to speak with our players and their families and ask that before they agree to anything that they do their research into the CHLPA and who is behind it."

This type of reaction is why the association says it is keeping quiet about which teams they've targeted for certification next, says association spokesperson Derek Clarke. The association fears that players with prounion views are at risk of retaliation by teams.

In a bizarre turn of events Wednesday night, Clarke himself came under fire in media stories suggesting that he may actually be Randy Gumbley, a former hockey coach convicted of fraud.

"Those allegations are entirely false," says Michael Mazzuca, of Gibson & Barnes LLP, the association's legal representative in Ontario. "Clarke is certainly not Gumbley."

Mazzuca added that Clarke would be on TSN on Thursday to prove it. The allegations are part of "a smokescreen" to detract from the membership vote on Friday, Mazzuca says.

As well as its success in Sherbrooke, and possibly Cape Breton, the association says it has started the certification process with five teams in Alberta but a vote there can't happen until a 60-day notice period is up on Dec. 6

Is Ontario next? Maybe, maybe not, says Michael Mazzuca, of Gibson & Barnes LLP, the association's legal representative in Ontario.

"In Ontario we're giving the league an opportunity to dialogue and sit down and possibly negotiate a collective agreement or a voluntary recognition agreement. If those attempts are not fruitful then, of course, we'll go down the path of starting the certification applications," Mazzuca says.

That is the same position the association has taken with another of its salvos against the CHL. Last week, it sent letters to the league and all the teams in the OHL threatening legal action if the teams didn't start following employment standards, including paying minimum wage of \$10.25 an hour. Right now, players who travel, train and are on the ice for dozens of hours every week are paid as little as \$35 a week.

"It's easy to say they aren't paid," says the Sherbrooke Phoenix's Thibault. "But there's more than just the salary."

The teams, among other things, work to balance the "heavy schedule in junior hockey" with attending high school and provide tutors, Tibault says. "You can't put numbers behind all that," he says. "Some of the teams do it better than others because they're richer but they all have the same intention."

So far, the CHLPA's multi-pronged approach to getting the CHL's attention – which includes filing a lawsuit for unpaid wages for a Nova Scotia hockey player – has not worked.

CHL president Dave Branch, who is also OHL commissioner, has said they already "provide our players with all of their needs ... both on and off the ice," and has refused to meet with the association's head former NHL player Georges Laraque.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.02.2012 643562 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: Locked-out Leafs await word on Winter Classic

Kevin McGran

Mike Komisarek knows what it's like to play hockey before tens of thousands of rabid fans in a college football stadium.

The Maple Leafs defenceman was a Michigan Wolverine when they played the Michigan State Spartans in 2001 in Spartan Stadium for the "Cold War," an outdoor game that attracted a then-record 74,000 fans and sparked hockey's infatuation with outdoor spectacles.

It appears increasingly unlikely that Komisarek and the Maple Leafs will get a chance to repeat that experience Jan. 1 in the Winter Classic at the "Big House," the University of Michigan's even bigger football stadium.

"That was a great experience," said Komisarek of the Cold War. "It would be great to be part of something like that. It would be great for the players and good for the fans.

"If the league feels they want to get ahead of the bargaining process by cancelling that game, that's for them to live with."

The NHL seems poised to axe that game — one expected to draw 110,000 paying customers — perhaps as early as Friday. NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly offered no comment.

There's no doubt the Winter Classic — between the Leafs and the Red Wings — might have been the biggest game on a Leafs fan's calendar since the team's last playoff appearance in 2004.

And the locked-out Leafs players were looking forward to it, although their optimism is tempered by the reality of the lockout.

"The fans were looking forward to it," said Leafs winger Phil Kessel. "It's disappointing to us that the fans won't get to see that game.

"There's nothing we can really do about it. That's their plan, I guess. It's going to hurt fans."

With the two sides not formally meeting to bargain, it's easy to see the cancellation — or the threat of cancellation — as a pressure point on the players as the league tries to wrangle itself a better deal.

It may well be a logistical nightmare for uncertainty to hang on any longer.

It may be simply cost: the NHL is due to pay the university \$250,000 on Friday, money that is refundable. (The league has already given the university a non-refundable \$100,000 cheque and must fork over a total of \$3 million between now and late January if the game goes on.)

The cancellation of the game has huge repercussions for the sport.

"Cancelling the Winter Classic means the owners are serious," said Brad Adgate, research director at Horizon Media. "We could be headed to another season being cancelled."

The game itself is a ratings hit with NBC that would be missed.

"It would be significant (to cancel the game), given the excitement around that game, the television, the novelty of it all," said Bob Dorfman, executive director of creative at Baker Street Advertising in San Francisco. "It does seem to be a game that pulls in casual hockey fans, non-hockey fans.

"It definitely is a market-builder, a demographic-builder and a sport builder. It would hurt in a lot of ways."

NBC — which is paying the league \$200 million this year whether the season is played or not — is believed to be looking for some alternative to televise if there's no hockey.

"I don't think NBC has too many blue-chip sporting events in the winter so it won't be that easy to replace," said Adgate. "The NHL is not a top-rated sport in the U.S. so rating points could be easier to replace than the NFL or NBA lockout."

NBC Sports, the all-sports network that used to be called Versus, was bolstered recently by the addition of English Premier League soccer. But the fledgling cable network is reeling without hockey — its single largest property.

"They're competing against the giant ESPN and they're trying to make this a viable sports entity," said Dorfman. "Anytime you lose a marquee property like the NHL, it's got to be painful."

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.02.2012 643563 Toronto Maple Leafs

Maple Leafs' Mike Brown takes Movember plunge

Staff

Are you sporting a moustache for Movember? Tweet photos of your whiskers to @SunMediaLife or email movember@scribbleive.com

Toronto Maple Leaf Mike Brown said farewell to his infamous beard Thursday in support of Movember.

The "Brown Beaut" joined Movember co-founder and CEO Adam Gerone at ManKind Grooming on Richmond St. W. to get a clean facial slate in order to join the annual fundraiser in support of men's health.

ManKind co-owner Jason Culala, who had his work cut out for him, took a straight edge to the Leaf winger's whiskers.

Last year, 246,000 Canadians raised \$42 million for men's health by participating in Movember.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.02.2012 643564 Vancouver Canucks

Alex Edler, Jason Garrison join group skate but still not cleared by Canucks

By Elliott Pap,

VANCOUVER - Injured Vancouver Canuck defencemen Alex Edler and Jason Garrison joined the UBC Thunderbirds and a handful of locked out NHLers for a practice Thursday, leading to speculation they were cleared to play and were now locked out as well. Not so.

Both are still rehabbing and under the Canucks' care. Technically, they were skating with the T-Birds and it just so happened that Cory Schneider, Dan Hamhuis, Manny Malhotra and others were also skating under UBC coach Milan Dragicevic's guidance.

Edler has been having back issues with a bulging disc while Garrison's problem is groin related.

"It's getting better obviously," Edler said in his first public comments since the lockout began Sept. 15. "It's a frustrating injury. You have to be very patient with it but I feel like it's going the right way. Surgery will be absolutely a last resort. As of now, the rehab is working so I'm going to keep doing that."

With no NHL games scheduled until at least Dec. 1, Edler has no reason to rush anything. He and Garrison are receiving their salaries, as is Ryan Kesler (shoulder and wrist).

"I think it's an injury you have to take slowly anyway," Edler responded. "Obviously I'd rather see us starting whatever stage I'm at. I'd like to get the season going no matter what. I don't really know when I'll be cleared to play. I'm just going to take it one day at a time."

He said he enjoyed skating with the large group Thursday, something he has been unable to do since the lockout began.

"Obviously it's a big difference between skating with two or three guys and skating with a team," added Edler. "I think it's a step."

GROIN PAINS: It appears Garrison has taken more than a step. He declared himself "definitely close" to full health.

"I'm just kind of getting rid of the last little bits and pieces," he explained. 
"I'm skating better every day. I'm working with a guy (Rick Celebrini) who is the best in the business when it comes to this. He's helped me out tremendously with the areas where I've needed attention. I've been told it's going to be sore for a long time, and that's something everyone deals with. It's more strength and getting the strength going."

GREAT DANE: Canuck right winger Jannik Hansen had a successful debut Thursday in the Finnish Elite League as he collected three points in Tappara's 5-1 victory over Kalpa Kuopio. Hansen skated on a line with 17-year-old sensation Aleksandr Barkov and veteran Ville Nieminen.

"It went well," Hansen said over the phone from Tampere. "We won so it was nice. I had a goal and two helpers. Why did I come? I didn't want to sit at home anymore. I had enough of waiting for something to happen. I wanted to take it in my own hands and get going."

Hansen had been skating in Winnipeg for most of the lockout before finally heading home to Denmark 11 days ago. The flight to Finland was a short one for him.

"It's about an hour and 20 minutes so no jet lag," he noted. "Another angle to me coming here is that we have Olympic qualifications for Denmark in February and if somehow they couldn't figure out the lockout, I wanted to make sure I was playing and in good shape. We're hockey players. We

don't want to be sitting at home or fooling around by ourselves. We want to be playing meaningful games."

Vancouver Sun: LOADED: 11.02.2012

643565 Vancouver Canucks

A Finn-tastic start for Jannik Hansen

Staff

Canuck right winger Jannik Hansen had an extremely successful debut Thursday in the Finnish Elite League as he collected three points in Tappara's 5-1 victory over Kalpa Kuopio. Hansen skated on a line with 17-year-old sensation Aleksandr Barkov and veteran Ville Nieminen. "It went well," Hansen told us over the phone. "We won so it was nice. I had a goal and two helpers. Why did I come? I didn't want to sit at home anymore. I had enough of waiting for something to happen. I wanted to take it in my own hands and get going."

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643566 Vancouver Canucks

Injured Edler, Garrison technically practised with T-Birds, not Canucks

Ben Kuzma

VANCOUVER — The initial optics could have suggested a much different medical prognosis Thursday.

When defencemen Alex Edler and Jason Garrison skated with locked-out teammates at UBC, it could have meant the Vancouver Canucks duo had been cleared of respective back and groin injuries and that the NHL club was no longer paying their salaries during the labour impasse.

Not so.

Edler and Garrison have not been cleared and were technically skating with the Thunderbirds to gain a better evaluation of their ongoing rehab since the Sept. 15 lockout. And you could technically argue that teammates Cory Schneider, Dan Hamhuis and Manny Malhotra and players' union brethren James Reimer, Jim Vandermeer, Andrew Cogliano and Rod Pelley were in the area and decided to drop into the practice. Technicalities aside, participating in an up-tempo skate with the T-Birds was the best progress news with the league on the cusp of cancelling the Winter Classic.

Edler suffered a bulging disc during the 2010-11 season and underwent a microdisectomy procedure to relieve pressure. He missed 10 weeks and returned for the second last game of the regular season. Asked whether skating or training led to his latest bulging disc, he wasn't sure what actually occurred or when it happened. Last season, he missed a game with back spasms and also missed several practices. And he made it sound like it was something that didn't go away in the offseason.

"The end of summer, just creeping up a bit," said Edler. "It's very hard to say and I can't even remember because it was so long ago. It's getting better obviously with the skating. It's a frustrating injury and you have to be very patient with it. I feel like it's going the right way and I'm just going to keep doing what I can to get ready."

Edler participated in all the drills Thursday and didn't seem to be in any discomfort and suggested that another surgery wasn't likely.

"Surgery would be the the absolute last decision and right now the rehab is working," he added. "I feel very positive."

Edler, 26, is in the final year of his contract at \$3.25 million US and the Canucks tried to sign the Swede to a long-term extension before the lockout. But at what price? Having Edler under their care will certainly given them a better idea of his long-term health before committing major money that his 49-point season might command.

As for Garrison, the 27-year-old White Rock native recently said if play had commenced Friday, he hoped to be ready for the grind. But why rush? He pocketed a \$3 million signing bonus July 1 on his \$5.5 million salary this season and wants to put an end to chronic groin problems that have plagued him the past two years. So, when could he actually play?

"It's hard to put it into a measurement," said Garrison. "I'm definitely close, feeling good and skating better every day and it's definitely progressing. When you're out there with multiple people, it's more awareness and it's a different feel and really good to get that practice tempo going. I've been told it's going to be sore for a long time, so that's something everybody deals with. It's more with getting the strength going."

In that respect, Garrison is also under the care of noted local physiotherapist Rick Celebrini. The retired soccer defender is head of sports medicine and science for the Vancouver Whitecaps, has worked with the Canadian men's alpine ski team and was chief therapist and medical manager for the 2010 Winter Oympics.

"I've been finding out a lot and working with the best in the business," added Garrison. "He has helped me out tremendously."

Meanwhile, the expected cancellation of the Winter Classic scheduled for Jan. 1 at the University of Michigan football stadium between the Toronto Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings — and a week-long festival of hockey at Comerica Park in Detroit featuring alumni, college, junior and youth games — would be a huge financial and marketing loss for the league. And as much as you'd think players wouldn't relish playing on bad ice, in bad weather and possibly suffering a bad injury, Garrison begs to differ.

"I think they [players] really look forward to it because it's good for the game," he said. "I always look forward to watching it and it would be a thrill to play in it for sure. I'd hate to see it go so early but, obviously, it's not my decision or the players' decision. We'll see what happens."

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643567 Vancouver Canucks

Report: Alex Edler, Jason Garrison skate with T-Birds

By Ben Kuzma

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643568 Washington Capitals

Caps' Karl Alzner, John Erskine won't let NHL lockout put a damper on Movember

Posted by Ben Sumner

November is normally a time of charitable deeds for several Capitals players, who have been participating in an event called Movember in recent years by growing mustaches in an effort to raise money for men's health.

Because of this season's lockout, participation in Movember among NHL players hasn't been as organized. The camaraderie of teammates and support from the clubs in the past made it more formal, and the visibility of playing while sporting a mustache helped the cause.

But the lockout isn't stopping Capitals defensemen Karl Alzner and John Erskine. Alzner joined up with Florida Panthers forward George Parros for this year's pledge drive. Parros is leading a team with other NHL players, such as L.A. Kings goaltender Jonathan Quick and Buffalo Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller, on Team Parrosmos, while Maple Leafs tough guy Mike Brown is hosting Team #Brownbeauts. Erskine, who had a very memorable Movember two seasons ago, signed up independently.

Alzner grew a mustache last season alongside teammates Erskine, Jason Chimera, Troy Brouwer, John Carlson, Matt Hendricks, Mike Green, Joel Ward, Mathieu Perreault, Jeff Schultz and others. The Capitals raised \$10,095, which was the fourth-highest total in the NHL.

Though Alzner is fortunate to not have had anyone in his immediate family suffer from those types of health issues, he's still quick to contribute to the cause. "Whenever I can help out with any sort of charity, it's pretty much a no-brainer to grow a mustache and help people out," he said.

He's also glad to be on Parross's team. "That's a pretty famous mustache he has, so I'm happy to be a part of that," he said.

Currently in Calgary with his new wife, Alzner is spending his time practicing with several Flames players and working out with a personal trainer.

Asked about his lockout plans, Alzner wasn't quite sure yet whether he'll end up playing for a team in Europe like some of the other Capitals.

"It's a real tough decision. There's so much that comes into play with that and finding the right place to play," Alzner said. "It's stuff I've been considering. I would like to continue playing and you can only do so much in a practice and a scrimmage. It would be really nice to come out and play some games but it's a matter of the timing and the right place."

In previous years, the NHL teams supported the players in their Movember initiative with promotion and updates. With the teams forbidden to associate with the players before a collective bargaining agreement is reached, the players are on their own, relying on Twitter to raise awareness.

Alzner says he'll try to get his Capitals teammates to contribute to the Movember cause. "It's definitely different," he said. "Usually we do stuff like make an appearance at a school or hospital or playground. But this is kind of a funny thing. People start looking at us, and it brings a bit of laughter to the whole thing. People really enjoy this. Hopefully we'll still have a few different styles to laugh at."

Movember raises money for prostate and testicular cancer initiatives, working with charities like Prostate Cancer Foundation and the Livestrong Foundation. to donate to Alzner's page and here for Erskine's page.

Update: Braden Holtby and several other Hershey Bears are also now participating. to see their team page.

Ben Sumner works in the Post's IT department and writes for Capitals Outsider.

Washington Post LOADED: 11.02.2012

643569 Websites

ESPN / Doan dealing with double dose of doubt

By Pierre LeBrun

For Shane Doan and the rest of his Phoenix Coyotes teammates, it's a double dose of uncertainty these days.

Being locked out and unsure of when they'll be able to resume their NHL livelihood is stressful enough, then add in the fact the perpetual ownership saga in Phoenix remains unresolved, and you've got one lousy situation altogether.

But Doan, the Coyotes' captain and face of the franchise for all these years, is trying to maintain a strong front as he waits out both situations.

"You just try to cross each bridge when you get to them," Doan told ESPN.com Thursday. "I know that's kind of cheesy but that's what it is. You hope both situations get done soon."

The irony is not lost on Doan, of course, that one situation layers onto the other in the fact that his Coyotes franchise has been brought up during the course of labor discussions since the summer. Specifically, the NHLPA wants to know why it's on its players -- through reduced player costs in a new CBA -- to pay for money-losing franchises such as Phoenix as part of the league's effort to get a new CBA that helps reduce owners' overall costs.

That argument aside, Doan still believes his market could work, given a fair chance.

"People may think this sounds naive, but I really do believe it can work here," he said on the phone from Phoenix. "And I know people don't believe that. But in the last three years, [the NHL, which is operating the team, has] done absolutely nothing outside of running hockey ops."

Doan's frustration is that the team hasn't had a chance to do the kind of normal selling job to its fan base a franchise would do when it has stable ownership.

"We've had zero ability to build off what we've done on the ice the last three years because every summer it's the same: 'Are we leaving? Are we staying?'" said Doan. "And this time we make it to the conference finals and we generate real excitement and then we get the lockout and we're talking about staying or leaving again."

It could, in fact, work in Phoenix, Doan said.

"If the ownership was in a stable situation, I believe that we wouldn't be one of the bottom revenue teams, I believe that we'd be in the middle of the pack and we'd be fine," said Doan. "But being the way it is right now, you understand. I just wouldn't want to give up on this city without giving us a real shot of having a stable owner and having the ability to make things work here. Because I do think it would work, as much as people may chuckle at that."

In the meantime, he has serious concerns on the labor front. Doan was in Toronto exactly two weeks ago Thursday and took in a short bargaining session when NHL commissioner Gary Bettman rejected all three of the NHLPA's counteroffers.

"I was glad I was in the room. It was important. I wanted to be there, it was interesting to see how it went and how it works," said Doan. "And in that particular moment we had agreed to come down to 50-50. That was a fairly large concession by the players. From watching when Gary walked out and said, 'They took a step backwards.' That galvanized the players."

That's a comment I've now heard from two dozen players over the past two weeks. It wasn't the fact the NHL rejected the NHLPA's three counteroffers, but rather the quick manner in which it was done. It angered the players in the room that day, a room that included the likes of Jonathan Toews and Sidney Crosby as well as Doan, among others.

"When they just flat-out said 'No' and I'm not sure they really had time to read all three of them, then you realize that it's a tough situation because they don't want to negotiate whatsoever," said Doan.

"It's just more about the money grab," he added. "And, in a way, that's encouraging as a player in the fact that I think eventually something will get done because it's more about just how much money they can get than it is about the systemic problems they were talking about earlier on. It really comes down to how much money they can grab, and I understand that."

Perhaps it was along those lines that Doan delivered that gem of a line that day in Toronto after the league rejected all three union offers.

"When people ask for money, they usually say, 'Give me your money or I'm going to hurt you," Doan said that day. "They don't say, 'Give me your money and I'm going to hurt you."

"There's that little word of 'and' or 'or,' and that's kind of important," Doan chuckled Thursday in recalling that line.

Doan simply hopes bargaining resumes soon.

"People may not believe this, but the players are the biggest fans of the game there is," said Doan. "We care so much about the game. We've sacrificed a lot for it. We want this deal done so badly."

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ESPN / Mediator won't be brought in just yet

By Pierre LeBrun

One of the most popular questions from fans these days is whether the use of a mediator could help dislodge the stalemate plaguing NHL labor talks.

As such, I reached out to U.S. federal mediator George H. Cohen to seek his opinion on the state of the NHL lockout given his participation in both the NBA and NFL lockouts last year.

Via email, Cohen, the director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, politely declined my interview request. However, he did mention that he had been in contact with both parties in the NHL-NHLPA negotiations.

That certainly piqued my interest.

"No news here," responded NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly via email Thursday. "Consistent with interviews we gave at the end of the summer. We have both separately been in touch with the FMCS at various points during this process. So far, I think we all have been in agreement that we didn't think that the introduction of a mediator into the process was timely or that it would necessarily further the process. That may change at some point, but it hasn't yet."

When contacted, a union spokesman said the NHLPA has had "occasional" contact with the FMCS since July.

NHLPA conference call

The players' negotiating committee and executive board, plus other players who wanted to join, held another conference call Thursday, one of many they've had throughout the labor talks process to update members.

I heard from two players who were on the call. They requested anonymity, but here is their recap of the call:

Player 1 said the call reaffirmed the union's willingness to stick together and hang tough, feeling that NHL is trying to wait and see if players crack.

Player 2 said the overwhelming feeling on the call was that players want NHLPA leadership back in the bargaining room with the NHL to explore what kind of flexibility from the league exists on key issues.

It was expected NHLPA No. 2 man Steve Fehr would reach out to Daly sometime Thursday to see if they could schedule bargaining talks.

We shall see.

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NBCSports.com / CHLPA spokesman may be a convicted con-man

Joe Yerdon

The attempt to create the Canadian Hockey League Players Association has been derided by some for its ham-handed efforts in getting off the ground. Others praise it for trying to stand up for the youngsters playing there.

One thing that won't help their cause is the possibility that one of their spokesmen has been convicted of fraud.

Joe Warmington of QMI Media reports CHLPA spokesman Derek Clarke is being investigated by Canadian hockey officials to figure out who exactly he is. TSN's Dave Naylor reports (video) he's spoken to two different people who have identified themselves as Clarke.

The man some believe him to be is former hockey coach and two-time fraud convict Randy Gumbley. Even CHLPA Executive Director Georges Laraque may not know who he is.

In an interview with TVA Sports reporter Stephane Gonzalez yesterday, Laraque in an on-camera interview identified a photograph of Gumbley as Derek Clarke. Then, in a subsequent interview denied the two were the same man

That's a bit embarrassing and, worse for the CHLPA, damning to their cause if it turns out a noted huckster like Gumbley is pulling the wool over their eyes.

To help add to the surreal nature of all this, the CHLPA says Clarke will be making an appearance on TSN today to show who he is. Here's to hoping he doesn't show up looking like this:

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NBCSports.com / The NHLPA held a conference call Thursday and "nothing new" was discussed

Jason Brough

The NHLPA held a conference call this afternoon for its executive board and negotiating committee.

Did anything interesting come out of it?

According to Predators captain Shea Weber, it did not.

"Nothing new," Weber told The Tennessean. "I think it's all pretty well known in the media, what's going on right now."

The union has said repeatedly that it's ready and willing to sit down with the NHL, but that the league won't meet because it wants to dictate the agenda.

It's been reported the Winter Classic will be canceled Friday unless there's significant CBA progress.

Update (4:02 pm ET):

An unidentified player tells ESPN's Pierre LeBrun that "the overwhelming feeling on the call was that players want NHLPA leadership back in the bargaining room with the NHL to explore what kind of flexibility from the league's part there exists on key issues."

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