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NHL 11/4/2012

By Chris Kuc,

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No surprise: NHL labor dispute all about money

The section of the expired collective bargaining agreement between the NHL and players' association about hockey-related revenue and how it's divided runs 82 pages.

It's not exactly light reading.

But to understand the core issue and the biggest stumbling block in the negotiations to end the NHL lockout that began Sept. 15, a look at the legalese provides an insight into what the league and NHLPA are squabbling over. Under the terms of the last CBA, the players received 57 percent of the \$3.3 billion of hockey-related revenue generated during the 2011-12 season. When the next deal is eventually signed, the players' take likely will be much lower.

According to a source, the league's latest offer of a 50-50 division is not only off the table, but the NHL has shifted its focus on getting more than half of HRR under the new agreement. One owner even has urged his peers on the Board of Governors to stick with the league's initial offer of 43 percent for the players, though is believed unrealistic. The NHLPA also has submitted offers that included reaching a 50-50 split at some point in the agreement but is adamant about not taking a rollback in salaries — something the NHL currently is demanding happen in Year 1 of any deal.

Then there are the issues of revenue sharing between teams, contract terms and more that also will need to be addressed when the sides get down to heavy negotiations. NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly met with NHLPA negotiator Steve Fehr on Saturday at an undisclosed location in an attempt to kick-start talks.

With the NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball all having signed new CBAs in 2011, a good barometer of how the NHL stacks up financially in several key areas is available.

Annual revenue

NHL: With seven consecutive years of growth since the lockout that caused the cancellation of the 2004-05 season, the NHL has experienced a revenue increase from around \$2.2 billion to \$3.3 billion.

NFL/MLB/NBA: The NFL generates approximately \$9 billion per season with MLB next at \$7 billion followed by the NBA's \$4.3 billion.

Revenue split

NHL: Not anticipating the record financial growth of the sport, owners gave players 57 percent of hockey-related revenue in the last CBA and now want that dramatically scaled back to at least a 50-50 split. The players also submitted offers of 50-50 but balked at any kind of salary rollback and a stalemate ensued.

NFL/MLB/NBA: Under their new deals, MLB players receive around 54 percent, NBA players between 49-51 percent and NFL players around 47 percent.

Salary cap

NHL: Tied into league revenues, the salary cap upper limit currently sits at \$70.2 million after increasing \$5.9 million from the '10-11 season. Owners would like to lower the cap significantly through the rollback of salaries via escrow — with the possibility of a "make whole" provision that would ensure players receive the full value of their contracts over time. The NHLPA has shown no interest in a rollback but could negotiate off the "make whole" provision.

NFL/MLB/NBA: The NFL's hard cap sits at \$120.6 million while the NBA is at \$58.044 million. Major League Baseball does not have a salary cap and instead has implemented a luxury tax.

Average salary

NHL: Average player salaries sky-rocketed almost \$1 million under the old CBA to \$2.4 million last season.

NFL/MLB/NBA: NBA players lead the way with average yearly salaries of \$5.2 million followed by MLB at \$3.44 million and NFL at \$1.9 million.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 11.04.2012

643666 Chicago Blackhawks

League, union restart talks in "secret" location

NINA FALCONE

The stalled labor negotiations finally saw some movement on Saturday for the first time since Oct. 18 as NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA special council Steve Fehr met in a "secret" location and restarted talks, just one day after the league canceled the Winter Classic.

Both sides agreed to meet in a confidential location to avoid any misinformation and media hype that is currently surrounding the lockout.

TSN reported Friday that the NHL seemed willing to make concessions regarding the "make whole" clause in their latest proposal that would shift financial burdens from players to owners via escrow. However, Donald Fehr refused that information and announced the league had not put another offer on the table. Here's Fehr's memo to the players, provided by CBC:

"You may have seen media reports this evening of a supposed league "offer" regarding the "make-whole" aspect of the negotiations. There have been no proposals from either side since the last talks took place on October 18th. As was discussed in detail by Steve Fehr on the Executive Board/Negotiating call yesterday, in informal conversations with the NHL this week, we have continued to explore how we can get back to the table and discussed with the NHL the issues we need to resolve, including the "make-whole" provision. We will continue to keep you updated and will let you know if anything concrete comes from these discussions. Meanwhile you should not read too much into media reports about informal phone calls.

"Following further phone conversations today, Bill Daly and Steve will meet tomorrow in a city and location that both sides have agreed to keep confidential in an attempt to keep the focus on the talks and not on conducting media scrums. We will update everyone following this meeting tomorrow."

Another meeting between Daly and Steve Fehr and will take place once again in confidential location on Sunday.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.04.2012

643667 Colorado Avalanche

Denver Cutthroats goalies Patterson and Millan give Denver hope

By Adrian Dater

The dressing room of the Denver Cutthroats is airy and modern, with a pair of high-definition overhead television screens bathing the room in contemporary cool. It isn't quite what you'd expect when walking into the 60-year-old Denver Coliseum, whose rainbow-shaped building beams long have been coated in sooty gray.

The city's expansion Central Hockey League franchise is trying to look young and hip on the ice as well, and it doesn't hurt that its two goaltenders are former starters from longtime college Division I powers who were drafted by the NHL's Avalanche.

In Kent Patterson and Kieran Millan, the Cutthroats have two good reasons for local fans to venture into the Coliseum — along with seeing classic

framed pictures on the arena walls from the visits of former guests such as The Who and Elvis Presley.

Patterson, selected 113th by the Avs in the 2007 NHL draft, was a starter at Minnesota most of his junior and senior seasons. Millan, drafted 124th by Colorado in 2009, compiled an 81-42-12 record in four years at Boston University — and helped win an NCAA championship in 2009.

Because the Avs have a glut of young goalie prospects, and partially because of the NHL's ongoing labor problems, Patterson and Millan are starting their pro careers at a lower rung than they probably wanted. The American Hockey League is the first step down from the NHL, with the Lake Erie Monsters the Avs' top farm team.

The life of a CHL player is not one of glamour. The Cutthroats bus to and from most games and players make about \$500 a week. Their housing is provided by the team and the \$31 per diem on the road is enough to buy a decent dinner at Applebee's. With lockers across from each other, Patterson and Millan seem OK with their surroundings. It may not be "The Show," but it's a start.

"You want to play at the highest level, and it was a little discouraging at first not starting out in the AHL level, but I have nothing to complain about," said Patterson, whose 2.06 goals-against average with Minnesota last season was the lowest in the Western Collegiate Hockey Association. "The guys are great here. The organization has treated us all great and I'm playing hockey,"

Millan, 23 and a native of Edmonton, Alberta, got off to a rough start. In his first two starts, he allowed nine goals in 94 minutes, with a 5.71 goals-against average and an .842 save percentage. He was pulled from his first game, at home against Missouri two weeks ago.

"Obviously, the first game wasn't how I planned it to be," Millan said. "But I've already found it's a little easier to shrug off in pro hockey because you play so many more games. There's a learning curve in a new league and I hope to put those kinds of games more behind me."

Avalanche goalies coach Kirk McLean and director of player development Craig Billington — another former goalie — have been on the ice working with Patterson and Millan. Patterson calls that a big bonus to being with the Cutthroats in Denver.

"They know what it takes to get there," said Patterson, a native of Plymouth, Minn.

Cutthroats coach Derek Armstrong, though, is the man in charge of playing time. While neither goalie's statistics were much to look at through four games, Armstrong said he is confident that having two young NHL prospects will pay off handsomely during the season.

"They're both good kids and very competitive," Armstrong said. "They're both going to learn and go through some things, but the key I think for goalies is to keep learning and just having a lot of perseverance. These guys are going to learn that this is still a big step. Pro hockey is pro hockey. Everybody is getting paid to play."

Competition in goal

The Denver Cutthroats have two goalies, Kent Patterson and Kieran Millan, who are in their first season of pro hockey and both were drafted by the Avalanche. A thumbnail look at the two:

Patterson: The 23-year-old, who played at Minnesota, probably has the edge as the Cutthroats' No. 1 guy in net. He led the Western Collegiate Hockey Association in goals-against average for the University of Minnesota last season (2.06).

Millan: In four years with Boston University, Millan won an NCAA championship (2009) and posted a 29-2-3 record his freshman season of 2008-09. He was pulled early from his first game with the Cutthroats, allowing six goals, and was 0-2 entering this weekend.

Denver Post: LOADED: 11.04.2012

643668 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Ian White sums up players' concerns on lockout: 'It's starting to look like '04'

By Helene St. James

November's games are gone from the schedule, so is the 2013 Winter Classic. And still the NHL and the NHL Players' Association have no formal meetings, no tangible talks toward ending their feud over how to divide revenue and start a season.

Red Wings defenseman Ian White said Friday that a teleconference with NHLPA leaders the previous evening didn't yield much positive news.

"There's nothing really new to share until the league is ready to meet with us and discuss the ongoing negotiations," he said.

The last time the NHL and NHLPA disagreed on a new collective bargaining agreement, the 2004-05 season was lost.

"It's definitely starting to get that feel," White said. "I started to get that feeling a little while ago."

Danny Cleary, one of the team's player representatives, shared a conversation he'd had with his 6-year-old daughter. She asked why he was home so much more than usual. After he told her, Cleary said the girl asked why the sides don't just split everything 50-50.

If a kid can figure it out, Cleary wondered, why can't the NHL and the NHLPA?

"Let's get these guys in a room and get talking, see where it leads," Cleary said. "It's a big three weeks here before U.S. Thanksgiving. I really do feel there is something that can be done. We just have to find a way to honor player contracts."

White said players are frustrated the league hasn't even wanted to look at the three proposals the NHLPA offered last month.

"They look at them for a few minutes, and then brush them aside without even considerations," he said. "They seem to really enjoy being the hard-line guys. There's not a whole lot of give and take, it seems. It's starting to look like '04, and it's a bad feeling."

White drew an analogy to the labor dispute that delayed last year's NBA season until Christmas: "It kind of seems like they're following the same playbook, because the NBA, it was the same time line with laying out different proposals and stuff. Fortunately, the NBA got a season in; unfortunately, it took them that long to do it. But if there's any optimism for us, it would be that it seems to be going in the same strides as the NBA."

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.04.2012

643669 Detroit Red Wings

Winter Classic cancellation puts NHL's dysfunction on big stage

John Niyo

NHL officials announced Michigan Stadium will host the Winter Classic in January 2014 — assuming the league is playing by then.

Hockey just canceled its Super Bowl. Which probably says all you need to know about the NHL at the moment. Or in the future, for that matter. Because if the Gary Bettman hat trick — three extended work stoppages during his tenure as commissioner — has taught us anything, it's that this sport simply can't be convinced to give up the gratuitous, unnecessary fighting.

NHL officials made it official Friday afternoon, following through with long-threatened plans to cancel the Jan. 1 Winter Classic between the Maple Leafs and Red Wings at Michigan Stadium. Also scrapped is the Winter Festival at Comerica Park, a two-week-long series of events in downtown Detroit scheduled in conjunction with the league's showcase game.

In effect, it's just a postponement for both events, as officials promised the "next" Winter Classic will be as advertised in Detroit.

You'll notice they didn't put a date on that, just in case. But presumably it'll be Jan. 1, 2014. Presumably, both sides in this latest labor fight also realize what a public-relations disaster this is.

NHL officials cited logistical reasons for canceling the game now — sponsors, ticket sales, rink preparations, and so on. All valid issues. Understand, too, Red Wings officials didn't want to stage a rushed, cut-rate version of this major event in the immediate aftermath of an ugly labor war.

Of course, there's also a contractual matter, as the league loses only a \$100,000 security deposit on its \$3 million Big House rental by pulling the plug Friday, when another \$250,000 was due.

But the NHL and its players are losing so much more, and surely they must know that. In February, when Bettman was in Detroit to announce plans for this game, the commissioner touted it as "a phenomenal event" and "one of the major events on the sports landscape."

Bettman left out the part about Detroit being the NHL's only one, practically speaking. The Winter Classic annually draws better TV ratings than the Stanley Cup Finals, mainstreaming the game to its target audience on a day most U.S. households are held captive by televised sports.

Eight months ago, Bettman also steered clear of calling the Winter Classic the canary in the coal mine. But in some respects, that's what it became as the NHL tried to avoid losing an entire season — again.

Classic for the ages

The league's signature event, one of the real signs of growth in the game following the 2004-05 lockout, was to feature two Original Six rivals and include a Canadian team for the first time. It was destined to be a huge success, setting an attendance record, generating an estimated \$25 million to \$30 million for the league and millions more for the local economy here.

In the public's eye, it certainly meant more than the November slate of games canceled last week. Some of those games — representing a quarter of the regular season — still could be rescheduled if the parties managed to reach an agreement in the next few weeks. But there's no rescuing the Winter Classic after today.

And there may be no rescuing NHL owners from their own folly. What's next for Bettman and Co.? Canceling Thanksgiving and Christmas?

I wouldn't bet against it, would you?

The sides were talking again this week, at least. But they haven't met formally since Oct. 18, when they last exchanged proposals and angry, defiant words as owners rejected three counter-proposals from the union. The union held a conference call Thursday, bracing the walls ahead of today's news while also reportedly urging its leadership to get back to the bargaining table.

But let's be realistic about this: Both sides have been bracing for this for months, if not years, even as revenue climbed to a record \$3.3 billion last year.

Starting from scratch

Donald Fehr was brought in as the union's new executive director in December 2010. He checked the forecast, pointed to the dark clouds and told players to start saving those escrow checks for a rainy day.

The owners, as soon as they were done ripping their hard-earned salary cap to shreds with ridiculous free-agent contracts, circled the wagons, got NBC officials to pony up \$200 million in lockout insurance and then gave Bettman his marching orders.

And that's how they ended up here, making the kind of New Year's resolution only this dysfunctional league could make — and keep.

The owners are standing on their wallets, while the players are standing on principle. And that leaves everyone else standing around wondering why they should even care.

That is, unless you're one of the many folks in this NHL city and others whose livelihood depends, directly or indirectly, on 41 home games and — hopefully — some postseason dates as well.

If that's you, I know what you're thinking today.

I'm just not sure it really matters to the people who can do something about it.

"It would be a real shame," Wings center Henrik Zetterberg said in September, when asked about the possibility of another nuclear winter in the NHL. "You saw what we had to go through after the last time. It took years for hockey just to kind of come back. But the last 3-4 years it's actually been going pretty good. So it would be a shame if they lock us out for a long time and we have to start from Square 1 again."

Well, shame on us for thinking they'd all recognize that.

Detroit News LOADED: 11.04.2012

643670 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Jimmy Howard will miss HBO's 24/7; plans to explore Europe options if lockout lingers

Ansar Khan

The popular reality series has brought much exposure to the league the past two years with its behind-the-scenes look at the participants in the weeks leading up to the outdoor game.

The league said the next Winter Classic, in 2013-14 if there's a labor deal in place, will feature the Red Wings and Maple Leafs at Michigan Stadium. The 24/7 series presumably will be back then.

"I think one of the joys of having the Winter Classic is being on HBO's 24/7," Red Wings goaltender Jimmy Howard said. "It doesn't matter who you are, you tune in all the time to see the different characters on different teams.

"It gives you a great feel of the guys throughout the league. That was also an aspect that everyone was looking forward to as well."

Howard, however, doesn't think many of his current teammates are suited for this type of show.

"I was curious to see how guys were going to react with the cameras all around, considering how many Europeans we have and how after games they're sort of like water bugs, the way they just run out of the room," Howard said. "I was curious to see how all the guys would be reacting when there's cameras everywhere."

How would Howard react?

"I was just going to be myself," he said.

Howard said he'll begin exploring opportunities in Europe soon.

"In the next couple of weeks if nothing's settled, I'm going to have to hopefully find a job if something's open," Howard said. "I don't want to sit a whole year and not play, I would like to get into some games.

"Even though I enjoy being out there with the guys practicing (during informal skates), it's just not the same."

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.04.2012

643671 Detroit Red Wings

NHL, players union resume talks after hiatus; league makes concession on 'Make Whole' provision

Ansar Khan

The NHL and players union resumed collective bargaining talks Saturday after a two-week hiatus.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHL Players Association special counsel Steve Fehr met at a secret location. The two spoke by phone several times earlier in the week. Unlike previous sessions, the sides agreed not to comment on the talks and focus instead on negotiations in an attempt to end a lockout that has reached seven weeks.

One ray of hope surfaced over the weekend, as the NHL has amended the "Make Whole" provision in its latest offer, according to tsn.ca.

It is considered a significant concession because it was a sticking point for the players. TSN.ca reports that the league has agreed to shift the cost of the Make Whole provision from the players' share to the owners' share.

Players didn't like the original proposal because the union believes it amounted to a 13 percent reduction to existing contracts, Red Wings forward Danny Cleary said.

Players have said they can accept a 50-50 split of hockey-related revenues as long as the league honors existing contracts in full.

The sides hadn't met face-to-face since Oct. 18, when the NHL rejected three counter proposals from the NHLPA.

The league has canceled all games through Nov. 30, as well as the Jan. 1 Winter Classic between the Detroit Red Wings and Toronto Maple Leafs. However, the season still could start as early as this month if the sides were to reach an agreement in short time.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.04.2012

643672 Los Angeles Kings

NHL, players union restart labor talks in 'secret' location

By Helene Elliott

The seconds-in-command for the NHL and the players association met Saturday in what was described as a secret location in an effort to revive their stalled labor negotiations.

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA Special Counsel Steve Fehr restarted the talks a day after the league announced it had canceled the Jan. 1 Winter Classic outdoor game, its annual showcase. The league has canceled 327 games since it locked players out on Sept. 15, more than a quarter of the season.

Saturday's meeting was triggered by an apparent willingness by the league to budge on the "make whole" clause in its last proposal. That clause provided a means to defer the payment of money players would lose as a result of their share of hockey-related revenues dropping from 57% last season to 50% in the new collective bargaining agreement. The NHLPA contended that the league's provision would cost them because the deferred payments would be counted against their future earnings.

Although even the hint of an agreement between the two sides on even the smallest of points raises the hopes of fans who haven't already given up on the league and the season, it's tough to say where this will lead. Donald Fehr, executive director of the NHLPA and Steve Fehr's brother, sent a memo to players saying the league hadn't made a new proposal and that Saturday's talks came about as the result of efforts by both sides to find ways to resolve their differences.

As for the super-secret location of their meeting, which sounds like double-secret probation, we can only speculate about the location.

The Vince Lombardi rest stop on the New Jersey Turnpike? Always a pleasant spot. The Carnegie Deli? A good corned beef sandwich can put anyone in a conciliatory mood.

How about the NHL store? Nobody goes there. Or maybe a deserted parking garage in Rosslyn, Va. That worked pretty well as a meeting place for Bob Woodward and Deep Throat during the Watergate investigation ... just saying.

LA Times: LOADED: 11.04.2012

643673 Minnesota Wild

Wild prospects Brodin, Granlund both injured in Aeros AHL game

MICHAEL RUSSO

Defenseman Jonas Brodin, a 2011 first-round pick who would be a roster contender for the Wild if the lockout ends, will miss several weeks after breaking his clavicle Friday night in a game between Houston and Oklahoma City in the American Hockey League.

Center Mikael Granlund, a 2010 first-round pick by the Wild, strained a muscle in the lower part of his right leg a few minutes later and will miss a few weeks.

General Manager Chuck Fletcher said Brodin will come to Minnesota early next week to be examined by Wild doctors, but typically players miss six to eight weeks with this kind of injury. Brodin was nailed behind the net by Edmonton Oilers 2011 first-overall pick Taylor Hall, who was making his AHL debut.

"He's stunned," Fletcher said of Brodin. "It's not good, but broken bones should heal and he'll get good care. It's a shame. He was playing so well and getting great experience."

As for Granlund, who was playing his first game since being named AHL rookie of the month, Fletcher said, "You see him go down and think the worst, but this may be relatively good news."

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.04.2012

643674 Minnesota Wild

Brodin sidelined for several weeks, Granlund for a few weeks; Gophers pregame

Posted by: Michael Russo

Bad night for the Wild and the Houston Aeros in Oklahoma City last night.

Jonas Brodin, a 2011 first-round pick and stud defenseman that would have a chance to make the Wild if the lockout ends, will miss several weeks with a broken clavicle.

Mikael Granlund, a 2010 first-round pick fresh off being named AHL Rookie of the Month, will likely miss a few weeks with a muscle strain in the lower part of his right leg. The Wild will know more possibly later today, but that's the thinking, hope and look of his situation right now.

To see video of the two incidents, see last night's blog.

Brodin was nailed in last night's game by 2011 first overall pick Taylor Hall. Hall received a match penalty for a hit to the head, but Hall contended it was a shoulder to shoulder and Brodin's injury would seem to verify that. He was supposed to be suspended for tonight's game, but Sportsnet's John Shannon reports that the AHL rescinded the match penalty and he is eligible to play tonight (although he may not).

At the very least it was a charge by Hall and at the very least Brodin will be sidelined for a long time pending an examination by Wild doctors.

The plan is for Brodin to come to Minnesota early next week for an MRI to see the extent of the injury. Typically, the standard for an injury like this is six to eight weeks to heal, but GM Chuck Fletcher said doctors need to take a look at pictures to see if it may be quicker or longer.

"He's stunned," Fletcher said. "He was kind of shielded on the play. I don't think he saw Hall coming and it came out of the blue. It's not good, but broken bones should heal and he'll get good care. It's a shame. He was playing so well and getting great experience."

As for Granlund, he landed awkwardly after taking a hit in the corner. He's getting more tests today and was feeling better this morning, but the early indication is he will miss the rest of the weekend and maybe next weekend and hopefully be back in two weeks.

"You see him go down and think the worst, but this may be relatively good news," Fletcher said.

The Aeros rallied from a 3-0 deficit last night to tie it at 3-3 before losing 4-3. They dominated the game by all accounts, too.

"Tough loss. But the loss is a lot less significant than the injuries," Fletcher said.

Jason Zucker is returning from an injury tonight in Oklahoma City, and he will be centered by Johan Larsson and red-hot Charlie Coyle.

The Aeros are severely banged up on the blue line. Marco Scandella has a wrist injury, although it's thought to be minor. Kris Fredheim is hurt and likely sidelined another few weeks. The Aeros wanted to recall Kyle Medvec to replace Brodin from ECHL Orlando, but he is hurt. So they turned to an Orlando player named Corbin Baldwin, who is a tough customer that can take care of himself, but he's not some goon called up in response to last night's injuries.

That's what some have painted the recall as, but the Wild has few other defensemen right now. If the Wild wanted to call up a fighter to make a statement, it would have brought in Josh Caron. Baldwin and Sean Lorenz are basically the only D left right now to call up with Medvec hurt, so Baldwin was chosen.

Plus, Granlund's injury didn't come from a dirty play, and whether you think Hall's infraction was dirty or not, he's suspended tonight AND Taylor Hall is not some goon.

Live from Mankato's Verizon Wireless Arena, the Gophers and Mavericks will play in 90 minutes.

Same lineups from last night for both teams (Mike Hastings has scrambled his lines for the Mavericks), and my assumption is Adam Wilcox will return to the nets for the Gophers.

Gophers (5-1, 2-1 in the WCHA)

Forwards

Kyle Rau-Nick Bjugstad-Zach Budish

Nate Condon-Erik Haula-Christian Isackson

Ben Marshall-Travis Boyd-Seth Ambroz

Tom Serratore-A.J. Michaelson-Justin Holl

Defensemen

Jake Parenteau-Nate Schmidt

Mike Reilly-Mark Alt

Seth Helgeson-Brady Skjei

Goalies

Adam Wilcox

Michael Shibrowski

Minnesota State Mankato (2-3-2, 0-3)

Forwards

Brett Knowles-J-P LaFontaine-Eriah Hayes

Chase Grant-Matt Leitner-Zach Lehrke

Bryce Gervais-Teddy Blueger-Johnny McInnis

Dylan Margonari-Eli Zuck-Max Gaede

Defensemen

Tyler Elbrecht-Josh Nelson

Zach Palmquist-Nick Buchanan

Brett Stern-Jon Jutzi

Goalies

Phil Cook

Stephon Williams

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.04.2012

643675 Montreal Canadiens

Back to the bargaining table

Posted by Stu Cowan

A day after the NHL officially cancelled the Winter Classic, the league and the NHLPA were heading back to the bargaining table Saturday, but meeting in private.

The Canadian Press reported that deputy commissioner Bill Daly was scheduled to meet with Steve Fehr, the NHLPA's special counsel, at an undisclosed location, according to a source.

It would be the first time the sides have sat down together since Oct. 18. Read more by clicking here.

Peggy Curran wrote the Extra feature in Saturday's Gazette looking at a sports landscape in flux in which locked-out Canadiens players can still count on a monthly stipend of as much as \$15,000 in licensing money to

help cover payments on their houses, condos and flashy cars. Compare that with a rookie on the Alouettes' CFL practice roster, who earns \$500 to \$800 a week. You can read the feature by clicking here. Curran also has a sidebar on how owners of pro sports teams play on "economic impact fantasy". You can read that story by clicking here.

Ironically on Friday, the same day the NHL cancelled the Winter Classic, New York mayor Michael Bloomberg cancelled Sunday's New York marathon as the city continues its recovery from the devastation of Superstorm Sandy. Former NHLer Nick Kypreos, who won a Stanley Cup with the Rangers in 1994, was one of more than 45,000 runners planning to take part in the marathon.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.04.2012

643676 New Jersey Devils

N.H.L. Resumes Labor Talks, but Insists Classic Is Off

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

On Saturday, less than 24 hours after the cancellation of the N.H.L.'s signature regular-season event, the league and the players union negotiated for the first time since Oct. 18. Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly and Steve Fehr, the union's special counsel, met for talks at an undisclosed location. Neither side issued a statement characterizing the talks, and Daly declined to comment in an e-mail message Saturday night.

On the union side, the loss of the Winter Classic was a sobering note. Privately, union officials had said for months that they expected the league to cancel the game as a negotiating tactic. They said they expected the game at Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor to be restored to the schedule, either on Jan. 1 or later, once a settlement was reached.

"I don't know why that needs to be canceled," the Rangers' Brad Richards told reporters Friday, reflecting the belief of the union leadership. "You can play it in February. The stadium's not going anywhere."

But the league was unequivocal in announcing that the Red Wings-Maple Leafs Winter Classic and related games at Detroit's Comerica Park would not happen this season and would be pushed to 2013-14. Refund procedures were announced for ticket buyers. Daly said in several e-mail messages last week that the league had no plan or intention to "resurrect" the game this season.

Independent business executives involved with the league, like those in sports management and marketing firms, have said that a cancellation two months ahead of the Jan. 1 game would be necessary because of the complex logistics of what has become an enormous event.

Saturday's negotiations, which the league initiated after nearly two weeks of objections from the union to return to the bargaining table, followed a week of preliminary phone conversations between Daly and Fehr.

On Oct. 18, N.H.L. Commissioner Gary Bettman took just minutes to reject three proposals from the players union. He and Daly rejected subsequent union offers to reopen negotiations.

That changed Saturday. The resumption of talks signaled potential movement past what had been a major stumbling block: the league's proposal to "make whole" existing contracts against salary reductions as it lowers the players' split of overall revenue to 50 percent from 57 percent in the first year of a new deal.

Donald Fehr, the union's executive director, said the N.H.L.'s provision amounted to "players paying players," but the league may be changing its stance. According to the Canadian network TSN, the N.H.L. is offering to shift the financial burden of preserving the full value of existing contracts from the players' side to the owners'.

Fehr, in a memo late Friday, told players and agents that they "should not read too much" into reports of a new stance by the league.

But if a revised league proposal on existing contracts is met favorably by union negotiators, it would be a sign of real progress. The union has already agreed to a 50 percent revenue split, though only after a gradual lowering that enables existing contracts to be honored in full. It has also agreed to an immediate drop to 50 percent if all existing contracts are fully paid.

That Saturday's talks were held in an undisclosed location — the first time that has happened since talks began last summer — would seem an indication of how serious both sides are. The renewed movement apparently comes too late to save this season's Winter Classic, but its cancellation seems to have awakened both sides — and particularly the owners — to the need for immediate action.

The loss of the N.H.L.'s biggest regular-season event is disastrous to a league that vastly improved its image in recent years. Now the overriding impression of the N.H.L. is not that of the league that presents a snow-globe outdoor rink surrounded by 100,000 fans, but of a league in its third lockout since the 1994-95 season — all during Bettman's tenure.

Already the N.H.L. is the only league to lose an entire season, 2004-5, to a lockout. The cancellation of the Winter Classic may have driven home to Bettman and the owners that if they do not move off their hard line in negotiations, they are in danger of losing a second entire season.

New York Times LOADED: 11.04.2012

643677 Ottawa Senators

LOCKOUT: NHL, players union meet at undisclosed location Saturday

REUTERS

LOCKOUT: NHL, players union meet at undisclosed location Saturday

The National Hockey League (NHL) and players' union returned to the bargaining table for the first time in more than two weeks on Saturday in a bid to salvage a portion of the league's regular season.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHL Players' Association special counsel Steve Fehr met in an undisclosed location to see if they could find common ground in a bitter labor dispute that has cost the league 326 games and its popular New Year's Day Winter Classic.

A league spokesman said he did not expect any comments by NHL officials after the session.

Earlier, Daly said in an email to the league's website, "Just trying to move the process forward. Maybe generate some more candid discussion on the issues that are separating us."

The two sides had not met since Oct. 18 although there had been telephone conversations.

Players were locked out by the owners on Sept. 15 after failing to reach a new collective bargaining agreement centering on how to split \$3.3 billion in annual revenue.

The regular season originally was set to begin on Oct. 11, but a week ago the league cancelled all games until Nov. 30.

The lockout marked the fifth time in 20 years the NHL has been stopped because of a labor dispute. The last was in 2004-05, when the entire season was wiped out.

The Winter Classic, featuring Original Six rivals the Toronto Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings, was to have been played at the University of Michigan's football stadium in Ann Arbor, attracting a potential NHL record crowd of over 110,000 fans to the venue known as the Big House.

It was scrapped on Friday along with a "Hockeytown Winter Festival" scheduled for Detroit.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 11.04.2012

643678 Philadelphia Flyers

Inside the Flyers: Former Flyers chime in about the state of the NHL

Sam Carchidi

The NHL labor war has killed the popular Winter Classic, canceled games through the end of November, and could erase the entire season. Both sides aren't compromising on critical issues, and prior to meeting Saturday the two sides had gone 15 straight days without any face-to-face meetings.

And while the owners and players say they are being loyal to their respective causes, fans are using other words to describe their inaction. Words like arrogant and selfish.

For a different perspective, we tracked down some former Flyers. Do they think both sides are doing irreparable damage to the sport? Are they chasing fans away forever? Are there any redeeming developments that can come out of this labor fiasco?

"How can a league that has been so successful the last few years go through this?" asked Lou Angotti, the first captain in the Flyers' history, from his home in Pompano Beach, Fla. "It just doesn't make sense. If it's not broken, don't fix it. There's got to be more to this than we are hearing."

Well, 18 NHL teams are apparently losing money, so the league - which has expanded beyond its means - is trying to appease those owners by cutting costs. Example: The league wants to count some AHL salaries toward a lowered NHL salary cap. In essence, the NHL is trying to put in rules that force owners to control their own spending.

"Hopefully, they can work out a deal where the small markets survive and make hockey stronger," said former Flyer Brian Propp, who is an executive with a company that offers technology consulting and staffing solutions. "That's the only positive I can see from all this."

Latest Flyers Videos

But before a collective bargaining agreement is in place, there will be more acrimony, more rhetoric, more childish behavior. The NHL's refusal to meet at the bargaining table the last two-plus weeks makes it look as if it is trying to flex its muscles and cause a divide among the players.

Then again, maybe the league has underestimated Donald Fehr, the executive director of the NHL Players' Association.

"I have a feeling we won't have a season," said Angotti, who after he retired from hockey owned a Florida nightclub for 15 years and later took financial classes and became a broker. "I don't know Fehr, but I know people who know him personally, and he's a vicious guy who wants to win. Look what happened in baseball" when Fehr was the union leader. "He won't budge and the owners look like they won't budge."

One of the main sticking points in the labor battle is that the owners want to defer some of the players' money through escrow.

"We fought in the early '70s to get guaranteed contracts, and the owners should stand by that," said former Flyers all-star defenseman Bob Dailey, who made \$150,000 at the peak of his earnings as a player. "Putting it in escrow isn't the right thing to do."

"I'm heavily involved with labor, so I'm on the players' side," added Dailey, an Elkins Park resident who is a sales executive for a union insurance company.

Dailey said "both sides have legitimate gripes, but I feel more sorry for the people who have jobs as parking attendants or work the concessions. They're all union people, too."

Angotti (top hockey salary: \$90,000) and Dailey are concerned that if the lockout lasts the entire season - as it did in 2004-05 - it will take a long time for fans to return to the sport.

"A lot of cities have great fan bases, but you're ticking people off," Dailey said, "How many times can you go to the well?"

After a while, fans "start looking at the bottom line," Angotti said. "They go to work 9 to 5 every day, and they're lucky to get two weeks' vacation and make \$40,000, and the players are making millions for six months. After a while, it's only natural that some resentment has to be building up."

Eric Lindros, a former Flyers star who will enter the Philadelphia Sports Hall of Fame on Thursday, worked as an ombudsman with the NHLPA after he retired as a player. Lindros still has connections throughout the hockey world, and he says the owners have changed the language from the last collective bargaining agreement as it pertains to hockey-related revenue. The owners' leaders disagree.

Former Flyers center Rick MacLeish, a onetime 50-goal scorer, never made more than \$250,000 in a season. Today's players average \$2.5 million, and MacLeish says there is too much greed among them.

Told it was somewhat surprising he wasn't on the players' side, MacLeish replied: "Why? I'm not a player anymore."

Propp, who didn't get paid when he was a Flyers broadcaster during the 2004-05 lockout, had a different view.

"You have to look at the whole picture," said Propp, a former Flyers all-star who had his biggest payday when he earned \$300,000 during a season with Minnesota late in his career. "You only have a certain amount of time to make the money because the average career is only four or five years. I look at guys who played and are my age and they're hobbling around."

Sort of like the sport of hockey these days.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.04.2012

643679 Philadelphia Flyers

Talks held in NHL lockout

Sam Carchidi

After 15 days without any face-to-face negotiations, representatives from the NHL and the players' union met Saturday and talked late into the night.

Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner, and Steve Fehr, special counsel for the NHLPA, met at a secret location and tried to find some common ground in the labor battle.

There were rumblings that the league was going to absorb part of the players' loss from a drop in their share of hockey-related revenue. The players had 57 percent of the share in the last collective-bargaining agreement and the owners want a 50-50 split in the new deal.

The owners had wanted the players to receive part of their salaries in deferred payments through escrow. The players have balked at that suggestion, and the owners may make concessions, according to reports.

Donald Fehr, executive director of the players' union, said in a memo to the players Friday that the league has not made a new proposal.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.04.2012

643680 Philadelphia Flyers

No progress in NHL labor talks?

Sam Carchidi

After 15 days without any face-to-face negotiations, representatives from the NHL and the players' union met on Saturday, but don't expect the lockout to end soon.

Sportsnet in Canada reported that there was no progress and that the meeting was over. A few minutes later, it said it had erred and the meeting was still in progress.

Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner, and Steve Fehr, special counsel for the NHLPA, met at a secret location and tried to find some common ground in the labor battle.

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Donald Fehr, executive director of the players' union, said in a memo to the players Friday that the league has not made a new proposal.

The lockout started on Sept. 15, and games have been canceled through the end of November.

Phantoms update. Scott Munroe made 26 saves and Sean Couturier had a shorthanded goal and two assists as the Phantoms blanked visiting Syracuse, 4-0, on Saturday night.

Afterward, Munroe sounded like Peter Laviolette.

"We needed to play with a little more jam and we did tonight," he said.

With a crowd of 4,355 watching _ along with several members of the Flyers' front office _ Ben Holmstrom, Erik Gustafsson and Shane Harper also scored for the Phantoms (4-5), who played their best all-around game of the young season.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.04.2012

643681 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL labor talks resume in undisclosed location

Tim Panaccio

They're back to negotiating. This time, without fanfare.

Collective bargaining talks resumed today in secrecy, one day before the NHL lockout enters its eighth week.

League deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr are meeting in an undisclosed location in hopes of finding some common ground to jump-start talks, which ended abruptly on Oct. 18.

A union source told CSNPhilly.com that both sides were still meeting late Saturday night and into Sunday morning.

Both sides agreed that it might be better to meet secretly to avoid media distractions and misinformation.

To that extent, the CBC reprinted a memo on its website from union executive director Donald Fehr to membership, which went out on Friday about misinformation.

Fehr's memo refuted a TSN report that the NHL had offered a new proposal to "make whole" all player contracts by shifting the financial burden from the players, via escrow, to the owners.

"You may have seen media reports this evening of a supposed league "offer" regarding the 'make-whole' aspect of the negotiations. There have been no proposals from either side since the last talks took place on October 18th.

"As was discussed in detail by Steve Fehr on the Executive Board/Negotiating call yesterday, in informal conversations with the NHL this week, we have continued to explore how we can get back to the table and discussed with the NHL the issues we need to resolve, including the "make-whole" provision. We will continue to keep you updated and will let you know if anything concrete comes from these discussions. Meanwhile you should not read too much into media reports about informal phone calls.

"Following further phone conversations today, Bill Daly and Steve will meet tomorrow in a city and location that both sides have agreed to keep confidential in an attempt to keep the focus on the talks and not on conducting media scrums. We will update everyone following this meeting tomorrow."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.04.2012

643682 Philadelphia Flyers

Losing Winter Classic is like losing Super Bowl

Tim Panaccio

The NHL didn't just lose another hockey game with the cancellation of this season's Winter Classic in Michigan. It lost its very own Super Bowl.

This was John Collins' baby. An enormously successful child the league's chief operating officer brought to life in 2008 with the first event at Buffalo's Ralph Wilson Stadium.

It was Collins' idea to tie the event to HBO's enormously-popular "24/7" series, an idea he got from his years spent as a programming executive with NFL Films.

That move took the Winter Classic national in terms of appeal. You didn't necessarily have to be a hockey fan to enjoy the drama of "24/7" and the build-up to a once-a-year sporting event that has more than held its own against college football's bowl games.

"24/7" gave the Winter Classic a human element. It put individual faces on the event so fans watching the game on Jan. 1 understood the backdrop and compelling storylines behind the game.

Last winter, CSNPhilly.com talked to Collins about the importance of the Winter Classic to the NHL and hockey.

Given this season's cancellation, we thought it might be relevant to recall what Collins had to say about the NHL's marquee event.

Here's a partial excerpt from our interview with him:

Q. What do you attribute the growth of the Winter Classic to, in terms of as a special event?

The atmosphere is incredible. It's the authenticity of outdoor hockey. Fans are given the opportunity to tailgate around a regular-season game. NBC provides a "big event" presentation through the production of their broadcast. The fans love it, players want to play in the Winter Classic, and sponsors want to be involved. It's a week long – or in some cases month-long – celebration of hockey. With alumni games, community skates and 24/7's cameras following both teams leading up to the game, the Winter Classic grabs the attention of avid hockey fans and piques the interest of general sports fans.

Q. What is it about this event makes it almost the NHL's version of the Super Bowl?

The Stanley Cup Final is our New Year's Super Bowl, but in just five years the Winter Classic has made its mark as an annual tradition on the North American sports calendar – and that is rare for a regular season game in any sport. One thing the Winter Classic has in common with the Super Bowl is that it is a celebration of the game and regardless of who your favorite team is, you still want to be a part of it.

Q. What role has HBO's 24/7 played in making this event take off and making it more mainstream in America which is hard to do with hockey?

The HBO producers are among the best storytellers in television, and there are always interesting storylines with our teams and players. HBO has been a great addition, not just for the Winter Classic, but also for hockey in general. It exposes the sport and our players to a new audience, while bringing our most passionate fans deeper into the game. There is no doubt that our players are some of the best guys in sports, and getting to see their personalities on a national stage is fun to watch. You never know who is going to emerge as the breakout star of 24/7. They are warriors, and seeing what it takes day in and day out to be a professional hockey player makes for great TV.

Q. What do the television ratings suggest?

HBO was very pleased with the ratings to last year's first installment, which exceeded their expectations. Beyond ratings, the buzz around the show is strong. Awareness is high and people are consuming highlight clips and following the storylines online. It's a water-cooler show for hockey fans, and becoming one for all sports fans.

Q. What has the Winter Classic done for NBC in terms of its national TV contract with games?

The Winter Classic had been a great launching pad for the NHL season on NBC for the past four years and NBC has done a great job with the production and storytelling of the game. And this year, though we started our national broadcasts on Thanksgiving Friday, VERSUS is flipping the switch to NBC Sports Network around the Winter Classic. It speaks volumes to their commitment to hockey.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.04.2012

643683 Pittsburgh Penguins

Bylsma has answers, just not his players

By Rob Rossi

In a perfect hockey world, Dan Bylsma would be 11 games into the 20 he believes are needed to forge the identity of an NHL club.

However, Day 50 of the lockout has hit, and Bylsma, like 29 other NHL head coaches, is as in the dark as was Prudential Center in Newark, N.J., where his Penguins were to have played the Devils on Saturday night.

Bylsma does not know the NHL's immediate future, but he shared thoughts on the Penguins — specifically last season's playoff loss to the Flyers — in an interview with the Tribune-Review:

Q: Some of your players are skating at Southpointe, and others are playing in Europe. What do coaches miss by not being on the ice every day with their players?

A: The practice part, the implementation part, that teaching part on the ice — it's not something I think I'm perfectly ready to jump right into that for whatever type of training camp you give me. Not having an exhibition game to coach in is one thing I'm not sure how to handle.

Q: What does a coach get out of an exhibition game?

A: I talked to a fellow Western Conference coach this summer, and his team only played us once last year, and he talked about how he couldn't find what our team's rhythm was, how it was tough for him to see how our team plays. The rhythm of the game is something that you can read in other teams and are part of how you coach as well. You fall into those rhythms. Players earn spots, and you count on these players. There are times our players expect to go on the ice — because there has been an icing and we're going to put out a line to capitalize on that. Not only can you, but your players can, too, get that rhythm for how you coach. Some of that in some aspects is like riding a bike, but (new acquisition) Brandon Sutter doesn't know that about me. Nor me him. If you talk about going out tomorrow for a practice with a team, I know exactly what I'm going to do, how I'm going to try to accomplish it and how we're going to try and do that. If you talk about a game, that's a little bit different.

Q: When was the last time you watched film from the playoffs last spring, and what do you want to be the impact of that series on your team?

A: What I watch now is bits and pieces, not games in their entirety. I did, and I have, but some of what we're doing entails watching specific parts of those games. I watch the games in their entirety right afterward. After that, it's not about entirety anymore. It's about bits and pieces and what we (assistants Tony Granato and Todd Reirden) can extract from specifics parts.

Q: What was the one thing that could be extracted from the way that series against the Flyers played out?

A: It's tough to draw one specific thing that's going to carry over. The hardest thing to do is draw the appropriate conclusions and move forward. I can clearly say, "It's X, and we're going to go in the opposite direction of X." I can say, "Well, we have to do this way differently," or, "We have to really focus on how we play." But I could also ask, "Was it two bad weeks? And if was, did I just throw away a lot of dang good." If you look at our penalty killing, you're looking at a penalty kill that ranks first in the league over the last two years and one that has done very, very poorly in the playoff series. You might be throwing away what worked. But if you look at different aspects of penalty killing, you might ask, "What did the Rangers and Devils do in their series?" You might run into some interesting things. I have. I'm not going to enlighten you on that. The toughest thing about going through and watching it — and knowing that I don't ever want to see that again — is determining what was a result of maybe two bad weeks and what is something that needs to be extracted from the way that series, and the series two years ago against Tampa Bay, the way both of those series went.

Q: So you're looking at all the playoff exits, not just that loss to the Flyers?

A: Yes, and we're not just looking at our picture. How did the Devils do against the Flyers, what did they do? Who had success against the Flyers,

and now what does that mean for what happened to us? Again, I'm not going to tell you, but I've seen some things.

Q: Is there any element from the last two playoffs that somebody could watch the Penguins, if and when the season begins, and say definitively the players have learned from those losses — at least, is there anything your team could show before another playoff begins?

A: Well, no. Absolutely, in a lot of ways, the proof will come then (in the playoffs). We've been talking about the penalty kill, but it's just not that. When you're talking about where we are better as a team, it has to be factored in — what we do in the playoffs compared to what we did in the playoffs. I've looked at Philly vs. Jersey just as much as I've looked at us vs. Philly. I had to.

Q: So the question Penguins fans might have is whether that loss to the Flyers, which still sticks with them — six months later, with all this time because of the lockout — does it stick with you any more than the other playoff losses?

A: Yes, because neither our expectations nor how we played was what our team is, and that's difficult. We missed out on a real opportunity. That opportunity was we really had a chance (to win the Stanley Cup.) To boot, we didn't play to our capabilities in a lot of areas, and that's very difficult.

Tribune Review LOADED: 11.04.2012

643684 Pittsburgh Penguins

Owners, players meet, but no resolution to NHL lockout

By Rob Rossi

Face-to-face meetings between the NHL and Players' Association resumed Saturday.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr met at an undisclosed location. Neither the NHL nor union divulged details of the session, which represented the first meeting since labor negotiations broke Oct. 18. It is not known when the sides will meet next.

The lockout hits Day 50 on Sunday. The NHL already has canceled games through November and the New Year's Day Winter Classic outdoor game that was scheduled to be played at Michigan Stadium between Detroit and Toronto.

Division of revenue and a method to guarantee contracts are the chief disagreements.

Tribune Review LOADED: 11.04.2012

643685 Toronto Maple Leafs

Q&A: Science journalist Jay Ingram exposes nerdy side of hockey

Joseph Hall

How light can you make a skate? How bendy can you make a composite stick before its shooting utility breaks? What's the optimal time to pull a goalie?

The hidebound world of hockey is resting more and more on the shoulders of science these days. (Scientists are even investigating whether leaner shoulder pads can help curb the curse of concussions). And when science is involved in a popular pursuit, you'll usually find Jay Ingram nearby.

Ingram, one of the country's top science journalists and long-time host of Daily Planet on the Discovery Channel Canada took a look at the physics, chemistry and even statistical analysis that's being poured onto the ice these days. The resulting special, Scoring With Science: Hockey Revealed, will air on the network Nov. 4 at 7 p.m. The Star spoke with Ingram about the program last week. Following is an edited version of that conversation.

Q. Hey Jay, do you know of any scientific formula that could get an NHL season off the ground this year?

A. It boils down to social science. And my look at it is that there's a lot of ground to be covered from a psychological, socio-cultural point of view before we ever get a season in.

I mean, I'm sure you can do some calculations, but it's all about people being willing to talk to each other and negotiate. There's a lot of science in the art of negotiations for sure, but it always comes down to the individuals and what their chemistry is. And it doesn't look like their chemistry amounts to much right now. I don't think it would light a candle.

Q. What elements of hockey are you going to be looking at in this show that can be translated into scientific terms?

A. Quite a few actually. The first thought would be the equipment. We do quite a bit on the design of skates. We went to the Bauer factory in St. Jerome, Que., and they worked very closely with an ice hockey research unit at (Montreal's) McGill University and we spent time at both places.

So skates for one thing, sticks for another. There's a lot of research looking into composite sticks to make sure they have the right flex and are designed in the optimum way.

But we went much further afield; we looked at the analytics of hockey. We sat in on a meeting of the analytics group of the Edmonton Oilers. They were trying to figure out if a guy who scored a goal in a game should be one of the guys shooting if there's a shootout. Would that enhance his chances? So it really illustrates how the science of hockey is beyond now just equipment, that it's getting into trying to analyze player performance.

We also get into the topic of how best to stay fit, nutrition, that sort of stuff.

Q. One of the first shows you did for the fledgling Discovery Channel was back in 1995 when you looked at the science of hockey at the end of the last century. How much has the game changed since then in terms of the research that goes into it?

A. It is a world apart, technologically especially. The average NHL skate 18 years ago was 1,100 grams. They are now down in the 700-gram range and what was really surprising and pretty cool is that the Bauer people have been field testing a skate that in the 400-gram range. It's about the weight of a sneaker. It's a little unclear whether this will be a skate that players love, actually. But it's an absolutely dramatic change.

And when you think when I started Daily Planet, there were a lot of wooden sticks still in the NHL. I think there's one now.

Q. In terms of the 400-gram footwear, one thing a skate needs to be that a sneaker doesn't is an ankle support system. How can you make a skate that light and still have the required support?

A. One thing, of course, is that you can use different materials. It's no longer just a leather side to skates. But the irony is that rather than concentrate on the ankle support, one thing they're stressing in new skates is ankle flexibility, particularly in the up-and-down direction, not the side to side. We have some really cool animations of this on the show. If you look at the mechanics, as you push on the ice and your leg extends out behind you, you don't want the angle between your leg and your foot to be a right angle. You'd like to be able to push your toes out even further. Never a straight line, but somewhere between a right angle and a straight line. To be able to do that and still be sturdy, the tendon guard at the back has to be able to fold and unfold, or bend and unbend hundreds of thousands of times. So one of the things we saw at the Bauer factory was tendon guards in a machine just being bent and unbent, over and over again. It's pretty cool stuff.

Q. You said you look at statistical analysis of the game as well. Can you talk some more about that?

A. We even have a little segment where a statistical analysis of when to pull the goalie shows that most NHL coaches are way too conservative. They wait too late. Really, you could pull the goalie with 12 minutes to go under some circumstances. But of course it's very, very traditional. You pull the goalie when you're down with a minute to go. But really, you should pull the goalie earlier.

Q. One of the things science is grappling with in all contact sports, but especially hockey and football, is concussions. Do you look into this issue at all?

A. We did a big thing on concussions a few months ago on Daily Planet, so we were a little reluctant to go whole hog into that. But we did a piece at the University of Ottawa . . . on a slightly different angle. That is, what about

redesigning shoulder pads? Shrink the pads, make them a bit more flexible and make it so that when you hit someone with your shoulder, you feel it.

You'd be much more sensitive to the degree of impact compared to now, when you can basically blast a guy in the head and you don't feel it because the pads are like armour. That piece will run separately on Daily Planet this coming week.

Q. Do you skate any better than you did when you laced them up at Maple Leaf Gardens for that first show back in '95?

A. I don't skate any better at all.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.04.2012

643686 Toronto Maple Leafs

OHL: Darnell Nurse, a Greyhound with impeccable pedigree

Daniel Girard

Darnell Nurse has never had to look far for role models.

Consider the 17-year-old Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds defenceman's pedigree.

His dad, Richard, was a wide receiver with the CFL's Hamilton Tiger-Cats. Mom, Cathy, was a star with the McMaster Marauders basketball team, the sport favoured by his two sisters — Tamika, who had a four-year NCAA career at Oregon and Bowling Green, and Kia, a high-schooler who has played for both Ontario and Canada.

There's also aunt Raquel Nurse, who had an excellent basketball career at Syracuse, where she met and eventually married NFL quarterback Donovan McNabb.

So, while Darnell may be the only one in the family pursuing an NHL career, he's got a lot of first-hand knowledge about what it takes to separate himself from the competition.

"He's grown up in an athletic family and he just seems to get it," says Mike Stapleton, head coach of the Greyhounds, where Nurse is in his second season.

"He comes to the rink every day ready. He's like a sponge. He wants to learn and work on stuff. He understands what it's going to take to get himself to the next level."

Given his size — 6-foot-4, 192 pounds — Nurse has been compared with his on-ice role model, Chris Pronger, the 6-foot-6, 220-pound veteran NHL defenceman and winner of the Hart and Norris trophies, who is imposing, defensively sound and offensively productive.

"He's definitely someone I try to model myself after," says Nurse, a potential first-rounder on draft day. "I've watched him and got film from his younger days as a player and always been impressed with how effective he is even with all the minutes he plays."

Nurse, who says he's working on improving his shot "and being a tough player to play against in my own end," knows it's key to be physical and win battles every night.

In his second OHL season, the Hamilton native is taking on a bigger role for the Soo. In addition to playing upwards of 30 minutes a night, Nurse is an alternate captain and has already exceeded his point total from last season and greatly improved his plus-minus rating.

Stapleton says while the size is what you notice first with Nurse, his coordination and mobility are other huge assets.

"He has the potential to be an offensive defenceman but he's also got great potential to be a stay-at-home, shutdown defenceman who plays with size and grit," his coach says.

Along with a year of maturity and OHL experience, Nurse credits his international duties last spring at the world under-18 championship and over the summer at the annual Ivan Hlinka tournament with giving him "a big confidence boost" this season.

And, he credits his family for offering lessons on life in sports.

"They've helped me realize the reality of sports," he says. "The biggest thing is that there's a million people trying to do the same thing and whoever's willing to do more and work harder, that's the person who's going to get the job."

DARNELL NURSE

Defence, Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds

BORN: Feb. 4, 1995

HOMETOWN: Hamilton

HEIGHT: 6-foot-4

WEIGHT: 192 pounds

STATISTICS (through Friday)

17 GP, 4 G, 9 A, 13 Pts., +4, 43 PIM

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Won gold medal with Canada at 2012 Ivan Hlinka U-18 tournament

Won bronze medal with Canada at 2012 U-18 world championship

Named to tournament all-star team at 2012 world U-17 hockey challenge where he won a bronze medal with Team Ontario

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.04.2012

643687 Vancouver Canucks

Brothers forever: the Biekса-Rypien story from last year

Staff

Kevin Biekса had two brothers when he was growing up. Then he met Rick Rypien and had three.

The last time Biekса spoke with Rypien, a month after Rypien had left the Vancouver Canucks to sign with the Winnipeg Jets, they discussed how strange it would be to play against each other in March and joked about fighting at centre ice at Rogers Arena.

Later, we learned that Rypien had been fighting clinical depression for years. A week after his phone call with Biekса, Rypien was found dead at home in Crowsnest Pass, Alta. He was 27. Rypien killed himself Aug. 15 to escape the unyielding torment of his mental illness.

There is never going to be another game for Rick Rypien. Never another talk with his mom, Shelley Crawford, never another moment with his dad Wes or a joke with his brother, Wes Jr. Never another laugh with teammates. Never another anything.

But tonight, the Rypiens will make it to centre ice after all when the Canucks honour Rick before their National Hockey League game against the New York Rangers. Rypien's legacy will be a website, funded by a \$50,000 donation from the Canucks, to help young people deal with depression and other mental-health issues.

Biekса will remember Rypien for much more than that.

"He had a huge heart and he really didn't like for people to worry about him," Biekса, 30, explained Monday in a quiet moment after the Canucks' practice. "He didn't want people worrying about him. He didn't want people to have to take care of him. He wanted to be the one taking care of other people. That's the way he was. He was kind of the leader of his family, the one everyone leaned on.

"When he wasn't playing, I'd talk to him and he'd say: 'How's the team doing? How was last night's game?' I remember thinking: 'Who cares? There are bigger issues here.'"

Biekса and Rypien met near the end of the 2004-05 lockout season when Biekса was with the Manitoba Moose and Rypien was a quiet, scrawny kid fresh out of junior hockey in Regina.

"I thought he was just a fan or a young kid," Biekса said. "I had no clue he was going to be playing for us. Then when he practised with us it was like: 'Oh, that's kind of nice. They're letting the young kid skate with the team.'

"There was no easy road for him to make it to the NHL. He came from a small town in the middle of nowhere. To get noticed, he had to do whatever it took. People respected that."

Biekса and Rypien became friends.

While driving together to a workout before the Canucks' 2008 training camp, Rypien confided in Biekса about his mental issues, his anxiety and worry.

A few months later, when Rypien disappeared during his first leave of absence from the team, Biekса and Moose general manager Craig Heisinger, who was like a second father-figure to Rick, met in Edmonton after a Canuck game and drove to Rypien's home in southwestern Alberta.

"We went there looking for him," Biekса said. "Didn't know what we'd find. We went to his house for four or five hours, just the two of us, hoping he'd come home and he finally did. That wasn't the best day for him. But we got him back and we got him help."

Biekса never betrayed Rypien's trust, even to caring teammates who inquired about Rypien's well-being. The Canuck organization knew about Rypien's depression since that 2008 camp and coordinated the player's treatment.

Biekса and his wife, Katie, helped as much as anyone.

While sitting out the rest of the 2008-09 regular season, Rypien stayed with the Biekсas in Yaletown.

"My wife stayed up to five in the morning talking to him every night," Kevin said. "We did what we could. . . just tried to get him through this. He loved hockey, loved coming to the rink. I remember him saying he just missed sitting in the dressing room and listening to guys chirping Hordy [ex-Canuck Darcy Hordichuk]. Things like that. Those were the things he enjoyed, the camaraderie. He didn't like to be alone."

Biekса said Rypien was with him when Kevin asked Wes Jr. to be his best man, and even knew before Kevin did that he was going to be a new dad again because the Canucks were on the road when Rick finally asked Katie why she kept throwing up.

"He knew before I did," Kevin smiled. Cole Biekса is nearly four, and his little sister Reese is two.

When Rypien moved back into his own apartment, Kevin would stop by after games to talk and sometimes walked Reese down the block just to check up on Rick and see if his lights were on.

Biekса is emphatic that Rypien loved his role in hockey and fighting had nothing to do with his mental challenges. He said Rypien's illness was too complicated to be explained away by one event or circumstance, such as the car-accident death nearly a decade ago of Rypien's girlfriend or the constant stream of injuries that slowed his NHL career.

"There were a lot of things going on," Biekса said. "I felt he was as much my responsibility as anybody's. Looking back now, I wished I'd talked to him a little more in the summer. I thought he was getting better. I knew the severity of it [but] I don't think anyone really thought this would happen."

Biekса's emotional wounds will be torn open again tonight, although he is thankful the Canucks are ensuring that at least some good comes from Rypien's death.

TSN is televising the game and the Canucks will livestream Rypien's ceremony on its website.

"He wouldn't like it," Biekса said. "He wouldn't want to burden anybody. He would want more than anything for us to win. I'm trying not to think about it a whole lot. It will be hard. We lived together, shared a lot of experiences and it feels like I lost a brother."

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643688 Vancouver Canucks

Winter Classic cancellation nothing to get in a froth about

By Jason Botchford,

If you ever needed an example of how small town the snow globe is in which the NHL resides, look no further than the continual braying about the cancellation of the Winter Classic.

Look, it's a nice game, even if it's largely irrelevant in Canada where it gets lower ratings than a regular season evening on Hockey Night in Canada.

In the US, the ratings have been decent for a sporting event, but declining. The game attracts what a pleasing college football game would get on most fall Saturdays.

But it stands out so much in the provincial world of the NHL because those who run it have been so inept in selling the league, you're left wondering if these guys could market free gas.

In relative terms, one good idea like the Winter Classic in the NHL is equivalent to the Marlboro Man.

Sure, it is an effective, if modest, commercial for hockey, especially with the HBO component. But 3.6 million viewers for one afternoon a year is not going to be the tide to budge the sinking franchises which hang around the neck of the NHL like a cinder block necklace.

If the NHL depends on the Winter Classic to win over peripheral fans, the league is in more trouble than anyone thought.

The owners cancelled it. So what? With the amount of outrage spinning out of various media you'd have guessed the NHL stripped the Boston Bruins of their most-recent Stanley Cup, and put rings on Ryan Kesler, Alex Burrows and Max Lapierre instead.

Fans shouldn't care. It was always the owners' baby. It was their schmooze fest. And when they take it out at the knees, the owners are the only people who should pay it any mind.

Even if you swoon for the inherent romanticism involved in playing an NHL game outdoors, you won't swoon forever. The Winter Classic always had a shelf life. There's only so many times NBC will allow the NHL to dip into this well, and a finite number of venues where it will work.

Detroit will get its game. Heck, it could be this year. The NHL could easily un-cancel it in the next couple of weeks.

If not, the league has already cancelled 326 games. What's one more?

This is hardly a disgrace, or worthy of anyone spiralling into a frothy fit. The hoteliers who lost their bookings will be just fine, thanks.

The only disgrace is this current cat fight over 3 per cent to five per cent of hockey-related revenues, in a league with record revenues, which is just bitter enough to put the entire season on the brink.

Latest Luongo

If the Canucks are looking to splash something on their currently useless \$5 million Rogers Arena scoreboard, may we suggest:

Thank you, Kevin Lowe.

After The Province recently revealed the Edmonton Oilers were the surprise latecomer in the Roberto Luongo sweepstakes, Lowe stoked the fires by admitting publicly he's not exactly overwhelmed with confidence when he looks at his situation in net.

"Goaltending is a question mark," Lowe admitted in a radio interview. "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."

On Dubnyk, he continued: "He's got to go out and prove it now if he's going to take over the No. 1 job."

Luongo, well-informed of the Oilers interest, did his part by giving the "Edmonton questions its goalies" storyline a deft tweak by donning one of his vintage Grant Fuhr Oilers' masks and posting it on twitter for Halloween. Trick or treat?

Sublime stuff, really.

Brian Burke must have loved it.

Despite reports, a deal between Toronto and Vancouver for Luongo isn't done, which is why Vancouver's assistant GM Laurence Gilman and senior adviser Stan Smyl were in Abbotsford this week, scouting the Toronto Marlies.

Coincidentally, Burke and his lieutenant Dave Nonis were also in attendance. Of course, the teams aren't permitted to talk trade during the lockout, though if they did, who would ever know?

Most people still believe a deal with Toronto is going to get done. The Leafs need a goalie, maybe desperately so. There is one veteran, sure-thing starter available. The Canucks like several assets in the Toronto organization, including Tyler Bozak, who they believe could step in and be their third-line centre. The obvious trade remains obvious.

But Edmonton certainly helps steer the leverage needle toward the Canucks.

It may seem improbable the Canucks would deal in their division, but it's not impossible. Using one hypothetical, if the Oilers were to offer Jordan Eberle, the trade is done, pending Luongo's approval.

And don't be so sure Luongo would say no, given the Oilers collection of young talent and the opportunity to stick it to Vancouver six times a year.

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643689 Websites

NBCSports.com / Donald Fehr explains NHL "make whole" concession

Joe Yerdon

Last night, the NHL made it clear they were going to alter their view on the "make whole" concession they're making to the players.

NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr, however, had to make it clear to the players what exactly it was they were reading in the press. Larry Brooks of the New York Post shared the memo to the players via Twitter.

"You may have seen media reports of supposed league 'offer' regarding make-whole aspect... There have been no proposals from either side since Oct. 18. You should not read too much into reports of informal phone calls."

In other words, there hasn't been a new proposal from the owners and there's no reason to get too excited about the latest development.

Doom and gloom stuff? Maybe for the fans, but keeping everyone on an even keel about how talks are going is important.

If the players ride the waves of emotion that come with the reports that slip out into the press, it's a quick way for negotiations to get even uglier than they may be.

In essence: When there's news to report to the players, he'll share it with them himself.

UPDATE: Here's Fehr's full memo to the players:

"You may have seen media reports this evening of a supposed league "offer" regarding the "make-whole" aspect of the negotiations. There have been no proposals from either side since the last talks took place on October 18th. As was discussed in detail by Steve Fehr on the Executive Board/Negotiating call yesterday, in informal conversations with the NHL this week, we have continued to explore how we can get back to the table and discussed with the NHL the issues we need to resolve, including the "make-whole" provision. We will continue to keep you updated and will let you know if anything concrete comes from these discussions. Meanwhile you should not read too much into media reports about informal phone calls.

"Following further phone conversations today, Bill Daly and Steve will meet tomorrow in a city and location that both sides have agreed to keep confidential in an attempt to keep the focus on the talks and not on conducting media scrums. We will update everyone following this meeting tomorrow."

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