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643780 Anaheim Ducks

Progress made in NHL talks

No details emerge from meetings in New York, but sides will meet again Wednesday.

By Helene Elliott

9:49 PM PST, November 6, 2012

Seven hours of meetings between representatives of the NHL and the NHL Players' Assn. on Tuesday in New York produced at least one key agreement: that they had enough reason to reconvene Wednesday to continue exploring resolutions to the labor dispute that has wiped out more than a quarter of the schedule.

People familiar with the nature of the talks but not authorized to speak publicly said progress had been made, but both sides declined to describe specifics of the sessions, which were attended by top executives of both sides as well as 13 players and several owners.

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly confirmed that collective bargaining talks had ended at 7:15 p.m. Pacific time and would resume Wednesday. He added, "The league will not characterize the essence or the detail of the discussions until their conclusion." A spokesman for the NHLPA said the sides will meet again Wednesday at an undisclosed time.

The NHL has canceled games through Nov. 30 and the Jan. 1 Winter Classic, but there's enough time for each team to play a schedule of about 60 games if an accord is reached in the next two weeks.

Tuesday's meeting was the first large-scale negotiating session since Oct. 18. Daly and Steve Fehr, the NHLPA's special counsel, had met Saturday and laid the groundwork for Tuesday's session.

After weeks of media manipulation and each side criticizing the other for being unwilling to negotiate, their reticence Tuesday seemed a sign they're serious about negotiating a new labor deal.

The mechanism to reduce players' share of hockey-related revenue from last season's 57% to 50% has been the center of contention. Players are unwilling to pay heavily into an escrow fund without guarantee they'll get the full value of their contracts, and the NHL is believed to have bent on that point. But the league still wants contracts limited to a maximum of five years and wants to delay unrestricted free agency until players are 28 or have eight years' accrued service, points the players oppose.

The sides have also dealt with player-safety issues and a league proposal that would no longer allow teams to avoid salary-cap problems by burying high-salaried players in the minor leagues.

LA Times: LOADED: 11.07.2012

643781 Anaheim Ducks

NHL, union hold lengthy talks

By ERIC STEPHENS / THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Hope for a National Hockey League season that's been on hold because of another lengthy lockout resurfaced as the league and NHL Players' Association met for over seven hours Tuesday in an attempt to settle their damaging labor dispute.

The latest round of talks that occurred in New York City represent the first formal discussions since the doomed Oct. 18 sessions when the NHL rejected three counterproposals from the union in a matter of minutes.

Since then, the NHL wiped out its schedule through the end of November and canceled its popular Winter Classic. The latter appears to have been a catalyst to restart talks as top officials on both sides held a marathon session over the weekend.

"We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and we'll continue bargaining until we find a way to make a deal," NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr told reporters before heading to an undisclosed location for the negotiating session.

Players have been willing to accept a 50-50 split of future league revenues, down from the 57 percent they received in the previous collective bargaining agreement. The key sticking point has been how all current contracts will be honored.

The NHL offered to pay players the money lost over the length of their deals but the union contended that those deferred payments would count against earning potential of future players.

But league deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr made progress during their day-long private meeting Saturday into Sunday morning. Owners now appear willing to pay those contracts in full.

"It's very good to be getting back to the table," Fehr said. "We hope that this time it produces more progress that we've seen in the past and we can figure out a way to make an agreement and to get the game back on the ice as soon as possible."

There is still disagreement over contract lengths and free-agent rights but the sides have agreed to meet again today as they hope to avoid a repeat of the work stoppage that cost the entire 2004-05 season.

Orange County Register: LOADED: 11.07.2012

643782 Buffalo Sabres

What's the Russian word for 'goal?' Grigorenko knows

Sabres prospect Mikhail Grigorenko and the Russians opened the annual Subway Super Series with a convincing 6-2 victory over the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League on Monday night.

Grigorenko, drafted by Buffalo with the 12th overall pick in June, had a goal (video below) and assist for Russia in the first game of the exhibition series. Game Two is Wednesday.

---John Vogl

Buffalo News LOADED: 11.07.2012

643783 Buffalo Sabres

Shhhh! The NHL and NHLPA are meeting

If you work hard and give 110 percent, you will learn there are cliches for every situation. One of the most common in terms of negotiating is that things are going well when it's quiet.

Well, the NHL and NHL Players' Association shot that to h-e-double-hockey-sticks the last few months because, except for a few rare moments, they haven't said much to anybody (including the other party). But today is going to be quiet time, at least for a little while.

The sides are set to negotiate in New York late this afternoon, and they've announced they'll keep the location secret. Manhattan has a lot of buildings, so the search for the site of the talks will be difficult.

(If I were doing the planning, I'd pick Katz's Deli, the Chrysler Building, Birdland Jazz Club, Carolines on Broadway or the Gapstow Bridge.)

The NHL will not have media availability following the talks, according to ESPN.com's Pierre LeBrun, but the NHLPA will talk. The talks, which are the first since the sides angrily split at union headquarters Oct. 18, could go a long way toward determining whether the NHL will return in December.

---John Vogl

Buffalo News LOADED: 11.07.2012

643784 Calgary Flames

Heat on Baertschi with Oilers' stars on tap

Wes Gilbertson, Calgary Sun

Bulletin-board material? Not even close.

But if you read between the lines, it seems Calgary Flames top prospect Sven Baertschi is getting a bit tired of hearing about the Edmonton Oilers' stockpile of can't-miss kids.

"I think the hype came with the Oilers because they have so many first-overall picks. But sometimes, it doesn't really matter when you get picked. It's about how much you make progress over the next couple years after you get drafted," said Baertschi, the 13th-overall selection in the 2011 NHL Entry Draft and one of several up-and-comers skating for the AHL's Abbotsford Heat during the big-league labour stoppage.

"(The Oilers' prospects) are all great players, they're awesome players to get drafted first overall or whatever, but if you look forward, the next couple of years, maybe things change. Maybe guys who got drafted late, in the end, they are outstanding. Maybe they're better than some first-round picks."

There will be no shortage of first-rounders on the ice when Baertschi and his Heat teammates welcome the Oklahoma City Barons — led by former first-overall picks Taylor Hall and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and 2012 NHL All-star Game selection Jordan Eberle — for a two-game set this weekend.

The Abbotsford Entertainment & Sports Centre should be jam-packed for both tilts, and Saturday's contest will be televised across the country

(8 p.m., SNWest/SNOne).

"Everyone has been talking about that team since the lockout started — how good they're going to be and what kind of players they're going to have," said Heat centre Ben Walter.

"So I think it will be a good test for us."

Thing is, it'll be a good test for the Barons, too.

The Heat (6-1-0-2) are sitting atop the AHL's North Division and have yet to suffer a regulation-time setback on home ice, while the Barons (5-4-0-1) are stuck in third spot in the South Division despite a star-studded cast.

Eberle and Nugent-Hopkins are currently averaging slightly more than a point-per-game.

It won't hurt that Hall, who had been sidelined with a shoulder injury since getting steamrolled by Flames defenceman Cory Sarich in March, is back in action, reuniting what was the Oilers' top forward unit for parts of last season.

The biggest bright spot for the Barons has been defenceman Justin Schultz, the object of a free-agent bidding war during the summer. Heading into Tuesday's AHL action, Schultz was atop the scoring race with 15 points in 10 games.

Eberle, Hall, Nugent-Hopkins and Schultz will all be making a beeline to Edmonton once the lockout is over. For wannabe combatants on the other side of the NHL's Battle of Alberta, this would be a good weekend to state their case.

"I'm going to find out if we just play the Heat style or if we're in awe of them or how we handle this whole thing," said Abbotsford head coach Troy Ward.

"I don't know how much I'll find out about certain players that we project to be NHLers, as much as we might find out about certain players that aren't projected to be NHL players — how they handle this. If they handle it really well, you like to say, 'Geez, that opens up another door for us because he handled those guys really well. If that guy is handling them here, he can certainly go up and help up there.'"

Baertschi, whose post-lockout plane ticket to Calgary will be of the one-way variety, faced off against the Oilers on the final night of his five-game emergency callup last spring and is anxious to rub shoulders with their rising stars again.

"Their first line is pretty much the best scorers for the Oilers, so that's a big challenge and it's going to be fun," Baertschi said. "I want to make sure I'm on their level or even higher."

Calgary Sun: LOADED: 11.07.2012

643785 Carolina Hurricanes

NHL sides talk but don't share details

By Chip Alexander - calexander@newsobserver.com

The NHL and NHL Players Association again turned to secrecy Tuesday.

The league and union held the first formal collective bargaining negotiations since Oct. 18 in New York. That much is known. What wasn't known were the specifics of the CBA talks or what progress was made.

The location of the meeting was not disclosed. Nor did NHL commissioner Gary Bettman or NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr hold press conferences after the session ended Tuesday night.

On Saturday, deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr also met at a secret location to discuss CBA issues. Neither provided details of that meeting, which lasted until late into the night, although both indicated later that it was productive.

Donald Fehr met briefly with the media before Tuesday's CBA session. Fehr would not say how close the two sides might be to bridging what he called "the issues that divide us."

"The players' view has always been that we ought to keep negotiating until we find a way to get an agreement and you sort of stay at it day by day, so it's very good to be getting back to the table," Fehr told reporters. "We hope this time it produces more progress than we have seen in the past and we can figure out a way to make an agreement to get the game back on the ice as soon as possible."

Thirteen players attended Tuesday's meeting, including Pittsburgh Penguins star Sidney Crosby and Los Angeles Kings forward Kevin Westgarth, a member of the players' negotiating committee. Westgarth, the son-in-law of former Pittsburgh Steelers coach Bill Cowher, lives in Raleigh in the offseason.

The players have been locked out since Sept. 15, when the previous CBA expired. The league has canceled all regular-season games through the end of November and the 2013 Winter Classic.

Bettman and Donald Fehr had not met since Oct. 18, when the NHLPA forwarded three CBA proposals. All provided for a 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue (HRR) at some point in a five-year CBA — a key concession by the players — and the union's third proposal called for an immediate 50-50 split if existing player contracts were honored.

The league rejected all three proposals in a matter of minutes.

The NHL had proposed on Oct. 16 a 50-50 division of revenue and a "make-whole" provision to honor the contracts through deferred payments. That money was to come out of the players' share of HRR in future years — or what Donald Fehr called "players paying players."

But it's believed the league now is willing to fund the "make-whole" payments from the NHL's share of HRR. If so, that's a significant change — more than \$200 million going to the players — and likely was a key factor in the two sides formally meeting again Tuesday.

The players received 57 percent of HRR last season under the old CBA — about \$1.88 billion.

News Observer LOADED: 11.07.2012

643786 Chicago Blackhawks

Kane's popularity soars in Switzerland

By Chris Kuc Tribune reporter

12:07 p.m. CST, November 6, 2012

You can't turn the corner in Chicago without seeing a Chicago Blackhawks sweater with Patrick Kane's No. 88 on the back of it.

Now the Swiss club Kane is playing for during the NHL lockout is jumping on the winger's popularity: HC Biel is selling a blue silk scarf with Kane's name and number on it. For 30 Swiss Francs (or \$31 American), the scarf

can be purchased on the team's web site or at the arena in Biel/Bienne, Switzerland.

Kane has taken advantage of the larger European ice surface to showcase his offensive skills and has two goals and five assists in three games with HC Biel.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 11.07.2012

643787 Chicago Blackhawks

NHL, NHLPA have lengthy meeting

TRACEY MYERS

For too long this fall, NHL and NHLPA negotiations have been brief and unproductive, with bitter words dominating the situation.

But on Tuesday, the two sides met for a lengthy session – and they plan to keep talking.

The NHL and NHLPA met for about seven hours on Tuesday at an undisclosed location in New York City, as they try to hammer out a new collective bargaining agreement. On the surface, it was a positive that the two sides talked for as long as they did. Their last negotiation chat back in mid-October was all too brief, with both sides leaving frustrated and venting to the media.

On Tuesday there was no such post-meeting airing of grievances. Neither the NHL nor NHLPA had media availability following Tuesday's talks, which began around 3 p.m. and ended around 10 p.m. EST. There was merely a statement from NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly that the two sides will keep talking.

"Collective bargaining negotiations between the National Hockey League and representatives of the National Hockey League's Players' Association recessed tonight at 10:15 pm," Daly said in the statement. "With meetings scheduled to resume Wednesday, the League will not characterize the substance or detail of the discussions until their conclusion."

The two sides are finally getting into lengthy talks with each other and keeping the details quiet. It doesn't signify done deal. But it's definitely a positive.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.07.2012

643788 Chicago Blackhawks

Beach named AHL player of the week

NINA FALCONE

Blackhawks prospect Kyle Beach was named the American Hockey League's player of the week after posting three goals and five points in Rockford's last two matchups.

Although the 2008 first-round pick has yet to earn playing time in the NHL during the regular season, Beach is showing promise with the IceHogs, recording a total of four goals and two assists during the eight matchups he's played in throughout the 2012-13 campaign.

If he keeps up the high level of performance he's produced so far, we may just see him in a Blackhawks sweater this season, whenever the season begins.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.07.2012

643789 Columbus Blue Jackets

NHL: League, players have long bargaining session

NHL lockout: Possible casualties

By Aaron Portzline

The NHL and the players union had their longest negotiation session since the collective bargaining agreement expired nearly two months ago, a marathon meeting in New York that began at 3 p.m. yesterday and lasted nearly 7 1/2 hours.

Neither side would comment after the meeting, nor would they plan to disclose where they were meeting. More meetings — silent and secretive — are planned for today. Most throughout the league — agents, players, etc. — interpreted the lengthy meeting and silence as good signs.

It's unclear if either side offered a new proposal or if they have begun negotiating off an existing proposal that previously had been rejected. League deputy commissioner Bill Daly and Players' Association special counsel Steve Fehr had long discussions over the weekend, but yesterday's gathering — which included a select group of players — was the first official negotiating session since Oct. 18.

The hope is that a partial season can be salvaged, and perhaps the 2013 All-Star Game, which is scheduled to be at Nationwide Arena. The possibility of a full 82-game season ended last month when the NHL rejected three proposals from the players in less than 15 minutes.

The final sticking point is how — and how quickly — the league and players split hockey-related revenues 50-50. The owners want a 50-50 split immediately, but that prevents them from honoring existing contracts, including some that were signed within 48 hours of the last agreement expiring.

The union has demanded that existing contracts be honored, making a 50-50 split more likely after three or more seasons.

Once the sides reach preliminary agreement, it will likely take another week or so to agree on ancillary details and have the document approved by lawyers on both sides. After that, the league will likely open training camps for no more than a week, rushing players back from Europe and Russia and recalling players from junior clubs and the minor leagues.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.07.2012

643790 Detroit Red Wings

Several Red Wings thriving in overseas leagues while they wait for NHL

By Helene St. James

The NHL and NHL Players' Association finished another day of talks Tuesday in an attempt to reach a new collective bargaining agreement, a necessary step to start the season.

While executives and lawyers for each side parley in New York, several Red Wings are playing overseas. All have out clauses that allow them to return whenever the NHL resumes. Here's a look at how they're doing:

Henrik Zetterberg: It's hardly surprising a guy who's a star in the NHL stands out in the Swiss league. Since joining Zug last month, Zetterberg has eight goals and five assists in seven games.

Pavel Datsyuk: Datsyuk is similarly standing out in Russia's KHL, where he has six goals and 13 assists in 15 games with CSKA Moscow.

Valtteri Filppula: Filppula is dominating in the Finnish league with six goals and nine assists in 15 games for Jokerit.

Jan Mursak: He's having a very nice season with Ljubljana in Austria: seven goals and 13 assists in 15 games.

Drew Miller: Miller went an unusual route, ending up in Scotland, where he has two goals and eight assists in seven games with Braehead Clan.

Jakub Kindl: He has five assists in 16 games for Pardubice in the Czech Republic.

Jonathan Ericsson: Between Vita Hasten and Sodertalje, both teams in Sweden, he has four assists in seven games.

Damien Brunner: The Wings signed last season's Swiss-league breakout star over the summer and kept him in Switzerland during the lockout. A teammate, and often linemate, of Zetterberg, Brunner leads Zug with 11 goals and 17 assists in 17 games.

Cory Emmerton: Suffered a finger injury in his first game in Finland, should be healed by mid-December.

Contact Helene St. James: 313-222-2295

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.07.2012

643791 Detroit Red Wings

Sidney Crosby enters fray as NHL labor talks resume

By Ira Podell

Associated Press

New York — The locked-out NHL players' association returned to the bargaining table Tuesday, and this time brought Sidney Crosby along.

On Day 52 of the lockout that has delayed the start of the hockey season and threatened to wipe it out completely, the league and the players sat down for the second round of negotiations in four days at an undisclosed site.

Not only were NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr there, as they were for a marathon session by themselves Saturday. They were joined by Commissioner Gary Bettman, NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr, a handful of team owners, and 13 players including Crosby, who has been an active participant in the process.

"We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and we'll continue bargaining until we find a way to make a deal," Donald Fehr said Tuesday before talks started. "Sometimes that goes in rather long sessions with short breaks and sometimes you take a few hours or half a day or a day to work on things before you come back together. I don't know which it will be.

"We certainly hope we'll be continuing to meet on a regular basis. I hope they do, too. I'm just not making any predictions."

Fehr's brother Steve met with Daly on Saturday in a secret location, and neither provided many details of what was discussed, but both agreed that the meeting was productive. That was proven when the sides agreed to quickly meet again Tuesday. There had been no negotiations since talks broke off on Oct. 18 until Saturday.

"The players' view has always been to keep negotiating until we find a way to get agreement and you sort of stay at it day by day, so it's very good to be getting back to the table," Donald Fehr said. "We hope that this time it produces more progress than we've seen in the past, and that we can find a way to make an agreement and to get the game back on the ice as soon as possible.

"We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and we'll continue bargaining until we find a way to make a deal."

The NHL requested that the exact location for Tuesday's negotiations in New York be kept secret, and the players' association adhered. Time is becoming a bigger factor every day that passes without a deal. The lockout, which went into effect Sept. 16 after the previous collective bargaining agreement expired, has already forced the cancellation of 327 regular-season games — including the New Year's Day outdoor Winter Classic in Michigan.

Whether any of the games that have been called off through Nov. 30 can be rescheduled if an agreement is made soon hasn't been determined. But the NHL has already said that a full 82-game season won't be played.

Back in October, the players' association responded to an NHL offer with three of its own, but all of those were quickly dismissed by the league — leading to nearly three weeks of no face-to-face discussions. Daly and Steve Fehr kept in regular contact by phone and agreed to meet again last weekend.

The NHL has moved toward the players' side in the contentious issue of the "make-whole" provision, which involves the payment of player contracts that

are already in effect and whose share of the economic pie that money will come from.

Other core economic issues — mainly the split of hockey-related revenue — along with contract lengths, arbitration and free agency will also need to be agreed upon before a deal can be reached.

The players' association accepted a salary cap in the previous CBA, which wasn't reached until after the entire 2004-05 season was canceled because of a lockout. The union doesn't want to absorb the majority of concessions this time after the NHL recorded record revenue that exceeded \$3 billion last season.

"The issues the players are concerned about remain the same," Donald Fehr said. "The players haven't seen any need to go backward, given the history of the last negotiations and given the level of revenue increase since then. Player-contracting rights are very important to them.

"Before we have any agreement, both sides have to see everything on paper and make sure that they all understand it right. That's about all I can say about it at this stage. I don't want to prejudge or indicate that I have any particular impressions or expectations. That's what the meetings are for."

Detroit News LOADED: 11.07.2012

643792 Detroit Red Wings

NHL, players union hold marathon bargaining session, will meet again on Wednesday

Ansar Khan | akhan1@mlive.com By Ansar Khan | akhan1@mlive.com

on November 06, 2012 at 11:03 PM, updated November 06, 2012 at 11:50 PM

The NHL and the NHL Players Association held a marathon bargaining session Tuesday night and will meet again on Wednesday, a potentially encouraging sign during a lockout that has reached 52 days.

Both sides had little to say before or after the 7½-hour meeting at an undisclosed location in New York.

"Collective bargaining negotiations between the National Hockey League and representatives of the National Hockey League's Players' Association recessed tonight at 10:15 pm.," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement. "With meetings scheduled to resume Wednesday, the League will not characterize the substance or detail of the discussions until their conclusion."

The sides hadn't met formally since Oct. 18 in Toronto, when the NHL took 10 minutes to reject three counter-proposals by the union.

Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr met in Toronto on Saturday.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.07.2012

643793 Detroit Red Wings

Some Detroit Red Wings sponsors, like Better Made, get prorated contracts

David Muller | dmuller@mlive.com By David Muller | dmuller@mlive.com

on November 06, 2012 at 8:00 AM, updated November 06, 2012 at 8:10 AM

DETROIT, MI – With the NHL lockout now entering its 52nd day, at least one Detroit Red Wings sponsor has started seeing a concrete loss in revenue, as about a handful of regular season games have been cancelled.

"This time last year we had sold about \$3,800 of potato chips to the Joe Louis," Detroit-based Better Made Potato Chips and Snack Foods President Mark Winkelman said. "This year we've sold about \$600. So were down \$3,200."

Winkelman estimates that Better Made sells an average of \$1,500 and \$2,000 worth chips a month.

"So it's safe to say about \$1,500 a month is what we're losing." However, in terms of the company's total sales, "that's almost nothing," Winkelman noted. The company's annual sales total about \$64 million.

"It's not a big deal," Winkelman added. "We're not going to stay up at night worrying about that. The more important thing is the advertising."

The abstract benefit of advertising for games in the Joe Louis Arena is hard to measure, Winkelman said.

In the meantime, the Red Wings have agreed to a prorated contract with Better Made that will ultimately be based on how many games have been played, Winkelman said.

Of course, how many games will be played remains a mystery.

"We really want hockey back," Winkelman said. "(Red Wings are) a good partner with us, We realize it's out of everyone's hands except the players and owners, and we hope they can come to an agreement soon."

MLive asked other companies about their sponsorship of the Red Wings. Metro Detroit-based Carhartt had this to say in an e-mail response from spokeswoman Erica Salomon to a phone call:

Like all hockey fans, we're disappointed that the Red Wings aren't back in action. Hopefully, the lock-out will end soon and the team can get back to what they do best.

And West Michigan sales giant Amway responded to how the lockout has affected the company in an e-mail from spokeswoman Anna Bryce:

The Detroit Red Wings continue to be an excellent partner for Amway and we're so proud to be supporting another Michigan company. We're very optimistic that the NHL season will play out and we'll see our Wings on the ice this year. Even if the lockout continues, we'll find ways together to get the full value out of our sponsorship.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.07.2012

643794 Los Angeles Kings

THERE USED TO BE AN ARENA – "THE AUD" BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Posted by Bob Miller on 6 November 2012, 4:19 pm

Here is another story about an arena in which I broadcast Kings' hockey but has since been demolished.

"THE AUD" BUFFALO, NEW YORK

The Buffalo Memorial Auditorium was simply referred to as "The Aud" by those fans living in Buffalo. The building opened on October 14, 1940. It was built for \$2.7 million, which in 2012 money would be \$45.1 million. It was the home of the Buffalo Bisons of the American Hockey League from 1940 -1970, the Buffalo Bisons of the National Basketball League in 1946, the Buffalo Sabres of the NHL from 1970-1996, and the Buffalo Braves of the NBA from 1970-1978.

The Buffalo Sabres played their first game in The Aud on October 15, 1970, and their final game there at the end of the 1995-96 season, a 4-1 victory over the Hartford Whalers.

Like most arenas of the time, seating was steep and provided an outstanding, close-up view of the action. Talk about a crowd "raising the roof," in 1971 the roof was actually raised 24 feet, making room for a new upper "orange" level, making the capacity 15,858 for hockey. The Aud was located in downtown Buffalo, at one end of what was once the Erie Canal. It became the center of entertainment in Buffalo and was also the last of the NHL arenas in which the ice surface was not the regulation size of 200 by 85 feet.

The Aud was 196 by 85 feet, Boston Garden was 191 by 83 feet, Chicago Stadium was 188 by 85 feet and the Detroit Olympia was 200 by 83 feet.

Hockey fans were treated to a lot of thrilling games in The Aud, including one on February 24, 1982, when Wayne Gretzky of the visiting Edmonton Oilers scored a "natural" hat trick in the final seven minutes to defeat the Sabres, 6-3. The first goal of that hat trick was Gretzky's 77th of the season, breaking the record of 76 held by Phil Esposito. I did not see that game, but here are some of the things I do remember about working in The Aud:

The most exciting line in hockey at the time, the "French Connection Line" of Gilbert Perreault, Rene Robert and Rick Martin. Until the L.A. Kings Triple Crown Line came along in the early 80s, the French Connection Line could bring you right out of your seat. I always said when Perreault stick-handled up the ice it was like listening to someone using a typewriter as he deftly handled the stick and puck.

The television location was in an area called "The Bucket." It was a small platform hanging off the ledge of the upper deck. It had a great view of the game, but you had to walk down through the crowd, climb over the railing and down a short ladder to get to your spot. The main press box was located at the top of that section.

In those years, we did Kings' hockey on a simulcast, meaning radio and TV at the same time. One night, the radio lines were mistakenly put in a booth in the main press box, but my partner, Nick Nickson, and I were located in "The Bucket." Since during the intermissions we did separate radio and TV audio, this posed a problem and we didn't have time to change it. Therefore, at the end of each period, Nick would go downstairs to do a TV interview, and I would go up to the radio booth. When Nick finished the interview, he would come back to "The Bucket" and I would lean over the press box railing to cue him for the television portion and I would do radio. At the end of that segment, during a commercial, I would go back down to "The Bucket" for the next period and at the next intermission we'd do it all over again.

Buffalo has a reputation for snow...a lot of snow, and sudden snowstorms. On January 10, 1982, the area was hit by a sudden blizzard. Over 15,000 tickets had been sold for the Kings-Sabres game but only 2,079 brave souls made it to The Aud. In fact, on the bridge behind the auditorium, people had to abandon their cars and be led off the bridge holding on to ropes. During the game, the Sabres announced that fans that were stranded and couldn't get home could spend the night in The Aud or in the Sabres offices. The next morning a photo in the Buffalo newspaper showed a fan sleeping in the penalty box.

After that "blizzard" game, all Kings' personnel were told to go to the back door of the arena where a four-wheel drive vehicle would take them back to the hotel which was only about a quarter of a mile away. When I got to the back door, about 50 people were ahead of me, the vehicle was able to take only three people at a time, and it was taking about 45 minutes for the round trip. I decided to walk. I used my broadcast headset as earmuffs and started in the general direction of the hotel because you couldn't see anything in the complete "white out." During my walk I thought, 'I'm not going to make it.' When I finally got to my room, I noticed a quarter-size area of skin on my face that looked like the beginning of frostbite. By the way, the Kings lost that game, 6-4.

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 11.07.2012

643795 Minnesota Wild

NHL-NHLPA meet until late Tuesday night, will meet Wednesday

Posted by: Michael Russo under Wild off-season news Updated: November 6, 2012 - 10:03 PM

In an effort to end the lockout, the NHL and NHLPA met for more than seven hours today at an undisclosed location in New York.

The Big Four from both sides and 13 players were involved in the meeting, and the good news is the sides plan to meet again Wednesday.

Is this the beginning of the end? We should know in short while, but this is hopefully a good sign after Bill Daly and Steve Fehr met in a series of meetings for most the day on Saturday.

A statement from Daly, the league's deputy commissioner: "Collective bargaining negotiations between the National Hockey League and representatives of the National Hockey League's Players' Association recessed tonight at 10:15 pm. With meetings scheduled to resume Wednesday, the League will not characterize the substance or detail of the discussions until their conclusion."

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.07.2012

643796 Minnesota Wild

Injury updates with Granlund, Brodin

Posted by: Michael Russo under Wild off-season news Updated: November 6, 2012 - 1:52 PM

Just got off the phone with Wild General Manager Chuck Fletcher, who was with Mikael Granlund at his doctor's appointment this morning in Edina.

Granlund has been diagnosed with a lateral right ankle sprain and will miss two to four weeks. He is in a walking boot and will do his rehab in Houston.

"He'll be able to start doing more next week and is walking pretty good, but we wanted to make sure, and mercifully, this is not the worst case scenario," Fletcher said. "It's relatively good news. It's not a knee or high ankle sprain or anything like that. It's a common ankle sprain."

Fletcher did say though that depending on how he heals, he is questionable for the Nov. 18 Aeros vs. Rockford game at Xcel Energy Center.

Jonas Brodin is out though. In the same game last Friday in Oklahoma City, Brodin broke his clavicle. He will miss at least eight weeks, Fletcher said, but he is seeing the doctors here in Minnesota this afternoon to get an MRI and determine a course of treatment. That would either be allowing the bone to heal or inserting a plate surgically.

In New York today, the NHL and NHLPA are meeting. That includes the Big Four and 13 players looking to move this process forward.

At the X, Fletcher made the decision to install the ice again just in case a deal gets done. It takes three days to get installed, so Fletcher figured 'why wait?' after having to tear it up for the Madonna concert. Other concerts and events coming to town -- girls' volleyball, Bruce Springsteen -- can still take place over the ice.

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.07.2012

643797 Minnesota Wild

Minnesota Wild prospect Mikael Granlund has ankle injury

By Bruce Brothers

Forward Mikael Granlund got off to a fine start this fall in his introduction to North American pro hockey with the American Hockey League's Houston Aeros, so Wild general manager Chuck Fletcher experienced some high anxiety when Granlund went down with an ankle injury in Oklahoma City over the weekend.

Granlund, the team's top pick in the 2010 NHL draft, had to be helped off the ice.

Fletcher, who was scouting the Aeros during their game Friday, Nov. 2, in Oklahoma City, said: "Your first thoughts are, 'This could be a bad thing.' I guess in the big picture it turned out to be better than it initially looked like."

Granlund, 20, visited a Wild doctor in the Twin Cities on Tuesday, and Fletcher said he is expected to miss

two to four weeks with a lateral ankle sprain.

That means the Finn is questionable for the Aeros' AHL game against the Rockford IceHogs on Nov. 18 at the Xcel Energy Center.

"He's injured," Fletcher said, "but it's not an injury that will take a significant amount of time for him to come back from."

Granlund was named AHL rookie of the month for October after picking up three goals and seven assists in seven games for the Aeros. He added a goal and an assist before he was hurt in his eighth game and led Houston in points.

"He's been productive offensively; he's been effective defensively," Fletcher said. "We know he has a strong work ethic. He's a good person, he's fit in well with his teammates, so I think on every level it's

been a good adjustment for him."

Fletcher said Granlund will begin working out next week, but the Wild want to make sure he's fully healed before allowing him to return to game action.

"The swelling has subsided; he feels better already, but who knows? We're not going to rush it," Fletcher added.

Defenseman Jonas Brodin, a first-round pick out of Sweden in the 2011 NHL draft, also was injured in Oklahoma City, suffering a broken collarbone.

Brodin also visited the Twin Cities to see a Wild doctor on Tuesday, and Fletcher said, "It's not a short-term injury."

He expects Brodin to miss two months and was waiting for word from the doctor about whether surgery might be required.

Brodin, 19, had two goals and two assists in eight games.

Pioneer Press LOADED: 11.07.2012

643798 Minnesota Wild

Charley Walters: Minnesota Wild investors to get another cash call

By Charley Walters

As expected, Minnesota Wild investors have been notified to expect another cash call while the NHL lockout continues.

The team's investors -- there are 11 limited partners besides majority owner Craig Leipold -- made a capital call of \$10 million after the Wild signed free agents Zach Parise and Ryan Suter in July to contracts that included \$10 million bonuses for each.

The second cash call is expected in mid-November.

Former Gophers golfer Tom Lehman, who on Sunday, Nov. 4, in Scottsdale, Ariz., won a \$1 million annuity besides a check for \$440,000 for his Charles Schwab Cup Championship, also won a \$1 million annuity last year for leading the Champions Tour in season points.

With the two annuities, Lehman, 53, is expected to be able to collect \$100,000 annually for 20 years, beginning at age 60.

Gophers freshman quarterback Philip Nelson, who doesn't turn 20 until September, had a 3.6 grade-point average at Mankato West and has the same GPA after summer and fall classes at Minnesota. Nelson is considering sports management and kinesiology as a major.

The Cleveland Browns, with former Vikings coach Brad Childress as offensive coordinator, rank 30th in the NFL in total offense. The Vikings are 22nd.

Former Mr. Basketball Minnesota Royce White, who averaged 2.3 points in four exhibition games as a rookie for the Houston Rockets, hasn't played in any of the Rockets' first three

regular-season games.

Cole Aldrich, the former Bloomington Jefferson star, is averaging 5.0 points in two games for Kevin McHale-coached Houston.

Hall of fame former Gopher Paul Molitor sat in on a meeting at his alma mater to raise money for a new Siebert Field. The Gophers need \$1 million more to construct an indoor hitting facility and outdoor field lights.

The Vikings' new stadium, scheduled to open in 2016, will include a baseball configuration for college and high school games.

Recently released bullpen coach Rick Stelmazek, 64, who spent 32 years with the Twins and is living in Chicago, hasn't decided whether he'll try to get back into baseball. Stelmazek would seem a perfect bullpen coach for new Miami Marlins manager Mike Redmond.

The Montreal Alouettes, coached by ex-Gopher Marc Trestman, have won the Canadian Football League's East Division with an 11-7 record and received a first-round bye and home-field advantage. Trestman, who is expected to be high on NFL head coaching lists this winter, has 59 coaching victories in five seasons with the Alouettes.

The Gophers' 2019 football schedule includes Navy at home. Minnesota plays at Navy in 2020. Colorado (away) is on the schedule for 2021 and at home for 2022.

The Gophers' 2013 home game against New Mexico State should become official soon.

Adrian Peterson and Percy Harvin are the only Vikings on Pro Football Weekly's midseason all-pro team.

Jared Allen's "Helping Heroes Gala," benefiting the Vikings pass rusher's "Homes for Wounded Warriors" charity, is at 6 p.m. Friday at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Minneapolis.

Former Gophers men's basketball assistant Silas McKinnie is a scout for the Detroit Lions, who play the Vikings on Sunday at the Metrodome.

Boxing referee Mark Nelson of St. Paul is headed to Singapore to officiate Friday's World Boxing Association featherweight title bout between champion Chris John (47-0-2) of Indonesia and challenger Chonlatarn Piriypinyo (44-0) of Thailand.

Former Gophers tight end-long snapper Derek Rackley of Apple Valley will be analyst for Saturday's Minnesota-Illinois Big Ten Network telecast in Champaign.

Dick Stockton, John Lynch and Jennifer Hale will call Sunday's Vikings-Lions game at the Metrodome for Fox.

Ex-Minneapolis South basketball star Tayler Hill of Ohio State didn't make the Associated Press' preseason All-America team but did receive at least one vote.

Those were former Vikings Joe Kapp and Ed White last week attending a University of California salute for Steve Bartkowski's National Football Foundation Hall of Fame election.

Justin Crane, who was a standout football player at South St. Paul and Minnesota-Duluth, died of leukemia last week at age 37.

DON'T PRINT THAT

Among Apple Valley junior point guard Tyus Jones' final considerations for college are Kentucky, Duke, North Carolina and Kansas. Kentucky leads the NBA in alumni players this season with 19. Duke is next with 18. North Carolina has 17 and Kansas 14.

Minnesota, which is also on Jones' final list, has two former players -- Kris Humphries of the Brooklyn Nets and Joel Przybilla of the Milwaukee Bucks -- playing in the NBA.

Twins center-field prospect Aaron Hicks, who batted .286 in 129 games at Class AA New Britain last summer, has slumped to .204 in 16 games for Bravos de Margarita in Venezuela.

At 8 a.m. Saturday, 35 Gophers baseball players will lay 40,000 square feet of sod along the outside of Siebert Field.

"I told our players to wear their oldest and dirtiest clothes," assistant coach Rob Fornasiere said. "One kid said that's his daily wardrobe."

OVERHEARD

Gophers linebacker Mike Rallis, who shed his shoulder-length hair for a shaved head for a cancer fundraiser: "I'm a little lighter and quicker on the field."

Charley Walters can be reached at cwalters@pioneerpress.com.

Pioneer Press LOADED: 11.07.2012

643799 Montreal Canadiens

Habs go Movember on charity T-shirts

By Dave Stubbs, The Gazette November 6, 2012

MONTREAL — They won't any time soon overtake the Canadiens' legendary CH-logo'd jersey as the prime choice of Montreal hockey fans. But a group of Habs are hoping that cotton-blend T-shirts bearing their mustachioed mugs soon will appear on the chests of their faithful, for a good cause.

Colby Armstrong, Brandon Prust, Brian Gionta, Josh Gorges, Erik Cole, Travis Moen and Carey Price (and perhaps a few others) are taking part in the Movember campaign, taking pledges for the moustaches they're growing this month to raise awareness of and funds for men's health, particularly prostate cancer.

Of course, being professional athletes, these Canadiens have turned the bristle of their upper lips into a competition.

The moustache isn't as grubby a custom as the playoff beard, NHL players disposing of their razors for sometimes months through the postseason run toward the Stanley Cup.

But the growth of a 'stache during the month of November, among men well beyond the hockey world, is now in vogue.

Participants, alone or in teams, gather pledges from donors for the moustaches they grow for 30 days; some raise thousands of dollars in what for many is a competitive event — not that growing facial hair is exactly a skill-testing endeavour.

Now fans of the participating Canadiens can show their support and kick a few dollars into the Movember kitty with \$20 T-shirts, manufactured and marketed by Toronto-based Donnybrook Hockey, a fledgling sports apparel company.

Each shirt bears four caricature likenesses of a player, his mug decorated with a possible moustache style by graphic artist Ryan Howard, of Toronto Web design and development shop Howard Media Group.

Twenty-per-cent of each shirt sold will be deposited by Donnybrook in that player's Movember account, the sum then donated on behalf of that player to men's health or the charity of his choice.

Canadiens forward Colby Armstrong is at the root of this, having used his popular Twitter account to broadcast his intention to dive face-first into Movember.

Armstrong's brother, Riley, now playing with the ECHL's Utah Grizzlies, had coincidentally been talking for some time with friend Scott Cundell, a veteran of the sports apparel industry, about starting a business.

Enter discussions over a few beers and Howard's hand as a caricaturist and the cotton/polyester idea was born.

Armstrong and fellow new Canadien Prust, another Twitter giant, were first aboard, needling each other by social media about the other guy's imminent peach-fuzz.

Their heckling tweaked the interest of a few other Canadiens, with Gionta, Gorges, Moen, Cole and Price, perhaps, dipping their toes.

"Colby can barely grow a moustache," Prust taunted Armstrong to me in a text message Tuesday. "He's going to be colouring it black with that Just For Men stuff to make it look thick."

Replied Armstrong, in a phone call: "Everyone knows Prust is a caveman. He acts like one. He can grow a beard in a day. But my 'stache is going to have a huge impact. It's so awesomely awful, it could change the world. It could bring about world peace."

With that at stake, Donnybrook is taking orders online, shirts being carefully produced in the Toronto area to avoid overstocking the young company. It should begin shipping this week, shirts to be sold perhaps through the first week of December.

Six shirts are featured on the company's website, with that of Price, should he approve his design, still to come.

It's too early to be laughing last, 24 days remaining in the month. But as of Tuesday, Prust shirt orders were nearly double those for Armstrong, the other Habs well back in the sort-of race.

Riley Armstrong has no inside information, and this won't score him any points with his brother, but he quietly believes that Gorges, with whom he bunked in San Jose's minor-league system from 2004-06, might make things interesting.

Donnybrook plans to grow slowly, for now a minnow in an ocean of enormous sports-apparel sharks. It features a shirt designed by Anaheim's Sheldon Souray based on his playful nickname Studly Wonderbomb, a cartoon of a blond woman astride a No. 44 rocket.

The company also has a few caps and shirts and expects to add a line of hoodies, sweats and summerwear.

Riley Armstrong is using his hockey connections and social media to spread the word, his brother being urged to wear a Donnybrook cap when he's out and about. He's spoken to Colby about heading out to Utah to skate a little should the NHL lockout drag on, "which would be better than his sitting on the couch."

In the meantime, Colby Armstrong is confident — to Riley and to me, at least — that he'll kick Prust's butt when the final November numbers are in.

More important, of course, is every dollar that will be raised for Movember. Surely, there has to be an upside to the mess these guys will wear on their faces for another three-plus weeks.

View and order Movember T-shirts at donnybrookhockey.com

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.07.2012

643800 New Jersey Devils

Locked-Out N.H.L. Players Are Lighting Up European Leagues

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

The top European domestic leagues went on a 10-day break Monday to make way for international tournaments. It came at a potentially auspicious moment, with the N.H.L. and the players' association meeting for new talks in New York on Tuesday.

Maybe those locked-out players returning to North America for the break will see genuine progress toward a new collective bargaining agreement. Tomas Vanek, coming back from Graz in the Austrian League to Buffalo, was optimistic about the negotiations, which, he said, seem to be "going forward a bit"). But only time will tell.

In the meantime, let's look at the locked-out N.H.L. players who are tearing up the best European domestic leagues. Below, the top-scoring N.H.L. players from the Czech Extraliga (CEL), Swiss National League A (NLA), German Deutsche Eishockey Liga (DEL) and the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL):

PLAYER	N.H.L. TEAM	EUROPEAN TEAM	GAMES	POINTS
GOALS+ASSISTS=POINTS				
Tomas Plekanec	Mtl	Kladno, CEL	17	14+14 = 28
Damien Brunner	Det	Zug, NLA	17	11+17 = 28
Evgeni Malkin	Pgh	Metallurg Mg, KHL	18	8+20 = 28
Jaromir Jagr	Dal	Kladno, CEL	16	10+16 = 26
Ilya Kovalchuk	NJ	SKA, KHL	16	9+17 = 26
Tyler Seguin	Bos	Biel, NLA	15	13+10 = 23
Logan Couture	SJ	Genève-Serv., NLA	15	7+14 = 21
Ales Hemsky	Edm	Pardubice, CEL	16	11+10 = 21

Claude Giroux	Phi	Eisbären, DEL	8	4+15 = 19
Pavel Datsyuk	Det	CSKA, KHL	15	6+13 = 19
Jiri Tlusty	Car	Kladno, CEL	17	10+9 = 19
Danny Briere	Phi	Eisbären, DEL	8	4+14 = 18

Kladno's Jagr-Plekanec-Tlusty combination is the most impressive overseas. (See this excellent article filed Monday from Kladno by Yahoo's Nick Cotsonika, and a replay of a Plekanec goal). Damien Brunner, a Detroit prospect who has yet to play in North America, has shown in Zug why the Red Wings covet him so much (and it helps that he's playing on a line with Henrik Zetterberg). Evgeni Malkin and Ilya Kovalchuk's superb play in Russia comes as no surprise, and neither does the success of Logan Couture and Tyler Seguin in Switzerland (it helps that Seguin is playing on a line with Patrick Kane).

But what about those N.H.L. players who arrived a bit later and don't have enough games played to crack the top scorers list? Below are the leaders in points per game. Get a load of what Claude Giroux and Danny Briere are doing with Eisbären Berlin in Germany — not to mention the normally low-scoring Lauri Korpikoski, now a power-play king in the Finnish SM-liiga.

PLAYER	N.H.L. TEAM	EUROPEAN TEAM	GAMES	POINTS
POINTS/GAME				
Claude Giroux	Phi	Eisbären, DEL	8	19
Patrick Kane	Chi	Biel, NLA	3	7
Danny Briere	Phi	Eisbären, DEL	8	18
Patrice Bergeron	Bos	Lugano, NLA	8	16
Lauri Korpikoski	Phx	TPS, SML	5	10
Jannik Hansen	Van	Tappara, SML	2	4
Henrik Zetterberg	Det	Zug, NLA	7	13
Tomas Plekanec	Mtl	Kladno, CEL	17	28
Damien Brunner	Det	Zug, NLA	17	28
Jaromir Jagr	Dal	Kladno, CEL	16	26
Ilya Kovalchuk	NJ	SKA, KHL	16	26

Nail Yakupov, the No. 1 pick in the N.H.L. draft by the Oilers last June, does not show up on either list, but he was selected as the K.H.L.'s rookie of the month for October. He has been dazzling, with 10 goals and 4 assists in 13 games for Neftekhimik Nizhnekamsk, his hometown club. On Monday night he had a goal and assist for Young Russia in its 6-2 win over the Q.M.J.H.L. all-stars at Boisbriand, Quebec.

Also of note in the K.H.L., Pavel Datsyuk has gone 19 points (6 goals and 13 assists) in 15 games with CSKA Moscow and, perhaps a bit disappointingly, Alex Ovechkin has 14 points (6 goals and 8 assists) in 14 games with Dynamo Moscow.

Finally, Rick Nash and Joe Thornton are doing well at HC Davos in the Swiss N.L.A., but not as well Seguin, Couture, Bergeron and others in the league. Nash has 15 points (9 goals and 6 assists) in 13 games, and Thornton has 13 points (4 goals and 9 assists) in 17 games.

New York Times LOADED: 11.07.2012

643801 New Jersey Devils

GM Lou Lamoriello: Devils players made it through Hurricane Sandy 'fine'

Rich Chere/The Star-Ledger By Rich Chere/The Star-Ledger

The calls went out soon after Hurricane Sandy had passed and Devils general manager Lou Lamoriello had a working telephone. He needed to find out whether players he knew in the area were okay.

"I did check up on all the players who are here. Everyone fared fine," Lamoriello said today. "Certainly there was inconvenience, but everybody is fine."

Several current and former Devils lost power and dealt with fallen trees. Some are still waiting for electricity to be restored.

Henrik Tallinder was without power until Thursday night. Dainius Zubrus, who lives in Montclair, never lost electricity.

Goalie Martin Brodeur still has no power, although he has a generator and has spent some time in Montreal. Bryce Salvador's electricity was turned on Monday night and Johan Hedberg got his electricity back Sunday night.

Andy Greene, who lives on the eighth floor of a building in Hoboken, is in Michigan.

"We were home the weekend before the storm and we were going to come back that Monday, but there was no need to drive into that if we didn't have to," Greene said.

The defenseman received e-mail updates during the storm and days afterward. His landlady emptied his refrigerator of spoiled food.

"We lost power in our building, but no damage and no flooding," Greene said. "Our garage is underneath our building. Somehow, luckily, not a drop of water got in there."

Defenseman Mark Fayne also lives in Hoboken, around the block from Greene, and only lost power in his building.

"What a terrible thing for a lot of people," former defenseman and current TV analyst Ken Daneyko said. "You watch it all on TV. We lost power but we've gotten it back. Not so bad. A few friends got hit hard.

"A buddy lost his house at the Shore. He had a place right on the beach in Mantoloking which was totaled. But he's fine."

Former Devils forward and coach, John MacLean, still lives in Bernards Township. Now an assistant coach with the Carolina Hurricanes, he packed up his family and went to North Carolina.

"We have no power and the boys don't have school so we're living with the Mullers in Raleigh right now," MacLean said, referring to Hurricanes head coach Kirk Muller. "So I came down to get a little work done, like watching the minor-league team.

"There are trees down but the (New Jersey) house and everything is okay. Monster trees. We got lucky."

The storm didn't keep Lamoriello at home.

"We were without power (at home) and didn't get it back until (Monday)," the GM said. "I came to work. We had power (at the Prudential Center) after a few days. But everybody had it worse, so I don't want to talk about me. For me it was a lot of little things, but it's been catastrophic for other people."

While many of his players wait for the power to be turned on, Lamoriello and others wait for the NHL and its Players' Association to negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement to save a partial season. Negotiations resumed yesterday in New York.

"You can't get anywhere if you don't talk, so it's good to hear that that's happening. All of us are hoping for the best," Lamoriello said.

Greene said: "At least they are talking. You try not to get too down or too excited. There was a lot of general optimism after that last big exchange of proposals. You thought, 'This could be it, maybe.' If you live and die with it every day you'd drive yourself crazy.

"Last time it had been so quiet, there was a lot of optimism. Maybe everybody got a little too excited."

Star Ledger LOADED: 11.07.2012

643802 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout links: Red Wings forward Danny Cleary is optimistic as NHL, NHLPA meet today

Charles Curtis, NJ.com By Charles Curtis, NJ.com

Over the past few months, there have been many, many "crucial days" in the lockout that lead to further disappointment: deadlines passing, weeks of games being canceled, speculation that there could be no 2012-13.

Welcome to the latest crucial day in the NHL lockout. Coincidentally, it comes on Election Day.

As we mentioned yesterday, the two sides will meet today for a bargaining session. Louis Jean of TVA Sports tweeted "the NHL has asked that location of today's meetings in NY be kept secret. Start of bargaining set for 3 p.m."

At least one player sees something positive happening. "There's a lot of optimism I think, for sure; anytime Steve [Fehr] and Bill [Daly] are saying the exact same thing I think it's positive," Red Wings right wing Danny Cleary told Ansar Khan of MLive.com. "We'll see today, but for sure there's some light. As a player, just talking amongst the guys today, definitely excited about seeing what's going to happen today. There's a ton of time to get a deal done, I still think there's a deal to be made."

We'll see if he and other players feel that way by the end of today. Larry Brooks of the New York Post wrote just how important today is. "Is this now or never? Maybe not, but it's difficult to envision a settlement if talks this week collapse, and it is impossible to envision a settlement if talks collapse because of an absence of trust between the parties," he said.

In other lockout news:

•Aaron Portzline of The Columbus Dispatch wrote about who could retire if there's an entire year lost, the same way some legends left after the 2004-05 lockout. "Ottawa's Daniel Alfredsson, Anaheim's Teemu Selanne and Philadelphia's Jaromir Jagr -- all future Hall of Famers -- might have played their last NHL games if this season gets canceled. And there could be others," he said.

•On Sunday, The Globe and Mail's David Shoalts discussed an issue that could come up during negotiations: "In his last offer, before the previous round of talks broke off on Oct. 18, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said teams would no longer be allowed to count player bonus money on their payroll in order to get to the [salary] floor," he said. "He also proposed all player salaries above \$105,000 ... even those on a team's minor-league roster, would now be included under the salary cap." That would have an effect on AHL players, who would have their salaries capped. It's also, as Shoalts pointed out, a problem for owners with "razor-thin margins" who would have to spend more money in order to reach the salary floor.

Star Ledger LOADED: 11.07.2012

643803 New Jersey Devils

NHL sides continue labor meetings

By TOM GULITTI

Tenuous as the situation still might be, there was building optimism Tuesday evening that the NHL and the NHL Players' Association finally might have started down the road toward reaching an agreement that would end the owners' lockout.

A large group meeting at an undisclosed, neutral location in Manhattan — a gathering that included owners and players as well as leadership from both sides — began at approximately 3 p.m. and did not end until 10:15 p.m.

The sides plan to meet again today at a time to be determined, but provided no details about what they discussed Tuesday.

"With meetings scheduled to resume [today], the league will not characterize the substance or detail of the discussions until their conclusion," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement.

Tuesday's get-together followed a marathon series of discussions between Daly and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr on Saturday — also at an undisclosed, neutral site. The hope was that Tuesday's meeting would lead to negotiations that continue over the remainder of the week.

In addition to the big four — NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, Daly, NHLPA executive director Don Fehr and Steve Fehr — some owners and 13 players also attended.

Boston Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs, Washington Capitals owner Ted Leonsis, Minnesota Wild owner Craig Leipold and Calgary Flames co-owner Murray Edwards attended the last larger group meeting between the sides Oct. 18 in Toronto. It is unclear if all of them were at Tuesday's meeting.

Among the players attending were Devils goaltender Johan Hedberg, Rangers goaltender Martin Biron and Penguins' star Sidney Crosby. Also there were Craig Adams, David Backes, Chris Campoli, Mathieu Darche, Ron Hainsey, Milan Lucic, Manny Malhotra, Steve Montador, Shawn Thornton and Kevin Westgarth.

During pre-meeting media availability at the union's temporary Manhattan office, Don Fehr expressed guarded optimism that the sides are on the verge of serious negotiation.

Fehr said the NHL requested that the location of Tuesday's meeting not be released to the public and the union was "happy to honor it."

The key element likely to be discussed was the "make whole" provision of the NHL's Oct. 16 proposal. In order to achieve a 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue right away, the NHL proposed deferring part of the players' salaries and paying out that portion over the length of their existing contracts. The players have insisted all along upon their current contracts being honored in full and weren't satisfied with the "make whole" provision because the deferred payments still would be counted as part of their share of HRR.

The owners apparently now are willing to be responsible for those deferred payments as part of their share of HRR. How that would be worked out was something the players want to see first before getting too optimistic.

The league and the players still would have to agree upon other contractual issues, such as limiting the length of contracts, the age of free agency and the entry-level system.

CLARKSON LEAVING AUSTRIA: Devils right wing David Clarkson said the final decision hasn't been made yet, but he is expected to return to North America after playing only five games for EC Red Bull Salzburg in the Austrian Hockey League. The team's communications director said via email that Clarkson already had left the team, but Clarkson insisted he still is in Austria and plans to meet with Red Bull officials today.

Bergen Record LOADED: 11.07.2012

643804 New Jersey Devils

NHL and players union in serious talks trying to resolve lockout, but leave media in the dark

The meeting lasted more than seven hours, from about 3 p.m. until 10:15 p.m., and another meeting was scheduled for Wednesday. Neither side held media availability after concluding Tuesday's session, given the delicate nature of this week's talks.

By Pat Leonard / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Tuesday's NHL labor meeting threw a curveball at the media, failing to give the "who, what, when, where and why."

Neither the NHL nor its players' association would reveal the where, only that it would begin at 3 p.m. in Manhattan and focus on "the issues which divide us," as union executive director Don Fehr told the press before the meeting, which concluded at approximately 10:15 p.m. Tuesday.

Another meeting was scheduled for Wednesday. Neither side held media availability after concluding Tuesday's session, given the delicate nature of this week's talks.

"The league will not characterize the substance or detail of the discussions until their conclusion," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement.

The secrecy, in effect at the league's request, was intended to limit the counterproductive, public-relations gamesmanship that has marked these

negotiations. The lockout, imposed by commissioner Gary Bettman and the NHL's 30 owners on Sept. 16, already has forced the cancellation of all games through Nov. 30 and the Winter Classic on New Year's Day.

"It's very good to be getting back to the table," Fehr said. "We hope that this time it produces more progress than we have seen in the past and (that) we can figure out a way to make an agreement and get the game back on the ice as soon as possible."

The parties had not held a large-group negotiation session since Oct. 18, but after second-in-commands Bill Daly (NHL) and Steve Fehr (NHLPA) made progress in private communications last week, Tuesday's meeting was set to include full rosters from both sides: Bettman, Daly and several owners representing the league; and both Fehr brothers and 13 players representing the union.

Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby, the players' face of the league, made a surprise last-minute decision to attend the negotiations, a confirmation of just how crucial this week is toward determining whether or not the NHL has a 2012-13 season. Crosby's presence normally means a significant announcement or development will follow, and that the best player in the world believes he needs to be there. Rangers player representative Marty Biron also was on hand.

"We certainly hope we'll be continuing to meet on a regular basis," Fehr said, echoing the league's hopes that Tuesday's meeting will spark more meetings throughout the week, even if no one is privy to where they're taking place.

HANK HELPS SANDY VICTIMS

Henrik Lundqvist announced on his Twitter account that he is auctioning off his goalie mask and the rest of his equipment, worn and signed, and will donate all proceeds to the victims of Hurricane Sandy.

"My thoughts are with you New York," Lundqvist tweeted from Sweden last Friday after the storm. "I'm confident we'll be on our feet very soon. After all, we are New York."

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.07.2012

643805 New Jersey Devils

Crack in ice: Optimism emerges from NHL meeting

By LARRY BROOKS

Not only did nobody walk out after 10 minutes this time, yesterday's negotiating session between the NHL and NHLPA — beginning in mid-afternoon and going deep into the night — produced enough progress that the two sides will meet again today in attempt to end the 53-day lockout.

There is, perhaps for the first time since the lockout was instituted on Sept. 16, a sense of optimism grounded in reality that the doors will open on a 2012-13 NHL season, perhaps as soon as the day after Thanksgiving.

The meeting of approximately 7 1/2 hours that was held at an undisclosed location in Manhattan marked the first time the parties had sat across the table from one another since Oct. 18 in Toronto, when commissioner Gary Bettman stalked out after rejecting three players' initiatives within 10 minutes.

Yesterday's session, which at various times included permutations of the 13 players — including Sidney Crosby, Martin Biron, Manny Malhotra, David Backes, Milan Lucic and Johan Hedberg — who traveled to New York for the meeting, focused immediately and primarily on the "make-whole" concept regarding existing contracts.

The league, which three weeks ago proposed that escrow losses created by an immediate reduction in the players' share of hockey-related revenue from 57 to 50 percent be paid on a deferred basis by the players themselves, signaled willingness last week to pick up a portion of the share, if not all of it.

Though the formula was unknown before yesterday, this move prompted a meeting on Saturday between league second Bill Daly and union second Steve Fehr at which hypotheticals were exchanged. That discussion led to yesterday's full session.

Neither NHL nor NHLPA personnel were available to the press after the meeting was adjourned.

"Sorry, not going to characterize," Daly wrote in an e-mail to the Post's Mark Everson.

The league, which had posted its last offer to the players on NHL.com, requested yesterday's veil of secrecy. Union executive director Don Fehr did hold a press briefing at the PA's Manhattan headquarters approximately 90 minutes before the negotiations commenced.

"The meeting is about the issues that divide us," Fehr said at that time. "We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and continue bargaining until we make a deal."

While "make-whole" will become an essential ingredient of any agreement, it is not the only issue that separates the parties. The league has previously proposed significant restrictions regarding systemic issues, most notably including contract length, free-agency eligibility, salary arbitration and entry-level deals.

"It doesn't end the matter," Fehr said about make-whole. "It would certainly matter in and of itself, but there are still other things that are important."

Though the NHL has canceled all games through November, it is believed the possibility remains a season of up to 70 games could start on Black Friday with the originally scheduled NBC broadcast of the Rangers at Boston if the length of yesterday's meeting is indeed a signal of meaningful progress.

New York Post LOADED: 11.07.2012

643806 New York Rangers

Avery Dives in to Help Sandy Relief Efforts in New York

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

Though he was sometimes controversial, Sean Avery was always hugely popular among Rangers fans when he played for the club off and on from 2009 until he retired last season. His actions in the week since Hurricane Sandy hit New York will spread his fan base here even further.

His contribution begins with a video made during the storm by Casey and Dean Neistat, brothers who spent four hours on bikes chronicling the scene as floodwaters swamped Lower Manhattan. The video was posted to YouTube on Oct. 31, and by early Tuesday morning it had been viewed more than 1.4 million times. Avery, a Lower Manhattan resident, helped make the video:

Casey Neistat received \$500 for the rights to that video. As Joe Berkowitz writes in Fast Company, Neistat took Avery's suggestion to record the damage in Staten Island, where Avery had been delivering hot food as a volunteer. Neistat used the \$500 to buy clothing to donate to those in need in the storm-stricken borough, and he and Avery drove out to deliver it.

The video of their trip to Staten Island was posted to YouTube on Nov. 3.

The Neistats and Avery are hardly the only New Yorkers to help their fellow citizens recover from the storm; as many have noted, individuals and grassroots groups have often been present where big, traditional disaster-relief organizations have not.

Avery and Neistat have been helping out in other neighborhoods. On Avery's Instagram account, where he has been posting pictures of storm damage, residents of other neighborhoods and towns devastated by Sandy have been writing in, asking him to visit.

"I live in Long Beach, NY and our entire town has been destroyed including our beautiful beach," read one message on Avery's Instagram account. "We would love to have u come down to our town where there is still no power, water or sewage system and won't be for a long long time."

Avery replied, "I'm working on it."

New York Times LOADED: 11.07.2012

643807 NHL

Longer NHL lockout a boon for Hockey Canada

Would be able to ice 'Grade A world team', including Oilers star Nugent-Hopkins, at junior championship if impasse continues beyond Christmas

By Jim Matheson, Edmonton Journal November 6, 2012

EDMONTON - Hockey Canada's chief scout Kevin Prendergast has his fingers crossed that Edmonton Oilers centre Ryan Nugent-Hopkins will be on their world junior championship squad.

But if the National Hockey League lockout ends before Dec. 3, there's no way.

The labour negotiations between the league and the NHL Players' Association hugely impacts Hockey Canada's roster for the worlds in Ufa, the Russian city of 1.1 million by the Ural Mountains, situated about 1,200 kilometres southeast of Moscow.

"Our worst-case scenario is we name our Dec. 3 training camp roster, then the lockout ends and the kids go NHL camps rather to our camp, which starts Dec. 10. What do we do then? Each NHL team has submitted two names to us of kids that'll go to NHL camps if the lockout ends."

While Prendergast is taking copious notes on the Canadian Hockey League juniors competing in the Subway Super Series against the powerhouse Russians, led by first overall pick/Oilers forward Nail Yakupov, the lockout is uppermost on Hockey Canada's mind.

"The biggest thing is whether the NHL's back," said Prendergast. "If they aren't back, we have a grade A world team. If there's NHL games again, we have basically a B team."

"If the lockout was still on, we would only have about 28 kids at our training camp in Calgary. But if not, then we'd have to invite another 35 kids to fight for jobs."

"It's not fair to the kids," said Prendergast.

He hopes to get the following players in the lineup: Saint John Sea Dogs winger Jonathan Huberdeau, a Florida Panthers draft pick; Niagara IceDogs defenceman Dougie Hamilton, Boston Bruins; Barrie Colts centre Mark Scheifele, Winnipeg Jets; Everett Silvertips defenceman Ryan Murray, Columbus Blue Jackets; Edmonton Oil Kings defenceman Griffin Reinhart, New York Islanders; Moose Jaw Warriors blue-liner Morgan Rielly, Toronto Maple Leafs; Niagara centre Ryan Strome, Islanders; and likely Red Deer Rebels blue-liner Matt Dumba, Minnesota Wild. Hamilton, Huberdeau, Murray and Scheifele are the most likely to be in the NHL if the lockout ends.

Nugent-Hopkins, however, is Hockey Canada's crown jewel. He would be the team's No. 1 centre if he's allowed to play in the Dec. 26-Jan. 5 tournament.

"Nugent-Hopkins is the only one playing pro now (Oklahoma City Barons of the American Hockey League). Hockey Canada has talked to Kevin Lowe (the Oilers team president). Because of the lockout, they can't tell Nugent-Hopkins what to do," said Prendergast. "But they said they will ask him. His agent (Rick Valette) says he would recommend that Ryan play in the worlds. I don't think being away from Oklahoma City for three weeks would hurt his development any."

"He's never played in the world juniors before, and I know he's rooming with (Jordan) Eberle (a former world junior championship hero)."

If the Oilers don't allow Nugent-Hopkins to play in the worlds, then what?

"Scheifele would be (the) No. 1 centre," said Prendergast.

And, if Scheifele's in the NHL?

"Don't even go there," said Prendergast. "I guess it could be (Nathan) MacKinnon."

MacKinnon, who plays for the Halifax Mooseheads of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, could go No. 1 in the June 2013 NHL entry draft. And he's just 17.

He had a rough outing against the Russians Monday in the CHL Super Series opener, a 6-2 loss, going minus-4, playing with Huberdeau.

"Nathan tried to impress too much. He was a little immature, but he got better in the third period," said Prendergast.

The Canadian world championship team will fly from Calgary to Frankfurt, then to Helsinki after their selection camp. They'll be at the Finnish Olympic training area in Vierumaki, about 90 minutes from Helsinki, for 2-1/2 days, and will play exhibition games against the Finns on Dec. 20 and Swedes on Dec. 22 in Helsinki before boarding a charter on Dec. 23 to Ufa with the Finns and Americans on board.

Ufa, which is near Kazakhstan, is an oil and coal district. It's also home to former Oilers defenceman Igor Kravchuk. Salavat Yuleyev is one of the Kontinental Hockey League's best teams.

"The only modern thing in Ufa is the hockey rink ... when (Oilers centre) Sam Gagner was there playing that eight-game (Russia-Canada junior series in 2007), they had a new building but had a problem with the ice-plant," said Prendergast. "The Russians went to the insurance company to get a new plant after the series ended. The insurance company said it wasn't covered. So the Russians burned the building to the ground and they had a new one built for them. It's 10,000 seats, two years old, I think.

"It's identical to the old building except it has a new ice plant," Prendergast said, laughing.

"We're staying at what's supposed to be a new hotel in Ufa, but it doesn't look new to me. It's Cold War new to me. Hockey Canada is bringing over their own chefs for the kids," said Prendergast.

Meanwhile, in the Super Series, Yakupov is the captain for the Russian touring side. They play the QMJHL all-stars in Val-d'Or, Que., on Wednesday, then they're off to Sarnia of the Ontario Hockey League, where Yakupov played junior, and Guelph. They then head west for Vancouver and Victoria.

The Russians have a juggernaut — this team will basically be the squad they will ice in Ufa.

"Yakupov was really good in the first game. We let him roam around too much, but he's a man with boys," said Prendergast.

"Grigorenko was good in spurts. If you give him room he'll really hurt you, but he won't fight through a lot of things. I thought their best player in the first game was Shalimov. He's a mean mother. He ran over a couple of our guys and put an inside out move on a goal."

Prendergast said Canada's first three lines are probably set if there's no NHL and the fourth line would be "an energy, physical line."

That's where Oil Kings centre Travis Ewanyk might come in. Same with teammate Mitch Moroz. Both will play in the series.

Prendergast is also interested in seeing Oil Kings defenceman Keegan Lowe, Kevin's son, play.

"He's going to play hard in this series (as a member of the Western Hockey League all-stars in the game in Victoria)."

Prendergast also wants to have a long look at Edmonton product Colin Smith, who attended Vimy Ridge Academy and is the now the second-leading scorer in the WHL with the Kamloops Blazers.

"We had Colin at the world under-18s a couple of years ago ... the last guy we picked, and I thought he was the second-best player on our team after Scheifele. He didn't get drafted by anybody because he only weighed about 158 pounds, but he's stronger now and he has outstanding hockey sense," said Prendergast.

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643808 NHL

If NHL is up and running Dec. 1, then what?

By Jim Matheson

I know some people think you could still squeeze 70 games in if the NHL lockout ended, say, on U.S. Thanksgiving Nov. 22, and there was a mandated week-long training camp and the first puck is dropped Dec. 1, but I think that's way too ambitious. That would mean cramming games in,

every second day, just like the playoffs, with an army of guys taking numbers to enter the team medical rooms. Are we supposed to have a game every second day from Dec. 1 until the middle of June when the Stanley Cup tournament ends?

The owners want to make money, with more league home dates, of course, and the players want more of their salaries (more games, more dough), but do owners want to pay players not to play because they're on crutches? I think not.

I say a 60-game season is the perfect remedy. If the NHL season started up Dec. 1, the Oilers would have exactly 60 games left. And I believe the NHL would totally rejig the schedules of every team and have them play only in their conferences so it's fair for everybody. You wouldn't see the Oilers going to the U.S. East Coast, for instance.

Here's how a 60-game season could work for the Oilers.

You play each team in the Northwest division (Calgary, Vancouver, Minnesota and Colorado) five times. That's 20 games. Say, you have two games at Rexall against the Flames and three in Calgary. Say, you have three games at Rexall against the Canucks and two in Vancouver. Same story with the Wild and Avalanche. You play the other 10 teams in the Pacific and Central divisions four times apiece (two here, two on the road), that's 40 more. That's 60 total.

OK, we're forgetting Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg, the Eastern Canadian teams. The Senators, Habs and Leafs usually have home-and-homes with the Oilers. Last year, the Oilers were in Winnipeg, but the Jets didn't come here. But, say we include them in the same scenario, where do we pick up another eight games?

Here's how. You play the Central teams Detroit, St. Louis, Chicago, Columbus and Nashville three times only. Same with, say, Dallas, San Jose and Phoenix. That's 24 games. You play Anaheim and Los Angeles four times each because they're geographically linked and an easy road trip. That's eight more for 32.

You play Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg eight games total, and you get to the same 40 outside the Northwest Division.

That's 60 games, in 134 days if the season ends April 13 as it's supposed to, now. You would still have the all-star game in Columbus in late January with, say, a four-day break. That's 60 games in 130 days.

That's just fine

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643809 NHL

Roy MacGregor: The Wayne Gretzky of hockey writing

JOHN ALLEMANG

MacGregor of The Globe — and formerly of the Post, the Star, the Citizen, Maclean's, The Canadian, and Office Equipment & Methods magazine, to name just a few — is playing against type.

You know him as this endlessly optimistic, eternal-boyish supporter of all that is good and great about the national sport.

But with days to go before he's welcomed into the bargain-basement media nook of the Temple de la Renommée du Hockey — it sounds so much classier in the language of Jean Béliveau — the 64-year-old fabulist who once chased a pre-teen Bobby Orr around the rinks of Ontario cottage country is resisting joy.

"It's so discouraging," he says from his nation-watching headquarters in Kanata, Ont., an Ottawa suburb he deigns to share with an arena known to corporate types as Scotiabank Place. "This should be a time to celebrate all the good things in hockey, with all those good people going into the Hall — and I don't mean me. And yet there's such a foul taste about the game. People really feel jilted."

That's an old-time MacGregor sentiment for you: We've let our game be stolen by people who think it's theirs. The MacGregor variety of hockey isn't just this business model that passes itself off as a sport. When he worked the Hill as a political columnist, he derided the back-room cabals that tried

to thrust the Meech Lake Accord on an ungrateful nation, and now he sees the out-of-work NHL as equally out-of-touch.

All this will pass, hockey nation will come to its senses and Roy MacGregor will regain his equilibrium. In the meantime he roams the small towns where hockey's soul hides during NHL breaks, chronicles the beer leagues he knows too well ("He's the ultimate one-way kind of player," chides his friend Wayne Wouters, Clerk of the Privy Council), drifts off into feel-good golf columns about the local boy who made the big time, and dips into his storyteller archives so the national conversation can once again feel like barstool chatter.

"The most fun I ever had in my life was covering the first years of the Ottawa Senators," he says, regaining his Hall of Fame euphoria. "I just about pissed my pants laughing every day, the stories were so funny."

He wrote one of his 40 or so books about the Senators' calamitous debut 20 years ago, when the team bus got lost in fog, the mascot was fired and the club managed to lose 38 straight road games. For MacGregor, who never quite got the Ottawa obsession with the corridors of power, the Sens were "a nice change of pace" from covering Brian Mulroney.

"At one point burglars broke in and stole their video equipment, all the TVs and recorders, but left behind the game tapes." Don't stop him if you've heard this one. "So E.J. McGuire, one of the assistants, comes out and says, 'How about that – burglars with taste.'"

Rick Bowness, now working with the Vancouver Canucks – actually, now going out of his mind with boredom watching Champions Tour golf at his lockout hideaway in Phoenix – had the honour of coaching the Senators and sharing the odd pint with MacGregor. "He always supplied the humour," Bowness says of MacGregor's expansion-franchise instincts.

He volunteers compliments about his friend's character ("You learn to trust Roy very quickly"), his writing ("Words come so easy for him) and even his golf stroke ("Nice swing, hits it a long way, doesn't play enough").

But the most MacGregorish quality he remembers is the journalist's eagerness to listen, as the coach's father told training-camp stories about trying to crack the Montreal Canadiens roster in the 1950s. "Roy loved that," Bowness says. "He always wanted to tie in family with the profession. We all come from somewhere and Roy keeps that in perspective."

Modern hockey, like large swathes of modern urban life, is rootless and lives in the moment. For a confirmed storyteller such as Roy MacGregor, who wears his old-fart demeanour with pride, news-cycle minutiae has become a worrying distraction from the real thing.

"I want to know what motivates a guy," he says, "what his home life is like, how all the magic of the game can be messed up by coaching and strategy. The dressing room has changed and privacy has totally vanished. I wish I had more time to sit down with the players themselves, because when you're able to talk to a Gretzky or a Crosby about the game as it's played, they seem to come alive and the clichés vanish."

He worked as Wayne Gretzky's ghost writer for a while, and couldn't have been happier. His favourite articles aren't the big-game narratives but the elusive portraits of real life that become more affecting when channelled through the players we think we know. "I spent a week in California with Marcel Dionne, sitting around while he told stories. About how as a kid he was lying in his room, listening through the vents, his uncles were all gathered around the table drinking beer, someone called for enough money to get little Marcel a new stick. And then he heard the quarters sliding cross the table. Stuff like that I loved."

Bob Gainey knows what it's like to have MacGregor listening, to be stared at by what he calls "that round, smiling face" and find yourself baring your tough hockey soul about the death of a young daughter. "It's disarming," he says. "But it's also easy. He's like the dentist who says, 'Okay, we're done,' and you didn't know you'd started yet."

For all his sensitivity, MacGregor is often depicted as a Canadian romantic, someone who glories in bygone values that a hardened urbanite might think the country's outgrown. "Roy's a small-town kid more than anything," says his friend and collaborator Ken Dryden. "Why people like reading him is because he reminds them of a part of themselves that's still small-town. The personal element is more front and centre when you live in a small place. Roy knows that people who seem mundane and ordinary and routine might not be. Look long enough and close enough and you're going to find something interesting."

If he still crusades for the game's frozen-pond origins, that's because he's uncomfortable with the sports writer's role in a world where money rules.

"There's a terrible concern that people like me become the high priests of an activity in which costs are spiralling out of control. Sometimes I feel like I'm really writing about the price of gold, because we're pricing the dream out of reach. I always say there'll never again be a Gordie Howe, a poor kid out of Floral, Sask."

MacGregor, who named his only son Gordie, knows how much his own small-town background shaped his attitudes to the country and its game, and not just because he puts a chip on his shoulder every time he gets a whiff of big-city sophisticates. His father laboured in lumber mills around Ontario's Algonquin Park and made the back woods seem like Canada's truest reality. "My dad worked Saturdays and only came to one of my games," he remembers. "He turned up at the rink and said, 'I want to see this Orr kid from Parry Sound.'"

Being in the background, by hockey standards at least, now suits the new Hall-of-Famer. He won't talk up Roy MacGregor, not when he could tell you about why Jean Béliveau turned down Rideau Hall, how Tie Domi was man enough to volunteer for a literacy campaign even though he couldn't read, or how a misguided coach tried to fire up MacGregor's team by informing them that Bobby Orr had girlish handwriting.

"So we go out there yelling and screaming, Orr scores 2 goals in 30 seconds, and I have to tell the coach, 'You know he's not playing with a ballpoint pen.'" Unlike some people.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.07.2012

643810 NHL

The NHL's deal maker

DAVID EBNER

In the late 1990s, when Murray Edwards was a new owner in the NHL and not yet a billionaire, he would meet every Wednesday morning at 7:30 in the office of Calgary Flames president Ron Bremner.

Those were dark years. While Edwards's main business was flourishing – the oil and natural gas company Canadian Natural Resources Ltd. – the Flames suffered on and off the ice. The team missed the playoffs year after year, attendance plunged, and the absurdly low Canadian dollar compounded the situation – all-in threatening the franchise's viability in Calgary.

This is where Murray Edwards learned the business of hockey, when Canada's national game seemed like no certain thing in Canada as a professional enterprise.

Edwards is well-known for his whipsmart mind – "He's got the mental engine that makes a Ferrari look like a Go-Kart," says former Flame Jim Peplinski – and this is what Bremner remembers from those early Wednesday morning sessions with Edwards, one of nine Flames co-owners, working through problems.

"I tell people to this day it was like getting an executive MBA on the side," Bremner says.

Edwards, 52, is one of the richest men in Canada, having led the ascent of Canadian Natural from penny stock to the biggest oil and gas producer in the country, worth some \$33-billion. And he has big stakes in a sprawl of other companies: oil drilling, mining, aerospace, ski resorts, the Flames, and is a force politically behind the scenes, in Ottawa, and in Washington D.C.

He is a consummate deal maker, always bargaining, always with his eyes fixed on the long term.

In the hockey arena, since buying a stake in the Flames in 1994, Edwards has risen to the top echelon of NHL owners. While other names get much more press – Jeremy Jacobs, the league chairman and Boston Bruins owner, and Ed Snider of the Philadelphia Flyers, never mind commissioner Gary Bettman – the Calgary billionaire deal maker is a central player in the current lockout.

In one instance two months ago, as the Sept. 15 lockout deadline set by the owners approached, Edwards joined a select group, Jacobs and Bettman, and the three men hammered out a failed offer.

"He's become pretty influential," said one owner. "He's a pretty tough guy. He's got a reputation for being a hard-driving deal maker. But he's balanced. Murray cares deeply. He really favours a fair deal."

As the lockout continues through November, and a number of owners are locked on a 50-50 deal with the players, the role of Edwards has been little noticed. It is possible he could emerge as a key broker, much like his forebear with the Flames, Harley Hotchkiss.

Hotchkiss, who died last year, was league chairman for a dozen years, 1995 to 2007. Hotchkiss helped end the last lockout, after he forged a bond with Trevor Linden, president of the NHL Players' Association, which was part of what finally led to a deal.

Edwards came from ordinary beginnings. Born in December, 1959, he was raised in a middle-class home in Regina, three children, his father was an accountant and his mother was a teacher.

In politics, Edwards has long been affiliated with the federal Liberal party. In business, his focus is long-term and on variables one can control, such as costs. Keep them low – important in the volatile oil and gas business. His companies are known for being demanding places to work. And he is not necessarily a friend of workers.

In 2004, when Canadian Natural was undertaking the biggest move of its history, to build the Horizon oil sands mine north of Fort McMurray, the company secured a special status from the province called Division 8 under Alberta's labour laws. With an eye to keep costs low, Canadian Natural then struck a special blanket deal for all site workers with the Christian Labour Association of Canada, a union that is seen by some other unions as business-friendly. The deal angered the traditional Alberta Building Trades, who tried to fight it in court.

The Division 8 status, interestingly, also assured there would be no work stoppages: no strikes, and no lockouts.

Canadian Natural made use of some foreign workers, also to save money.

There was controversy in April, 2007, when two Chinese workers were killed at the Horizon construction site, and two others seriously hurt. The safety was shoddy. In 2009, the province laid 53 charges – 29 against Canadian Natural, and 24 against Sinopec entities. Fifty charges were later withdrawn or stayed. But on the case's three primary charges, against Sinopec's SSEC Canada Ltd., the employer of the workers, the company pleaded guilty in September for failing to ensure the health and safety of workers. SSEC Canada faces fines of up to \$1.5-million, which the Alberta crown wants fully levied, and the sentencing hearing is set for Jan. 24.

Still, considering Edwards has made his money in energy, and the controversial oil sands, the media-shy billionaire hasn't roused much negative attention, or attention at all.

After growing up in Regina, Edwards went to business school at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and then law school at the University of Toronto. He became a lawyer in Calgary and quickly turned to deal making. Canadian Natural was started in 1989, when he was 29. He invested \$100,000 alongside two partners. He is chairman and his stake – he remains the sixth-largest shareholder in the company – is worth nearly \$700-million, which underpins his fortune estimated by Forbes to be \$1.6-billion, No. 17 in Canada and No. 804 globally.

"He's clearly a force," says Red Wilson, CEO and chairman of Bell Canada in the 1990s. "He's a force of nature."

Wilson chuckles. He first met Edwards – a big man, standing 6 feet 2 inches – several years ago when Edwards was on a panel that Wilson chaired, one set up by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to investigate Canadian business competitiveness. The final report, entitled *Compete to Win*, includes a hockey metaphor Edwards has always liked: "We must skate harder, shoot harder and keep our elbows up in the corners."

Wilson described Edwards, most of all, as a shareholder. A man with skin in the game. Not just an executive, a big salary, stock options, piling up a plush pension.

Where Edwards operates, his money is on the line.

Edwards is deeply involved in all that he does, as he has become with hockey. He takes big stakes in ventures. Magellan Aerospace is one example, where Edwards now owns three-quarters of the stock. Most of his investments have been winners but Magellan has long struggled. "I've been called Mr. Patient Money because I have the patience to work through

challenging circumstances," Edwards told *The Globe and Mail* four years ago as Magellan fought through fiscal turbulence.

Edwards's style is to analyze deeply, and then try to move quickly. The best-known deal on this front in Calgary happened in 1999, when Canadian Natural and Penn West, another Edwards company, bought \$1.6-billion of assets from BP, a deal launched during Stampede. The assets included the raw land north of Fort McMurray that became the \$11-billion Horizon mine.

What is interesting is an Edwards comment about bargaining with BP, one of the biggest oil companies on the planet. He proposed the initial deal on the first day of Stampede, when most of corporate Calgary was drinking. Over a month or so, the sides worked toward a deal they both liked. "It's more important," said Edwards at the time, "to fly midpoint in deals and work together, than to try to haggle for the last dollar."

Hal Kvisle – today CEO of Talisman Energy – remembers the first time he worked with Edwards. It was 1993, and Kvisle at the time also ran a small oil company. Both he and Edwards were sniffing around a deal, and they then worked together on it, and split the proceeds.

The basic framework was agreed over a handshake.

Edwards's stock, in business and hockey, has climbed in step with the rise of Canadian Natural and Edwards as a political player. He is fixed in the inner circle of NHL power players in this lockout and among Canadian owners, his stature today is unrivalled. He is the longest-standing owner, and most are fresh to the club, like Daryl Katz in Edmonton in 2008, and the new corporate owners of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Bell and Rogers.

"In any tent," Kvisle said. "Murray very quickly emerges as the leader."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.07.2012

643811 NHL

After marathon session, NHL and players union to meet again Wednesday

David Shoalts

Hope of saving a full or almost full NHL season built Tuesday evening as the first bargaining session between the owners and players since Oct. 18 lasted seven hours and 15 minutes, probably the longest stretch in the sporadic negotiations that marked the league's latest lockout.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, deputy commissioner Bill Daly and several owners met with NHL Players' Association executive director Donald Fehr, NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr and a group of players including superstar Sidney Crosby at a secret location in New York. It is hoped a pitch by the owners to shoulder at least some of the responsibility for paying existing player contracts in full despite a cut in their share of league revenue from 57 per cent to 50 will be enough to prod the two sides into an agreement.

Neither side would comment after the meeting but issued word they will meet again Wednesday. Louis Jean, a broadcaster with the Quebec-based network TVA, said Tuesday night a source told him the session was "going well" and the discussions were "positive."

Shortly before Tuesday's meeting, which started at 3 p.m., Donald Fehr said he was hopeful what people on both sides regard as the last chance to save an 82-game season would be fruitful. However, Fehr also warned there were more issues at stake than the "make-whole provision" in the owners' last offer.

Settling how player contracts will be paid in full or almost in full will not "end the matter," Fehr said. "There are still other things that are important, but it certainly would matter in and of itself."

There a flurry of media activity early Tuesday evening when it appeared the session ended after just a few hours. A rather bland statement from Daly was released signalling the end of the meeting but it turned out the league released it prematurely and the meeting was still going.

As the second NHL lockout in the last seven years entered its 53rd day on Wednesday, the meeting in New York marked the first attempt to reach a new collective agreement since talks broke off Oct. 18. That session ended when the owners took 10 minutes to reject three alternative offers from the players in response to their offer of a 50-50 split in revenue that would have

seen current contracts paid in full by reducing the players' shares in later years.

The players pointed out this would result in players paying players and would actually be a reduction of a 50-per-cent share. The players received 57 per cent of the NHL's hockey-related revenue (HRR) in the last agreement.

However, the owners were not interested in any of the players' suggestions, which included setting aside 13 per cent of HRR in a new agreement to make sure existing contracts were paid in full and then splitting the rest 50-50. But talks resumed Tuesday after the owners sent a message to the union they were willing to take on at least some of the responsibility for paying their contracts in full.

Much of Tuesday's meeting was thought to be spent on a full explanation from the owners about how they propose to do that.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.07.2012

643812 NHL

Dowbiggin: New agreement will get done in spite of Bettman, Fehr

BRUCE DOWBIGGIN

The NHL and NHLPA are friending again today in New York City. Okay, friending might be a strong word. There's good and bad in their finally coming together after a two-week snit. The weekend meeting of NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA executive Steve Fehr has clearly created some traction. That's good.

The bad is that Gary Bettman and Don Fehr are at the table, too. Clear-eyed observers believe that this CBA will be done in spite of them, not because of them. Hockey's all about those Ws and Ls in the standings. So are Bettman and Fehr when it comes to their resumes. They're both obsessed by the Big W at the end of the process that says they broke the other guy.

But those people out there still paying attention (you know who you are) don't give a cuss whose proposal the solution is based upon. They just want it over. Thankfully, the constituents of Bettman and Fehr have told them that another lost year is unacceptable. They've been commanded to get a deal that starts hockey by next month if they want a full season.

If they fail to do so, their resumes won't read Win or Lose but U for unemployed.

DEFICIT SPENDING

One of the lesser-known changes in the potential NHL CBA being negotiated is a panel to review just how revenue sharing is spent. Almost all the large markets are in favour of helping out their less fortunate partners with some sort of transfers. What they're not crazy about is those partners spending the money on budget-busting contracts to players like Shea Weber of Jeff Skinner. In effect, paying for a Nashville or Carolina to sign players at levels they can't afford.

This was an issue as Philadelphia owner Ed Snider noted he was paying the lucrative salary of restricted free agent Shea Weber, who he'd signed to an offer sheet, whether he played in Philly or Nashville. Under the panel, teams will be urged to use revenue sharing for infrastructure items such as new time clocks or improved parking lots or for in-game presentations or broadcast infrastructure.

Sounds reasonable. The question is what happens in two years on this panel when they find that this CBA hasn't changed a thing when it comes to perennial losers in the NHL business plan. Are we back where we started Part 4 or will the league finally clear up its unworkable plan?

DOWN THE STRETCH

It's election night in the U.S. Tuesday, and that means news types trying to read results under pressure and generally making a hash out of it. We've never understood why the big networks, with their herds of sportscasters, don't employ them to deliver the fast-breaking electoral-college scores or results from Cuyahoga County.

Instead we'll see quavering reporters melting in the spotlight like Albert Brooks in Broadcast News. C'mon NBC free up your Bob Costas. CBS liberate the Jim Nantz. ABC get Chris "Boomer" Berman to say the President's numbers are going "Back, back back back..." . Get the winners and losers right in real time. America will thank you.

TWEET NOTHINGS

"dowbboy Hockey world crushed to learn Daly and S Fehr just playing an epic game of Risk. Daly took Kamchatka. Fehr controls Australia."

@dowbboy People have their preferences but honestly you goin' to watch ALA/ LSU slugfest over USC/ USC?"

MARBLE MOUTH

Our old pal Terry Bradshaw is in trouble again. FOX's marble-mouthed good ol' boy is being labelled a racist for describing Miami's Reggie Bush (who is black) "chasing a bucket of chicken" as the Dolphin running back scored a touchdown. The inner workings of Bradshaw's mind are a mystery (we think he was just fixating on the postgame buffet) and Lord knows, Bradshaw's your cartoon cutout of a southern man in his '50s.

Still. We would only offer anyone else to try doing live TV for a year and not malaprop a few times. And suggest maybe that FOX needs to lessen Bradshaw's work load, highlights-wise. It'll work out better that way.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.07.2012

643813 NHL

Donald Fehr expresses optimism as talks resume

By Stu Cowan

There was a bit of good news for hockey fans on Tuesday as NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr expressed optimism that both sides in the labour dispute were ready to start working towards a deal.

Fehr met with reporters in New York about 90 minutes before negotiations resumed at an undisclosed location Tuesday afternoon. They were the first formal talks between the sides since Oct. 18 and Fehr said he hoped it would be the start of a push to end the lockout.

"The players view has always been that we ought to keep negotiating until we find a way to get an agreement," Fehr told reporters. "You sort of stay at it day by day — so it's very good to be getting back to the table. We hope that this time it produces more progress that we've seen in the past and we can figure out a way to make an agreement and to get the game back on the ice as soon as possible.

"We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and we'll continue bargaining until we find a way to make a deal," he added.

You can read more by clicking here.

Meanwhile, former Canadiens coach Jacques Demers — who is now a Senator in Ottawa — said that while the NHL lockout is sad, he doesn't expect the Harper government to get involved.

"Labour conflicts in companies like Canada Post and Air Canada are one thing, they provide a service to the people," Demers, the last coach to win a Stanley Cup with the Canadiens, told The Gazette while making a political appearance in St. Lazare on Monday. "I think the government will stay out of this."

Demers added that it's frustrating to see how ordinary hard-working people are being affected by the NHL lockout.

You can read more by clicking here.

In Toronto, a woman recently held an auction hoping to sell her Bridle Path area home for \$5 million, along with a lot of its contents. The home didn't sell, but the best deal might have been a framed, autographed Maurice (Rocket) Richard Habs sweater that sold for only \$500. Maybe she would have got more in Toronto if it was a Darryl Sittler or Wendel Clark Maple Leafs sweater.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.07.2012

NHL lockout: Fehr, Bettman roll up their sleeves

Kevin McGran

NEW YORK—Donald Fehr offered very few hints in advance of Tuesday's bargaining session with the NHL, but the hints he offered were reminders that there is an awful lot of work to do before an agreement is reached.

The two sides met for more than seven hours, breaking before 11 p.m. promising to meet again Wednesday.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman insisted on secrecy for the talks — a sign to some that the league is more serious about negotiating than sputtering rhetoric — in a bid to save hockey.

Fehr acceded to media requests to talk, but was very guarded, even if a tad optimistic, in his comments.

"I'm not going to comment on signs, I'm not going to prognosticate," said Fehr. "This is a work-your way through it. And you have to work your way through."

Fehr, his negotiating team and about 14 players, including Sidney Crosby, still have a lot to work through before any thought of saving the season is considered.

For one, the big news from the weekend that the league seems willing to pay contracts in full while at the same time getting the union to a 50-50 split with hockey related revenue remains very much up in the air.

"We'll have to see what they put on paper," said Fehr. "I don't want to prejudge or indicate that I have any impressions or expectations."

But the NHL has another long wish list in a bid to constrain costs on the \$3.3 billion business. Indications were that the league wasn't going to budge on its series of contract restrictions, namely:

- Two-year entry level contracts (down from three)
- Unrestricted free agency at age 28 or 10 years in the league (up from 25)
- Five-year limits on contract length (currently unlimited)
- No more than a five per cent difference in annual salary from year to year.

"Player contract rights are very important to them," said Fehr. "The issues the players are concerned about obviously remain the same, don't bear a lot of repetition, but the players haven't seen any need to go backwards given the history of the last negotiations and given the level of revenue increase since then."

There were items still on the table Fehr didn't mention that could prolong talks even if there's quick agreement to the 50-50 split, the "make whole" provision on salaries, and targeted revenue sharing.

Bettman had asked for a number of changes as to what counted toward the salary cap. For example, he no longer wanted bonuses to be counted toward the cap. A trick in the old cap was to sign rookies to big performance-based bonuses — score 50 goals, be named Conn Smythe winner. So money that would never be paid counted toward the cap. That helped small-market teams get to the floor. Teams affected by would like to see the salary cap floor lowered.

And Bettman also wanted players in the AHL on NHL contracts to have their deals over \$105,000 count toward the cap.

Some other things that the players want include a joint NHL/NHLPA Health and Safety Committee; easy access to second medical opinions; doing off-season rehab activities at a site of the players' choosing rather than the home-team site; improved standards in visiting locker rooms; improved ice conditions; and each player getting his own room on the road (rather than just players with more than 600 games experience).

"It is very good to be getting back to the table and we hope this time it produces more progress than we have seen in the past," said Fehr.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.07.2012

NHL labour deal within reach if sides can get past ego and pride

By Bruce Arthur

It is fun, the notion of the National Hockey League's leaders sneaking around Manhattan in hats and sunglasses, ducking into the shadows while the media roars by with the lights flashing. The latest meeting between the league and its player union took place in New York on Tuesday in an undisclosed location, just as the meetings on Saturday between deputies Bill Daly and Steve Fehr did. It is a measure of where they are, and how these things end, that this was seen as significant progress.

But it was, at least in theory. The fact that the time for grandstanding had passed — at least temporarily — was progress. The fact that the two sides talked and then decided they had something more to talk about in greater numbers — at least temporarily — was progress.

None of this, of course, means the lockout is ending anytime soon. Even tangible progress at the bargaining table can be derailed after the fact, even if Tuesday's meeting, which started at 3 p.m., was still going well into the evening.

But this tends to be how these things end; not an afternoon at the theatre, but a negotiation. Last year's National Basketball Association's lockout ended a few days after their own secret meeting, away from the microphones. This thing could still have several paroxysms of rancour left in it, but when it ends, the quiet comes before the noise.

This was the first meeting involving Don Fehr and Gary Bettman since Oct. 18, when Fehr offered three different proposals and Bettman walked out after 10 minutes. But the issues remained the same: money, primarily, and then contract issues that the league is almost certainly more willing to bargain away. And whether it is quiet or not, the same problems will need to be overcome.

Progress will require saner voices. It will require compromise, fueled by the urgency to salvage as much of a season as they can. It will require the players working off the league's way of calculating 50-50, by percentage of hockey-related revenue, rather than offering concessions by sacrificing a share of future revenues, which protects their take-home pay right now.

Similarly, to make a deal before the end of November — to make a deal without going to the mattresses — the league will have to make concrete moves to protect some or all of that take-home.

It is not a Gretzky-given right that existing contracts need to be honoured — the escrow made sure of that in the last CBA — but players will need to feel as though it is being honoured. Their slew of offers the last time made clear that these sides can get to 50-50 by the end of this CBA, which means that this is at least theoretically concessionary bargaining.

After their last proposals, the two sides were approximately US\$500-million to US\$650-million apart over the life of a five-year deal; that is between US\$3.3-million and US\$4.3-million per team per season, or one very good second-liner. With zero growth the NHL could generate US\$16.5-billion in five full seasons. This gap is minuscule, given what is at stake.

Of course, even after the money is settled, they will need to agree on the contract issues — free agency, arbitration, entry-level contracts, the architecture through which the money flows. But once the money is settled, there will be a season.

None of this means a deal is inevitable. In 2005 the two sides finally broke off negotiations in mid-February while US\$6.5-million apart on an annual salary cap per team, and they never got much closer before they cancelled the season. The good news is that for all the apocalyptic rumblings over the past two months, there are at least two months left before a partial season would be in jeopardy, and the gap is half what it was the last time.

The NBA — which along with the NFL employed the same law firm that the NHL is using, with lawyer Bob Battersman at the helm — did not settle until Nov. 26, and crammed in a 66-game season. And not even the most ardent LeBron James hater is attaching an asterisk to it. Players were filing antitrust suits 11 days before a settlement. This is how it works.

"I would not read into this optimism or pessimism," NBA commissioner David Stern told the media on Nov. 9. "We're not failing. We're not succeeding. We're just there."

This is the playbook, and nobody needs to start worrying about the season yet. They are just here.

And there is a deal to be made. Maybe it involves a cap on escrow, meaning a partial guarantee on what players would actually be paid, which would shift the NHLPA's offer of sacrificing a share of future growth back to the players. It probably requires a willingness by the NHL to eschew 50-50 this season, to ensure the savings from future years and the revenue from this season. And the NHL needs to get over its mistrust of Don Fehr, and Fehr needs to give them a reason to do so.

All we need is adults in the room who can do what other leagues did — reach across the table and meet somewhere in the middle.

It has come to this: if these two sides lose the season every one of them should be swept away, never to be seen in hockey again, because that much stupidity and pride and ego should not be trusted with this game. That is a bit of a naive statement, of course, given the list of stuffed pigeons and egomaniacs who have traditionally run hockey, which is a business above all else. No owner is going to lose his job over this.

But if they screw this up over the price of a second-liner in every pot, then they should all don disguises and duck into the shadows. If, of course, they were capable of shame.

National Post LOADED: 11.07.2012

643816 Ottawa Senators

Lehner stands tall, defends Sens' Swedish AHL rookies

by Ken Warren

Lehner stands tall, defends Sens' Swedish AHL rookies

Robin Lehner is doing his best to deflect attention away from himself after his solid start to the AHL season with the Binghamton Senators.

At the same time, however, the Senators promising goaltending prospect says the critics of fellow Swedes Jakob Silfverberg and Mika Zibanejad need to relax and give them time to adapt.

"They're new guys to the league, there's too much pressure on them," says Lehner, who is sporting a tidy 4-2 record, with a goals against average of 1.99 and .933 save percentage. "I know for the Swedish guys, it's a totally different game. It will take some time for them to find the routes to get into the shooting lanes. This league is full of more chaos (than in Sweden or the NHL). It's just not the same. Everyone in the NHL does their job. It's so much more structured than down here."

For those who were expecting Silfverberg and Zibanejad to fill AHL nets night after night, guess again. In nine games, Silfverberg has two goals and two assists, while Zibanejad has no goals and three assists. Their lack of production is part of the reason why Binghamton has scored only 22 goals so far, leaving them 23rd among 30 AHL teams in scoring.

Binghamton is treading water in the AHL standings, with a 4-4-1 record heading into Wednesday's game against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins. The team's offensive leaders are veteran AHL defencemen Andre Benoit and Tyler Eckford and centre Mike Hoffman, who all have five points.

"We've got to get a bit more assertive," says Lehner. "We're fine. We've got a good team, but there are still a lot of guys who are new to this league."

If it sounds like the 21-year-old goaltender has taken on a leadership role, you wouldn't be wrong. Lehner's picture graces the top of the club's website. His popularity rose another notch when he fought Syracuse netminder Riku Helenius a few weeks back. After being kicked out of that game, he helped rally the Senators to a 2-1 overtime win the next day — with his voice and his play. "Well, that's my personality," he says. "I'm always going to be talking," he says.

The intriguing internal battle is Lehner's duel with Ben Bishop, who has the inside track to be Craig Anderson's back-up in Ottawa because of his

guaranteed NHL salary of \$650,000. (Lehner has a two-way deal, paying him \$900,000 if he's in the NHL, but only \$87,500 in the AHL). Bishop has allowed four goals in both of his starts in Binghamton, losing both.

"I'm happy where I am right now, I feel pretty good right now," says Lehner. "Of course, (Bishop) is helping push me, but I would be pushing even if he wasn't here. And Nathan Lawson is also a very good goalie who has played in the NHL. Whenever you're on a team, you're playing for the team and yourself. I want to get better."

THE BOUNCES ARE GOING WIERCIOCH'S WAY: You don't need to tell Binghamton defenceman Patrick Wiercioch that hockey is game of inches. Two of his three goals this season have been bank shots off the post from the blueline, including the game winner in a 4-3 victory over Norfolk last Friday. "You always want to get better, you're always thinking (afterwards) about what else you could have done, but I'm making a conscious effort to shoot more this year," he says.

Following a summer of intense training with good friend Kyle Turris in Ottawa, Wiercioch has fully recovered from the scary scene when he took a puck in the throat during a game last season. Now in his third AHL season, Wiercioch says he has definitely learned the hard way about the AHL.

"Experience only comes one way," he says, confirming what Lehner suggested about Silfverberg and Zibanejad. "Along that road there are definitely frustrations. You want everything to come quickly, but you've got to push through it, take the highs when you can and don't get too down with the lows."

IF NHL RETURNS SOON, NWT DOESN'T HAPPEN: John Chabot has one eye on the north and the other on New York. Chabot's plans to bring players from the Ottawa Senators and other NHL teams to northern Canadian communities for charity games could be in jeopardy if the league and the players' association end the lockout by reaching agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement.

The series of games includes a Nov. 12 date in Thunder Bay, followed by games in Yellowknife, Inuvik and Hay River, Northwest Territories, the following week.

"I've talked to people and we've heard there's a chance (of an agreement), but we might just fit the games under the wire," Chabot said after watching 4,800 fans turn out for the first game in the series in Cornwall on Monday. "If there's a deal, December 1st is what most people are saying. It would take a couple of weeks to work through all the details and if that's the case and we brought them back on the 24th or 25th or 26th, it would work out fantastic."

The proceeds from Monday's event went to Chabot's charity, First Assist, and the Max Keeping Foundation. The money raised in future events will also go towards First Assist, a mentorship program for First Nations youth.

Chabot has also received calls about making yet another tour to the Yukon, but "most likely it won't happen, because (the lockout) might be settled by then."

LATENDRESSE FINALLY SAYS HELLO: On July 1, Guillaume Latendresse signed with the Senators as a free agent. On Nov. 5, he finally got around to meeting a few of his new teammates in the Cornwall game. "Yeah, you meet them in November in a charity game, it's pretty weird," he said after scoring two goals, adding five assists and hitting the post three times.

Latendresse, who had previously played in "seven or eight" similar charity games throughout Quebec, appeared to have an extra step on his peers. He hoped Senators general manager Bryan Murray and coach Paul MacLean were paying attention. If not, he told a reporter with a laugh, "I hope you will call the team and let them know."

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 11.07.2012

643817 Ottawa Senators

Daniel Alfredsson, Chris Phillips get rare chance to share ice with sons

By Don Brennan ,Ottawa Sun

The Zamboni incurs technical difficulties during a resurfacing midway through the practice at the Kanata Recreation Complex Tuesday night and the players are amused to no end by the snow it leaves on the ice.

Meanwhile, the fact that they are about to skate, pass pucks and learn from two of the true pillars in Ottawa Senators history, well, that has no impact on them whatsoever.

Not anymore, anyway.

"To these guys," coach Henric Alfredsson says of his players on the Kanata Blazers atom squad. "They are just another dad on the team."

"They" are Daniel Alfredsson and Chris Phillips, two locked-out NHLers who sure are spending a lot of time at rinks these days.

After their charity game in Cornwall Monday night, they remained at the Civic Complex until all autograph requests were granted. The bus didn't get back to the Sensplex, where their cars were parked, until 2:30 a.m.

At the dinner hour later that day, they were on the KRC ice with the Blazers, again helping the coach, Daniel Alfredsson's younger brother.

Daniel's son Hugo and Phillips' son Ben are on the team of nine-year-olds.

"They're contradicting all my decisions so far ... it's been a work in progress," Henric, who played the 1998-99 season for the 67's, said of his celebrity assistants, before turning serious. "No, it's been nothing but great. The kids are benefitting from it. Both Daniel and Philly, they're usually working by now, but now they're able to be helping out on the ice and I think the kids are having a great time.

"Obviously, Daniel and Philly are having a good time, as well."

Phillips says it's making the most of the bad situation that is the lockout.

"I've been out on the ice with my daughter's team a few times, and I've really enjoyed it," he said. "I'm out here running a couple of stations and helping the kids where I can see they could use a tip, here and there. When the practice is over and the games start, I'm up in the stands with all the other parents."

During Blazer games, Phillips and Alfredsson get approached, but generally people respect the fact they are there to watch the kids. Autographs are signed and chit-chat is made before and afterward.

At practices, their names might as well be Joe and Bob.

"I think I was Ben's dad for a little while, until today, when all the cameras showed up," Phillips said at what might have been the most media-covered practice (one newspaper, one TV station) of an atom team ever. "Then they saw the NHL player for a little bit."

Alfredsson has a lot of fun out on the ice with the kids — and not just because it gives him someone to play keep-away with again.

"It's pretty neat to see the kids develop and mature," he said. "I'm learning a lot myself as well.

"Even though I know quite a bit about hockey, it's different teaching kids and how they learn, and how they accept what I'm trying to tell them. I've definitely had to work hard and try to explain, make sure I make myself understood in a way that they understand."

Is it gratifying enough to make the Senators captain consider a coaching career after his playing days are done?

"I don't know, maybe. I enjoy it," he said. "I definitely enjoy being with the kids. I don't know if I'd enjoy to spend as much time (on the job) as the pro coaches do. They're putting quite a lot of work into keeping the whole operation going. (But this) is a lot of fun. The kids are so receptive, they're eager, they want to learn.

"Our focus is definitely on skill, and having fun," added Alfredsson. "And get work habits in there as well.

"I think that's important. I think that's what is great about playing a team sport. You learn everybody needs to pull their share. You learn how to be social in a group, how to interact in a group, taking given out responsibilities.

"That's what I hope they take out of it the most. If some of them become good players, good for them."

Alfredsson has compared Hugo's game to that of former Senator Magnus Arvedson. He's more of a smart player than a flashy player.

Is Ben Phillips another Wade Redden?

"You know what's funny? I'd probably compare him to myself," said Phillips. "It's hilarious how you don't teach him some things, but he skates very similar to me, right from his first year of hockey ... a defenceman, he'd like to stay back, it was comical to watch.

"He's very much like me."

Both of the offsprings could wind up following the footsteps of their fathers. Or not.

"It's impossible to say, I think," Alfredsson said when asked if Hugo is a future NHLer. "I think he's developed a lot. There's still a lot of learning to do for him, but I enjoy watching him play.

"I don't see him that much in practice, to be honest, and it's probably easier if I leave Henric the responsibility of coaching Hugo. If I give him too much criticism, he just gets mad at me. He hears it at home all the time.

"But he's a good little player and I have a lot of fun with him."

Alfredsson has marvelled at the way people in this country revere the game he plays. He was very much surprised by 4,800 fans turning out for a charity game in Cornwall. He said a similar type event featuring a Sundin and a Forsberg in Sweden would probably draw less than 2,000.

"What I really find pretty neat is the interest people have in hockey," said Alfredsson. "We know hockey is pretty much religion in Canada, but when I speak to people back home and I tell them about the interest, and the volunteer coaches there are for all different programs, from IP up to junior, it's pretty amazing."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 11.07.2012

643818 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL, players' union continue bargaining

For the second time in four days, representatives from the NHL and the players union had a lengthy meeting as they attempted to end their labor feud and take a step toward a new collective bargaining agreement.

The meeting in New York, attended by 13 players, including Pittsburgh Penguins star Sidney Crosby, lasted more than seven hours Tuesday night.

Neither side would disclose what occurred at the meeting. They planned to meet again Wednesday.

"The players' view has always been that we ought to keep negotiating until we find a way to get an agreement," Donald Fehr, the NHL Players' Association's executive director, told reporters before the sides met. "You sort of stay at it day by day, so it's very good to be getting back to the table."

Before Saturday, the sides had gone 15 straight days without meeting.

The league is believed to be considering guaranteeing the players' contracts - without money being deferred through escrow. That would be a concession to the players.

But there are still "other things that are important," Fehr said.

The players figure to battle the NHL's proposal to limit contracts to five years, along with several other issues, including the league's desire to make the original team responsible for the salary-cap hit of a player who signs for more than five years - even if the player retires after being traded.

The league has canceled games through Nov. 30, along with the popular Winter Classic, which was scheduled to be played Jan. 1 at Michigan Stadium. If a collective bargaining agreement is in place and the season starts Dec. 1, there is a good ch

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.07.2012

643819 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL, players' union: Another step?

The NHL and the NHLPA are finally more interested in negotiating than sound bites.

That's good news as the lockout heads toward two months.

Representatives from the NHL and players' union met for 7 hours and 15 minutes in New York on Tuesday. It was the second lengthy meeting in four days.

Before that, they hadn't met for 15 straight days.

Neither side would comment after Tuesday's meeting, but the fact they agreed to meet again on Wednesday is a positive sign.

"The league will not characterize the substance or detail of the discussions until there is a conclusion," said Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner.

The meeting was attended by 13 players, including Penguins star Sidney Crosby.

"The players' view has always been that we ought to keep negotiating until we find a way to get an agreement," Donald Fehr, the NHLPA's executive director, told reporters before the sides met. "You sort of stay at it day by day, so it's very good to be getting back to the table."

The league is believed to be considering guaranteeing the players' contracts _ without money being deferred through escrow. That would be a concession toward what the players want.

But there are still "other things that are important," Fehr said.

The players figure to battle the NHL's proposal to limit contracts to five years, along with several other issues, including the league's desire to make the original team responsible for the salary-cap hit of a player who signed for more than five years _ even if the player retires after getting traded.

The league has canceled games through Nov. 30, along with the popular Winter Classic, which was scheduled to be played Jan. 1 at Michigan Stadium. If a collective bargaining agreement is in place and the season starts Dec. 1, there is a good chance that a 64-game, conference-only schedule will be played.

Follow Sam Carchidi on Twitter @BroadStBull.

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643820 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL, NHLPA to meet again after marathon talks

A marathon of secretive CBA negotiations at a neutral site in New York City on Tuesday highlighted what is seen as a positive development in bringing the 52-day NHL lockout to an eventual end.

Both sides met for more than seven hours (7:15). Neither side commented other than to say talks will resume on Wednesday.

One source told CSNPhilly.com there was considerable ground that still needed to be bridged to forge an agreement.

League deputy commissioner Bill Daly released the following statement:

"Collective bargaining negotiations between the National Hockey League and representatives of the National Hockey League's Players' Association recessed tonight at 10:15 pm.

"With meetings scheduled to resume Wednesday, the league will not characterize the substance or detail of the discussions until their conclusion."

Can we have a hockey season by Black Friday?

That was the goal as the NHL and the NHLPA resumed bargaining with mostly a news blackout.

"We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and we'll continue bargaining until we find a way to make a deal," said union executive director Donald Fehr on Tuesday before talks started.

"Sometimes that goes in rather long sessions with short breaks and sometimes you take a few hours or half a day or a day to work on things before you come back together. I don't know which it will be.

"We certainly hope we'll be continuing to meet on a regular basis. I hope they do, too. I'm just not making any predictions."

Tuesday's bargaining session was the longest to date.

The league, as CSNPhilly.com reported on Monday, was not expected to hold a news conference after the meeting. Typically, the union does.

Sources within the league were gently pushing the union to mimic what NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman intends to do: Release a statement, but not negotiate in the media or divulge what was said.

"The call is for silence now," one prominent agent said before Tuesday.

Said another agent, "The big thing? They're finally negotiating."

"The window to make a deal is there," said one person with ties on both sides of the table. "Players want to play, and their demands to get a deal are there.

"The owners are moving in the right direction. And agents, the key ones, have a lot of push. I think it gets done next week."

There is a belief within both sides that if the traction they found over the weekend multiplies, it can lead to sustained talks that will end the lockout.

They may have found it, finally.

The goal is to get a deal done by mid-month, open training camps and play on Black Friday -- at the latest -- with a 60-game season or better.

"It's definitely an important time, considering the timing of everything," Sidney Crosby told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

"Knowing in the back of our minds that it's probably the last chance to get anything close to a full season."

Crosby was among the 13 players in New York for the meeting, along with several owners.

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Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.07.2012

643821 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL, NHLPA meeting at undisclosed location

The secrecy continues.

The NHL and its players' association took their talks to an undisclosed location, all in the hopes of shielding the media.

Donald Fehr, the executive director of the NHLPA, did address media in New York Tuesday prior to the start of his meeting with Commissioner Gary Bettman.

"The players view has always been that we ought to keep negotiating until we find a way to get an agreement," Fehr said. "You sort of stay at it day by day -- so it's very good to be getting back to the table. We hope that this time it produces more progress that we've seen in the past and we can figure out a way to make an agreement and to get the game back on the ice as soon as possible.

"We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and we'll continue bargaining until we find a way to make a deal."

Thirteen NHL players and some owners gathered in New York for the meetings. Pittsburgh Penguins captain Sidney Crosby was among them, as was Martin Biron, Craig Adams, Milan Lucic, Steve Montador, Shawn Thornton, David Backes, Manny Malhotra, Ron Hainsey, Johan Hedberg, Chris Campoli, Kevin Westgarth and Mathieu Darche.

There were no Flyers players at Tuesday's meeting.

Email Lisa Hillary at lhillary@comcastsportsnet.com.

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643822 Pittsburgh Penguins

Crosby: 'Last-minute' decision to attend NHL talks

By Rob Rossi

The sudden departure of franchise player Sidney Crosby — not the unexpected arrival of franchise goalie Marc-Andre Fleury — caused a stir among the dozens of fans who attended Penguins players' practice at Southpointe on Tuesday.

Crosby and teammate Craig Adams, the club union rep, skated for less than an hour.

They hurriedly exited the facility just after 11 a.m. to catch a flight for New York, where the NHL and Players' Association gathered for a negotiating meeting.

"It was last minute," Crosby said.

Neither Crosby nor Adams had planned to attend the New York meeting as of Monday, but a union conference call that night forced a change in plans, Crosby said.

Adams declined to provide details of that call, but teammate Pascal Dupuis said Tuesday that the ongoing labor dispute between the NHL and union was now mostly about the guaranteeing of current deals and structural issues, such as entry-level contracts and free agency.

Several Penguins players said they also believed the manner in which guaranteed contracts will be honored was the major barrier between the NHL and union.

That sentiment suggested owners and players had bridged the gap on a timetable for a 50/50 split of revenue on the next labor deal — though neither league nor union officials would confirm an agreement on that issue.

Union executive director Donald Fehr spoke before the meeting began around 3 p.m. Tuesday and said any proposal from the NHL to modify a previous offer to honor existing contracts with deferred payments would not "end the matter" of the labor dispute.

"There are still other things that are important, but it certainly would matter in and of itself," he said.

The lockout of players will reach its 53rd day Wednesday.

Tuesday's meeting was sparked by lengthy face-to-face negotiations between deputy commissioner Bill Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr on Saturday.

Tuesday's meeting, held at an undisclosed location in New York, lasted more than seven hours and ended just before 11 p.m.

Daly declined to characterize the meeting but confirmed in an email that negotiations will resume Wednesday.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman was unlikely to publicly comment, league officials said.

The union reported 13 players attended the meeting, but Crosby's appearance was probably not insignificant. The face of the NHL has closely studied the labor situation and kept in constant contact with Donald Fehr.

Crosby had attended four previous meetings. At two of those, the union presented a proposal, and his other appearance came at a larger players meeting in New York two days before the lockout was enacted.

The NHL has canceled games through November, but there are plans to play at least 60 games if the season can begin during the first week of December. The NBA lost 16 games to a lockout last season but played 66 games when that league returned last Christmas.

Crosby, speaking Monday at Southpointe, said the NBA lockout model has been talked about among players.

"Everyone wants to compare, and whether you can read into that completely — I don't think you want to," he said. "It does have some resemblance."

Tribune Review LOADED: 11.07.2012

643823 Pittsburgh Penguins

Goalies take lockout hit, says Penguins' Fleury

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Getting a new goaltending partner likely won't be the biggest relationship change Marc-Andre Fleury experiences this year.

That's because he took on a new roomie -- known in some quarters as a wife -- over the summer.

But if the NHL lockout ends and part of the 2012-13 season is salvaged, Fleury will find himself working alongside Tomas Vokoun, who received a two-year contract after his rights were acquired from Washington this spring and will replace Brent Johnson as the Penguins' No. 2 goalie.

Fleury, who made his first appearance at the Penguins' informal workouts Tuesday at Southpointe, said he does not know Vokoun well and that he "talked to him once or twice this summer."

Which is about how many times he chatted with Johnson every 15 minutes or so during their days together.

There's no reason to believe that Fleury and Vokoun won't get along and won't be able to form an effective partnership, but it also should not be assumed that they will bond the way Fleury and Johnson did.

"With [Johnson], it was easy, because I could always talk [to him]," Fleury said. "Like, between periods, walk in and go see him and ask him about 'this goal,' and whether I should do something different.

"He'd be honest with me. We'd talk, and try to help each other out."

Fleury -- perhaps, in part, because he's such a pleasant sort -- has meshed nicely with pretty much everyone with whom he has shared the position since he broke into the NHL just months after the Penguins invested the No. 1 choice in the 2003 NHL draft in him.

"I've been pretty lucky," he said. "There has always been an awesome goalie here, so it's been easy for me. I'm sure it'll be all right with Tomas, too."

Fleury spent the past few weeks playing in charity games former teammate Max Talbot organized around the province of Quebec, but acknowledged those didn't necessarily prepare him for an NHL season.

"There was no hitting, pretty much no slap shots," he said. "It was more of an all-star type of game. [Games with scores such as] 10-9 and stuff like that, so it was kind of tough to play. There were a lot of two-on-zero breakaways, backdoor [plays], so it was kind of tough."

If the NHL and its players association are able to settle on a collective bargaining agreement in time to save a portion of the 2012-13 season, there presumably will be an abbreviated training camp. It seems unlikely that the shortened preseason would include any exhibition games, which Fleury suggested will make it tougher for him to have his game honed when he is forced to face other teams for real.

"You know those exhibition games?" he said. "I think they're good. You can see more game[-type] action. Guys crashing the net ... you don't see that much in practice, guys in front of you, trying to battle around."

If the lockout isn't resolved fairly soon, Fleury expects to investigate the possibility of playing in Europe, where dozens of NHLers have found temporary employment the past month or so.

"Hopefully, everything works well [with the CBA negotiations] this week, and they have a good talk and everything settles down pretty quick," he said. "But if it's going to last longer, I might throw my name out there to see what's available."

Fleury hopes he and Vokoun can develop the kind of relationship he had with Johnson and seems to believe that's a realistic objective.

He also knows that at least one thing matters more than how close he gets to be with his goaltending partner.

"The bottom line: We need to win," Fleury said. "And it doesn't matter how we do it."

•

NOTE -- Defenseman Ben Lovejoy rejoined the Southpointe workouts after spending a few days in Enfield, N.H., where what he calls "a huge pine tree" struck his house because of winds and rain spawned by superstorm Sandy. Lovejoy said the tree "grazed" the structure. "I'm unlucky that it fell on my house," Lovejoy said. "But lucky that ... it could have been so much - so much -- worse."

Post Gazette LOADED: 11.07.2012

643824 Pittsburgh Penguins

NHL labor talks go deep into night

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The NHL and its players association finally got around to some hard-core negotiating Tuesday. And apparently enjoyed it so much that they didn't want to stop.

The sides got together at an undisclosed location in New York in mid-afternoon and continued to talk until deep into the night, finally adjourning after more than seven hours. Reports in the early evening that talks had broken off proved to be premature -- inaccurate, actually -- as the parties continued to negotiate for hours after that.

A statement by NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly was released inadvertently hours before the talks adjourned, and confirmed plans to have them resume today. The league issued another brief statement after the negotiations concluded, but it did not shed any light on what transpired during the talks. It also said talks will resume today.

"The league will not characterize the substance or detail of the discussions until their conclusion," Daly said in the latter statement.

The meeting was headlined by NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and NHL Players' Association executive director Donald Fehr, but a number of players and owners also were involved.

Penguins player representative Craig Adams and captain Sidney Crosby were among the 13 players who took part in the talks. They flew to New York after participating in a player-organized workout at Southpointe in the morning.

The NHLPA declined to meet with reporters after the negotiations, the NHL offered only Daly's statement and Adams declined to discuss what went on during the meeting.

Fehr met with reporters before the session and seemed prepared for the kind of lengthy meeting that took place.

"We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and we'll continue bargaining until we find a way to make a deal," he said.

"We certainly hope we'll be continuing to meet on a regular basis. I hope they do, too. I'm just not making any predictions."

Not surprising, financial issues have been at the core of the dispute, and the sides have spent considerable time trying to settle on how what is known as "hockey-related revenue" should be shared.

Lately, there has been considerable focus on the players' desire to have existing contracts honored, and the details of how that could be accomplished.

That issue was one of the major points of contention before the Tuesday meeting.

Even if the fundamental money matters get resolved, there are many other issues that have to be dealt with before a new collective bargaining agreement is in place. They deal with such diverse things as room-sharing on the road, proposed limits on the length of contracts and eligibility for free agency.

Post Gazette LOADED: 11.07.2012

643825 San Jose Sharks

Sharks' Ryane Clowe signs with Bulls

Staff and News Services

Locked-out Sharks winger Ryane Clowe signed with the San Francisco Bulls on Tuesday and could play in the first-year ECHL team's next home games, Friday and Saturday at the Cow Palace.

Details of Clowe's agreement with the Bulls were not available, but the team said he will pay to insure his NHL contract. He has one year left on a four-year \$14.5 million deal with San Jose.

The NHL locked out players Sept. 15. The league and the players' union resumed collective-bargaining negotiations Tuesday in New York, but the league already has canceled all games through November.

NHL players can sign and play elsewhere during the lockout, with those deals lasting the duration of the work stoppage, per International Ice Hockey Federation rules.

A spokesman for the Bulls said Clowe "could play this weekend. If not, he could be behind the bench as a coach."

Clowe, 30, has scored at least 45 points in four straight seasons for the Sharks, playing mostly on the team's second line.

"We're excited to have a player of Ryane's caliber join the team," Bulls President and head coach Pat Curcio said. "We look forward to having him around the locker room as he gets back into game shape. The rest of the players on the team will have a chance to learn from his work ethic."

Clowe is the second NHL player to sign with the Bulls. On Monday, the Bulls signed Oilers defenseman Theo Peckham, who is expected to make his debut Wednesday in Ontario.

San Francisco Chronicle LOADED: 11.07.2012

643826 San Jose Sharks

Clowe officially signs with Bulls

The San Francisco Bulls have officially signed Sharks left wing Ryane Clowe to a contract, it was announced on Tuesday.

Sharks reporter Brodie Brazil first reported Clowe and the Bulls were close to an agreement last week.

Clowe will practice with the Bulls on Thursday, and it is "up to him" whether or not he plays in San Francisco's home game on Friday night at the Cow Palace, according to president and head coach Pat Curcio. If he doesn't play, Clowe will likely be behind the bench.

Clowe communicated with CSNCalifornia today via text, saying he "still doesn't have any plans to play. Just practice for now."

The Bulls, currently in their first season of operation, are the ECHL affiliate of the Sharks. They host the Stockton Thunder on Friday and Ontario Reign on Saturday.

Kevin Kurz

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.07.2012

643827 Tampa Bay Lightning

Conacher focused on honing his skills

By ERIK ERLANDSSON | The Tampa Tribune

Thinking about all the "what ifs" would be understood in Cory Conacher's case.

After making a strong impression during his first NHL training camp last year, the 22-year-old expected to make a strong push for a spot on the Lightning roster this season. But the league imposed lockout did not allow

for training camp this season, delaying Conacher's opportunity to try to earn an NHL job.

So the 2012 American Hockey League MVP reported directly to Syracuse, Tampa Bay's new AHL affiliate.

"I've lucked out to be able to play in Syracuse," he said. "I think for all of us down here, the whole year is our tryout, it's pretty much our camp the whole year until the NHL does end the lockout. So right now that's how I'm taking it.

Instead of sitting around and thinking about things he can't control, the 5-foot-8, 175-pound native of Burlington, Ontario, continues to focus on what he can do, and that's continue to work on his game so whenever the NHL does come back from its deep freeze, he'll be ready to once again make that strong impression to the Lightning brass.

Though Tampa Bay switched affiliates over the summer, moving from Norfolk where the most of the same group of minor league players won a championship last season, things have not changed for Conacher. He opened the season with a goal and two assists during an opening night shootout loss. Through eight games this season, Conacher leads the Crunch with six goals and 12 points, tied for third in the league.

It's all just part of the process to Conacher.

"I know everyone is going to be watching, all the management. So it's important for us young guys to continue to develop," he said. "So that's what I'm working on is to keep developing as a player and develop into a professional athlete. I'm still a young player and I have a lot to learn and this is a great year to do that."

Conacher was the surprise of training camp last season, coming in as an invitee only signed to an AHL with Tampa Bay's then affiliate, Norfolk Admirals. But as camp went on, the Canisius College graduate continued to find his name on the exhibition game roster and often paired on one of the top lines and frequently with Steven Stamkos and Marty St. Louis.

The impressions didn't end when camp ended and Conacher ended up down in the minor leagues.

By the end of the season, plenty around the hockey world knew exactly who Conacher was after he led the AHL in goals (39) and finished second in points (80) before being named league MVP as well as the Rookie of the Year. In the postseason, he finished tied for third in league scoring with 15 points, including four assists in the Calder Cup championship clinching victory against Toronto.

And instead of pouting about what could have been at the start of this season, Conacher continues to play his game, no matter where he is playing.

"I have a great team here in Syracuse, I have a lot of fun with these guys and the coaching staff gives me a great opportunity to play, especially during important times in the game," Conacher said. "I'm getting the chance to perform and it's really up to me to take advantage of that opportunity. That's how I see it right now."

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 11.07.2012

643828 Tampa Bay Lightning

NHL, union return to bargaining table

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK --

The locked-out NHL players' association was back at the bargaining table Tuesday, and this time it brought Sidney Crosby along.

On Day 52 of the lockout that has delayed the start of the hockey season and threatened to wipe it out completely, the league and the players sat down for the second round of negotiations in four days at an undisclosed site.

Not only were NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr there, as they were for a marathon session by

themselves Saturday. They were joined by Commissioner Gary Bettman, NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr, a handful of team owners, and 13 players including Crosby, who has been an active participant.

"We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and we'll continue bargaining until we find a way to make a deal," Donald Fehr said Tuesday before talks started. "Sometimes that goes in rather long sessions with short breaks and sometimes you take a few hours or half a day or a day to work on things before you come back together. I don't know which it will be.

"We certainly hope we'll be continuing to meet on a regular basis. I hope they do, too. I'm just not making any predictions."

Fehr's brother Steve met with Daly on Saturday in a secret location, and neither provided many details of what was discussed, but both agreed that the meeting was productive. That was proven when the sides agreed to quickly meet again Tuesday. There had been no negotiations since talks broke off on Oct. 18 until Saturday.

"The players' view has always been to keep negotiating until we find a way to get agreement and you sort of stay at it day by day, so it's very good to be getting back to the table," Donald Fehr said. "We hope that this time it produces more progress than we've seen in the past, and that we can find a way to make an agreement and to get the game back on the ice as soon as possible.

"We're hopeful that we'll start bargaining and we'll continue bargaining until we find a way to make a deal."

The NHL requested that the location for Tuesday's negotiations in New York be kept secret, and the players' association adhered. Time is becoming a bigger factor every day that passes without a deal.

The lockout, which went into effect Sept. 16 after the previous collective bargaining agreement expired, has forced the cancellation of 327 regular-season games — including the New Year's Day outdoor Winter Classic in Michigan.

Whether any of the games that have been called off through Nov. 30 can be rescheduled if an agreement is made soon hasn't been determined. But the NHL has said that a full 82-game season won't be played.

In October, the players' association responded to an NHL offer with three of its own, but those were quickly dismissed by the league — leading to nearly three weeks of no face-to-face discussions. Daly and Steve Fehr kept in regular contact by phone and agreed to meet again last weekend.

The NHL has moved toward the players' side in the contentious issue of the "make-whole" provision, which involves the payment of player contracts that are already in effect and whose share of the economic pie that money will come from.

Other economic issues — mainly the split of hockey-related revenue — along with contract lengths, arbitration and free agency will need to be agreed upon before a deal can be reached.

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 11.07.2012

643829 Toronto Maple Leafs

Planned speedway 'perfect' site for NHL outdoor game, says Fort Erie mayor

Mark Zwolinski

Sports Reporter

The Canadian Motor Speedway may not yet have an official race, but the mayor of the track's home in Fort Erie can see an outdoor hockey game in the future.

"I think a Leafs-Buffalo game there would be perfect," Fort Erie Mayor Doug Martin said Monday. "We're not sure the design of it would be perfect, with the oval and the road course there, but it would be a great event to have once this is up and running."

The CMS came one step closer to breaking ground over the weekend when the Ontario Municipal Board cleared all appeals to the \$400 million development near the Peace Bridge.

Reports suggested the one-mile oval could also become a potential site for a future NHL outdoor game. The Maple Leafs, whose Winter Classic game against the Detroit Red Wings was cancelled last week due to the NHL lockout, declined comment on whether the team would be interested in the speedway hosting an outdoor game.

The Leafs are targeting a trifecta of NHL events — the All-Star Game, the draft, and an outdoor game — in time for the franchise's centennial in 2017.

"We talked about that (Leafs-Sabres game) when the idea for this track first came up," Martin said. "It's a dream event, but I think it would be great to see Toronto and Buffalo here."

As the NHL lockout entered its 54th day, the speedway began looking forward to a potential groundbreaking before the end of the year — but with a caution against any expectations of a NASCAR race.

"We continue to tell anyone that . . . NASCAR is not involved, we don't have any races from them and we don't expect any races from them," said Azhar Mohammad, the chief developer behind CMS.

Mohammad said the primary objective with the CMS is to get a shovel into the ground and begin development of a 332-hectare parcel of land that includes plans for commercial, recreational and research-and-development projects.

"It's not just the speedway, there's a commercial and industrial component that has full-time jobs that go with it, and that's exciting," Martin said.

Martin said the CMS development site reflects an "open-for-business" attitude in a town that has endured several economic setbacks.

Some 200 jobs were lost earlier this year when Ontario Lottery Gaming Commission closed the Fort Erie Race Track. The province's slots program at horse tracks was also shelved at the same time, cutting off a chief revenue source for the Fort Erie facility.

The closing of a wind turbine factory in nearby Stevensville cost another 300 jobs.

The speedway — whose oval was designed by NASCAR great Jeff Gordon — will be flanked by a 2.5-mile road course and seating for 65,000.

"We want to build a world-class facility for stock car racing and other racing series, and at the appropriate time, when we're in the position, we will be able to say what our intentions are for attracting (racing series)," Mohammad said.

Martin was part of a CMS group that visited Gordon in Richmond, Va., earlier this year to experience a NASCAR race. Gordon's company has also designed an oval at Cooper Stadium in Columbus, Ohio.

"We were told the race facility attracts a lot of race-related industries, so we are hopeful about that as well," Martin said.

But, once the CMS is ready for a race — the current timeline for the track's completion is 2014 — its status as Canada's largest oval won't guarantee favourable consideration from any top racing body.

NASCAR, while operating the Canadian Tire series in Canada, recently pulled its Nationwide series race out of Montreal. Reports suggest a potential move of those races to Mosport, which was purchased in 2011 by a Ron Fellows-led investor group with considerable backing, and which has inroads into NASCAR through Fellow's success in several road course events over the past decade.

NASCAR already has races in New York and Michigan, while IndyCar — North America's premier open-wheel series — recently extended its agreement in Toronto another three years.

"Obviously, the hope is to attract that type of race," Martin said. "But we are not a NASCAR-endorsed facility. . . . Once it's built we can have those types of conversations."

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.07.2012

643830 Vancouver Canucks

Vancouver Canucks' Alex Burrows a model of consistency — and clothing, too

Winger takes a break from charity skates in Quebec to return to Vancouver, and he's hoping to stay

By Elliott Pap, Vancouver Sun November 6, 2012

Vancouver Canuck winger Alex Burrows hasn't been among the players skating regularly at University of British Columbia throughout the lockout but he's managed to keep busy playing charity games in Quebec and dressing for success.

The 31-year-old forward was back in Vancouver Monday, specifically to make a promotional appearance at the RW&Co. clothing store in the Pacific Centre. Burrows has been based in Montreal since the seven-week NHL work stoppage began and hopes he won't be returning to La Belle Province any time soon, unless it's to play the Montreal Canadiens.

"Hopefully I am here for a long time," Burrows said inside the store while hundreds of fans waited outside to meet him and get an autograph. "Hopefully they'll be able to get a deal done soon and I won't go back. Hopefully the talks (scheduled for today) will spark something and we can get the season going soon. I've got my fingers crossed."

In the meantime, Burrows has been showing his fashion sense while the league and players association bicker over dollars and sense. It was a deal, he explained, set up by his agent Paul Corbeil last summer.

"It was a good fit for me," he said, without intending the pun. "I like to be comfortable in my clothes and I always liked this kind of clothing."

Burrows estimates he has skated in about a dozen charity games with locked out players from the Montreal-Quebec City area so he hasn't lacked for ice time or workout partners. He signed a four-year, \$18 million contract extension with the Canucks on Sept. 14, the day before the lockout began.

GLASS HALF-EMPTY: Former Canuck and current Pittsburgh Penguin forward Tanner Glass has a history degree from Ivy League school Dartmouth, so he doesn't need a lesson in critical thinking.

He isn't easily swayed by rhetoric, gossip and 140-word declarations on twitter. Not surprisingly, he wasn't overly enthused with weekend development in the 51-day-old work stoppage. You might say he was a Glass half-empty Monday.

"I think it's proven unless there is an offer out there, there is no reason to get excited," Glass said after skating at UBC. "When there is something concrete to work from, I'll get more excited but I don't jump up and down when they say there is potential of an offer, or something like that."

Glass wouldn't even admit to being a little more energized Monday at the suggestion NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr, brother of executive director Don Fehr, had made some headway in their Saturday tete-a-tete. "I try not to get too up and or too down, it's kind of like a season," said Glass. "Everybody is getting excited about this 'make-whole' thing but there is a lot of other stuff, too. It's a process and until there is something really good to go off of, I'll stay patient."

CORY'S CORNER: Bargaining committee member Cory Schneider described the Daly-Fehr weekend summit as "better than nothing", hardly a ringing endorsement.

"As far as we know, there are no offers from either side of the table but, again, I think we've said all along anytime there is dialogue and they're talking for an extended period of time, it's better than nothing," Schneider said. "I've learned to keep my optimism and pessimism in check but it's absolutely better than not talking. I think it's getting down to the point where something has to happen one way or another. So, hopefully, it's for the better."

Schneider emphasized that contracting is still a major concern to the players beyond the revenue split and make-whole provision on deals already signed.

"Obviously the monetary split is a big one but the contracting has kind of been forgotten," Schneider explained. "Don has made it clear as your cut of the pie shrinks, contracting becomes that much more important and any leverage you can have, and any position you can be in, to become a free agent or shop your abilities around becomes so much more important when there is less to go around.

"If you look at their (last) proposal closely, they are basically looking to eliminate any and all leverage a player really has until he hits 28. And, even then, by capping contract lengths and the way the money can be distributed

and signing bonuses, it really eliminates a lot of leverage and a lot of things that the players got in the last lockout.”

QUOTABLE: “I beat Hank on our run today so that’s how I get energized.” – Daniel Sedin when asked if he was enthused by the resumption of CBA talks. Hank, of course, would be twin brother Henrik.

Vancouver Sun: LOADED: 11.07.2012

643831 Vancouver Canucks

Canucks players in town sampling each other’s workouts

By Jason Botchford, The Province November 6, 2012

If you’re looking to book a trip to Mexico, don’t bother Kevin Biekša.

What he’s not is a travel agent.

So, he doesn’t have Mason Raymond’s itinerary; or Alex Burrows’s schedule; or the location of the next David Booth hunting romp.

Instead, he has to have trust in them.

The labour standoff has begun its most critical stage. This, as they say, is where it gets real. A deal in the next few weeks, and we could see NHL hockey in December.

The rumour buzzing among the players is that a training camp will be an intense two weeks, where players skate every day, with as few as two preseason games.

It promises to be cruel, exposing any players who don’t show up in peak condition.

“If they’re not, it’s on them,” Biekša said. “It’s going to show.

“But our team, more than any other, is dedicated to fitness. We always have been since I’ve been here. There’s been a huge emphasis. We have personnel in positions other teams don’t to make sure we have an advantage in nutrition, and health and fitness.”

As much as the players want this lockout to be about the collective, it’s not. The choices they make are individual ones. Some choose Europe. Some, like a group of Canucks, have decided to stay in their home NHL cities. And others are sitting in a tree stand, hunting large mammals.

“He actually works out a little too much,” Biekša said of Booth. “This is probably a good lockout for him, to get some rest.”

Fitness has never been an issue for Booth. It’s his puck skills people worry about.

But, inherently, Biekša, the Sedins and others have to have blind faith in Booth, and the rest of their teammates who are scattered across North America and Europe. They have to hope those who aren’t playing or in Vancouver are preparing for the season as if they are still getting paid.

“I don’t have any concern about the guys who are here,” Daniel Sedin said. “Those are the only guys I can answer to.

“We have put a lot of emphasis on being well-conditioned throughout the year. We travel so much and we don’t get a lot of sleep. So we have to be in top shape. Players who play for the Canucks are used to it.”

The core group of players who stayed in Vancouver have created an interesting dynamic during the past two months. They’ve established a hub of home schooling, where players like Biekša, Chris Higgins, Manny Malhotra, Dan Hamhuis and the Sedins have been teaching each other their unique training techniques. It’s a petri dish for working out which never would have materialized without a lockout.

“We are all pushing each other,” Biekša said.

“Everyone is good at their own thing. I’m good at what I do. But that’s why I have really liked venturing out into what they do, seeing what they’re doing differently.

“I’m trying to get better at the longer distance running the twins do.

“And I’m doing steps and some of the core-explosion stuff Dan [Hamhuis] likes to do. Everyone is good at different things, and that’s why it’s been so productive training together here with different guys.”

The Sedins love their long-distance running, normally reserving their sprinting for bikes. But they’ve been dabbling off the menu, for example trying some of the Higgins’ workout. He is about quick, fast footwork. He’s big on steps and short sprints.

“It’s a lot different than what we do. When you’re with 10 different guys, everyone has their own individual workouts,” Daniel said. “So what we’ve been doing is mixing and matching, and trying different things. It’s one of the things that has been fun about this.”

How has Biekša looked on those runs?

“He’s been OK,” Daniel said. “I don’t want to be too tough on him. But he’s getting around.”

What have the Sedins picked up from Biekša?

“He does a lot of bicep curls,” Daniel said. “For an hour, he’ll be on biceps.”

We hope they keep that up. Seeing the Sedins with serious guns would be something else.

But Daniel said he’ll pass on a hunting excursion with Booth, if asked.

“I’ll let him do that,” Daniel said.

Daniel predicts the Canucks will be at a disadvantage early in the season because they have only two players in Europe and two in the AHL, Zack Kassian and Chris Tanev, who are expected to be on the team.

He thinks it will last two weeks. But he also said there will be some payback later in the year.

As he pointed out, the Canucks promise to have the advantage at the end of the season and in the playoffs, being the team that has played the fewest number of games.

And maybe the team with the bigger biceps, too.

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643832 Vancouver Canucks

Canucks trying to stay sharp during stoppage

David Ebner

As the NHL lockout hits an important pivot – do talks move forward, or do they remain stalled? – the prospect of being in game shape has become a more tangible question if a potential settlement is reached in the next several weeks.

In Vancouver, a small group of players from the two-time Presidents’ Trophy-winning Canucks continue to practise at the University of British Columbia, including the Sedins, and goaltender Cory Schneider.

On Tuesday morning, for part of the practice, Schneider worked one-on-one with goalie coach Eli Wilson, the former Ottawa Senators goaltending coach who now runs his own business.

The Canucks, alongside the Los Angeles Kings and New York Rangers, have among the fewest players in Europe, just two for Vancouver, while some NHL teams have upwards of half their roster playing pro games overseas, including the Detroit Red Wings and the Boston Bruins.

Schneider, an American who has Swiss citizenship through his father’s side of the family, closely watches the labour talks, as a team rep on the players’ bargaining committee, but he mulls a move to Switzerland “sooner than later” if progress isn’t made. He would qualify as a non-import.

For Schneider, a 26-year-old who has never been an NHL starter, it’s about getting the game sense, the intuition, humming. Schneider had earlier resisted Europe, due to the differences in goaltending on the larger ice surface.

“When you’re out here,” said Schneider after practice at UBC on Tuesday, “you don’t think the game like you would in a game situation.”

Schneider concedes players coming back from Europe would have something of an advantage early but said that could be equally outweighed by fatigue in the spring. Defenceman Kevin Bieksa said players returning may be a "little bit sharper" but believed intense training camps may minimize the factor.

Bieksa said there is talk of intense two-week training camps, skating every day, with a couple exhibition games.

"I know we're not playing game-type situations, but you don't lose it that much, when you're skating every day, when you're skating with high-calibre players, the Sedins. Some of the best players in the world are here," said Bieksa. "We've all pushed each other, and we've all pushed each other in workouts."

The Canucks in recent years have been slow starters. The team was 9-9-1 last year in mid-November before going on the run to finish first in the regular season.

The lost month of hockey, in one way, has helped the Canucks, given the injury situation. Centre Ryan Kesler continues to rehab from wrist and shoulder surgeries and may not be ready until January.

Had there been hockey in October, the Canucks would have had a depleted defence. Top-scoring D-man Alex Edler has an injured back again, a bulging disc, and his return is not known, though he is skating. D-man Jason Garrison, a Vancouver region local and the team's big free-agent signing, is out with an injured groin, though he has said he is nearly recovered after working with Vancouver physiotherapist Rick Celebrini, a well-known specialist.

Schneider, Bieksa and Daniel Sedin all emphasized the Canucks' team focus on fitness. The group practising together also work out off the ice, all trying each other's specific workouts. Sedin also noted that any condensed schedule could help the Canucks, because the team is used to gruelling travel, and back-to-back games. He said any advantage players returning from Europe will be short-lived and could be a hindrance late in the year.

"I'll give it a week," said Sedin on Tuesday. "That's not really a problem. I think it will even out. Hopefully, we go on a long playoff run, and we'll be fresh."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.07.2012

643833 Winnipeg Jets

NHLPA's Fehr has little to say before heading into meeting with Bettman

By: Gary Lawless

NEW YORK -- NHLPA executive director Don Fehr met with the media for a few moments this afternoon before heading off for negotiations with NHL representatives including commissioner Gary Bettman.

Fehr had little to say, however, he was hopeful that today's session was the first of many that would eventually lead to an agreement.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman (left) arrives with deputy commissioner Bill Daly at collective bargaining talks in Toronto in October.

He would not discuss specifics of what he expected to be discussed today.

Fehr would also not commit to meeting with the media following today's session but did leave the door open.

The NHLPA and NHL are scheduled to meet at 1 p.m. (CST) at an undisclosed New York location.

Winnipeg Jets' defenceman Ron Hainsey and Pittsburgh Penguins' centre Sidney Crosby are among 13 players in New York for today's meeting.

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 11.07.2012

643834 Websites

ESPN / Real negotiations have finally started

By Pierre LeBrun

NEW YORK -- Shhhhh...

Amid the amazing buzz of a U.S. presidential election on Tuesday night, tucked away in a secret location in New York City, the NHL and NHL Players' Association met for seven-plus hours and agreed to meet again on Wednesday.

More noticeable, though, was how quiet each side was after what has to be categorized as the most meaningful negotiating session to date.

Well, for starters, they actually stayed in a room and negotiated meaningfully, really, for the first time in this entire process.

The league put out a modest statement afterwards that simply said talks would continue the next day and the league would not characterize how Tuesday's meeting went. The NHLPA didn't even put out a statement.

When it's quiet, that's usually when real work is finally getting done.

Let's not carried away here. This thing can still go sideways and implode. It's still too early to call.

But there was real talk Tuesday. Sources on both sides were tight-lipped and very much guarded in their optimism.

The lead-up to Tuesday's meeting was talk that the league was willing to fund a sizeable part of the Make Whole provision -- honoring players' existing contracts. Players I spoke with over the past few days wanted to know more details about the league's new ideas -- or as one player said, "the fine print" -- before getting too excited.

But sources on both sides said that revenue sharing and player contract issues were the focus of Tuesday's meeting and discussion of the Make Whole provision was shelved until Wednesday.

As NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr pointed out before the meeting Tuesday, even if there's an agreement eventually on the Make Whole provision, there are still many other issues that concern the NHLPA.

My sense is that the NHLPA had a message for the league in Tuesday's meeting: since the players are willing to give a huge concession by going down from 57 percent of hockey-related revenue in the last CBA to a 50-50 split in the proposed new agreement, there wasn't much of an appetite to give up too much on the systemic player contract issues.

The league's demands of limiting player contract to five years, for example, might be too much to swallow for the NHLPA. And I think when push comes to shove on the league side, that's not the kind of issue that should stop a deal from happening.

So there's still work to be done here, but Tuesday has to be seen moderately as a decent first step.

Why the sudden urgency? I believe there was pressure from constituents on both sides to stop the constant posturing and get down to brass tacks.

Owners want NHL commissioner Gary Bettman to get a deal done yesterday. These aren't the same owners that were willing to scrap an entire season in 2004-05. These owners want back on the ice. They understand the damage to the business if they're foolish enough to scrap two seasons in eight years.

Similarly, agents and players on the NHLPA side have communicated to Fehr over the past week their utmost desire to try and get a deal done as the HRR pot shrinks with each passing day, and with it the players' share.

Time is of the essence to preserve as valid a season as possible. If there's enough traction this week and somehow a new CBA gets done over the next 2-3 weeks, you can still have perhaps 70 games or so.

A source told ESPN.com that the league internally had a meeting Tuesday morning to go over scheduling possibilities, just in case labor talks did indeed produce a new deal over the next few weeks. Makes sense; the league needs to be prepared for every scenario.

Many have pointed to Nov. 23 as a possibility for a season start given that it was supposed to be NBC's start for games to be televised. Others look at Dec. 1 as a decent target.

Fact is, that is putting the cart in front of the horse.

One meaningful day doesn't mean the end. There is still lots of ground to cover here, folks. But at least they actually met. And stayed. And talked.

Now we need more of that.

ESPN LOADED: 11.07.2012

643835 Websites

NBCSports.com / Crosby makes "last minute" decision to attend NHL-NHLPA meeting in New York

Mike Halford

A quick but potentially interesting update on today's collective bargaining session:

Sidney Crosby and Penguins teammate Craig Adams have made a "last minute" decision to attend the meeting, according to Rob Rossi of the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review.

The decision to attend was announced shortly after Crosby and Adams practiced with teammates at the Southpointe Iceplex in Pittsburgh.

It's an interesting turn of events given that, yesterday, Rossi reported Crosby's only plan for Tuesday was to attend a Madonna concert:

Adams said he was "looking into flights to New York," but had not committed to attending the Tuesday meeting. Penguins teammates at Southpointe on Monday — Crosby, Matt Cooke, Pascal Dupuis and Chris Kunitz — said their plan was to practice again Tuesday and not attend the New York meeting.

Crosby, who along with Adams attended the last group negotiating session between the NHL and NHLPA in Toronto on Oct. 18, said he was unsure "who's invited."

Thus, he invited teammates and their significant others to join him in a private suite at Consol Energy Center for the Madonna concert.

"You don't want to read into anything," Crosby said of the Tuesday meeting.

Having both Crosby and Adams in attendance for Tuesday's meeting is symbolic.

As one of the league's biggest stars, Crosby has been front and center for a number of sessions — he, along with Jonathan Toews, flanked NHLPA boss Donald Fehr during media availability following last significant NHL-NHLPA meeting on Oct. 18.

The Harvard-educated Adams is a member of the NHLPA's negotiating committee and Pittsburgh's lone union representative.

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643836 Websites

NBCSports.com / Online bookmaker giving 1/2 odds NHL season will be canceled

Jason Brough

Despite the cautious optimism that's ushered in this week's CBA talks, online bookmaker Bovada/Bodog is giving bettors 1/2 odds the NHL will cancel the entire 2012-13 season due to the lockout.

If you think there will still be hockey this year, you can get 3/2 odds.

For what it's worth, we think there will be hockey this year. The two sides are a lot closer now than they were at this point in 2004 before the season was canceled. Historically pro sports leagues have found a way to solve labor disputes without scuttling the entire schedule.

That said, given the NHL's history, we wouldn't bet the house on the season being saved.

The car, maybe.

(But not a nice car.)

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.07.2012

643837 Websites

NBCSports.com / Tight-lipped Fehr hoping CBA negotiations produce progress

Jason Brough

Donald Fehr met with the media prior to this afternoon's CBA meetings in New York, though we're not sure it was completely necessary. The NHLPA chief didn't have much to tell reporters, other than confirming the talks will cover "the issues that divide us."

We suppose that's more likely to lead to a deal than spending time on the issues that don't divide the two sides, but Fehr wouldn't make any predictions.

"We hope this time it produces more progress than we have seen in the past and we can figure out a way to make an agreement and get the game back on the ice as soon as possible," he said.

In a familiar refrain, Fehr added: "The players haven't seen any need to go backwards given the history of the last negotiations and given the level of revenue increase since then, and player contracting rights are very important to them, obviously."

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.07.2012

643838 Websites

NBCSports.com / One NHL governor thinks the Stanley Cup finals could be played in July

Jason Brough

It sounds crazy — and frankly, it probably is — but one anonymous NHL governor still thinks an 82-game season is possible.

How? By pushing the Stanley Cup finals into July.

From the Globe and Mail:

His rationale is simple: The only way a deal gets done is if the players receive the full value of the contracts they signed before the Sept. 15 lockout, even after they split league revenue 50-50 with the owners. The only way to do that is play all 82 games to maximize revenue.

"Now is the time to make a deal," the governor said. "Make a deal this week and you can come close to playing 82 games. Maybe you can play 82. Why not, for just this year? If you have to play the finals in July, play it."

The regular season was originally scheduled to start on Oct. 11, but the lockout has caused all games to be canceled through November.

Last year, the Stanley Cup was awarded on June 11.

In 1995, the Cup was awarded on June 24 after a lockout stretched into January, leaving a 48-game season.

Consider us extremely skeptical that an 82-game season is still possible, even with a Dec. 1 start and the finals pushed back to late June or early July. Too many games, too little time. Not only for the players, but also the fans.

The owners and players have made their beds, now they'll have to sleep in them.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.07.2012

643839 Websites

YAHOO SPORTS / Erik Christensen finds European comfort zone after years of bouncing around the NHL

PRAGUE – "It might surprise some people for me to say this," Erik Christensen said, standing outside the Lev Prague dressing room the other night, leaning against a concrete wall. "The hoopla of the NHL, it kind of wears off as you get a little older and you have some experience."

Erik Christensen chose an everyday job in the KHL over surviving on the fringes of the NHL. (Y! Sports) Christensen wasn't ripping the NHL. It is the best league in the world – with the best talent, the best arenas, the best perks – at least when it isn't mired in a lockout. Even though he left for the Kontinental Hockey League, Christensen is still the same Canadian kid from Edmonton who grew up idolizing Wayne Gretzky. He doesn't seem bitter.

It's just that the NHL isn't for everybody, and there's a larger world out there. Once you've played on the same team with Mario Lemieux, once you've skated at Madison Square Garden, it isn't about making the NHL anymore. It's about making a living. It's about doing what you really set out to do – play.

And so here is Christensen, living in Prague, making more money than he did in the NHL, playing a top-six role after being benched and scratched and demoted and traded last season in the NHL. He is among the expatriates taking a different path in a different league on a different continent.

This isn't what he envisioned, not exactly. But in professional sports, things often don't work out as planned. He has no regrets.

"When you're a kid, you dream of playing in the NHL, especially if you're from North America," Christensen said. "But I think when this becomes a job ... that's sort of what matters most to a lot of guys, especially for a guy like me who struggled a lot in my career, had some ups but mostly downs."

Europe, he said, is "definitely a viable option."

Christensen actually always thought he would love to play in Europe. He figured he would play the last two or three years overseas, just for the experience of it. He just hoped he would be in his mid-30s when it happened.

He's 28 now. He started out with the Pittsburgh Penguins, right before Lemieux retired for the last time. But then he bounced to the Atlanta Thrashers, and to the Anaheim Ducks, and to the New York Rangers, and to the Minnesota Wild, never living up to his potential. Though an excellent passer, he didn't produce enough offensively, and he wasn't physical or strong defensively. Frustrated, he decided to head for Europe early.

Christensen was joined in Prague by Zdeno Chara, who's waiting out the lockout in the KHL. (Y! Sports) "I spent years kind of struggling in the NHL, trying to find a niche for myself," said Christensen, a third-round pick in 2002. "I was just trying to be kind of a regular. I think a lot of people thought with my skill level, I would be a top-six or top-nine forward. But it just kind of never panned out. ...

"I've played for some tough coaches. They want you to perform consistently, and when I wasn't doing that, I was an easy guy to bench or scratch. That's just sort of the way it went."

Christensen went on a European tour with the Rangers at the start of last season. Sweden. Switzerland. Slovakia. The Czech Republic. Christensen played in Lev's home arena against Sparta, a member of the Czech Extraliga.

He looked at the larger ice surface. He looked at the skating and the speed and the flow. He looked at the loose structure and long breakaway passes.

And he starting thinking: This wasn't the stop-and-start, dump-and-chase, crash-and-bang, dirty-goal style the NHL had adopted. This was more like the Gretzky game he grew up loving.

"Don't get me wrong, the best players in the world are playing in the NHL," Christensen said. "I just kind of like the style they play here. It sort of fits the way I think and my skill set."

Last season went poorly. Christensen found himself in coach John Tortorella's doghouse. He would play a few games, then sit for several. He was even sent to the minors for a conditioning stint because he was playing so little. He was traded to the Wild.

Even before that, he'd had enough.

[Nick Cotsonika: The hockey world according to owner-player Jaromir Jagr]

"I mean, I decided I was coming over to Europe probably the middle of last year," Christensen said. "I said, 'Once my contract's up, I'm not going to try to get an NHL deal. I want to play.' "

But where? He wasn't interested in certain places, which speaks to the reputation the KHL has among North American players.

Even before Christensen was traded to Minnesota last season, he'd already decided to try Europe. (Getty) "To be quite frank, we don't hear a lot of great things about Russia," Christensen said. "You hear some horror stories about how some players are treated, even their own players, getting fired in odd ways. So that kind of scared me a bit."

So did the Lokomotiv Yaroslavl plane crash. He wanted to go somewhere comfortable, somewhere he felt safe.

Prague was perfect. The city is beyond beautiful – gothic and baroque architecture everywhere you look. Many people speak English. The team uses a well-regarded Czech airline.

Christensen signed a deal with no out-clause. He won't say how much he's making. But his salary maxed out at \$925,000 in the NHL, and he will say this: "I'll make more money playing over here than I would ever in the NHL."

[Also: Wayne Simmonds refuses to let racist incident ruin his Euro experience]

He had seven goals and 12 points in 49 games last season with the Rangers and Wild, averaging 10:24 of ice time. He has eight goals and 10 points in 23 games for Lev, averaging 15:36.

It is still a big step down in many ways.

Tipsport Arena is not MSG. It has character, but it's smaller, seating only 13,150, and needs its own billion-dollar renovation to come close to an NHL building.

One night, the place might be rocking, like it was Saturday when Lev hosted Slovan Bratislava – a Czech vs. Slovak battle – and the sellout crowd traded songs and chants the whole game. Another night, it might be relatively dead, like it was Thursday when Lev hosted Sibir Novosibirsk and there were hundreds of empty seats.

Lev is in only its fifth season and still trying to establish a following, while Sparta has all the history in Prague, and it doesn't help that the team has lost 10 of its last 11, even with stars like Zdeno Chara and Jakub Voracek.

[More: Sergei Fedorov's evolution from defector to NHL superstar to Soviet savior]

The Czech airline might be solid, but the plane has to land, and the team doesn't always stay at five-star hotels. At one fleabag in Cherepovets, Christensen said, "you're afraid to lie down in your bed."

"We're so spoiled coming from the NHL," Christensen said. "I was pretty spoiled playing in New York, where you get the best of everything."

This is not the best. This is not the NHL.

It is the best for Christensen, though.

"It's kind of the best of both worlds," Christensen said. "I can make the good living and enjoy playing the game, because last year, for me personally, it was just a tough year. I wasn't playing."

"I want to play the game."

Nicholas J. Cotsonika

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