

# SPORT-SCAN DAILY BRIEF

NHL 11/12/2012

## Anaheim Ducks

644070 NHL labor talks stalled

## Carolina Hurricanes

644071 CBA session breaks up after one hour

## Colorado Avalanche

644072 Joe Sakic's career timeline  
644073 Joe Sakic: Hall of Fame NHL player reflects on his career  
644074 Joe Sakic: Middle years highlight career  
644075 Joe Sakic: Hall of Famer scores two goals in Legends Classic  
644076 Sakic wore No. 19, but he's No. 8 on this list  
644077 NHL lockout: Mood more grim than ever with no deal on horizon  
644078 Frei: Joe Sakic was defined by passing the Cup to Ray Bourque

## Columbus Blue Jackets

644079 NHL: Lockout drags on with little progress  
644080 NHL lockout analysis: Revenue sharing is key factor

## Dallas Stars

644081 Progress screeches to a halt; players say owners are unwilling to negotiate

## Edmonton Oilers

644082 Inactivity during lockout a bane for most NHL goalies  
644083 Stafford latest Oiler selected for Hockey Hall of Fame  
644084 Barons fall short of pre-season expectations  
644085 Learning curve for Edmonton Oilers' young guns

## Los Angeles Kings

644086 NHL labor talks stalled  
644087 Dean Lombardi-Final

## Montreal Canadiens

644088 Assessing the NHL lockout fallout  
644089 Geoffrion moved out of intensive care  
644090 NHL lockout has become water torture for fans  
644091 Dave Stubbs: A memorable feast for charity with Habs  
644092 Update: Improving Blake Geoffrion moved out of intensive care

## Nashville Predators

644093 Nashville Predators prospect adjusts to fit team's needs  
644094 Nashville Predators alumni game raises \$4,000-\$5,000

## New Jersey Devils

644095 Negotiations Bog Down as Sides Dig In on Contract Issues  
644096 Contract Issues Emerge as Final Hurdle in N.H.L. Talks  
644097 NHL lockout hits absurd 57th day as sides can agree on one thing: they are making little to no progress toward

## New York Rangers

644098 Oates Tackles Learning Curve in A.H.L.

## NHL

644099 Remembering 'the unselfishness of Joe Sakic'  
644100 Contracting rights create impasse in NHL labour talks

## Ottawa Senators

644101 Bettman isn't going anywhere

## Philadelphia Flyers

644102 No progress in NHL labor talks

## Pittsburgh Penguins

644103 Only 14 of 17 points to resolve NHL lockout seem to be feasible

## St Louis Blues

644104 Oates set to be inducted into Hockey Hall of Fame

## Toronto Maple Leafs

644105 Hockey Hall of Fame: Mats Sundin wishes he'd retired as a Maple Leaf  
644106 Sundin 'led by example': Fletcher  
644107 Goalie coach St. Croix bides his time with Marlies

## Vancouver Canucks

644108 Joe Sakic: One of the great ones  
644109 Schultz snub still stings

## Washington Capitals

644110 Adam Oates enjoying Hall of Fame induction weekend  
644111 It was taught in the family, as Oates described it as, "if you can be unselfish, your teammates will always li

## Websites

644112 ESPN / Hall of Fame: Inductees share memories  
644113 ESPN / Theo Fleury: I have no sympathy for owners  
644114 ESPN / NHL, players meet briefly in NY  
644115 NBCSports.com / Your casual reminder of just how good Pavel Bure was  
644116 NBCSports.com / Fehr on contract issues: "I don't see a path to an agreement here"  
644117 NBCSports.com / CBA meeting over after an hour and things didn't go well  
644118 NBCSports.com / Adam Oates' five greatest accomplishments  
644119 NBCSports.com / Even NHL guys in the AHL are well informed by Donald Fehr  
644120 NBCSports.com / Players and owners to resume negotiations today  
SPORT-SCAN, INC. 941-284-4129  
644070 Anaheim Ducks

NHL labor talks stalled

Helene Elliott

Collective bargaining talks between the NHL and the NHL Players' Assn. broke off Sunday after slightly more than an hour and appeared to reach a stalemate again after a week of daily communication had fueled hopes they might be nearing a resolution to their labor dispute.

"No progress and no meetings," NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said when asked to sum up the day's events and whether they had scheduled more negotiations. Donald Fehr, executive director of the NHLPA, told reporters in New York he does not see "a path to an agreement."

The NHL said it had moved toward the players' stance on 14 of 17 contracting issues the union raised last week and bent on the crucial "make whole" clause, which would ensure players get the full value of their contracts partially through deferred payments. However, the league is holding firm on capping contract lengths at five years, limiting the variance on contracts to 5% from year to year, and delaying eligibility for free agency by a year, and players won't agree to those conditions.

—Helene Elliott

LA Times: LOADED: 11.12.2012

644071 Carolina Hurricanes

CBA session breaks up after one hour

By Chip Alexander

The NHL and NHL Players Association met Sunday, but only briefly and little was accomplished.

The collective bargaining session, held at the NHL's offices in Manhattan, broke up after only an hour. Both sides agreed on one thing: little or no progress was made in the meeting.

Donald Fehr, executive director of the NHLPA, was blunt in his assessment, telling reporters he did not "see a path to an agreement" on a CBA. Fehr said the two sides could meet again Monday in Toronto.

The league and union held lengthy CBA negotiations Tuesday through Friday in an attempt to end the NHL lockout and get a season started. There was an informal luncheon on Saturday involving NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr.

Sunday's formal meeting centered on contracting issues. Fehr claimed the league is not willing to budge on any of its contract demands, and said NHL commissioner Gary Bettman has said the two sides were "past the point of give-and-take."

Daly later disputed that claim, saying the league has been willing to compromise on 14 of 17 contracting concerns.

The league has proposed limiting contracts to five years and ending front-loaded contracts. The NHL wants unrestricted free agency to begin at age 28 or after eight years of service (it was 27 and seven years under the old CBA.)

Sunday marked the 57th day of the lockout. The league has cancelled 327 games, including the 2013 Winter Classic on New Year's Day.

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644072 Colorado Avalanche

Joe Sakic's career timeline

staff report

1986-88 — Has two outstanding seasons for the Swift Current Broncos of the Western Hockey League. He is selected 15th by the Quebec Nordiques in the 1987 NHL draft. In his time with Swift Current, Sakic survives a bus crash that kills four of his teammates.

1988-89 — Scores 23 goals and 62 points in his rookie season with the Nordiques. Records an assist in his first NHL game, Oct. 6, 1988, against Hartford. He wears No. 88 in his first season.

1989-90 — Achieves 100-plus points in his second season (39 goals, 63 assists). He switches to No. 19.

1990-95 — Scores 100-plus points two more seasons, but the Nordiques make the

Joe Sakic holds the Stanley cup over his head in Civic Center Park during a giant celebration to welcome home the 1996 Stanley Cup champions. (The Denver Post file)

playoffs only twice before moving to Denver on May 25, 1995.

1995-96 — In his first season with the newly named Colorado Avalanche, Sakic achieves career highs in goals (51) and assists (69) as the Avs win the Pacific Division. In the playoffs, Sakic wins the Conn Smythe Trophy as most valuable player, getting 18 goals and 34 points in 22 games. Included are a then-record six playoff game-winning goals. The Avalanche wins the Stanley Cup.

1997 — As a restricted free agent after the 1996-97 season, Sakic signs a three-year, \$21 million offer sheet with the New York Rangers, which includes a \$15 million signing bonus. The Avs match the offer a week later to keep him. It temporarily makes him the highest-paid player in sports.

1998 — He plays for Canada in the Olympics in Nagano, Japan, but a knee injury forces him out of the competition early.

1999 — In a Dec. 27 game against St. Louis, Sakic records his 1,000th career point — an assist on a goal by unheralded Chris Dingman.

2000 — In a March 23 game, Sakic records his 400th career goal and passes Peter Stastny to become the

Joe Sakic's No. 19 was raised to the rafters at the Pepsi Center in a pregame ceremony on October 1, 2009. (Denver Post file)

all-time franchise scoring leader with 1,049 points.

2000-01 — In a Hart Trophy-winning season, Sakic scores a career-high 54 goals, with 118 points. He follows that up with an excellent playoffs, with 26 points in 21 games, as the Avs win the Stanley Cup a second time. Some memorable playoff goals include a penalty shot in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals against St. Louis and a power-play goal that salted away Game 7 of the Cup Finals against New Jersey.

2002 — On March 9 of the 2001-02 season, Sakic plays in his 1,000th game. During the Olympic break in 2002, he is named the MVP of the Winter Games in Salt Lake City as Canada wins the gold medal. On Dec. 11 of the 2002-03 season, he scores his 500th career goal, at Vancouver.

2003-06 — Sakic has "back-to-back" 87-point seasons in 2003-04 and 2005-06, with a missing season in between because of the lockout that resulted in the cancellation of the 2004-05 season.

2006-07 — Sakic achieves 100 points at age 37, becoming the second-oldest player in NHL history to achieve the mark, behind only Gordie Howe.

2007-08 — A sports hernia surgery forces Sakic to miss 32 games. He plays only 44 games but still puts up 40 points. In the playoffs, he scores an overtime winner to beat Minnesota in a first-round game.

2008-09 — Injuries, including a herniated disc and three broken fingers from a snowblower accident, limit him to 15 games. His final NHL goal comes on Oct. 23, 2008, in a 4-1 Avs victory over Edmonton against goalie Mathieu Garon. He officially retires in the summer of 2009, at the Inverness Hotel. On the 2009-10 season's opening night, the Avs retire his No. 19.

2010 — Sakic is hired by the Avalanche as an executive adviser, a post he still holds.

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644073 Colorado Avalanche

Joe Sakic: Hall of Fame NHL player reflects on his career

By Adrian Dater

Step inside Joe Sakic's stunning Cherry Hills Village home, walk down one of the two swirling staircases, hang your first left and see ahead what looks to be a transplanted wing of the Hockey Hall of Fame.

There, behind glass and finished oak, are countless pucks, trophies, pieces of hockey equipment, trinkets, photos, guitars (two, signed by Garth Brooks and members of Aerosmith), paintings, street signs, ticket stubs and jerseys. Lots and lots of jerseys, so many from the backs of sports' greatest players that they move on an electrically powered conveyor belt, the kind you see at dry cleaners.

There are 20 years of NHL memories in this room, several others from the hockey of his youth. With a well-stocked wine cellar

Joe Sakic poses with his father the night he was drafted into the NHL.

attached to the trophy room, it would make sense if Sakic spent much of his time in here, relaxing and toasting a career that will be honored by the Hockey Hall of Fame Monday night in Toronto.

But the Avalanche legend, surprisingly, said he almost never lingers in the trophy room. Three years after retiring from the NHL, Sakic is too busy for rest and reflection.

While his duties as executive adviser with the Avalanche have lessened in recent weeks because of the NHL lockout, he still is working on behalf of the team. He remains heavily involved in charitable causes, including a yearly dinner and golf tournament on behalf of the homeless in Denver. He is working as an assistant coach on the Mullen High School hockey team, which includes his 16-year-old son, Mitchell. He is heavily involved in the activities of his two younger children, daughter Kamryn and son Chase, both 12.

"My life these days is just driving my kids everywhere. That's all I do," Sakic said, laughing over a late afternoon cup of coffee and a few chicken wings at an Old Chicago restaurant in Lakewood. "Or, I'm doing what Debbie (his wife) says. She's the boss. But you know what? I love it. When I retired, I was ready. I'm lucky. I never had any doubts, like a lot of players do."

Well, except for one day. The only time Sakic, 43, felt the burning urge to get back on the ice was during warm-ups before the Canada-USA gold medal Olympic game in his hometown of Vancouver, British Columbia in 2010.

"We had second-row seats. I remember watching Chris Drury skating around in front of me for the U.S., because we were down at their end. I turned to my wife and said 'Oh, I wish I were out there right now,'" Sakic recalled. "But I also knew that I wouldn't have been able to play at the level I wanted, so it wasn't so bad."

Headly on the ice, no-brainer choice

Look at Sakic's hockey accomplishments and it's easy to see why "regret" isn't in

his vocabulary. He played 1,378 games, scored 625 goals, had 1,016 assists and won two Stanley Cups, one Conn Smythe Trophy, one Hart Trophy and one Olympic gold medal with Canada in 2002, when he was the tournament's most valuable player. Most experts consider him among the top 10 centers of all time. He enters the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility.

"It was a no-brainer, and I'm proud of him," said longtime teammate Adam Foote, who is in Toronto for Sakic's induction. "He knew what he wanted. Joe's got that quiet competitive nature. He tries to make people think that he doesn't, but when he wants something and he wants to be number one, he works hard until he's satisfied that he's there."

He got there, and he's satisfied.

Despite how easy he made it all look, despite all the accolades, and vast wealth he accumulated, Sakic remains the same: unassuming, humble, embarrassed at questions surrounding his success. He and his wife have worked hard at instilling the same values in their kids they both had as children of modest means growing up in Western Canada — Sakic in Vancouver and Burnaby, British Columbia, and Debbie in Swift Current, Saskatchewan.

Sakic's father, Marijan, and mother, Slavica, emigrated to Canada from Croatia in the 1960s and settled in the Vancouver area, where Marijan worked as a carpenter. A hockey fan, Marijan took Joe to his first Canucks NHL game when Joe was 4.

"I remember he said he wanted

to be a hockey player that night," Marijan said. "I had a feeling he might make it too. He was a very good skater early on. He had a sister (Rosemarie) who became a good figure skater. They were always skating at an early age."

When little Joe got in trouble — "which was every night," Marijan said — he would be sent down to the basement. The punishment: stickhandle without a puck for half an hour.

"After a while, your forearms ache. But it really helped me. I didn't realize it at the time, but he was trying to make me a better stick-handler, and it worked," Sakic said.

From ages 7-11, Sakic played in the North Shore Winter Club in Burnaby. Under coach John Bartok, he learned to shoot wrist shots off both legs — a crucially important edge he gained over other players that would last through his final NHL game, Nov. 28, 2008, in Phoenix.

Sakic's wrist shots had as much speed as a normal player's slap shot, and he often caught goalies leaning the wrong way by shooting his left-handed shot off his right leg.

"His shot was just tremendous," ex-Detroit goalie Mike Vernon said. "It was accurate, and he didn't need much time or space to get it off."

Today, Sakic imparts his knowledge of the game to his lucky pupils of Mullen. But, as ever, he is not pushy. At practice, he wears the same blue track suit as the others on the staff, with "Coach Sakic" written on the front in italics. Kids, he said, "just need to learn by playing as much as they can. You try to push too much on them, and it probably doesn't work."

Back at home, Sakic relishes the time he spends with his family that wasn't possible as a player. Downstairs, in the game room, he'll sometimes play a game of bubble hockey with one of the kids or maybe a game of Ms. Pac-Man on a real, '80s-style arcade unit. Every summer, he drives the family in an RV back to British Columbia for a few weeks, often treating friends and relatives to one of his specialties — cedar plank, marinated salmon on the grill.

"His salmon is quite good," said Debbie, who rolls her eyes at her husband's newfound domesticity. She has always been Sakic's best friend — and his biggest needler.

"I'll be honest, and I hate to admit this, but I have a new appreciation for what Debbie had to do when I was on the road. Even when she's been away for just a day, I've caught myself going, 'This is hard!'" Sakic said.

High school sweethearts

The couple met in high school in Swift Current in 1986. Debbie was hanging by her locker, chatting with friends, when Joe — a star with the local Broncos of the Western Hockey League — approached her. She had no idea who he was, Debbie said, which only endeared her to him even more, Joe said. They've been together since.

She followed him to Quebec, where he began his NHL career in 1988 playing on some bad teams that had stars such as Michel Goulet, Peter Stastny and Guy Lafleur all in the twilight of their careers.

In that second season, 1989-90, the Nordiques won only 12 games and Sakic admitted it was the only time in his career when he fell into a period of negativity.

"I remember being in the back of the bus, after another bad loss on the road late in the year," Sakic said, "and (I was) big-time complaining. I was really frustrated with the losing. But I remember Guy Lafleur came to me and just said: 'Hey, kid, don't worry about anybody else here. You just go out there and play your game, play hard and don't worry about anything else.' I took it as maybe he knew something that I didn't already know yet, because I was only a kid still."

"When I look back, he probably knew that not many others were still going to be around because we were a bad team. From then on, I played as hard as I could and didn't worry about things out of my control."

After becoming the Nordiques/Avalanche captain for good in 1992, that "Hey kid, just play hard and don't worry about it" advice from Lafleur became Sakic's signature style with teammates.

"Never too high, never too low. That was how Joe always was," said teammate Peter Forsberg, who formed a deadly 1-2 punch at center on two Avalanche Stanley Cup teams. "He just outworked everybody all the time. But when you combined that with his talent, that's why he's a Hall of Famer."

What does the second act of his life figure to look like? He doesn't plan on leaving Colorado anytime soon, that's for sure. Or leave the game of hockey. He wants to keep "learning the business" in the Avs' front office and see what happens.

"I grew up wanting to be a hockey player, and now that I'm retired I'm still in the game, coaching my two boys, and I'm back with the Avalanche, which is perfect," he said. "I want to stay in the game of hockey. Nothing else really interests me. Hockey's been my whole life."

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Quotes

"When I was young, when veteran guys would tell me it would all go fast, I'd go 'Come on. Yeah, right.' But they were all right. Now I'm telling it to young kids, and I get the same look I once had." - Joe Sakic

"It's no secret that he was able to control a hockey game." - Kirk McLean, longtime goalie and current Avalanche goaltending consultant

"The first goal is probably the one you'll always remember most when it comes down to it. Of course, I still remember mine so well. It was at home against New Jersey in my second game, against Sean Burke. It wasn't much of a goal — just a deflection. But it was quite a feeling." - Sakic

"It was special that he was on the power play with me in Quebec and then 20 years later, he was playing on the power play with my son Paul in Colorado. He was a complete player and one of the greatest in history." - Peter Stastny, former Quebec Nordiques teammate and Hockey Hall of Fame forward

"The one season that everything just went right all the way through? Has to be 2000-01. Our line (with Milan Hejduk and Alex Tanguay) was just in sync all year, all the way to winning the Cup. It was a magical year." - Sakic

"It's like nothing was spectacular with him, just steady greatness. It's under-the-radar, quiet, tremendously well-prepared, zero maintenance, smiles, do anything for the team, doesn't need attention or to be stroked. He's just the perfect pro, the perfect leader." - Joel Quenneville, former Avalanche assistant and head coach

"When we won Game 6 in New Jersey to tie the series 3-3, we knew we were going to win the Cup the next game at home. On the plane ride back, we just looked at each other and we knew. ... We knew there was no way we weren't going to get Ray Bourque that first Cup. And everyone knew I was going to give it to him first." - Sakic

"We hated the Avalanche, of course, but we always had the utmost respect for Joe Sakic." - Kris Draper, former Red Wing

"One of my most vivid memories of that first year in Denver is the first day we all saw Patrick Roy in the dressing room in our uniform. I just don't think guys really could believe it for a while, and I think that was true for him too. But we knew we were all looking at 'The Guy.' He was the final piece that we knew we needed." - Sakic

"He was the one player I always feared as a coach when he was on the ice." - Ken Hitchcock, Blues coach

"I was really working hard to try to come back for our last two games (in the 2008-09) season. But I just couldn't get there. I was probably still about three or four weeks away with my back condition, and I just wasn't going to go out there and embarrass myself." - Sakic

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644074 Colorado Avalanche

Joe Sakic: Middle years highlight career

By Adrian Dater

As much success as Joe Sakic had, as many great teams as he was on, he played on some real turkeys too. The man who won two Stanley Cups and an Olympic gold medal did a lot of losing at points during his 20-season NHL Hall of Fame career.

The combined record of the first four seasons of Sakic's career with the Quebec Nordiques, beginning in 1988? That would be 75-205-40. His last season, 2008-09, with the Avalanche? The team finished 32-45-5.

The big middle part is where all the good stuff was. The worst season was Sakic's second, when the Nordiques finished 12-61-7.

"We were slugs," Sakic said. He led the team with 102 points.

All that losing by the Nordiques produced a lot of high draft picks, however, and Quebec drafted well. Either through the draft or the acquisition of other high picks in trades — such as the Eric Lindros-Peter Forsberg blockbuster with Philadelphia in 1992 — the Nordiques built a young, talented roster that was coming into its own by the time the team moved to Denver in 1995.

Despite several high-scoring seasons in Quebec, Sakic was considered something of an Ernie Banks of hockey at the time, a great player on a bad team. But that all changed when Forsberg joined him to form a deadly 1-2 combination at center that terrorized the NHL's Western Conference for a decade. When the Avs acquired Patrick Roy from the Montreal Canadiens in 1995, the Avs were on their way.

"We knew we had the piece we'd been missing," Sakic said.

In six seasons, from 1995-2001, Sakic averaged 92 points, twice exceeding 50 goals. In those two seasons, the Avs won the Stanley Cup, and Sakic arguably could have been the Conn Smythe Trophy winner both times. He won the award in 1996, setting a playoff record for game-winning goals (six) en route to 34 points in 22 games. In the 2001 playoffs, he scored 13 goals and 26 points in 21 games. He had a goal and an assist in a Game 7 Cup Finals victory

over the New Jersey Devils. But Roy won the Conn Smythe.

So much for the Ernie Banks phase of Sakic's career.

In 2002, Sakic won an Olympic gold medal for Canada — its first in 50 years — and earned MVP honors.

"Those two years, it's tough to top them," Sakic said. "We wanted another Cup in '02 and came close, but having that gold medal was a nice consolation prize."

The Avs never advanced beyond the second round in Sakic's final six seasons, but he still provided some great moments. In Calgary in 2007, he scored his 600th goal to ice a victory, one of his 100 points that season at age 38. Sakic became the second-oldest player in league history to score 100 points, behind only Gordie Howe.

After an injury-shortened 2007-08 season, Sakic nearly retired.

"The body was telling me maybe it was time, but I decided to give it one more go," he said.

In that last season, 2008-09, he was able to play only 15 games due to a severe back injury.

"The doctors told me the strength in my left leg would never be as good because of the back and the nerves," Sakic said. "Once I heard that, I knew it was all done. But to play 20 years? No, I never would have thought it would happen. No regrets at all."

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644075 Colorado Avalanche

Joe Sakic: Hall of Famer scores two goals in Legends Classic

By Adrian Dater

TORONTO — Talk is cheap, but athletes who retire soon realize that locker-room banter is priceless.

Joe Sakic was the latest ex-player to say something along those lines Sunday after he played in the Legends Classic at the Air Canada Centre, part of Hockey Hall of Fame weekend festivities. The Avalanche's all-time leading scorer will be inducted Monday night (5:30 p.m., NHL Network).

"You miss that the most," said Sakic, who scored two goals on a team that included former Avs teammates Adam Foote and Theo Fleury, along with former assistant coach Bryan Trottier. "It doesn't take long after you retire to realize how much you miss your teammates and the locker-room environment. When you're around the same

guys together all the time, traveling together and fighting together, you get a bond that's hard to replace."

Sakic showed his legendary wrist shot hasn't yet hung up its tendons. He snapped one past goalie Curtis Joseph.

"Didn't look any different from when I played against him," Joseph said. "I didn't think I gave him any room on the shot. But I used to think that a lot after fishing the puck out of the net."

Footé, Sakic's longtime teammate in Quebec and Colorado, said: "There's no way I would have missed this weekend. It's going to be special seeing him go into the Hall."

Fleury, told that his wheels still looked pretty good for a guy who hasn't played in the NHL since 2003, said: "I don't know about 'wheels,' but I guess I could always go out there and skate around and look fast. It was great to play again with Joe. I will always treasure the time I got to play with him in Colorado (in 1999).

"I think what's unbelievable is he only went 15th overall in the (1987) draft. But that might have been because he was never one to toot his own horn and people didn't know of him as much around the league. I'm sure there are 14 pretty embarrassed scouts that year. I played against him on every shift when he was out there when I played, and I can tell you it was a lot more fun to play with him than against him."

Footnotes. Sakic's mother, Slavica, and father, Marijan, will attend Monday night's ceremonies. Avalanche president Pierre Lacroix also is expected to attend. ... NHL commissioner Gary Bettman is expected to be on hand but it is possible that could change. His appearance could be a public-relations problem, given the ongoing NHL lockout.

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644076 Colorado Avalanche

Sakic wore No. 19, but he's No. 8 on this list

By Adrian Dater

Joe Sakic is the eighth-best center in NHL history.

That is the consensus of 10 veteran hockey journalists, several of whom are also members of the Hockey Hall of Fame. The Denver Post Polled those media members and assigned points for places 1 through 10. Sakic came in eighth with 31 points, three points behind Bryan Trottier, and 15 ahead of ninth-place Stan Mikita.

Wayne Gretzky was No. 1 on every ballot (100 points), with Mario Lemieux (89) and Jean Béliveau (74) coming in second and third. Sakic's highest placing, fifth, came from Adam Proteau of The Hockey News.

"In my mind, Sakic was the Béliveau of his era," Proteau said. "He wasn't as big of a physical specimen as the immortal Canadiens captain, but Sakic was just as incredible of an all-around performer whose playmaking skills boosted the performance of everyone around him. Like Béliveau, Sakic also was one of the cleanest, most respected players of his day and was just as dominant come playoffs."

Sports Illustrated's Michael Farber, who picked Sakic ninth, said: "Sakic was the quiet man here, with fewer distinguishing marks than say, (Steve) Yzerman, whose career bifurcated neatly when he became a two-way center, or Béliveau, with his 10 Stanley Cups, or Mikita, who turned himself from hothead into a Lady Byng winner. Good ol' 'Quoteless Joe' just had this fabulous wrist shot — a blur of a release — and a constancy that was noteworthy."

Sakic was included on all 10 lists, along with Gretzky, Béliveau, Lemieux and Mark Messier. Even though Sakic cracked just one top five list, it was perhaps the ultimate testament to his consistency as a player that he found a way onto everybody's top 10 list.

"Nobody ever had a better wrist-shot in traffic, a shot that consistently ripped past goalies," longtime Edmonton Journal hockey writer Jim Matheson said.

Sakic's spot

The top 10 centers in NHL history, as selected by an expert panel of hockey journalists: (10 points for first, nine for second, etc.)

Rk. Name, points

1. Wayne Gretzky, 100
2. Mario Lemieux, 89
3. Jean Béliveau, 74

4. Mark Messier, 68
5. Phil Esposito, 39
6. Steve Yzerman, 36
7. Bryan Trottier, 34
8. Joe Sakic, 31
9. Stan Mikita, 16
10. Howie Morenz, 12

Others receiving votes: Igor Larionov, 11; Bobby Clarke, 10; Peter Forsberg, 7; Peter Stastny, 5; Marcel Dionne, 4; Ron Francis, 4; Bill Cowley, 3; Sidney Crosby, 1; Pat LaFontaine, 1; Henri Richard, 1; Adam Oates, 1

Expert panel: Steve Dryden (Sportsnet Canada), Damien Cox (Toronto Star), Michael Farber (Sports Illustrated), Alan Adams (former Canadian Press writer), Bob Duff (Windsor Star), Adam Proteau (The Hockey News), Pat Hickey (Montreal Gazette), Jim Matheson (Edmonton Journal), Greg Wyshynski (Yahoo), Dave Molinari (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)

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644077 Colorado Avalanche

NHL lockout: Mood more grim than ever with no deal on horizon

By Adrian Dater

TORONTO — A longtime NHL front-office executive, in a hallway Sunday at the Air Canada Centre, was asked how he was doing.

"Bored to tears," the team executive said.

With NHL employees prohibited from speaking openly about the ongoing lockout — under threat of a heavy fine from commissioner Gary Bettman — such not-for-attribution snippets are about all the media can get these days. The locked-out players have been more vocal, some taking to Twitter to chastise Bettman.

The public, though, seems not to care a whit about what either side in the dispute says anymore. That applies even in this hockey-crazed city, where the Maple Leafs have been selling out games forever despite not having had a playoff team since 2004. When Bettman's image was shown on the Jumbo-Tron on Sunday at the Legends Classic — with shots of him handing the Stanley Cup in 1996 to Avalanche Hall of Fame inductee Joe Sakic — boos filled the arena.

No one will know the effects of the lockout on attendance and television ratings until the NHL resumes. But if anecdotal evidence is one measure, it won't be pretty for a sport enduring its third lockout since 1994. Everybody, it seems, is thoroughly fed up with the fight between NHL owners and players, now arguing over a small percentage of revenues. That includes players who were still drawing NHL paychecks not too long ago.

"They have to find a way to solve this. They absolutely have to," said former Avalanche winger Theo Fleury, who played Sunday's game as part of Hockey Hall of Fame weekend festivities.

Fleury gave a prediction that, if the sides don't agree to a deal that saves this season, should scare the wits out of any NHL fan. "If they don't do it (for this season), it's going to be two years probably they play again," he said.

Two years? Fleury and a couple of others who were asked Sunday believe that's possible. The doomsday scenario they can foresee would involve the NHL Players Association and owners trying to "blow up" their financial system entirely and essentially starting all over again. For the players, maybe that means trying to get the salary cap eliminated. For the owners, maybe that means having no more guaranteed contracts.

The sides met Sunday in New York, but talks broke off in less than an hour and the outlook seems dire. NHLPA boss Donald Fehr told reporters the owners are "completely unwilling" to budge and said Bettman told the NHLPA "we're past the point of any give and take."

Fleury indicated it's all posturing.

"Now that I'm in business myself, there's always a deal to be made, no matter what," Fleury said. "When a business like the NHL goes from \$2 billion a year to \$3.3 billion like it did, there's going to be some tough negotiating. It's a matter of finding some common ground and getting it done."

Bettman, incidentally, is slated to be in attendance Monday night at the Hall of Fame as part of induction ceremonies. Expect more boos.

Denver Post: LOADED: 11.12.2012

644078 Colorado Avalanche

Frei: Joe Sakic was defined by passing the Cup to Ray Bourque

By Terry Frei

The handoff. When pondering Joe Sakic's career, I keep coming back to that.

There was so much more to his career, wasn't there?

The wrist shot. The mostly-by-example captain's leadership. The dry sense of humor that occasionally sneaked through the screen of hockeyspeak. The big — no, make that "huge," pronounced "yooge" in the hockey vernacular — playoff goals. The Hart Trophy season in 2000-01, when even casual sports fans in Colorado could tell you it was the league's equivalent of a most valuable player award.

As other worthy-of-marquee players came and went in the Avalanche's heyday years, Sakic was the Face of the Franchise during its first 13 seasons in Denver.

That handoff didn't take much longer than a blink or a Sakic wrister going from stick to net. But it's what so many remember.

In 2001, taking the Stanley Cup from NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, Sakic was in position for one of the most glorious rites in sport, or one of the most triumphant rights of captaincy. Instead of lifting Lord Stanley's parting gift to Canada overhead, he handed it off — or delivered a tap pass — to teammate Ray Bourque, a truly iconic figure whose quest for the Cup had led to his trade from Boston to Colorado the year before. We didn't know it for sure, only sensed it, but Bourque had just played his final game at age 40.

Bourque had waited 22 years. Surely, he could have waited another 22 seconds. Nonetheless, Sakic, without ceremony or raising the trophy himself first, handed it to Bourque, and the pictures taken moments later remain perhaps more defining than any other of why hockey's postseason and its championship trophy are the best in North American professional sports.

The story behind the picture — Sakic's deference — is as much about hockey, too, as was Bourque's unforgettable expression.

Sometimes hockey's proponents get carried away with extolling

Joe Sakic skates with the puck during an Avalanche-Kings game on October 20, 2008 in Los Angeles. (The Denver Post file)

the game's selflessness and underestimating the team concept in other sports. Even selfish players can make the Hockey Hall of Fame, and you do keep score in the game. But it says something that for a player who lasted so long in the league, who scored 625 career regular-season goals and 84 more in the playoffs that his iconic moment involved respect for the game and making sure someone else was in the spotlight.

Yes, minding the economic protocol of the time and the NHLPA's emphasis on all unrestricted free agents owing it to their brethren to raise the benchmarks, Sakic signed a front-loaded, three-year, \$21 million offer sheet with the Rangers in 1997 that strained the Avalanche's financial resources when the team matched it. Yes, his unapologetic and forgiving friendship with Todd Bertuzzi was puzzling and seemingly contradictory. But other than that, he was the constant, the bedrock, the Captain.

The best player in Avs history? Well, that's debatable.

When Peter Forsberg was at the top of his game and healthy, he could take over games, most notably in the second half of the 2002-03 season, his own Hart Trophy year. He could dominate in a fashion so rarely seen from

skaters in a sport of rolling lines and keep-'em-short shifts. But he wasn't always healthy and at the top of his game.

When Patrick Roy was in the net, most of the time there was nobody better at one of sports' most influential positions. And his competitiveness was contagious.

Yet for 14 years, Sakic was at the forefront of the events that led to Colorado becoming one of the youth hockey hotbeds in the country. His two sons, and the children of so many other NHL players who have chosen to live here in retirement, could end up with — or already have had — USA on their sweaters. The son of Croatian immigrants to Canada, who as a boy painfully made the transition from Croatian in the home to English in school, who picked up the sport in Burnaby, B.C., and who ended up representing his country at three Olympic Games, more than other any single hockey player influenced the Denver sports scene.

On Monday night, he becomes a Hockey Hall of Famer.

Denver Post: LOADED: 11.12.2012

644079 Columbus Blue Jackets

NHL: Lockout drags on with little progress

By Aaron Portzline

The NHL today arrives at a sad, awkward juxtaposition.

As it celebrates the careers of gifted forwards Pavel Bure, Adam Oates, Joe Sakic and Mats Sundin with their induction in the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto, the league is embroiled in a lockout that shows no signs of ending.

The NHL and the Players' Association met briefly yesterday in New York, just long enough to re-establish their differences — not only regarding how the game's revenue should be divided, but on new rules regarding player contracts.

"(The NHL) has indicated to us from the beginning that (revenue) share was really important and contracting issues were really important," union executive director Don Fehr told reporters in New York. "We've told them both are important, but as (players') share is limited, contracting rights become not only more important, but vastly more important.

"Their answer is, the players will have vastly fewer rights, vastly less leverage for vastly longer portions of their career under the NHL proposal."

The NHL wants to limit contract terms to five years, plus require that player salaries don't fluctuate more than 5 percent from one season to the next. The aim is to limit back-diving contracts — deals with extra, low-salaried years added on the end to circumvent the salary cap.

Further, the league wants to delay free agency until 28 years old or eight NHL seasons, up one year from the current system.

Under the NHL's proposal, young players would face longer entry-level contracts (four years, up from three) and an extra season before they're eligible for salary arbitration.

"We think the system will operate better (with the new proposals)," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said. "We have concerns for a while about contracts that we feel are a circumvention of the system, and that's an issue we need to clean up.

"The other issue deals with allocating more money to more established players. It's something we hear from our (general managers) regularly. They believe they're forced to make talent assessments too early in a player's career and it would be better for the game — their teams, the product, and ultimately the revenues of the product — if they could make those decisions later in the player's career."

Fehr said the union was told by NHL commissioner Gary Bettman that there was no room for "give and take" on the contract proposals.

If the sides can't find traction soon, look for more regular-season games to be canceled and, possibly, the 2013 NHL All-Star Game, which is scheduled for Nationwide Arena on Jan. 27.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.12.2012

## NHL lockout analysis: Revenue sharing is key factor

By Aaron Portzline

Since the early days of negotiations, the NHL Players' Association has been pushing revenue sharing as the path to labor salvation. And why wouldn't they? It's an almost unassailable position.

Revenue sharing props up struggling franchises, leads to greater parity and makes the league, as a whole, stronger. That's a message that resonates with almost every fan and, probably, at least half of the league's 30 ownership groups. It also directly benefits players within the salary-cap system by giving poor clubs more money to spend on players.

But Blue Jackets defenseman Adrian Aucoin said the idea has been largely dismissed by the NHL because the wealthiest owners also are the most powerful, the ones closest to commissioner Gary Bettman.

"Who's on the NHL's negotiating committee?" Aucoin said, referring to Boston owner Jeremy Jacobs, Calgary's Murray Edwards, Minnesota's Craig Leipold and Washington's Ted Leonsis. "It's pretty clear that the owners of the clubs who really need revenue sharing aren't at the table. They aren't allowed into the meetings apparently, so you wonder if those voices are actually being heard during the negotiations.

"There's a way to fix this so that we're not in this position every five or six or seven years, canceling games and stuck in a fight. A salary-cap system does not work unless you have sufficient revenue sharing; it's been proven over and over. Look at baseball. They got it right."

Bettman has downplayed the impact of revenue sharing, but it's extremely important to clubs such as the Blue Jackets, whose wild spending on players and poor play have cost them millions in losses. After weeks on the backburner, revenue sharing was thrust front and center yet again by the union last week, when a series of lengthy talks led nowhere. Talks crumbled yesterday.

For a fleeting moment, it appeared a deal could come together — if the NHL increased its revenue sharing, or if the union agreed to a 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue either immediately or after one season. It didn't happen. Will it?

This much can't be argued: The salary-cap system adopted after the 2004-05 lockout isn't working. During the past seven seasons, the wealthiest clubs — Toronto, Montreal, Philadelphia and others — have pushed revenues beyond anyone's wildest predictions in 2004-05. As the cap is linked to revenue, it would have been set at \$70.2 million in 2012-13 under the old system, with a salary floor of \$52.2 million. The floor in 2012-13 would have been \$13.2 million above the cap of just seven seasons earlier. Here is one of the conundrums of the current labor strife: To make the salary cap and floor work for small-market clubs — that is, to give them a chance to make money when they spend wisely and make the playoffs — the new agreement would need to roll back salaries and player-revenue percentage dramatically. (That could describe the NHL's initial offer, which players dismissed as "insulting").

That, in turn, would leave the wealthiest clubs with huge profits, money they couldn't spend on players because the salary cap had been lowered so much to benefit weaker clubs.

The money does the players no good if it's sitting in the coffers of the wealthier clubs. But if it's passed along to the Florida Panthers, St. Louis Blues, New York Islanders and Blue Jackets, it's available to them.

The NHL shares 4.5 percent of its revenue — a pittance compared with the NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball. There are two sides to this issue, and those who fight revenue sharing might not be wrong. But they are in the minority.

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644081 Dallas Stars

Progress screeches to a halt; players say owners are unwilling to negotiate

NEW YORK — As quickly as NHL labor negotiations got going again, they came to a screeching halt. Now there is no telling when the league and the players will return to the bargaining table.

After a one-day break following a series of formal discussions last week, the sides got back to business Sunday. Less than 90 minutes after talks solely about player-contract issues started, they were over.

The players contend the NHL has dug in on its position and is not willing to negotiate.

"The owners made it clear there is no give with respect to their proposals unless the players are willing to take them — this is my phrase, not theirs — down to the comma, then there is nothing to do, that we're past the point of give and take," players' association executive director Donald Fehr said.

No new plans to talk were made, but Monday wasn't ruled out.

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

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 11.12.2012

644082 Edmonton Oilers

Inactivity during lockout a bane for most NHL goalies

Jason Gregor

EDMONTON - Whenever the NHL and NHLPA come to their senses, figure out how to share \$3.3 billion of revenue, and get back playing, we will likely see an increase in goals.

An abbreviated training camp and no pre-season games will be a factor, but the main reason will be the inactivity of goalies. Only nine starting goaltenders are currently playing games: Pekka Rinne (Nashville Predators), Sergie Bobrovsky (Columbus Blue Jackets), Semyon Varlamov (Colorado Avalanche), Antti Niemi (San Jose Sharks), Ondrej Pavelec (Winnipeg jets), Ilya Bryzgalov (Philadelphia Flyers), Tuukka Rask (Boston Bruins), and Anders Lindback (Tampa Bay Lightning) are playing in Europe, while Braden Holtby (Washington Capitals) is in the American Hockey League.

Rick DiPietro was playing in Europe but, wait for it, got injured again. Jonathan Quick was assigned to the AHL, but can only practise due to the league rules this season.

The Edmonton Oilers' Devan Dubnyk, like 21 other NHL starters, will face the difficult challenge of having to shake off some rust during meaningful games. If the NHL returns, there will be no pre-season games.

"When we get this resolved, I won't have much time to get comfortable," Dubnyk said. "I've never gone this long without playing. I've been trying to get a job in Europe for a while. Last week, I was packed up and ready to go and then it fell through at the last minute."

With no job on the horizon, Dubnyk has been gallivanting across the country, trying to keep his game sharp. He skated in Dallas for a week with a group of shooters, including Sidney Crosby, and next week he'll either go to Calgary or Phoenix. There is no place or team for him to practice with in Edmonton.

Admittedly, I'm not the biggest supporter of goalies. I think their equipment is still too big, which inflates their save percentage, and lowers their goals-against average, so I'll be excited to see more goals when the NHL finally returns.

I do recognize, however, how important they are to a team's success. The netminder needs to be, at the very least, competent and, most likely, very good if his team has any hopes of making a run for the Stanley Cup.

This season, if we actually have one, will be a sprint and playoff berths will hinge on how quickly the inactive goalies can refine their games. It is virtually impossible to re-enact game situations in practice and Dubnyk recognizes that will be his biggest challenge.

"Just reading plays is the main thing goalies don't get in practice. Looking at the shooter's body angle to know where he can and can't shoot when he's being pressured is impossible to emulate. In a game, you can look at his positioning and know he won't be able to rifle a shot high from a certain point, and if he does go high, it won't be hard," he said.

"A shot from a guy flying down the wing with a man on him is much different to a guy in practice coming down the wing, head up, no one pressuring them and he's looking to go under the bar every time. In practice, everything is from a real high-scoring area, which can be good, but you don't experience any of the other effects that come from that shot.

"In practice, you just focus on stopping the puck, but in the game ... I have to think about where I'm putting the puck after I make the save, which corner should I direct it to, are the other forwards coming to the net from the middle of the ice or the off-wing? Goalies have to account for all of that in a game, and you just don't get that in practice."

Dubnyk is hopeful that, regardless of the condensed training camp, he'll experience something similar to a long-standing Oilers tradition.

"It'd be nice to run a few games similar to the Joey Moss Cup. You have fans, referees and the pace is much closer to an actual NHL game compared to a scrimmage where the coach is blowing the whistle," he said.

Oilers goaltending consultant Frederic Chabot realizes a long layoff and no pre-season games will be a challenge for Dubnyk, so he's already got a strategy in place.

"We will put him through as many drills as possible. I will focus on a lot of things in tight around the net. Usually, in practice, he would face a lot of shots from the outside and guys coming down the wing, but we'll have a lot of drills and shots from six feet around the net," Chabot said. He'll need to rely on quick reflexes at the start of the season and, with most of the scoring chances coming from in close, we'll need to focus on that aspect of his game a lot."

No pre-season games, a compressed training camp, and 70 per cent of the starting goalies battling inactivity; the NHL should be highly entertaining. It's one of the few positives of this horribly-managed labour dispute.

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644083 Edmonton Oilers

Stafford latest Oiler selected for Hockey Hall of Fame

By Jim Matheson

EDMONTON - Barrie Stafford says he had "the best seat in the house" during the Edmonton Oilers' glory days.

Now, the Oilers' former equipment manager has joined the greats in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Stafford was inducted into the trainers' Wall of Honour and will be in the honoured seats at the HHOF ceremony Monday night for player inductees Joe Sakic, Adam Oates (whose last NHL season was with the Oilers), Mats Sundin and Pavel Bure, plus writer inductee Roy MacGregor (Globe and Mail) and Buffalo Sabres play-by-play man Rick Jeanneret.

Stafford, who was Edmonton's equipment manager/medical trainer for 26 years before moving into special projects, made sure Paul Coffey — the best skater in the game — had his blades sharpened just right and attended to the needs of Wayne Gretzky and Mark Messier, Glenn Anderson and Grant Fuhr.

He has always considered himself the luckiest man in hockey, joining the Oilers in 1981 after graduating from the University of Alberta with an athletic training degree and three national titles playing with the Golden Bears for Clare Drake and Billy Moores. He was a medical trainer at first, then got into the equipment end of things.

"Being a trainer was the only way I was ever making the NHL. I was aggressive, determined ... I put my head down, went to work and learned my trade," said Stafford, who was witness to an Oilers team full of Hall of Famers and great leaders like Kevin Lowe and under coaches like Glen Sather, John Muckler, Ted Green and Ron Low during the dynasty years.

Sather was in Toronto to say hello to Stafford, along with Coffey.

"I remember standing in a small corner of the Oilers' bench on May 19, 1984, watching the clock slowly ticking down that night of the first Stanley Cup ... 30 years later, it's still one of the most exciting things in my life," said Stafford.

Equipment managers on hockey teams are the hardest-working employees. They're up early at home or on the road, staying late after games, packing bags, carrying them to the trucks, fixing equipment, sharpening skates, racing to give the right stick to a player who's broken his blade during the action.

Now, Stafford has joined some wonderful NHL training legends like Eddy Paichak (Montreal Canadiens), Larry Ashley (Vancouver Canucks), Lou Varga (Chicago Blackhawks), Ken (Doc) Fieger (Canucks, Boston Bruins, New Jersey Devils, Buffalo Sabres), Tom Woodcock (San Jose Sharks), Pete Demers (Los Angeles Kings) and Norm Mackie (Kings, St. Louis Blues) in the HHOF trainers' category.

"I'm very proud to represent the NHL trainers' group ... I was a little overwhelmed when I got the call actually," said Stafford. "I had a great run in Edmonton and was in the right place at the right time. I was so proud to be part of the Oiler team during their dynasty years and very lucky to represent Canada (Canada Cups, Olympics, world championships) and see some of the best hockey played in our era.

"I worked with some of the best players, coaches, managers, trainers. Winning seemed to be the common thread. Adam Oates was an Oiler. I was with Joe Sakic four times (representing Canada). Mario Lemieux, Steve Yzerman, Marty Brodeur on Canadian teams ... I learned from them all how to be a pro," he said.

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644084 Edmonton Oilers

Barons fall short of pre-season expectations

By Joanne Ireland

ABBOTSFORD, B.C. — Looking back on the early heady days of the pre-season, Oklahoma City Barons general manager Bill Scott said he did cringe ever so slightly when the prognosticators started promoting his team's fortunes.

Not only were the Barons coming off a successful American Hockey League playoff run, they were the beneficiaries of the NHL lockout with the addition of Taylor Hall, Jordan Eberle, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Justin Schultz from the Edmonton Oilers.

The Barons were anointed the AHL's "A team" before they had even played a game.

"The expectations were astronomically high," Scott said, "and I don't think credit was given to the league or the other teams in the league.

"From a star power basis, it was understandable we'd get that type of hype and attention, but you don't win on skill alone. We certainly have a lot of that, but these guys are still finding their way as a group. There are guys who probably expected to have a bigger role if there wasn't a lockout as well, and they have had to adjust, too.

"It's something we know is going to work out. Would we have liked it to have worked out from Game 1? Absolutely, but it's better to learn these lessons now than in April."

The Barons left Abbotsford after a 4-0 loss and a 2-1 overtime win in back-to-back games against the Calgary Flames' affiliate. The Heat, with the likes of NHL would-be Sven Baertschi and Roman Horak in the lineup, are 7-1-3 while the Barons are 6-5-1.

Before Hall scored his second goal in four games post-shoulder surgery and Schultz fired the game-winner, the Oilers' farm team had gone two games without a goal. It was a much sounder effort on all fronts in Saturday's win.

"Last year, we had a good year, so we knew from that standpoint, OK, we are now a team that's on the map. We're not under the radar," said Scott. "We knew we were going to have a target on our backs from the get-go. When you add the name power that we did, that just made the target that much bigger.

"Guys on the other teams want to prove they can shut down a Nugent-Hopkins or a Hall or an Eberle. That's their badge of honour. That's understandable. We'd want to do the same thing.

"So the biggest thing with all the pre-season hype was to make sure the guys weren't buying into it, which I don't think they did. But we certainly had a lot more attention than we were used to. It's tough to ignore it. It made for an interesting start to the year."

The forwards sent down by the Oilers have had to adjust to exceptionally tight checking and haven't been able to just step out and dominate.

Barons head coach Todd Nelson told the trio that there would be some adjustments to make, given that it's easier to go from playing in the AHL to the NHL than shifting from the NHL to the AHL, because the game is much crisper up top. Even with the influx of NHLers throughout the AHL, there are still players sharpening their game. Players aren't always in the right positions or making the right play.

One benefit for the Oilers is their young core players are together during the lockout.

"I do think it's good that we're all here playing in Oklahoma. There's a lot of the core pieces here who are going to be able to lead the team in the future," Eberle said. "It's good that we're gaining a relationship down here and, hopefully, getting more wins, so we can bring that winning attitude back to Edmonton.

"Everybody wants the NHL to start, but this is the (next) best scenario. We recognize that."

With Hall, Eberle and Nugent-Hopkins a season older, and with the additions of Nail Yakupov and Schultz in the off-season, the Oilers thought they were nearing the turnaround point.

"It's really frustrating to not be playing hockey. I thought we would be by now," said Hall. "It really does suck. After seeing how well Schultz has done, and with Yakupov now, this looked like the year we'd really turn the corner and make some strides as an organization. Hopefully, it ends soon so we have enough of a season to prove ourselves."

If the lockout was to end next week, Scott said the Barons would adjust just like every other AHL team. They also built the team on the assumption there'd be an NHL season, so there are players in the ECHL with the Stockton Thunder who would otherwise be in Oklahoma City. Philippe Cornet, the Barons' leading goal scorer last season, was sent down after training camp, and Toni Rajala put up six goals and six assists in his first 10 games as a North American pro.

The Barons won't replace their stars, but neither will teams like Abbotsford.

"We haven't got the results we wanted so far this year, but that keeps the guys hungry, too," Scott said. "Nobody is satisfied, but sometimes you can get off to a hot start and the team goes south because they think it's going to be easy the rest of the year.

"The league is better this year. If you could take our team last year and put them against the teams this year, I don't know how successful we'd be. Certainly we'd have some success. Would it be as much as last year? Probably not. That's just the reality of the situation when every team adds a couple of players that were either in the NHL last year or would have made the NHL this year. But we are a better team for having those guys with us, there's no doubt about that."

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644085 Edmonton Oilers

Learning curve for Edmonton Oilers' young guns

Robert Tychkowski

EDMONTON -

Justin Schultz, Jordan Eberle and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins are 1-2-3 in Oklahoma City Barons scoring, and Taylor Hall has two goals in his first four games.

Nice? Yes.

Dominant? Not quite.

The once and future Edmonton Oilers are putting up points, but found out rather early that they were not going to stroll into the American League and treat it like a statistical ATM machine.

No punching in a pin code and getting a fistful of goals any time they feel like it.

They're having to work, maybe even harder than they did in the NHL, for everything they're getting.

"It's been difficult for them," said Barons general manager Bill Scott. "They've had to deal with a game that isn't quite as crisp. It's a different style of game down here, it's a little more scrambley.

"There's a reason a lot of these players are in the American League and they're not in the NHL yet — they haven't fine-tuned their game.

"Players aren't always where they're supposed to be because they're still young in their careers."

In a 2-1 overtime win over the Abbotsford Heat on Saturday, Hall opened the scoring with an assist from Nugent-Hopkins, and Schultz won it in overtime on an assist from Eberle. But they had their hands full all night, spending as much time in their own zone as the Heat's.

Every time they play, they're lining up against adrenaline, against someone who is looking to do something he'll be able to tell his grandkids about.

"They're getting everybody's best game every night, because everybody wants to prove something against these guys," said Scott.

"Guys on the other teams want to prove they can shut down a Nugent-Hopkins or a Hall or an Eberle; that's their badge of honour in these games, when they're able to.

"At the NHL level, Pavel Datsyuk doesn't need to prove anything against Jordan Eberle. It's tough sledding out there. It's made for an interesting start to the year."

Mix in an AHL that's playing at maximum lockout strength and it's even tougher, but Scott believes it's also going to be a fantastic learning experience for everyone on the team.

"More than anything, the league is just that much better this year," he said.

"If you took our team last year (that finished first in the western conference) and put them up against the teams this year, I don't know how successful we'd be.

"Would it be as much as last year? Probably not. That's just the reality of the situation when every team adds a couple of players who were in the NHL last year or would have made the NHL this year."

Scott chuckled at recent suggestions, though, that opponents are taking runs at the Oilers young stars.

Yes, Oklahoma's marquee players are the targets of some tough, physical play, he said. It's called hockey.

"They're playing our guys hard and we would expect our guys to do the same thing against other team's best players," said Scott.

"I don't think it's anything you wouldn't expect. It's good for our guys to stand up for each other."

When they get settled in and are 100% comfortable, Scott can't wait to see what this team is capable of.

"These guys are still finding their way as a group to come together. There are guys who expected to have a bigger role if there wasn't a lockout who've had to adjust as well.

"So it's a little bit of a feeling-out process for us right now.

"But you can see the guys are getting better every game. It's going to come, it's inevitable for us."

Eberle thinks so, too.

"We have a (6-5-1) record and it feels like we're a losing team right now," he said.

"We're somewhat like the Oilers; we have all the right pieces, we just have to start putting it together.

"We're going to start stringing some wins together, it's pretty obvious."

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 11.12.2012

644086 Los Angeles Kings

NHL labor talks stalled

Staff and wire reports

Collective bargaining talks between the NHL and the NHL Players' Assn. broke off Sunday after slightly more than an hour and appeared to reach a stalemate again after a week of daily communication had fueled hopes they might be nearing a resolution to their labor dispute.

"No progress and no meetings," NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said when asked to sum up the day's events and whether they had scheduled more negotiations. Donald Fehr, executive director of the NHLPA, told reporters in New York he does not see "a path to an agreement."

The NHL said it had moved toward the players' stance on 14 of 17 contracting issues the union raised last week and bent on the crucial "make whole" clause, which would ensure players get the full value of their contracts partially through deferred payments. However, the league is holding firm on capping contract lengths at five years, limiting the variance on contracts to 5% from year to year, and delaying eligibility for free agency by a year, and players won't agree to those conditions.

—Helene Elliott

LA Times: LOADED: 11.12.2012

644087 Los Angeles Kings

Dean Lombardi-Final

We wrap thing up with Dean talking about the Yankees and "dynasties"...Reggie Jackson and the team concept...the "Rumble in the Jungle"...and his relationship with Darryl Sutter...

JF: You just used the word Yankees and that's the team you constantly bring up and you've probably touched on it in the last answer but are the Yankees the epitome of dynasty or...?

DL: I think what I find fascinating about them...I think everybody wants to talk about, 'oh you know this team doesn't that have much money and look what they're doing'. And that's great, but I remember telling this to Kenny Holland five, six years ago and you know before when there was no cap, and I remember seeing how he was going to meetings when his team was in the third round and things and I tell him 'you know what, I've got so much respect for...because people back then were like oh look how much money the Red Wings spent...BULL...I think the hardest management job in all of sports is the New York Yankees because you're expected to win and it's a heck of a lot easier when it's 'okay if we win great, but if we don't, it's okay, I have an excuse'. I mean, I don't care what walk of life you're in, it's a lot easier to work when 'if I fail, I got a fall back', the Yankees don't have a fall back, the Red Wings don't have a fall back...that's tough and so you see what happens with the Yankees, heck, they're looking at their record and all the crap they're taking, it's incredible and then you look at the playoffs seven years in a row, 'it ain't good enough...that's incredible'. I think that's what I admire, when you're expected to win and you find a way to get it done, I find that one of the most fascinating nuances in sport, period. Gretzky had that. They expect a win and then they find a way and I think there's a difference, I've said this before, there's a difference between a guy who plays "to win" and a guy who "plays to play well". The guy who plays to

win will play well. The guy who plays to play well might not always play well. I think that's what I admire most...that they have those expectations on them, no fall back, no excuses and they get it done. And then you see those guys and everybody forgets too that when the Yankees were struggling there, it was still those homegrown guys, you've heard me talk about guys like Posada (Jorge) or Rivera (Mariano), they came up but it was still built the right way, they don't win until those guys come through in the system. Now they kept them obviously because they are Yankees but even then they couldn't go out and buy it so it was another reason I admired them, that those guys came up and they kept them together which is something we tried to do here. If we're going to bring our guys through the system, let's run this so we can keep them so they can learn to be like those guys and go through the ups and downs and then learn to expect to win and rise to the occasion.

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644088 Montreal Canadiens

Assessing the NHL lockout fallout

By Jeff Heinrich

Sports stores, parking lots, hotels, memorabilia outlets, ticket scalpers, bars and restaurants — wherever there's a buck to be made off hockey in this city, the NHL lockout is cause for despair.

With the Canadiens absent from the Bell Centre for weeks now, businesses in the area and farther afield are complaining — often bitterly, like jilted lovers — about all the lost revenue.

It's hard to quantify, but some bars are reporting a 25 per cent to 30 per cent drop in sales; parking lots are down by 50 per cent, and half-price sales on Habs gear in stores are routine.

And the scalpers — some of whom rely on the Habs for three-quarters of their annual revenue — are going back to their day jobs.

Fact is, without the Habs' usual home games Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, downtown Montreal can seem like a wasteland at night.

No hockey, no fun. No fun, no spending. And no end in sight.

The lockout is now in its 56th day; negotiations between the league, club owners and the NHL Players Association for a new collective agreement are off and on, although they've ramped up lately; games have been cancelled to the end of November; and no one knows if the 2012-13 season will ever be played.

Meanwhile, business suffers.

At Sports Crescent on Ste. Catherine St. W., hockey items usually account for a good 50 per cent of sales. Now, most of it's priced to go — at 50 per cent off. You can get a Carey Price T-shirt made by Reebok for \$17.50, a Reebok Centre Ice Playdry polo shirt with the CH logo goes for \$29.99 and there's a wide choice of cut-rate hoodies, too. And don't worry about finding help from the staff — there's no one else in the store.

Well, almost no one. On what would have been a home game night (Habs vs. Canucks) last Saturday, store manager Santana Enrique had so little to do, he brought in his 5-year-old daughter, Yasmine, to save the cost of a babysitter at home.

"Normally, it's completely packed in here," said Enrique, who's been in business 20 years but has never seen it so slow. Not even in the last lockout, in 2004-05, did sales go south so quickly.

"We've cut our prices in half, but still nothing is selling — we are really, really hurting," he moaned.

In October 2011, the store did \$68,000 in sales; that was down to \$32,000 this October; some days it barely makes \$200. Enrique has had to return merchandise to wholesalers and close one of two stockrooms upstairs, and instead of four staff members he gets by with two, including him. Montreal's a hockey town, he said, but not anymore.

"We don't have basketball, we don't have baseball, in winter we have nothing, just hockey. If there's no hockey, where are you going to go?"

Certainly not the bars. Marty Devey is the manager of the Irish Embassy, a large Bishop St. pub. On a regular Saturday night when there's a game at the Bell Centre, over 200 customers come in three or four hours before puck-drop. They eat and drink and listen to the pregame radio show broadcast live by TSN 690 right on the premises. Last Saturday, the TSN crew was there, but their show was decidedly downbeat — and inaudible to the few patrons at the bar; the sound system wasn't on. "I usually hook the big speakers up so the house can hear," Devey sighed. "Now there's no point."

"There's only so long you can talk about the lockout, right?" he said as hosts Simon Tsalikis and Bobby Dollas, a former NHL defenceman, chatted into their headsets about basketball and football and whatever else was on the agenda that day in the wide world of sports — ones actually being played. A CFL game in Winnipeg between the Alouettes and the Blue Bombers was on the overhead TVs.

On hockey night, the pub would normally be at full staff — about 20 employees, from bouncers to bartenders to busboys. Now it gets by with 10. On a Tuesday game night, the bar at the back would be filled with 80 customers; now "it's a ghost town," Devey said. Business is down 15 to 30 per cent. "We have our regulars, but those 80 people who come here with their Canadiens outfits on, making a lot of noise, that ambience is not there anymore."

Instead, Devey has to be proactive and go after business from other Bell Centre events, like rock concerts. Every day, he checks the arena's website to see who's coming, then he goes on Facebook and other social networks to advertise to that demographic and encourage them to come to the Irish Embassy. He's also trying to line up Habs stars like P.K. Subban to participate in TSN events at the pub.

"The Canadiens cast a huge shadow," he said. "We all rely on them in the wintertime, and when they're not at the Bell Centre we all lose. We lose employees, we can't give them the shifts they want to get, so they're not making money, and those are the same girls and guys who would go out and spend money. It's a domino effect. If there's any comfort to take in this, it's the fact that everyone else — our competition, so to speak — is affected. Everyone's talking about the woes of this lockout."

One of the unfortunates is Steve Tsatas. Talk about bad timing: The president and founder of Madisons, a Quebec chain of New York-style grill restaurants, opened his 14th location at the end of October, right in front of the Bell Centre. It's a big place — 325 seats — built at the foot of the 1250 René Lévesque skyscraper where a National Bank was before. Four thousand people work on the office tower's 47 floors, so lunches are busy, and nighttime events at the Bell Centre keep the kitchen hopping. But hockey — that would make things really hum.

"The decision to locate by the Bell Centre was 100 per cent based on the hockey," Tsatas said last Saturday over an espresso in one of the restaurant's booths. Outside, scalpers and fans of that night's Lucian Bute-Denis Grachev boxing match at the arena were starting to arrive — good for Madisons. So were other events there in the restaurant's opening days: concerts by the Australian Pink Floyd Show, Journey and ZZ Top, and a minor-league hockey matchup between the Hamilton Bulldogs and the Syracuse Crunch on Friday. But nothing would be better for business than the Habs.

"We estimate those game nights would represent close to 25 per cent of our sales, which is substantial," Tsatas said. He knows that without them, the growing pains of his latest and most high-profile restaurant will be all the more acute. Not that there's much he can do about it. "It's disappointing, the lockout — a) speaking as a true Habs fan, and b) as a business. Having the team here would really make a difference."

Just talk to the scalpers. In a cold, raw wind outside the ZZ Top concert Wednesday night, J.D. Wolf trolled the sidewalk barking out "Tickets! You want tickets?" but knew he'd come away with little from the evening. "Concerts, you only make a couple of bucks, but hockey's where the money's at — it's very big." Except now — "it's dead." In a typical year, about 60 to 70 per cent of his sales are hockey tickets; on a night when Toronto or Boston are in town, he can sell a pair of seats behind the Canadiens bench for \$600 to \$900 — double or triple their face value. Now that income is gone, and Wolf's looking for work.

"The last lockout, everyone survived, because the economy was still strong," said Wolf, who's been scalping tickets for 15 years. "Now the economy's gone from bad to worse — I mean, look at the gas prices," he said, pointing to the service station across the street, "they're ridiculous. Even if the hockey comes back — and I don't think it will this season — it's not going to be strong like it used to be. Gas is up, food is up, people aren't

going to spend money on hockey games when they've got priorities to take care of."

And him? "I'm going back to snow removal," Wolf said, almost embarrassed by the admission. "I wouldn't be shovelling snow if the hockey was here, that's for sure."

One bright spot: Sales are hopping at the 530-unit Tour des Canadiens — a condominium tower to be grafted by late-2015 to the Bell Centre's western flank, and where Habs season-ticket holders get first dibs. "When people decide to live next to the Bell Centre and the legend of the Montreal Canadiens, it's a decision that transcends the lockout," said developer Daniel Peritz, senior vice-president of Canderel Group. "It's a long-term decision. The franchise has been around for over 100 years, and I think everyone in their heart of hearts knows that there will be hockey. We would have liked to have a season to build momentum ... but (the project) has still been exceptionally well received."

For others around the Bell Centre, however, it's a different story.

Owners of parking lots are suffering. They haven't taken down their "Bienvenue au Centre Bell" signs yet, enticing drivers with the CH logo and game-night flat rates of \$15. But they're calling the gridlock in the NHL a nightmare for traffic to their properties. "It's killing every parking lot, every restaurant, every store, everything," Emmanuel Mavridakis, owner of Stationnement E.M. Parking, said Monday afternoon at a lot on Drummond St. His company has several lots totalling about 400 places around the Bell Centre.

"Hockey gives life to downtown — without it, it's dead," he said emphatically as a few random flakes of snow — the first of the season downtown — suddenly drifted into view, a reminder of the long winter ahead. Mavridakis has been in business 32 years and can't remember when it's ever been worse. "These days, I close every night at 7:30," he said. "People are saying hockey's not coming back until January; I don't know. We can hope. We have no choice."

A drop in tourist traffic — the kind of people who come to Montreal, take in a Habs game, stay overnight, go up to Mont Tremblant the next day and then home — is affecting hotels downtown as well.

Thomas Deegan is general manager of the Novotel on de la Montagne St., whose restaurant, L'O, is also not nearly as busy as it usually is. The hotel has lost business during the week from out-of-towners who used to come for the hockey, Deegan said. "Especially the Saturday games, when people would come from out east or the United States and see a Canadiens game — that's what I'm losing. You have to deal with it; what else can you do? I hope it comes back. But I don't think they realize the damage they're doing — both sides, players and management."

Retailers who deal in NHL collectibles are also hurting. Alan Pearson has owned Raxan Collectibles, a sports card and memorabilia store in Kirkland, for 23 years, selling licensed NHL products like T-shirts, hockey cards, photos, blankets and more. He's so livid over the lockout and what it's done to his business, he's announced on YouTube that he expects to go out of business by the end of the year. The video — a manifesto against greed and a plea to save what's left of his life's passion — is called The NHL Destroyed My Business.

"I have paid current and former players for autographs, and now the millionaires and billionaires are killing the little guy like myself for the second time in eight years," Pearson said, referring to the 2004-05 lockout that resulted in the entire season being cancelled, as could well happen this time, too.

"I am like a car dealership with no 2013 models to sell," he continued. "The goodwill I have built up for the last 23 years is basically gone." With no new inventory "and a backlash of fans who no longer want to buy items of their favourite teams," the time is nigh when he'll have to close up shop.

"No one wants to give more money to greedy people who make more money in one year than most make in 40 years," he said bitterly.

Except, perhaps, the real fans — Ron Biron, for one. In town the other day with his wife, the Dunbarton, N.H., tourist came into the Sports Crescent store and plunked down \$35 — full price, plus tax — for an official NHL Canadiens jersey for his 2-year-old grandson, Jackson, in Tucson, Ariz. You see, Biron (pronounced Byron, the American way) considers the Habs part of his French-Canadian heritage, and he wants his grandson to grow up feeling the same way. The last lockout turned Biron off hockey for some time, but now he's reliving it through the boy.

Sort of — the NHL is AWOL on TV. What will he tell his grandson about the lockout when he gives him the jersey? "I won't tell him anything," replied Biron, who normally gets to an NHL game twice a year but usually makes do with cheaper outings to see the affiliate teams. "I'll just tell him it fits him well and it's part of who we are, and I'm sure he'll love it. And hopefully the lockout ends really, really soon and we can take him to games. We're still fans, and I think that's the key to the whole thing.

"So, a note to the owners: Move!"

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644089 Montreal Canadiens

Geoffrion moved out of intensive care

By DAVE STUBBS

Geoffrion moved out of intensive care

As Blake Geoffrion skated a bloody mess off Bell Centre ice Friday night, leaving under his own power with a depressed skull fracture, he officially became a card-carrying member of a family that historically has shown an uncommon threshold for pain.

There's little doubt that his father, Danny, during 34 games with the 1979-80 Canadiens, absorbed a bump and bruise, too.

So as Blake Geoffrion skated a bloody mess off Bell Centre ice Friday night, leaving under his own power with a depressed skull fracture, he officially became a card-carrying member of a family that historically has shown an uncommon threshold for pain.

Geoffrion, a 13-game veteran of the Canadiens and now a member of the American league's Hamilton Bulldogs, underwent successful surgery Friday night at the Montreal General Hospital.

The news was very encouraging on Sunday — he was moved out of intensive care in the morning, his daily progress to determine the length of time he'll remain at the General.

The 24-year-old had been hammered Friday by Syracuse Crunch defenceman J.P. Côté, met midbody by a punishing hip-check as he carried the puck along the far boards, at full speed, head not quite up, between the red line and the Crunch blue line.

The force of the check literally lifted Geoffrion off his feet and pirouetted him in mid-air, landing him 180 degrees from the direction in which he was rushing. The right skate blade of Côté, who tumbled from the impact, slashed Geoffrion in the face; it was either the blow of the skate or more likely Geoffrion's helmeted head striking the ice that caused the skull fracture.

Geoffrion shook off the cobwebs as Bulldogs teammate Michael Blunden rushed in to trade punches with Côté — an honourable defence, though the check was absolutely clean — then skated directly to the dressing room, his face dripping blood.

None among the crowd of 18,000-plus, the media covering the game and perhaps even both team benches were aware of the severity of Geoffrion's situation until Bulldogs coach Sylvain Lefebvre announced post-game that the player was undergoing surgery for an undisclosed head injury, something that he said wasn't considered to be life-threatening.

Geoffrion's parents, Danny and Kelly, were at his side, having come to Montreal for the game.

On Saturday morning, Canadiens' head team physician and chief surgeon David Mulder, one of the world's leading specialists in medical trauma, notified Habs and Bulldogs general manager Marc Bergevin of the clinical nature of Geoffrion's injury and that surgery had been deemed a success.

In precise terms, not as the vague, time-honoured "upper-body injury," the information was relayed to the media with an early afternoon news release, which included word that while sidelined indefinitely, Geoffrion was expected by doctors to make a complete recovery.

Mulder, who has tended on ice and in dressing rooms to more critical injuries than he can count during his half-century association with the

Canadiens family, was not at Friday's game, flying home from Cleveland. But he immediately went to the General and was in the operating room for the roughly two-hour duration of Geoffrion's surgery.

As it has so often in the past, it was the fine-tuned work of many at the Bell Centre and the General that carried the day. Mulder hailed the efforts at the arena of Canadiens head athletic therapist Graham Rynbend and of Luc LeBlanc, Rynbend's counterpart with the Bulldogs, for seeing to Geoffrion's immediate care and quick transfer to the hospital for surgery.

Geoffrion has embraced his family's rich Montreal history since he first laced up skates as a boy in Tennessee. He arrived with the Canadiens last Feb. 17, acquired from the Nashville Predators with prospect Robert Slaney and a 2012 second-round draft choice (Dalton Thrower) for veteran defenceman Hal Gill and a conditional fifth-round pick in 2013.

Geoffrion met the Montreal media en masse on Feb. 29, swarmed at his Bell Centre dressing-room bench as he prepared to make his home-ice debut the following night.

"My dad told me not to worry about you guys," he joked to the media mob. "When he played here, he said he felt the pressure. He was nervous. It's a lot different for me. I was kind of disguised way down in Tennessee. You guys didn't even know I existed for awhile.

"My father grew up here. He got to see Pappy all the time," he added of his granddad, the legendary Boomer. "When Dad played here, my Pappy was the coach."

Blake Geoffrion got a taste for this city's hockey passion on March 11, 2006. That night, his grandfather having died earlier in the day, he was on Bell Centre ice with his family for the emotional retirement of Boomer's No. 5.

That evening was 69 years to the day that the funeral was held in the Montreal Forum for Blake's great-grandfather, Howie Morenz, perhaps the Canadiens' first genuine superstar and arguably the greatest hockey player of the first half of the 20th century.

Morenz died of a coronary embolism in Montreal's St. Luc Hospital on March 8, 1937, 38 days after having had his left leg badly broken in a Forum collision with Chicago defenceman Earl Seibert. It was the last of the many gruesome injuries Morenz absorbed in his brutal hockey era.

On Jan. 28, 1958, 21 years to the day of Morenz's fateful, final game and four days after Danny Geoffrion's birth, Boomer was stricken on the same Forum rink during a Canadiens practice, the practical joker's howls of pain laughed at by teammates.

He was rushed across the street to hospital, where doctors discovered a ruptured bowel and performed two hours of emergency, life-saving surgery.

Boomer's wife, Marlene, was in the hospital herself with newborn Danny when she heard on the radio that her husband had been injured and was near death. Only after she emerged from the sedation under which she was placed did she learn that Bernie would indeed survive.

"It's an honour to wear the Geoffrion name on my back and to be a part of this family and the tradition here in Montreal," Blake Geoffrion said upon his arrival here, having warmed up with five games in Hamilton.

He chose to combine Boomer's retired No. 5 and Morenz's retired No. 7 for his Canadiens and Bulldogs jerseys that bear No. 57, and he chuckled his first day here, asked whether his given name was in honour of Canadiens legend Toe Blake, a famous contemporary of Boomer.

"I've asked my mom that," he replied, grinning. "But she said she chose it because she liked it. It's just a coincidence. I think."

Geoffrion left a light footprint in Montreal last season, scoring twice in 13 games in which he averaged 12:13 of ice time. He was signed in July to a one-year contract for \$803,250 and was expected to be in a training-camp battle this fall for a Habs roster spot, one that never materialized with the NHL lockout.

But for now, there are more important things in the life of this latest Geoffrion to play in Montreal, his recovery from a frightening injury first on everyone's list.

Another member of this rugged family has proven his mettle. And like a Morenz and two Geoffrions before him, Blake has just written himself a fine story for the grandkids.

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644090 Montreal Canadiens

NHL lockout has become water torture for fans

By Jack Todd

NHL lockout has become water torture for fans

Ooooookay, folks, it's day 58 of the lockout and I'm sorry, but this is starting to feel like water torture. Drip. Drip. Drip. They're making progress. Drip. Drip. Drip. They're still talking. Drip. Drip. Drip. They're not talking. Drip. Drip. Drip. They're talking but Friday was a rough afternoon. Drip. Drip. Drip. Make whole. Drip. Drip. Drip. UFA. Drip. Drip. Drip. HRR. Drip. Drip. Drip. "Our great fans." Drip. Drip. Drip.

And so on, until you reach the point where, if it doesn't stop, you're going to GO IN THERE AND RIP IT OFF THE WALL!!!

Seriously. Not that Gary Bettman gives a flying fandango but the NHL is reaching the point where the sheer, excruciating madness of enduring a lockout at regular intervals has to drive fans to the point where they'd rather follow anything else. NASCAR. UFC. Full-contact tiddlywinks.

for the first time since the beginning of the Unnecessary Lockout, your MMQB is beginning to believe that there will be no season.

The heart of the problem is spelled out in this section from Don Fehr's letter to the players after things got sticky at the end of last week, in which he lists all the things Bettman is trying to extract from the players in addition to a billion-dollar giveback:

"As you know, these include — among other things — losing a year of salary arbitration eligibility, allowing the team to file for salary arbitration in any year that the player can file, extending UFA eligibility to age 28 or 8 seasons, limiting contracts to 5 years, and permitting only 5% year to year variability in player contracts. Individually each is bad for players; taken together they would significantly reduce a player's bargaining power and give the owner much more leverage over a player for most if not all of his career.

"In short, the concessions on future salary we have offered (at least \$948 Million to \$1.25 Billion over five years, depending on HRR growth) are not enough. We are still being told that more salaries must be conceded, and that very valuable player contracting rights must be surrendered."

These are the "contracting issues" everyone was talking about Sunday and the league has said it gave an inch on 14 out of 17 contracting issues but it certainly doesn't look that way. As always with Bettman, enough is never enough. The biggest little bully in sports wants to grind Fehr's head into the ground. Trouble is, he underestimated Fehr. He particularly underestimated Fehr's ability to keep the players together. Even last week's dirty tricks attempt to make players believe Fehr wasn't letting them in on the NHL's offer backfired in Bettman's face.

That's why Fehr is saying "I don't see a path to an agreement." Why there was the sense yesterday that it's time to get real interested in the NBA.

And why I'm beginning to believe there will be no season. But if that's the case, I wish they'd just cancel it now and stop the water torture. Drip. Drip. Drip.

People get ready: Should be a rock-'em, sock-'em East final between Marc Trestman's Alouettes and Scott Milanovich's Toronto Argonauts next Sunday afternoon. If Sunday's thumping of the Edmonton Eskimos is any indication, Milanovich has his Argos firing on all cylinders. And if there's anyone who knows Trestman's mind and the Als' tendencies, it's Milanovich — Trestman's former offensive coordinator.

Milanovich got a three-year contract extension last week, a solid vote of confidence in a solid coach. Now if he can figure out how to stop his old, er, former quarterback, Anthony Calvillo, the Argonauts might get a chance to play in the Grey Cup Centennial game in Hogtown.

Our fearless prediction? Alouettes 28, Argos 27 in a close one.

still more lies and vicious innuendo: Got on Twitter for the first time this week (see my Twitter handle below) and discovered that Brad Richards of

the Rangers apparently does not know how to spell "Knicks," as in the team that shares Madison Square Garden with the Rainjers. Richards had it "Nicks" twice and had to apologize to Nicks, er, Knicks fans. Mind you, the Knicks have been so bad for so long, maybe they should think about a name change. ...

We've had our doubts about Roberto Luongo at times, but he's apparently the man behind this wonderful "Strombone" tweet aimed at Bruins knucklehead goaltender Tim Thomas: "Some people say 4 more years of Obama. I look at it more like 4 more years of disgruntled goalie politically charged Facebook rants!

That injury to Blake Geoffrion is another reminder of the main reason we'll back the players to the bitter end in this lockout. Because the players risk everything they have every time they step on the ice, while the owners risk nothing that matters. Mercifully, it appears the youngest Geoffrion to make the NHL will make a full recovery. ...

Most untrue statement Sunday came not from Bettman but from his nemesis, Larry Brooks of the New York Post, who tweeted: "Not one of us reporting on or analyzing this has so much as a nickel's worth stake in the outcome." Are you kidding me? Check the bank accounts of all those talking heads blabbing and tweeting on TSN and RDS and tell me that these all-media hockey jocks have no stake in the outcome. An end to the season is going to hit them where it hurts. ...

Canadiens fans like to talk up the young talent they have in Hamilton, but the Habs youngsters were handed a hockey lesson Friday evening by the Syracuse Crunch — since June, an affiliate of the Tampa Bay Lightning. ...

No surprise to see Claude Julien coaching 8- and 9-year-old players in a charity game last week. I talked to Julien at some length during the last lockout and the man was tearing his hair out. (You probably don't remember this, but before the 2004-05 lockout, Julien had hair like Troy Polamalu's. Honest.) ...

Coach Mike Brown of the Lakers fired five games into the season? He lasted one more game (and won one more) than Jacques Demers did in the autumn of 2005, when he was bounced with the Habs 0-4. ...

finally, the video clip of the week? Has to be Bush-era strategy creep Karl Rove, taking a hissy fit on Fox after he learned that you can't actually buy an American election.

Heroes: Blake Geoffrion, Roberto Luongo, Sarah Reid, Pascual Perez, David Ortiz, Mathieu Schneider, Mathieu Darche, Donald Fehr, Scott Milanovich, Texas A&M, Johnny "Football" Manziel, Taylor Martinez &&& last but not least, four more years for Barack Obama — a rare act of sanity on the part of my former country.

Zeros: Tim Thomas, Karl Rove, the Unnecessary Lockout, Marcus Vick, Lane Kiffin, Nick Saban, Steve Spurrier, Greg Schiano, Jim Harbaugh, Bobby Valentine, Jeffrey Loria, David Samson, Claude Brochu, Lance Armstrong, Ed Snider, Jeremy Jacobs, Murray Edwards, Craig Leipold, Daryl Katz, Paul Ryan, Mitt Romney, Karl Rovelast but not least, Gary Bettman.

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644091 Montreal Canadiens

Dave Stubbs: A memorable feast for charity with Habs

By Dave Stubbs,

Dave Stubbs: A memorable feast for charity with Habs

So what if Colby Armstrong's Movember mustache doesn't bring us world peace, as he pretty much guaranteed this week that it would? So what if it won't be so awesome that the planet will never be the same, as he vowed?

Armstrong, with a starved caterpillar on his upper lip, and five Canadiens teammates will make the holidays brighter for many less privileged Montrealers, and if that's a more modest accomplishment than global harmony, so be it.

An Oct. 11 challenge that I threw out to Armstrong on Twitter — that he photograph himself and tweet the photo from an exhibition-game bench that

night in Quebec City — grew into something unimaginably special Wednesday evening.

This was social media used for much good: one tweet ultimately saw Montrealer Caroline Tardif and her partner, Éric Legault, dine at iconic 76-year-old Montreal steak house Moishes with Armstrong and fellow Habs Brian Gionta, Carey Price, Josh Gorges, Travis Moen and Brandon Prust. They were joined by myself and Lenny Lighter, the Moishes co-owner who for nearly four hours uncorked some fabulous wine, on the house.

Caroline was the high bidder, at \$3,300, in a five-day eBay auction that would give the winner and a guest two seats at our dinner table. Every penny of her bid goes to The Gazette Christmas Fund, this season in its 47th year of putting food on the tables and gifts under the holiday trees of less fortunate Montrealers.

Caroline entered the bidding late, winning on just her second bid, but confided to me Wednesday, "I know how to win an auction!"

(Lenny, our host, could have saved a few pennies on his Hydro bill; Caroline's smile alone illuminated the stately dining room from first sip to last forkful.)

"It sounds like an odd thing to say, but I was happy to see how really 'normal' all the guys were," Caroline said later of the players. "They're so down-to-earth and easy to talk to. They totally made us feel included and welcome, like we were part of their group, not two outsiders just looking in.

"The strangest thing was to sit with a group of guys you feel you know from their stats and having read about them, watched interviews and followed on Twitter, and they didn't know Éric and me at all. They're a wonderful group of guys and we're absolutely thrilled to have gotten a chance to meet them.

"I'm also happy to think I may have contributed in helping less fortunate Montrealers enjoy a more pleasant holiday season," she added. "As for me, my Christmas sure came early this year and I've loved every second of it."

Missing from the dinner was former Canadian Mathieu Darche, who in Quebec posed with Armstrong for the Gorges-snapped in-game photo that gave birth to the charity auction.

Darche was in New York as a member of the NHLPA's negotiating committee, in meetings trying to hammer out a new CBA that might finally get the 2012-13 NHL season underway. We raised a glass in his honour, a nod to the man who didn't get to satisfy his desire to sample Moishes' new filet mignon poutine.

Before we were seated at 7 p.m., the Canadiens signed a blue Forum seat that The Gazette will auction next summer at our golf tournament, proceeds of that going to the 2013 Christmas Fund. The seat arrived with Gazette marketing coordinator Amanda Di Rienzo, a huge fan of Price who might still be beaming after having had a photo taken with her favourite.

My hat is off to Amanda, Gazette marketing director Nadia Orobello and the many others behind the scenes at The Gazette who organized the digital and print promotion of the auction to ensure its success.

And thanks to the players, who stirred interest not only in the charity event with their participation, but created awareness generally of the Christmas Fund, which for decades has been generously supported by Gazette readers.

Armstrong, as expected, was a riot, from the moment he asked that his multi-angled nose be photographed straight in a pre-dinner picture, to the tantalizing hockey scoops he threw at me, knowing I wouldn't report them, to his gracious near-midnight text message that included: "Thanks for the heads up on the dress code!"

The players' jeans and casual sweaters in fact set the tone for a relaxed evening of laid-back storytelling from the rink, dressing room and far beyond that Caroline and Éric won't soon forget.

Let's face it, not every fan would be privy to conversation — all cleared from the table with the dishes — that included Price and Gorges discussing their respective wedding plans; some candid insight into last January's mid-game trade of Michael Cammalleri to Calgary; and delicious tales about the Boston Bruins' Zdeno Chara.

Together, the stories and main courses were a carnivore's delight, our host's chicken the only plate not filled with Moishes' world-class steak. This wasn't entirely surprising since Lenny, a tremendously fit competitive cyclist, might eat at his own restaurant four times a week.

I sat directly across from a bottomless pit named Price, who said he'd trained hard that day and arrived at the restaurant hungry.

Price opened with Moishes' legendary coleslaw and dills, then followed with bread to cleanse the palate before he got serious: a beef tartare appetizer preceded a chopped salad, a 22-ounce rib-eye steak that barely saw the plate, grilled vegetables and a massive Monte Carlo potato. He finished off with pumpkin-puréeed cheesecake, evidently no room left for coffee.

In fact, Price chose to pass on dessert — until he opened the menu. When he suggested lightly that his fiancée, Angela, would kill him for having the cheesecake, I helpfully recommended that he take her home a slice as a peace offering.

"No, she'd kill me for that, too," he replied, laughing, tackling his portion.

"Prustie, help me finish this, will you?" he finally pleaded to the teammate seated at his right elbow which today might have tendinitis.

Prust laughed, then took one of the two forkfuls of cheesecake that remained.

None of the goaltender's teammates went hungry. Gorges, a Moishes veteran, proved as deft with a steak knife as he is blocking shots. Captain Gionta surely left the restaurant up a few weight classes.

At the end of the table, the square-physiued Moen was dangerously quiet, tabbed by Price to be his choice for the evening's best appetite. That couldn't be substantiated, but Moen was last seen helping Armstrong destroy a monstrous slab of chocolate cake.

It was nearing 11 p.m. when we thanked Lenny for his hospitality and lumbered into the night, Price declaring that he'd be on the treadmill in the morning to burn off his dinner.

"Until when? Sunday?" I asked.

He laughed weakly, and replied something to the effect that he might not need a bedtime snack.

Caroline Tardif's blog account of her special evening: [tinyurl.com/bycac2t](http://tinyurl.com/bycac2t)

The Gazette Christmas Fund welcomes every donation, big or small. Donate online at [tinyurl.com/a73ssna](http://tinyurl.com/a73ssna) or use the coupon on Page B8 of Saturday's Gazette.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.12.2012

644092 Montreal Canadiens

Update: Improving Blake Geoffrion moved out of intensive care

By Dave Stubbs

Hockey Inside/Out has learned that Hamilton Bulldogs centre Blake Geoffrion was moved from intensive care at the Montreal General Hospital into a regular room Sunday morning, an excellent sign that the 24-year-old is recovering nicely from the depressed skull fracture he suffered in a Bell Centre game Friday night.

Geoffrion was hit with a thunderous check by Syracuse Crunch defenceman Jean-Philippe Côté midway through the first period of the Crunch's 4-1 AHL victory. The clean hit levelled Geoffrion, who smacked his helmeted head on the ice and suffered a laceration from the skate of Côté, who tumbled to the ice following the heavy hip-check.

Geoffrion left the ice under his own power but was transported immediately to the Montreal General Hospital, where he underwent surgery that lasted roughly two hours.

It is unclear how long Geoffrion will remain in the hospital as he recovers. The only communiqué from the parent Canadiens has come on Saturday early afternoon, when it announced that Geoffrion had suffered the depressed skull fracture, had undergone successful surgery and that doctors expect him to make a complete recovery.

Canadiens head team physician and chief surgeon David Mulder, a veteran of nearly 50 years with the Canadiens family, praised the Bell Centre work of Habs head athletic therapist Graham Rynbend and of Luc LeBlanc, Rynbend's counterpart with the Bulldogs, for their quick, efficient work on

site to care for Geoffrion and get him to the Montreal General, which is world-renowned for its superb trauma care.

Mulder wasn't at the Bell Centre game, returning home from a trip to Cleveland, but went immediately to the General and was in the operating room throughout Geoffrion's surgery.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.12.2012

644093 Nashville Predators

Nashville Predators prospect adjusts to fit team's needs

Josh Cooper

For Predators forward prospect Austin Watson, it's a process.

It's about learning how to eat right, how to take responsibility for his body, how to account for players bigger and stronger than previously encountered. It's about learning how to play center — and wing.

For Nashville's first-round pick in the 2010 draft, who currently is in his first season with the Milwaukee Admirals of the AHL, it's about learning to be a professional.

The Predators didn't select the 6-foot-3, 203-pound Watson to be an offensive dynamo, but they do like his progress as a two-way forward who can play multiple positions.

"He's so versatile that we can use him anywhere," Predators assistant general manager Paul Fenton said. "We can put him in a checking role. We can put him in a higher role where he's on your top two lines. We can put him on the power play. Defensively, he is so responsible with his game from what we saw when we drafted him, and he's getting physically bigger and stronger every day."

In many ways, Watson is one of Nashville's most important prospects.

The Predators traded their 2011 first-round pick in a deal that landed forward Mike Fisher, and their 2012 first-round pick was packaged for forward Paul Gaustad this past season.

So that makes Watson the Predators' most recent first-round pick. Although Nashville historically has drafted and scouted well in the later rounds, viable NHL talent out of the first round is vital to any franchise.

The Predators have put Watson at both wing and center. The transition for a young player from junior to pro is normally easier at wing, but Watson, who played juniors from 2008-09 through 2011-12 in the Ontario Hockey League, intimated that at center his learning curve could accelerate.

"You have to be a little more aware," Watson said. "Plays happen quicker, and guys are a little more skilled and a little smarter. It's just a matter of the little details get done in a quick manner."

So far, Watson has one goal and three assists this season in 10 games. It's hard to expect a player who barely averaged more than a point per game his last year in offense-happy juniors to not have some drop-off.

But the Predators don't see him as a major point producer in the future. They see him more as a versatile NHL player who can contribute at various places on the ice.

"Will he be able to put 60 points on the board? I don't know. I mean, if everything goes right, maybe he can," Fenton said. "In his prime, he's looking at maybe 40-plus points, playing against every team's best player and bringing that Predator work ethic that we pride ourselves on."

Fenton added that it was unlikely that the still-raw Watson would make it to the NHL this season — if the lockout ends. Watson said he just cracked the 200-pound mark for the first time and still needs to make some gains in overall strength.

There's still some belief on his part that he could crack the lineup if he keeps improving.

"When the NHL season starts, we all want to be there," Watson said. "We all want to be there as soon as possible, but at the same time, we're focused on getting the job done here."

Reach Josh Cooper at 615-726-8917

Tennessean LOADED: 11.12.2012

644094 Nashville Predators

Nashville Predators alumni game raises \$4,000-\$5,000

Josh Cooper

Predators radio analyst Stu Grimson called Saturday's alumni game between former Predators and Blues players a "smash success."

The showdown at A-Game Sportsplex in Franklin brought in between \$4,000 and \$5,000 for Monroe Carrell Jr. Children's Hospital and Hurricane Sandy relief, Grimson said.

"Considering the nature of the event and how starved people are for NHL hockey, there was a real nexus here," said Grimson, a longtime NHL enforcer and former Predator. "I was amazed at the attendance and the spirit of people in the building."

Grimson helped put the game together with good friend and former St. Louis tough guy Kelly Chase, who is the radio analyst for Blues broadcasts.

Grimson hopes it can be the first of many similar events.

"People seemed enthusiastic about what happened at A-Game," he said.

Geoffrion update: Former Predators forward Blake Geoffrion, who underwent surgery Friday for a skull fracture, is out of intensive care in a Montreal area hospital, according to the Montreal Gazette.

Geoffrion, a Canadiens prospect, suffered the injury during an American Hockey League game at Montreal's Bell Centre.

Playing for the Hamilton (Ontario) Bulldogs, Geoffrion was hit hard by Jean-Philippe Cote of the Syracuse Crunch. Geoffrion's head slammed into the ice, but he skated off under his own power.

Geoffrion grew up in Brentwood and was drafted by the Predators in 2006. He was traded to the Canadiens in February.

Reach Josh Cooper

at 615-726-8917

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644095 New Jersey Devils

Negotiations Bog Down as Sides Dig In on Contract Issues

By REUTERS

(Reuters) - National Hockey League (NHL) and players' association officials returned to the bargaining table on Sunday but made no breakthrough in settling their long-running, bitter labor dispute.

With both sides digging in on player contract issues, there appeared little hope of resolution to a new collective bargaining agreement that would salvage the season.

"We made it very clear to the players' association these issues are important to us, and unless they are willing to address these issues in a meaningful way or even have a proposal to address them in a meaningful way, I don't know where we go from here," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told reporters in New York after Sunday's hour-long session.

NHL Players' Association executive director Donald Fehr was equally blunt.

"The owners made it clear that there is no give with respect to any of their proposals," Fehr said.

"That unless players are prepared to take -- and this is my phrase, not theirs -- down to the comma, there's nothing to do.

"We're past the point of give and take. (That's) what I am told Gary (NHL commissioner Gary Bettman) said when I was out of the room."

There were no plans for another bargaining session although the sides likely will touch base on Monday before the NHL Hall of Fame induction ceremonies in Toronto.

League owners would like to avoid long-term contracts, limiting them to five years, delay free agency until a player turns 28 or plays eight years, have two-year entry deals and limit salary arbitration until after five years of play.

They also want to reduce the players' share of \$3.3 billion in annual revenue to 50 percent from the current 57 percent.

"They are not issues that can be traded off per se," Daly said.

"They are all important issues to us. That doesn't mean you can't talk about them and shake them.... There is flexibility around the issues we need to achieve but they are not issues that we can walk away from."

More than 300 regular-season games have already been canceled and the league's showcase event, the New Year's Day Winter Classic, called off since the lockout began on September 15.

(Reporting by Gene Cherry in Salvo, North Carolina; Editing by Greg Stutchbury)

New York Times LOADED: 11.12.2012

644096 New Jersey Devils

#### Contract Issues Emerge as Final Hurdle in N.H.L. Talks

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

After a week of negotiations, the N.H.L. and its players association have drawn close to agreement on several key issues, remaining far apart in only one main area: players' contract rights.

That area remains thorny and could delay an end to the N.H.L. lockout, which reached its 57th day Sunday and concluded with gloomy news briefings from Bill Daly, the N.H.L. deputy commissioner, and Donald Fehr, the union's executive director. The sides remain divided over when players can become eligible for free agency, among other contract issues.

But the two sides have made far more progress toward ending the lockout than is widely believed, according to a member of the union delegation who has attended the talks.

"We're basically there" in several areas, according to the union delegate, who was granted anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly.

Fehr and Commissioner Gary Bettman met Sunday afternoon at the N.H.L. office in New York along with their deputies for less than two hours of discussions on contract rights. Afterward, the two delegations broke to leave for Toronto and Monday's Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Daly told reporters that "contract rights issues are very important to the clubs" and that because of the wide gulf between the two sides on those issues, "I don't know where to go."

Fehr said he did not "see a path to an agreement" on contract rights.

But lost amid the gloom is the progress the league and union have made in six straight days of talks. They are fairly close on the critical issue of honoring existing contracts, according to the union delegate.

The issue of finding a way to pay players with existing contracts in full under a lower salary cap — or settling on a "make whole" provision, in the language of the negotiations — had been a stumbling block in previous weeks. But by Sunday, the two sides were \$2 million to \$3 million apart per team, per year, an amount the delegate described as "within spitting distance."

The league and union are even closer to agreement on revenue sharing among clubs, with a plan described as basically done except for administrative details. The system will be significantly expanded compared with the N.H.L.'s current system, with more teams qualifying for revenue sharing and more money distributed.

The system will include a small fund, similar to baseball's industry growth fund, that Bettman can specially earmark for the neediest franchises — presumably teams like Phoenix, the Islanders, Columbus and Florida.

But big obstacles remain on the issue of contract rights.

Under the collective bargaining agreement that expired Sept. 15, players whose contracts had expired were eligible for free agency if they were 27 or had seven years of N.H.L. service. The league is seeking to raise those thresholds to 28 and eight years of experience.

The league is also seeking to restrict players' rights to go to salary arbitration, and to limit the term of contracts to five years. Under the previous system, there were no limits.

The union delegate characterized the league's stance on player contract issues as "very draconian" and said, "We're very, very far apart" in that area.

According to published reports, confirmed by those present at Friday's bargaining session, Bettman told Fehr that no deal was possible unless the union agreed to all of the league's proposed changes to player contract rights.

"The owners made it clear that there is no give with respect to any of their proposals," Fehr told reporters after Sunday's meeting. "That unless players are prepared to take — and this is my phrase, not theirs — down to the comma, that there's nothing to do."

But the union delegate also stressed the "very professional" tenor of the negotiations on both sides.

Reports emerged Friday of a shouting match between players and owners at the end of that day's meeting. But the delegate said the exchange was "extremely brief" and stood out only because of its rarity.

The exchange was between the free-agent defenseman Chris Campoli and Winnipeg defenseman Ron Hainsey on one side, and the owners Murray Edwards of Calgary and Craig Leipold of Minnesota on the other.

The delegate called descriptions of the incident a "major exaggeration."

"No one would have noticed it but for the fact that these meetings are very, very professional — no one even raises their voice," he said.

New York Times LOADED: 11.12.2012

644097 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout hits absurd 57th day as sides can agree on one thing: they are making little to no progress toward an agreement that will start season

By Pat Leonard / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

The NHL and players' union put Friday's animosity aside and returned to bargaining on Sunday, only to hit another wall and emerge without any idea how to proceed.

"I don't see a path to an agreement here," union executive director Don Fehr said outside the league's Manhattan office.

"I don't know where we go from here," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly agreed on day 57 of the lockout.

Everyone knows the NHL and players' association can't agree on how to split their revenue, but Sunday's meeting exclusively addressed the league's proposed player contract restrictions.

The "candid discussion," as Daly called it, confirmed two basic facts: first, the owners are just as adamant about changing contract rules as they are about altering the revenue structure; second, the players have no interest in giving away contract rights, especially since those rights were acquired after the 2004-05 lockout in exchange for financial concessions.

Fehr said NHL commissioner Gary Bettman told the union during the meeting that "we're past the point of give-and-take," meaning the core contract issues are not items the owners are willing to take off the table in exchange for others.

"The owners are just being greedy," a union source said. "Of the two main issues (revenue and contracting rights), they want it completely their way. That's not negotiation. That's why they locked the players out."

The NHL's owners, on the other hand, believe there is an imbalance in allocation of player salaries. They have proposed shortening the entry-level term and adding a year until unrestricted free agency so that "more established players" are making the bulk of the money in their second true contract negotiation rather than their first (see 20-year-old Taylor Hall's seven-year, \$42 million extension signed this summer as an example of what teams are trying to avoid). They also want to prevent "back-diving" contracts, in which clubs frontload a player's salary to lower his annual cap hit, by imposing a maximum 5% annual variance from the first year of any deal.

"These issues are very, very important to the clubs," Daly said. "They've told us what they need as part of this CBA. If we were hearing from the clubs, 'Geez, don't let these player contracting issues get in the way of making a deal, let's get a deal done and get the players back on the ice,' that's what we would be saying at the bargaining table. But that's not what we're getting from our clubs."

In other words, even if the players and owners reached agreement on how to split revenue and honor player contracts during the transition, the owners would continue to lock out the players and delay the season until agreement were reached on the contract issues.

"We made it very clear to the players' association these issues are important to us, and unless they're willing to address these issues in a meaningful way – or even have a proposal to address them in a meaningful way – I don't know where we go from here," Daly said.

Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr are expected to speak on Monday, when they, Don Fehr and NHL commissioner Gary Bettman will attend the Hockey Hall of Fame induction ceremony in Toronto for Pavel Bure, Adam Oates, Joe Sakic and Mats Sundin.

The next bargaining session is then expected to take place in Toronto. But it has to be scheduled first.

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.12.2012

644098 New York Rangers

Oates Tackles Learning Curve in A.H.L.

By DAVE CALDWELL

HERSHEY, Pa. — Adam Oates took a break from his responsibilities as a co-coach of the American Hockey League's Hershey Bears this past weekend and flew to Toronto to be inducted Monday into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

"Back Tuesday," Oates said Saturday night, smiling.

Until N.H.L. owners and players reach agreement on a new labor contract, Oates, a former center who was a master at winning face-offs and distributing the puck to his linemates, says he plans to continue coaching in Hershey.

This is not exactly why George McPhee hired Oates, 50, in June. McPhee is the general manager of the Washington Capitals, the Bears' parent team, and his intention was to bring on Oates to be the Capitals' coach.

The lockout changed those plans, and McPhee said he thought that Oates, who was an N.H.L. assistant for three years (two years with the Devils and one year with the Tampa Bay Lightning), would benefit by sharing a job with Mark French, the Bears' coach.

"There's stuff that seeps into your knowledge, and it's being involved in hockey," Oates said. "You're making decisions you didn't make last year. You're growing."

Later, he said: "There have been some frustrations, mostly because I don't know the personnel of this league. But that's coming fast, and really, that's not the goal. So it's been a good situation."

French, who led the Bears to the Calder Cup in his first season as the coach in 2010, does not seem to have problems with the arrangement, and, to Oates's knowledge, neither do the Bears, a few of whom would be playing in Washington had there been no lockout.

The Capitals' Alex Ovechkin is in Russia, but Braden Holtby, the 23-year-old goaltender who started 14 playoff games for the Capitals last year, is in Hershey. Holtby had a .945 save percentage in his first five games with Hershey.

"It's not like our performances are going unnoticed," Holtby said. "Everyone's still trying to prove himself, and it helps having him here every day. You can't take a day off because he'll notice and is making the big decisions. It will keep us all sharp."

Hershey is hardly a backwater team. The Bears lead the A.H.L. in home attendance, with 8,726 coming to Giant Center — next to Hershey Park — on Saturday to watch the Bears' lackluster 2-1 loss to the St. John's IceCaps.

Oates stood with French behind the Bears' bench, making line-change calls and giving pointers to his players. Calle Johansson, who was hired to be Oates's assistant in Washington, has also joined French and his assistant Troy Mann.

French said the different personalities made it work.

"There's not a specific area anyone really worries about," he said. "It's a collaborative effort. As a group of four, we all learn from each other. I think our players have benefited from the situation, not only having Adam here, but Calle here as well."

Most N.H.L. coaches have dropped in to watch their minor league teams during the lockout. Oates has not played for the Capitals since 2002, and he faced a learning curve: becoming familiar with his new players as he became a coach.

It made sense for Oates to come to Hershey. He is staying in a hotel here. His family is in Washington, 130 miles south, and Oates says he has been "bouncing back and forth" to see his family and check in with the main office.

French handled the postgame news conference Saturday night, grumbling about the team's less-than-robust energy and poor execution. Those issues would be addressed, but later. The players dressed and went home.

Of Oates, Hershey forward Jon DiSalvatore said: "He's not going to scream and jump down your throat. He's going to talk to you, especially during the week. He takes a lot of time with the guys."

DiSalvatore added: "He explains himself very clearly, and that's to the benefit of the guys who are trying to learn the game. He doesn't just give you one point and leave it there. He's going to sit down and work on it with you and give you time to develop."

The Capitals playing in Hershey will benefit from Oates's being around, Holtby said, because they will be familiar with his system when, and if, the N.H.L. season begins.

Oates will know the players in Hershey who can help out if needed in Washington.

DiSalvatore, 31, has spent all but six games of his professional career in the minors. He is in his first year with the Bears after spending three years with the Houston Aeros. Maybe Oates will remember him when he coaches the Capitals.

"Every day is an audition day, and every day is an opportunity to learn from one of the best players to play the game," DiSalvatore said.

"There's a lot of learning that's going on right now. It's quite an experience to be able to learn from him."

Asked if he was trying to make the best of a glum lockout situation, Oates said: "I think we all are. I'm sure if George thought something was being majorly sacrificed, he'd stop it, but I don't think Mark feels that way."

Oates laughed as he said, "Hopefully, the players don't."

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644099 NHL

Remembering 'the unselfishness of Joe Sakic'

Eric Duhatschek

Of all the things Joe Sakic accomplished in his hockey-playing career – two Stanley Cup championships, Olympic gold medal – the scene that most people remember is a pass. More precisely, a handoff. It happened on June 9, 2001, the night the Colorado Avalanche won their second Stanley Cup championship in five years.

HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2012 Spotlight shines on the set-up man as Oates receives his call to the Hall

NHL Hockey Hall of Fame inductee Mats Sundin (L) talks with Hall of Famer Lanny McDonald on the ice at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto November 11, 2012. Sundin was participating in pre-game ceremonies prior to the NHL Legends Classic hockey game at the ACC, home of the Toronto Maple Leafs, and will become a member of the Hall of Fame in a ceremony on November 12, 2012.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman presented Sakic, the Avalanche captain, with the Stanley Cup. They posed for a moment on the red carpet, then Sakic turned and handed the Cup to Raymond Bourque, so he could be the first to raise the Cup over his head. Bourque had never won the Stanley Cup in a 22-year career. Sakic had, five years earlier. It could have been his moment again. Instead, he made it Bourque's moment.

"And that speaks to the unselfishness of Joe Sakic," reflected Rob Blake, who played with Sakic on both Stanley Cup and Olympic championship teams. "To be that great a player, you have to be very secure in yourself and in the way you play. I remember they talked about it at the back of the bus the night before Game 7 and I think Joe gave him a head's-up, that if we were fortunate enough to win the Stanley Cup, he would let Ray take it. That's one of the greatest Stanley Cup photos – of Ray with the Cup – and that's directly a result of Joe.

"The other thing about Joe is, he played with a lot of superstars," Blake added. "Not every superstar is so welcome to having other superstars with them, because they might not get as much power-play time or stuff like that. But if you look at the history of the Avalanche, never was that ever a question with Joe. Whether it be Patrick Roy or Adam Foote or Peter Forsberg or Bourque or [Valeri] Kamensky, [Theo] Fleury – you name all these guys who they added in deadline deals, never once was there a question of who the main guy on that team was.

"It was always Joe's team."

Quiet and self-effacing, Sakic will enter the Hockey Hall of Fame Monday at the head of the class of 2012, the No. 9 scorer in NHL history, a two-time champion and perhaps most importantly to Canadians, the most valuable player of the 2002 Winter Olympic men's tournament, in which Canada won its first gold medal in 50 years.

The 2002 tournament was a seminal event that started badly for Canada, but improved as the team grew together. Sakic ended up centring two young kids – Jarome Iginla and Simon Gagné – and on the day they knocked off the previously undefeated American team, on home ice in Salt Lake City, he had a four-point day, including the game-winning goal. His influence was critical, even if it was sometimes overlooked in all the Lucky Loonie hubbub afterward.

"All the other talk was about Mario [Lemieux] or Iginla's goals or [Wayne] Gretzky in the background, and that's how Joe wanted it," Blake said. "He just went out there and was the best player he could be and was so obviously very important to us.

"He was a difference maker in all the right ways – preparation-wise, a good team guy, a captain, a leader and clutch. When you needed a big goal or a big game out of someone to change things around, he was it. And then ultimately, a guy who can lead you to a championship. There are guys that have different aspects of that, but only a select few have all those attributes. In my time, Joe Sakic and Steve Yzerman are the two that fit that bill."

Pinpointing a career highlight is difficult for Sakic, but gold in 2002 along with Stanley Cups in 1996 and 2001 feature more prominently than the individual accolades that came his way – a Conn Smythe, a Hart Trophy, a Lady Byng and a Lester Pearson award.

Colorado won its first championship in 1995-96, after relocating from Quebec, where Sakic spent the first seven years of his career.

"For me, Quebec was a great place to start," Sakic said. "If you're a young player and want to go into a hockey environment, there weren't many places better than Quebec City.

Sakic was the 15th player chosen overall in the 1987 entry draft by the Nordiques, slipping that far back because of the perception that his size might hinder him as a pro. The 11 players chosen directly ahead of him were, in order: Wayne McBean, Chris Joseph, Dave Archibald, Luke Richardson, Jimmy Waite, Bryan Fogarty, Jay More, Yves Racine, Keith Osborne, Dean Chynoweth and Stéphane Quintal. If the scouts had mixed views about his future, Sakic, drafted from the Swift Current Broncos of the Western Hockey League, never gave it much thought.

"I knew I always wanted to play hockey," he said. "I never really thought about the future. I just thought about in the moment. I just played. Growing up, you get to midget age and I got listed by the Lethbridge Broncos, so your focus is, just get through that.

"I never thought, 'If I don't make it, what am I going to do?' I just thought, 'I'm in Swift now, play the year out.' Halfway through my first year, you look and you're on the Central Scouting board. It's great. After that, you get drafted. So it happened really quick and I just went with it. I was living out my dream, wherever it took me."

Sakic works as a consultant for the Avalanche now, assisting general manager Greg Sherman and assistant GM Eric Lacroix. His first two years after retiring, he immersed himself in his children's lives

"My daughter's in gymnastics, I'm the assistant coach of both boys' hockey teams. My oldest is 16. He's playing for his high-school team. My little guy is on a travelling team. Right now, with the kids at this age, the twins are 12, Mitchell's 16, we're always with them and I wouldn't want to be doing anything else.

"But hockey is my whole life. Everything I have is because of hockey. Even though I'm not playing, it feels like the norm to go to the rink and still be part of it. I don't think that's ever going to leave me. I think hockey's too important for me ever to want to walk away from it."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.12.2012

644100 NHL

Contracting rights create impasse in NHL labour talks

James Mirtle

Two steps forward. Two steps back.

That, in a nutshell, has been how the NHL lockout's mind-boggling negotiating process has played out over the past two months, even as the two sides appear to be creeping closer to the financial terms of a deal.

The league's latest meeting with the NHL Players' Association on Sunday afternoon in New York was the perfect example. On the edge-of-your-seat topic of player contracting rights, it lasted less than an hour and accomplished little.

"It was a candid discussion, but there was no progress," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said.

This was an unwelcome end to an otherwise relatively positive three days of talks in the middle of last week. But after the owners offered to pay up to \$211-million (all currency U.S.) toward the players' existing contracts, what had been a relatively quiet process spilled into the media on Friday night with ugly allegations from both sides.

The league alleged that Fehr had misled players about its proposal.

The players fired back that the NHL was more interested in undermining their leader than getting a deal done.

More of the same, really.

After taking Saturday to cool off, the two parties spent part of Sunday afternoon tackling 17 player contracting issues, 14 of which Daly said the league was willing to compromise on.

Those that they weren't able to find any common ground on, however, are the most contentious: a contract term limit of five years, moving free agency

and arbitration rights back one year, and allowing only a 5-per-cent variance in salary from year to year.

The players' argument all along has been that they have conceded on the financial side of things already (going from a 57-per-cent share down to what will eventually settle at 50-50) and do not want to budge on any of the contract rights they gained during the 2004-05 lockout.

"The owners made it clear that there is no give with respect to any of their proposals," Fehr told assembled reporters. "That unless players are prepared to take [the offer] – this is my phrase, not theirs – down to the comma, that there's nothing to do.

"We're past the point of give and take.' That's what I was told Gary [Bettman] said when I was out of the meeting."

When informed of the quote, one member of the players' camp was livid over the suggestion the players had received anything in bargaining.

"What have they given?" he said. "If they gave something, maybe we could have a deal. But where's the give?"

Daly characterized the owners' request to bump back free agency as a reasonable one.

"We're talking about one year," he told NHL.com. "We're not talking about moving heaven and earth."

Despite the grim public front, believe it or not, there were three pieces of good news buried in all of this back and forth.

One piece of good news: The \$211-million the owners have apparently put on the table means the two sides are now closer on the financial side of a deal. The two sides' proposals in mid-October put them between \$487-million and \$546-million apart over a five-year deal based on a full season and 5 per cent annual growth, meaning a \$211-million shift – even on a deferred basis – is potentially significant.

Two is that they continue to talk, with Fehr saying more negotiations are likely this week in Toronto with Bettman and Co. in town for Monday's Hockey Hall of Fame inductions.

Three is that offers continue to be made at all, even with all of the complications that a shortened, lockout-damaged season adds.

The bad news, however, is that this is going to take even more time to sort out, and time isn't particularly on their side. At best, the NHL is likely now looking at a 60-game season starting a month from now, and that's if they can hammer an agreement out in the next two weeks or so.

Minus all of the principled stands and ill will involved, given how little actually separates these two sides – financially and on contractual issues – missing any more time than that would be absurd.

Not that that means you can't rule it out.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.12.2012

644101 Ottawa Senators

Bettman isn't going anywhere

By Mark Sutcliffe

A high school student in Chilliwack, B.C. has been selling wristbands that read "Lockout Bettman."

"I wanted to make something that could help make change," he told the Chilliwack Times.

Sorry, kid. You'll probably make a bit of money off your creation, but it's unlikely you will get the outcome you want. Gary Bettman isn't going anywhere.

If you're one of the people predicting that the NHL lockout will be Bettman's Waterloo (no Jim Balsillie reference intended), think again. No matter what you or thousands of other hockey fans think of him, no matter how much you blame him for the third NHL lockout under his watch, it's very likely that Bettman will be NHL commissioner for as long as he chooses.

The typical commissioner of a major sports league is very difficult to displace. According to a report by the U.S.-based Conference Board earlier this year, the average term of an American CEO is just over eight years. Many sports commissioners last two or three times that long.

The average tenure of NBA commissioners has been more than 16 years. David Stern will have been on the job for 30 years by the time he retires in 2014. The NFL is on only its third commissioner since 1960. There have been 11 U.S. presidents over the same period. Professional leagues are not democracies, and they certainly don't have term limits.

Just as a CEO's performance is measured on the happiness of shareholders rather than customers, a commissioner's job is to please the owners, not the fans. Today's commissioner is more of a CEO building shareholder value than a custodian of the best interests of the sport. League revenues, attendance and television ratings, not the integrity of the game, are the key indicators of success.

It's unlikely that team owners are significantly better at making hiring decisions than the average Fortune 500 business (especially when you look at their track record with coaches, general managers and players signed to long-term contracts). Running a sports league might be a better job than others — making it less likely a commissioner would leave for another opportunity — but the evidence suggests that there are several important dynamics to the position that allow commissioners to hold on to power longer than some monarchs and dictators.

A sports league is a unique business without the corporate governance models of a publicly traded company. And if he survives the first few years on the job, it seems, the typical commissioner is able to build a coalition of support from a few loyal owners who hired him and some of the new owners he introduced to the league. After that, it's pretty difficult to knock him from his privileged perch atop the league.

For example, there were five NHL presidents before Bettman became the first commissioner. Other than Red Dutton, who lasted only three years in the 1940s, and Gil Stein, who was in the role for about a year, everyone has served at least 15 years.

Likewise, nine men have run Major League Baseball. Five served six years or less (including Bart Giamatti, who died shortly after taking the job). The tenures of the other four range from 14 to 24 years, including Bud Selig, already into his third decade.

But even in a profession with a lot of job security, Bettman has a particular stranglehold on his job. On Feb. 1 (whether or not there are NHL games being played that day) Bettman will mark 20 years as commissioner. Only two other NHL presidents have served longer than him, along with two baseball commissioners, the NBA's Stern and the NFL's Pete Rozelle.

Bettman doesn't just have the confidence of the current owners, he also has some serious job security written into his contract. A clause in his contract stipulates he can be fired only if a super-majority of 75 per cent of the owners agree to it. If there were no term limits and all he needed was the support of 25 per cent of the population, Barack Obama might be president for the next 20 years as well, no matter how big the U.S. deficit becomes.

You can buy one of those "Lockout Bettman" bracelets, or even boo him the next time he hands out the Stanley Cup (whenever that will be). You can wonder aloud whether the CEO of any normal private company would survive three work stoppages. But it's likely you'll have to put up with Gary Bettman long after the lockout is resolved.

Whether you consider it benevolent or despotic, the role of sports commissioner is basically a dictatorship. As long as you protect your power carefully and strategically, it doesn't matter how happy the masses are. You can stay as long as you like.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 11.12.2012

644102 Philadelphia Flyers

No progress in NHL labor talks

Sam Carchidi

After a contentious round of meetings Friday, representatives from the NHL and the players union returned to the bargaining table Sunday. But both sides said no progress was made during a one-hour session in New York.

After the meeting, which centered around player contract terms, Donald Fehr, executive director of the NHL Players Association, said the league wouldn't budge and that he didn't "see a path to an agreement."

Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner, claimed the league has made concessions on 14 of 17 issues.

In order to start the season Dec. 1, it is believed that a collective bargaining agreement would have to be in place by Nov. 20 to give players time to return from Europe and have a one-week training camp.

The lockout started Sept. 15. The NHL says it has lost \$720 million because games have been canceled through Nov. 30.

- Sam Carchidi

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.12.2012

644103 Pittsburgh Penguins

Only 14 of 17 points to resolve NHL lockout seem to be feasible

By Shelly Anderson

A one-day hiatus from formal negotiations did not smooth the way for progress between the NHL and the NHL Players' Association.

The sides met for about an hour Sunday in New York, but even steering clear of the two biggest issues did not produce much, if any, common ground. The quest for a new collective bargaining agreement and an end to the lockout does not seem to be advancing.

The topic of the day was player contract rights, and union executive director Donald Fehr said afterward that he did not "see a path to an agreement" because the league has not budged enough from its original demands.

Fehr said NHL commissioner Gary Bettman told the union representatives that "we're past the point of give and take."

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly countered that the NHLPA gave the league "17 issues on players' contracts last week. We have a deal, or made progress, on 14 of them." Those 14 apparently are not major sticking points, however, and Daly conceded that the sides are in a stalemate on other components.

"I don't know where to go," Daly said.

The sides could meet again as soon as today -- perhaps shifting to Toronto, site of the Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

After a day away from the table, Sunday marked the fifth negotiating session in six days. There was optimism last week over the fact that the two sides were not only meeting but also exchanging offers, but it appears things have stalled.

The league and union took a break from the two topics that have dominated talks and in large part defined the impasse -- revenue sharing, and a way to honor existing player contracts while reducing their share of league revenue from 57 percent under the CBA that expired Sept. 15 to 50 percent under a new deal.

An indication of which of the contract rights issues are most important to the union might have come in a memo last week from Fehr to the players. He wrote that the NHL was not willing to budge off the idea of an immediate 50-50 split of revenues or off of its player contract proposals that "include -- among other things -- losing a year of salary arbitration eligibility, allowing the team to file for salary arbitration in any year that the player can file, extending [unrestricted free agency] eligibility to age 28 or eight seasons, limiting contracts to five years, and permitting only 5 percent year-to-year variability in player contracts."

Players have said since before the lockout began in mid-September that if they were going to be willing to come down in the percent of revenue they receive, they expect in return concessions from the owners in other areas.

Several Penguins who were among a large gathering of players in New York for NHLPA meetings Sept. 12 and 13 said as much then.

"I remember 2004, it was tough, all the concessions we made there," Penguins defenseman Brooks Orpik said then, referring to a 24 percent salary reduction players accepted after a lockout that erased the 2004-05 season. The league incorporated a salary cap then, in addition to the salary rollbacks, and the players got many of the contract rights that now are back on the table.

"We gained a lot in free agency, arbitration rights," Orpik said in September. "This time around, it kind of seems like it's just all concessions from our side, and we're not really getting anything in return. Usually in most negotiations, it's give and take."

Post Gazette LOADED: 11.12.2012

644104 St Louis Blues

Oates set to be inducted into Hockey Hall of Fame

By Jeremy Rutherford

At times during Adam Oates' career with the Blues, his teammates had no idea where the slick-handed center was passing the puck.

"He would throw a backhanded pass through the middle of the slot, and you were on the ice or the bench thinking, 'Who the heck is going to be ... BOOM! ... somebody would come through that hole and hammer it,'" former Blue Kelly Chase said. "You would be like, 'What the heck just happened there?'"

Defenseman Jeff Brown, he of 47 assists himself in 1990-91, added, "If a lane wasn't there, he would hang on to it, hang on to it, look away and almost practice making blind passes. That was the thing, he always knew where guys were."

In 2½ years in St. Louis, Oates netted 228 assists, and in 19 NHL seasons he totaled 1,079, sixth-highest in the history of the league. He retired in 2004 and a three-year waiting period didn't make him eligible for the Hockey Hall of Fame until in '07, and he waited an additional five years before receiving his official invitation last June.

Tonight, the creative half of the most popular point-machine, "Hull & Oates," and one of the game's most prolific setup men, Oates will finally be on the receiving end of a gifted pass -- a Hall pass.

In a ceremony that will be televised on the NHL Network beginning at 6:30 p.m. (St. Louis time), Oates will be enshrined in a class alongside Joe Sakic, Pavel Bure and Mats Sundin.

"I'm extremely happy for Adam," Brett Hull said. "For a guy to be as classy as he was, to put up those numbers in relative anonymity almost, I tip my hat to the Hall of Fame committee for seeing his body of work and seeing that it belongs in the Hall of Fame."

An undrafted player who got his shot in the NHL after signing with the Detroit Red Wings in 1985, Oates led the league in assists three times in his career and was second to only Wayne Gretzky in assists for the entire decade of the 1990s. He was the principal setup man for three 50-goal scorers (Hull, Boston's Cam Neely and Washington's Peter Bondra), and two of those (Hull and Neely) netted 50 in 50 games or less.

"For me, the two things that always come to mind: I got to play with two guys who scored 50 in 50. ... It's only been done a handful of times, and I played with two of them," Oates said. "When Brett did it in St. Louis (in 1990-91 and '91-92), he was taking the league by storm. It was just fantastic to be a part of it. Then when Cam did it, he basically did it on one leg. And I had the best seats for both of them."

Acquired along with Paul MacLean on June 15, 1989, in a deal with Detroit that sent Bernie Federko and Tony McKegney to the Red Wings, Oates found instant chemistry with Hull.

"I think we were both ready to go to the next level," Oates said. "Brett scored (41) goals the year before; I scored (78) points the year before. After getting traded, all of a sudden we clicked together. We're getting more ice time together and before you know it, we're rolling, and the next you know, he scores 72 goals and 86 goals. It was incredible.

"Brett's a very, very smart guy and never got enough credit for that part of his game. You don't score 700 goals by just standing still. There is actually an art to that, too. His ability to be elusive and be able to shoot the imperfect pass as much as the perfect pass meant he is the best at that."

"But you know what?" Hull said. "A goal scorer can score goals, but without a guy like Adam, you don't reach the level that I was able to reach. There's a lot of guys who can score goals and unfortunately for a lot of them, they didn't get to play with an Adam Oates."

In 1990-91, when Hull netted a career-high 86 goals, the third-highest total in NHL history, Oates assisted on 41 of them.

"As good as Hullie was at shooting the puck off his front foot, back foot, it seemed like Oatsie was always sliding it in his wheel-house," Brown said.

But there was more to Oates' abilities than his deft passing skills. He never got rattled on the ice, or if he did, he never showed it.

"I remember reading about (former NFL running back) Jim Brown one time saying that he never got up fast, never got up slow," Chase said. "He just got up when he was tackled because he never wanted anybody to know that he was hurt or they were getting to him. And that's how I felt like Adam Oates was. It's rare that you can play the game as long as Adam did and rarely see a guy get thrown off his game, where he'd respond or react to something another player did.

"Somebody might run at you and you say, 'Would you (screw) off?' But a guy would run or slash him and he wouldn't respond. He'd just skate away. I think he intimidated teams because you're like, 'Well, how do you rattle this guy?'"

As it turned out, only a contract dispute rattled Oates. After he requested to renegotiate his original four-year, \$3 million deal a second time, the Blues traded the center to Boston in February 1992 in exchange for Craig Janney and Stephane Quintal.

"That's part of sports and part of the game, but it really (stunk)," Hull said. "We could have been a foundation for a number of years. Adding pieces to the pie to strive for that Stanley Cup in St. Louis would have been really something special. It was unfortunate."

Oates would continue to put up mind-boggling numbers, including a career-high 142 points in 1992-93 with the Bruins, but many still wonder what Hull and Oates could have continued.

"Bobby Hull (Brett's dad) said, 'There would have been one guy shooting pucks in the net, and they would have needed two guys taking them out,'" Chase said. "It's true. It was scary."

Oates' 1,420 points left him as the highest-scoring player in NHL history not to be in the Hall. His 156 playoff points are the most among players never to win a Stanley Cup. One of those distinctions will change tonight.

"I never put myself in the category of Wayne Gretzky or Mario Lemieux, people I thought were special players," Oates said. "Am I honored by it? Absolutely ... that somebody else puts me in that category. But I can't say that I ever put myself in it."

The Blues will be heavily represented at tonight's ceremony. Owner Tom Stillman has offered his support for a group that will include Hull, Chase, Brown, Garth Butcher, Rick Zombo, Sergio Momesso, Gino Cavallini, Curtis Joseph and Terry Yake, among others.

"It's important to be up there because, No. 1, Adam was such a great player and he's a class guy," Chase said. "As you get older, you realize how important guys like that are to the game. I believe he's one of those guys. You look to him and say, 'He's a great representative for the NHL.'"

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.12.2012

644105 Toronto Maple Leafs

Hockey Hall of Fame: Mats Sundin wishes he'd retired as a Maple Leaf

Mark Zwolinski

Mats Sundin has repeatedly referred to the high level of emotion he's harboured this Hockey Hall of Fame weekend.

It was never more apparent than when he stepped onto the ice for Sunday's Legends Classic at the Air Canada Centre — in front of a near-sellout crowd in the city where he'd been a star for 13 years.

The emotions will continue to flow Monday when Sundin, Adam Oates, Pavel Bure, and Joe Sakic are formally inducted.

Not even the NHL lockout, which wiped out the traditional Saturday night's Leafs game on induction weekend, could put a damper on the experience for the class of 2012.

"We're having a great time this weekend," said Sundin, greeted by cheers and mobs of media from the moment he arrived at the ACC, two hours before the legends game. "You'd think it was a playoff game in here. . . . When I landed at the airport it was like coming home."

As for his acceptance speech, he says it will be economical.

"It will be short. I think I go last, so it will be short," Sundin said with an ever-present smile.

He also told the crowd he wishes he'd retired as a Leaf.

"In my last season I wasn't sure I wasn't going to play anymore," Sundin said. "I think it took six months or so before I decided to play again. Sometime it's out of your control; you can't decide how your career ends. No doubt, Toronto is dear to my heart. I love this city. We (Sundin, wife Josephine and their infant daughter) live in Sweden, but we come back here often and it's very special to me."

The crowd — which also gave a warm reception to the other inductees and ex-Leafs Doug Gilmour, Curtis Joseph, Darcy Tucker, Gary Roberts and Joe Nieuwendyk — booed loudly when NHL commissioner Gary Bettman's image was flashed on the scoreboard.

The retired players remain very close to the game and, off the record, many fear the entire season could be wiped out. There was a Twitter report Sunday afternoon that Bettman told the players' union negotiations are "past the point of give and take."

"When the game goes from \$2 billion to \$3 billion in revenue, there's going to be some negotiations and some (stalemates)," said former Calgary Flames star Theo Fleury, now a popular public speaker and in the process of writing a follow-up to his successful book *Playing with Fire*.

"The game has changed," Fleury added. "There's a lot more money on the table. I think the players are a lot more business-orientated than we ever were. I was the guy that always said, 'Drop the puck, let's play hockey.' But here's how I see it: I do a lot of events all across Canada and I run into guys like Gordie Howe and Johnny Bower, who are still doing events. And I say, 'Why are you guys here?' They need to be there to make money."

"So I have no sympathy for the owners because of that. Because those are the icons of the game, the guys that I looked up to and wanted to emulate. I'm fully behind the players and what they're trying to accomplish."

Former Leaf Gary Roberts, now a sought-after off-season trainer, said many of his NHL clients just want the game back.

"I'm involved with current players that I train. They're not different than us years ago. They want to play," said Roberts. "It's discouraging, for sure, for hockey fans. I'm a hockey fan. I want to see hockey being played. Hopefully they can find a happy medium and all get back to work and move on."

The players and owners talked for 90 minutes on Sunday and there's a sense that the next key date is U.S. Thanksgiving on Nov. 22.

Sundin was traded to the Leafs in 1994, the year a lockout shortened the season to 48 games, starting in January, 1995.

"There's always things you (players) can't control, but for sure everyone wants to see the game start back up again," Sundin said.

Sundin — who says he's been emotional ever since the selection committee called, during dinner with his wife in June — is entering the Hall in his first year of eligibility. Next year's list of candidates is also impressive, including Rob Blake, Rod Brind'Amour, Scott Niedermayer, Chris Chelios

and Brendan Shanahan, who narrowly missed selection this year. For the second straight year, there are no women on the ballot.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.12.2012

644106 Toronto Maple Leafs

Sundin 'led by example': Fletcher

By Lance Hornby

Thirteen years as a Maple Leaf made Mats Sundin a Hall of Famer and it was Cliff Fletcher who made Mats a Maple Leaf.

Almost 20 years after the controversial trade brought Sundin to Toronto for Wendel Clark, Fletcher will be along those clapping the loudest on Monday night when Sundin is inducted. On June 28, 1994, as Fletcher and Quebec Nordiques' general manager Pierre Lacroix walked into the NHL draft in Hartford, the six-player deal, with Sundin for Clark the centrepiece, was completed. A firestorm ensued among Leaf fans, one that was never quite doused despite Sundin going on to be the franchise's scoring leader.

"It was a great trade for the Leafs, but very emotional from the standpoint of Wendel," Fletcher said. "The face of the franchise for so many years was (gone). But Mats had a great Leaf career for well over a decade."

Fletcher knew that Sundin would give the Leafs a one-two punch at centre with Doug Gilmour and correctly forecast he'd eventually be the team's focus whenever Gilmour departed. But Sundin's best years would come post-Gilmour with Fletcher gone and Pat Quinn as Leafs' GM. Fletcher did move Clark when his value was highest and eventually retrieved him in a later deal with the Islanders.

"When we made the trade, Quebec was looking for toughness and Mats had just completed his fourth season in the NHL. He was very durable and had not missed a game. He was strong, highly productive, everything you want in a centreman, averaging 30 goals a season.

"The trade went down like a lot negotiations, like it might never happen and then to a larger deal (Todd Warriner and Garth Butcher to the Leafs, Sylvain Lefebvre exiting and a swap of inconsequential first rounders). Quebec had Joe Sakic and thought it was a trade they could afford to make. It started off with them interested in Wendel and we said only if Sundin comes back. Then it just developed in size."

Not that Clark wasn't a great leader, but Sundin grasped everything the job of captain entailed, on and off the ice.

"No one worked harder in practice," Fletcher said. "If you were a young player coming up with the Leafs and you stepped on the ice and saw how hard the star of the team worked, you'd think 'I'd better pick up my pace'. I thought Mats did his job with such grace, always making himself available, having time for everyone. He brought so many intangibles.

"He was not the most outwardly vocal person in the world, he just led by example. He had such a distinguished career. This is a happy day for me."

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644107 Toronto Maple Leafs

Goalie coach St. Croix bides his time with Marlies

By Lance Hornby

SAN ANTONIO -

As Rick St. Croix boarded the Marlies' bus after Saturday's game he resisted the urge to wipe his hands and announce "my work here is done."

The arrival of the new Maple Leaf goaltending coach, in the midst of this hellish road trip, coincided with three wins in as many nights by all three stoppers, two of whom badly needed to boost confidence. Though such trifectas do happen in the weird world of minor-league scheduling — the

Binghamton Senators did it early in 2011 — it allowed St. Croix to see all three in a short span and positive light.

He still has much work ahead with Ben Scrivens, Jussi Rynnäs and Mark Owuya and has not yet shaken hands with de facto No. 1 James Reimer. But a week of on-ice tutelage with another game in Oklahoma City on Tuesday, gives St. Croix fresh data. After replacing Francois Allaire, who made a loud exit by saying Leaf coaches meddled in his duties, St. Croix can joke about being unbeaten, but not be unrealistic about what short-term impact he can have.

"I don't like to feel I'm coming in and changing a lot," said St. Croix, a one-time Leaf in the Harold Ballard era. "But certain things are important and one is making sure they're all enjoying what they're doing and enjoying the process.

"If anything, I'd hope they recognize they have a wonderful opportunity to do what they're doing, that they're grateful and they hold onto it. Before they know it, it's gone in the blink of an eye."

All three Marlie goalies were free agents who followed the allure of Allaire to Toronto. Reimer, an older draft pick, credited Allaire in part for his rapid success, jumping to the NHL in 2010-11. Scrivens was the AHL's best statistical goalie last season. But the difficulties that Jonas Gustavsson encountered before leaving the Leafs and Reimer's struggles after his injuries pointed to a change.

St. Croix, who shares Manitoba ties with head coach Randy Carlyle, worked with Ed Belfour in his Cup year in Dallas among other star pupils. But the lockout forbids him access to Reimer and there's also the chance another NHLer will arrive via trade, perhaps Roberto Luongo.

"This is strange," St. Croix admitted. "I'm not really connected to the Leafs yet, just the Marlies. I just think there will be a lot of urgency once this (lockout) gets resolved. It will be a shorter time frame for me to work, but we'll get through it."

For now, he's been given a say in who starts each game for the Marlies and has tinkered with a couple of details, such as how the 6-foot-5 Rynnäs fields pucks behind the net. The Marlie staff thought that aspect of the Finn's game looked much more proactive in Friday's 3-0 shutout in Austin, his second in three starts.

Owuya was slotted for more time in the East Coast Hockey League, but the combination of the lockout tying Scrivens to the farm and the sudden end of the Leafs' affiliation with the Reading Royals meant with the Marlies have no secondary home for Owuya just yet. He had a good third period in Saturday's 5-3 win to even his record at 1-1. Marlies' head coach Dallas Eakins had said Scrivens' early season hiccups put his No. 1 status in jeopardy, but then Scrivens also closed strong on Thursday in Houston.

"All three have been receptive to me," Kenora native St. Croix said. "I'm sure they're all wondering 'who is this guy? Is he going to help me or hurt me'? You need time to build trust and hopefully, that will unfold here.

"With video, the amount of info you can get now is not in short supply. There is some info that can be drawn upon from (scouting) them in the past when I was in the Winnipeg Jets and Manitoba Moose organizations. But it's good to see first-hand who's in our system and relate to them as people."

Owuya is appreciative of St. Croix's efforts.

"You can tell he's done this before. It's fun, because he works on a lot of things, more than you're used to. The biggest thing with him is communication. I believe that's big, too, because if a goalie coach tells you to work on this or that and you're not comfortable, it's not going to work."

Until the lockout ends, St. Croix is taking a bit of time re-discovering his Leaf roots. He played three years at a turbulent time in the club history, spanning the end of 1970s hero Mike Palmateer to the '80s rookie tandem of Allan Bester and Ken Wregget. Leaf assistant coach Dave Farrish was a teammate.

"It was an exciting time, but we were not a first-place team," St. Croix chuckled. "I don't have many memories of winning, but every experience is a part of a journey and makes you a better person. I met Harold many times. He played a few mental games with me. But I really enjoyed my time. I'm finding old connections with the Leafs and with Oshawa from my early playing days in the OHL.

I knew my way around the Gardens, but I've never seen a game at the Air Canada Centre."

He hopes to start exerting some influence there soon.

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644108 Vancouver Canucks

Joe Sakic: One of the great ones

By Ben Kuzma

Joe Sakic: One of the great ones

'Burnaby Joe' is to be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame along with Pavel Bure, Adam Oates and Mats Sundin. A consummate if taciturn professional, Joe Sakic always allowed his play on the ice to do his talking for him

Joe Sakic loathed game-day skates.

The long-standing NHL morning ritual of loosening limbs and sharpening minds never really resonated with the Burnaby native. He would rather adjourn to the weight room and engage in a vigorous regimen of exercises, while his teammates went through the on-ice motions. And when they met the media, Sak-ic would often linger in the gym and do an extra set of squats or stretches - anything to avoid extra skating.

"To be honest with you, I hated them and thought they were useless and I was pretty lucky that they were always optional for the most part," recalled Sakic. "I thought it was better to get a good stretch and get the legs going a bit. To put the equipment on, I just thought mentally it was a lot easier to go to your meetings, stretch out, go home and get ready for the game."

The next game for the retired Sak-ic is the Legends Classic on Sunday in Toronto, a prelude to his induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame on Monday along with Pavel Bure, Mats Sundin and Adam Oates. And while there was often another game at play with the media who hoped Sakic would speak at length - it spawned the moniker "Quoteless Joe" - the consummate captain preferred to let his play do the talking.

So don't expect a long and rambling recount of Burnaby Joe's career during the acceptance speech.

"On the podium, I'm just going to be thinking about getting through it," he chuckled. "Really, I'll be thinking about all the people who helped get me there."

While there was plenty of help along the way in a remarkable 20-year career, Sakic did so much on his own. The determination alone spoke volumes. So did the numbers that have earned him a place in the Hall and the retirement of his No. 19 jersey by the Colorado Avalanche. Unleashing one of the league's quickest and most accurate wrist shots allowed the mild-mannered, yet driven, centre to pile up 625 career goals and 1,016 assists over 1,378 games in a career that concluded after the 2008-09 season as hernia and back surgeries took a toll. Yet, when it mattered most, Sakic was just as effective, with 84 goals and 104 assists in 172 post-season games, and his legacy as a leader is unquestioned.

So was that shot, that looked a lot like Markus Naslund's in his prime.

"I don't remember, as a kid, having a great shot or having to rely on it," said Sakic. "I enjoyed getting on the ice a little early or staying a little late and getting 20 to 30 pucks and trying to shoot as hard as I could. I wasn't worried about accuracy. It was how hard and how quick I could shoot. Through repetition, it became natural."

While much should be made of two Stanley Cup championships with the Avalanche in 1996 and 2001 - along with Conn Smythe, Hart Trophy, and Lester B. Pearson Award honours - Sakic was an international star from the outset. He experienced a World Cup of Hockey triumph in 2004, won Olympic gold and MVP honours with Team Canada in 2002, a world championship in 1994 and world junior title in 1988. It was the same year he was named WHL and CHL player of the year with the Swift Current Broncos.

More importantly, Sakic embodies every element of the criteria for entry into the Hall: "Playing ability, sportsmanship, character and contribution to the team or teams and to the game of hockey in general." It's why he's so revered in hockey circles, is an executive adviser and alternate governor

with the Avalanche, and has a street near a sports complex in North Burnaby named "Joe Sakic Way" in his honour.

Scoring 50 goals on two occasions and hitting the 100-point plateau in six seasons was the statistical proof of his individual impact. But there was nothing to replace the team title feel.

"The Stanley Cup, especially the first one, you're relieved that you won what you've been dreaming about as a kid," said the 43-year-old Sakic. "What you miss the most is going to the rink every day and that special bond with your teammates. You take it for granted and when you retire, whoa, that's tough to find."

Not that Sakic is looking to replicate that feeling. He skated twice to prepare for the Legends Classic - to get the feel of donning hockey equipment again, instead of the corporate suit he now wears daily.

Those two twirls on the ice were enough. "It would have been nice to win another Stanley Cup, but I worked as hard as I could and I have no regrets," he stressed. "I'm very proud to have been around the game for that long."

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644109 Vancouver Canucks

Schultz snub still stings

By Jason Botchford

Schultz snub still stings

Justin Schultz is turning heads in the AHL with the Oilers' farm team, the Oklahoma City Barons. Schultz picked the Oilers over the Canucks, among other NHL suitors, earning him boos during Friday's game versus the Abbotsford Heat

Piling up 15 points in his first 10 pro hockey games isn't Justin Schultz's most remarkable performance in pro hockey.

No, that was choosing the Edmonton Oilers.

Vancouver is still hurting from that one.

You could hear the pain here Friday when jilted Canucks fans booed Schultz lustily, and did it often in his first game in his home province after spurning the Canucks for the young Oilers. It won't be the last time.

It's frustrating to finish runner-up to an Alberta rival, especially now, when you see the 22-year-old blueliner control the defensive end like he had a well-behaved dog on a lead.

Schultz didn't get a point. He was still the star-laden Oklahoma City's most-impressive player.

He was smooth, clever and confident, and all behind his own blue-line.

This is supposed to be the offensive wizard whose defensive game was to look like a toddler teething as he made the transition from the University of Wisconsin to the pros.

Sure doesn't look that way.

"What's under-appreciated right now is his defensive game," Ryan Nugent-Hopkins said. "He's out there for every penalty kill and every tight situation. It's awesome to have a guy like that back there, who you can trust offensively and defensively."

Vancouver may have come close in their pursuit of Schultz, the B.C. kid from Kelowna who grew up a Canucks fan, just like his dad. But it would have been an upset.

The Oilers were always his first choice and you don't have to look much further than the Oklahoma City team which visited Abbotsford this weekend to understand why.

On it is the Oilers future, including Taylor Hall, Jordan Eberle and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. They all have the potential to be stars. That worked like gravity on Schultz.

"It was a little tough but I always figured in the back of my mind Edmonton was the right place for me to be in," Schultz said.

"It made that decision a little easier.

"I saw a great opportunity there and I wasn't worried about what anyone was going to think. I think I made the best decision for my career. The young talent they have here is going to be an exciting couple of years coming up if the NHL starts.

"The end goal is a Stanley Cup, hopefully a couple of them. I think we have the talent here to do it. I'm excited to start playing with them up in the NHL."

Still, it took days for Schultz to make up his mind officially. He was ripped online for being indecisive. The Rangers, Leafs, Canucks and Ottawa Senators were viewed as teams in the running.

It must have been overwhelming. Here was a young player who had never played a pro game and his situation was being covered as ferociously as the Ryan Suter and Zach Parise saga.

"I definitely didn't expect the attention it got," Schultz said. "But, you know, I learned a lot from it and I'm glad it's over.

"I was a little shocked (at the attention). There's a lot of media in today's world."

Vancouver was in the mix because of Schultz's roots. His family still lives in Kelowna where he stays every summer. He played for two years in the BCHL.

"That was the start of everything for me," Schultz said. "I wasn't a highly touted guy. I got recruited to college and from there, I got here.

"I had a lot of great times there and it really developed me as a player. I wasn't the biggest guy and I didn't have many teams coming after me."

And as Schultz put it: "We were always Canucks fans."

"(My dad) basically left most of it up to me and whatever I thought was right," Schultz said. "He was supportive of me and whatever I chose.

"(Vancouver) was right up there. I always liked them when I was growing up."

He just didn't like them enough. Booooo.

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644110 Washington Capitals

Adam Oates enjoying Hall of Fame induction weekend

Katie Carrera

Sunday morning, as Adam Oates began taking part in the festivities surrounding his induction to the Hockey Hall of Fame, he had about 25 friends and family members along with him for the experience. By the time he received his honored member jacket from Hall of Fame officials and took part in the Legends Classic game at Air Canada Centre in Toronto Sunday afternoon, the number swelled to 40.

Oates is from nearby Weston, Ontario, which sits just a little more than 11 miles away from the Hall of Fame building where he will be enshrined along with Joe Sakic, Pavel Bure and Mats Sundin Monday at 7:30 p.m. The proximity makes it easy for all of them to attend and that's important to Oates, who says the honor he's receiving is just as much a testament to them as it is for him.

"It's the ultimate compliment to your career, really it's for them. I got to play this game for 19 years, for me it's a way to say thank you to them," Oates said. "It's nice that part of the moment for me is the fact that it's not just playing in the NHL. It's your whole career. Playing in Toronto and all the teams I played on and all the people I played [with], to have an opportunity to share some of that with them is just a great feeling."

Check out video of Oates's portion of the pregame ceremony below. If you listen closely, just as Oates is putting the blazer on you can hear a fan scream, "Finally!"

• On the labor negotiation front, the NHL and NHLPA met in New York Sunday but it didn't go well.

The two sides focused primarily on player contracting issues during a brief session and afterward NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr said he doesn't currently "see a path to an agreement" according to ESPN's Katie Strang. Meanwhile, NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly told Pierre LeBrun that there was "no progress" made in Sunday's negotiation session.

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644111 Washington Capitals

It was taught in the family, as Oates described it as, "if you can be unselfish, your teammates will always like you."

staff report

"It just kind of became my role where obviously trying to please my dad," he said. "I think it's just the way that you're 7 years old and your dad's like, 'Pass the puck. You're a centerman.'"

Maybe it happened before Oates was 7. Hall of Famer Brett Hull, who scored 50 goals in 50 games twice with Oates as his center on the St. Louis Blues, said, "I think he was born to be a playmaker."

It didn't hurt that David Oates gave his son a stick that allowed him to perfect his backhand and see both sides of the ice. From there, Adam Oates began building awareness on the ice, soon able to see 135 degrees to his left as a right-handed center.

But the idea of being a selfless player was present before he ever laced up a pair of skates, and it showed.

"It brought him much greater pleasure to make a play to set up a teammate who would set up a goal than when he would score himself," said Mike Addesa, Oates' coach at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). "That was his game."

Lacking flash and dash

Being able to dish the puck to teammates isn't a bad game to have. Still, it wasn't good enough to fulfill Oates' dream of playing major junior hockey, so he spent time in Junior B with the Port Credit Titans and in Junior A with the Markham Waxers.

Oates was more than a point-a-game player at what's considered Tier 2 junior hockey, but he kept getting passed over.

Hull, playing on the West Coast, admittedly knew little of Oates at the time. But that kind of talent going under the radar still was surprising.

"It's hard for me to believe that he wasn't at least a little bit talented as he was growing up," Hull said. "There's guys who slip through the cracks all the time."

At first glance, it wasn't easy to see why the 5-foot-11 Oates didn't attract attention.

"Adam was never perceived to be the proper body type," Addesa said. "He was paunchy; he had high body fats. ... He was anything in appearance but the prototypical, 'This is a hockey player.'"

Most scouts were in awe of players with what Addesa called "flash and dash."

"The prolific skater, the guy that you say, 'Wow, can that guy ever skate? Oh my goodness.' And Adam was at the other end of the spectrum," Addesa said.

Oates kept plugging away in Markham, but something had to change.

'RPI was my break'

The change came with a visit to Markham by two of Addesa's assistants at RPI, Bill Greer and Paul Allen. Oates, for once, stood out.

"[They saw] him within three days, and both of them said the same over to the phone to me: 'Coach, you've got to come and see this guy as soon as you can. This guy is brilliant,'" Addesa recalled.

RPI's coach agreed and wanted to recruit Oates. But it wasn't that easy, and it shouldn't have been surprising given Oates' struggles to emerge from anonymity early on in his career.

While trying to make the Toronto Marlboros of the Ontario Hockey League in 1980, Oates played two exhibition games alongside teammates who were being paid. Ten days later, the NCAA passed a retroactive rule that athletes who played alongside professionals were ineligible through contamination.

So Oates had to wait as Addesa and RPI athletic director Bob Duquette filed a formal petition with the NCAA to allow him to play.

"I can remember it like it was yesterday: the hearing and the perspiration as you're on a conference call with 12 members on an NCAA committee, yourself and your athletic director," Addesa said. "Then you had to wait 24 hours, and we heard back from them that they were going to grant his eligibility, but he would have to sit out the first seven games of our season as a freshman."

One final hurdle required Oates to take two courses at the Gordon Graydon Memorial Secondary School in Mississauga, Ontario, and get grades of 75 percent Canadian or higher, equivalent to 85 percent in the U.S. He did, gaining admittance to RPI.

It wasn't exactly the path Oates had envisioned.

"I had never even heard of it when I met Mike Addesa," Oates said. "I'd never even heard of it."

Three seasons, 216 points and a national title later, Oates knew it: "RPI was my break," he said.

'He worked his butt off'

Oates credited RPI's national title run for giving him the necessary visibility to get noticed by the NHL. But it wasn't like he arrived on campus in Troy, N.Y., and became a star.

Addesa told Oates during his freshman year that to make the pros, he had to work on his skating. Eager to do whatever it took, he spent more than two full summers living and working with skating coach Paul Vincent on Cape Cod.

Vincent saw potential in Oates but knew he had "a lot" to improve on with his skating.

"I remember that when we got working together he wasn't a great skater. But I found out that he also competed in track and was an 800-yard guy or 800 meters today," said Vincent, who has worked with four NHL teams as an instructor or scout. "When he'd run, you're in a natural athletic position. But when he skated he tended to lean forward and he was a railroader: feet never completely came back underneath him."

Blessed with vision and hands that cannot be taught, subpar skating still could have held Oates back. Except he was willing to change everything.

"We kind of reinvented what he had to do and how he had to do it," Vincent said. "He worked his butt off to get better."

Oates said he didn't necessarily get faster, only more agile and stronger, but his track to the NHL sped up tremendously.

Hull puts Oates on the map

From national champion at RPI to rookie with the Detroit Red Wings, Oates earned a four-year, \$1.1 million contract and didn't waste much time before becoming a point-a-game player in the NHL.

But it was a 1989 trade to the Blues that started Oates' ascent. Addesa already considered his protege a brilliant hockey mind who always wanted to talk about the sport, but it wasn't until Oates played with Hull that he started seeing things more analytically.

"I talked way more hockey with Brett. And then it started evolving where you start thinking to a different level," Oates said. "We had a connection, and he's lighting the league on fire."

In three seasons on Oates' wing, Hull scored 72, 86 and 70 goals. In 1990-91 and '91-92, he scored 50 goals in 50 games, thanks in large part to Oates, who idolized Brett's father, the legendary Bobby Hull.

"It's just we kind of had the same philosophy on the game, we had the same ideas on the game. To me, I was brought up obviously listening to my father and he instilled in me the game was give-and-go," Hull said. "You've

got to move the puck and go and get it back. There was no better guy to do that with than Adam because of his skill set."

Hull, inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2009, scored more than 30 percent of his 741 career goals with Oates as his teammate. "He helped me get into the Hall of Fame," Hull said.

Oates said that "Hully put me on the map." But that was just the beginning.

Following his trade to the Boston Bruins, Oates led the league with 97 assists in 1992-93, and the following season helped Cam Neely score 50 goals in 50 games.

Oates singled out helping Hull and Neely hit those milestones as two of the most memorable parts of his career.

"It's only ever been done a handful of times, and I played with two of them," he said. "When Brett did it in St. Louis, it was just, I mean he was taking the league by storm. And then when Cam did it, he basically did it on one leg. And watching him prepare every day to try and just play the game, let alone do what he was doing, was an incredible feat. And I had the best seats for both of them."

Hull praised Oates for having as good a hockey brain as Gretzky or Mario Lemieux. In the modern era Oates' vision stands out.

"His ability to see the game, not just offensively, but the whole game, from end to end, that's what made it easy for him," Hull said. "I wasn't necessarily a shooter. He was a playmaker, and that's what he loved to do as much or more beating a defense or beating a defenseman and kind of making them look silly, giving me say a layup or a great wide-open one-timer or whatever it is. He relished in doing that to the defense."

Oates joked Sunday that "I did score a couple goals." That's 341 for those counting. But it was more often than not his job to be the point guard on the ice.

"He could score if he wanted to. The parameters of his game, he was always put on a line with the shooter, whether it was me, whether it was Cam Neely, whether it was [the Capitals'] Peter Bondra," Hull said. "You don't really have much choice if you got a guy who could also move the puck."

Evolving on the fly

Oates reached the Hall of Fame based on those passing skills, but it was far from the only thing he cared about. As his career evolved, he took even more pride in defense.

"There wasn't a single night that you don't go into a rink and you want to win the game, but you also want to try and play a little better than Wayne Gretzky," Oates said.

It wasn't a revelation to Oates, though, given that he was the one coaching up Addesa on defense at RPI.

"I can remember him saying to me, 'You know, Coach, if that guy doesn't have his hands, how can he hurt you? So if I engage that man's hands, I'm going to diffuse anything that he can do to our team,' " Addesa said.

Oates credited Bruins teammate Ray Bourque for making him devote more attention to the defensive end of the ice, something he also thinks will help him in coaching the Capitals.

"He made me a better player, just because he made me more involved in the whole game, just wanting to," Oates said. "He never said anything to me. Just playing with him, it rubs off and I wanted to be [like] Ray more. The centerman is the only player on the team that is involved in all four corners all the time."

Even on the offensive end, Oates wasn't a static player. It took a different tact to set up Hull, Neely, Bondra and others. He could post Hull up for a one-timer and send Neely driving to the net like it was second nature.

And he could also adjust to defenses and the flow of different games.

"To me he just got the game," Hull said. "If it was a physical game, he got in there and he got his nose dirty and he took hits to make great plays. If it was a wide-open game, he could just sit there and play wide open and make you look silly. He just understood the game so well, and he had all the skill level you want. He was big, strong, he was great shape. And he had the vision, second to none."

Ultimate respect

Using that vision and hands that were his lifeblood, Oates made it to the Hall of Fame after 19 NHL seasons and 1,420 points. He never got the chance to win the Stanley Cup, making two appearances in the Final, with Washington in 1998 and the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim in 2003.

That was hardly a reason to keep Oates out.

"It's not all about Cups. There's a million guys that have won Stanley Cups that don't deserve one," Hull said. "The greatest thing to me about Adam Oates getting into the Hockey Hall of Fame is that the respect I have now for the Hall of Fame committee that they were able to look at a guy like Adam Oates, who didn't get all the accolades and didn't win a Cup, but they were able to see the talent and the raw talent and the skill and the great career he had and what he did for other players to see that he deserved to be in the Hall of Fame."

Oates said he's honored but never put himself in the class of Gretzky or Lemieux. As the player with the 16th most points in NHL history, he joins them as a Hall of Famer on Monday night.

It wasn't the easiest path, from devastation to enshrinement, but Oates found his way.

Said Vincent: "Adam, for a kid that wasn't supposed to be, turned into a hell of a hockey player."

Read more: Adam Oates built Hall of Fame career on passing the puck - Washington Times  
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/nov/11/adam-oates-capitals-built-hall-of-fame-career/#ixzz2By1QfTi8>

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644112 Websites

ESPN / Hall of Fame: Inductees share memories

By Scott Burnside and Pierre LeBrun

TORONTO -- Not to put too fine a point on it, but it's too bad NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr and NHL commissioner Gary Bettman weren't at the fan forum leading up to Monday's Hall of Fame induction ceremony, especially given the pessimism that currently surrounds the labor talks. It's too bad the two leaders couldn't have seen firsthand the kind of special bond that exists between fans and players -- in this case, Hall of Fame inductees Joe Sakic, Adam Oates, Pavel Bure and Mats Sundin -- the kind of relationship the lockout puts at risk.

Several fans told Bure that he was the reason they became hockey followers. Another fan spoke with reverence at a memory of Sakic stopping during a Stanley Cup celebration to get his young son a drink of water.

Many of the 250 or so fans crammed into the Great Hall at the Hockey Hall of Fame in downtown Toronto were sporting jerseys with the inductees' names on the back.

Funny that during an hourlong question-and-answer session Sunday, an annual event since 1999, when Wayne Gretzky was inducted, not one question was asked about the lockout. It was certainly a measure of the respect that the fans have for the four inductees and maybe, just maybe, a reflection of the anger and apathy that threatens the game during the second lockout in the past eight years.

Certainly, after watching the owners and players stumble around for the past two months and hearing the ominous reports out of Sunday's talks in New York, it was refreshing to hear the players talk candidly about their experiences during long and storied careers.

Mats Sundin, for instance, told fans that he wished he had retired a Toronto Maple Leaf instead of returning to play his final half-season in Vancouver with the Canucks.

"I wish I would have finished my career as a Maple Leaf, for sure," Sundin said.

After contemplating retiring after the 2008 season, he returned late in the 2008-09 season with the Canucks in an effort to win the championship that had eluded him as the longtime captain of the Leafs, something he described as a "business decision."

Sundin insisted that Leafs management was doing all it could to put a winner on the ice, and he believes it will someday bring home its first Stanley Cup since 1967.

"You just have to keep believing as a Leaf fan," Sundin said. "The Leafs will win the Cup, it's just a matter of when."

Coach Oates

When -- if? -- the National Hockey League and its players ever find their way to a new collective bargaining agreement, one of the most interesting storylines will be the evolution of Hall of Famer Adam Oates from assistant coach to head coach with the Washington Capitals.

And more to the point, how Oates handles erstwhile superstar Alex Ovechkin is bound to speak volumes about whether he is the long-asked question of who might bring a championship to Washington.

Ovechkin, of course, has seen his stats take a nose dive in the past three seasons with goal totals dropping from a career-best 65 in 2007-08 to 38 and 32 the past two seasons.

One of the first things Oates did after being named head coach this past summer was meet with Ovechkin. And if you think Oates is planning to keep Ovechkin on the same tight leash former coach (and former teammate of Oates in Washington) Dale Hunter did, you've got another think coming.

"I get the game," Oates told ESPN.com. "I met with Ovi for three hours in Washington. I'm a communicator. I really am. I wanted to let him know that I understand where he's coming from. I understand that when he drives to the arena tonight, he's thinking about scoring."

That's what he should be thinking about. It's his job, Oates said.

The newest Hall of Famer recalled the criticism of Alex Rodriguez during the New York Yankees' disappointing playoff run this season.

"A-Rod doesn't get to come and hit singles," Oates explained. "Those are the facts of life."

Similarly, Ovechkin doesn't get to come to the rink and be a plus player; he needs to be more, to do more.

"There is a certain double standard," Oates explained. "My job as a coach is to make sure Ovi understands it, everybody understands it, let him know I understand it, but then I also have to teach him the game with that."

What kind of vibe did he get from his captain?

"I got the vibe that I got as a fan," Oates said.

The Russian star insisted to Oates that he would always work hard, but that was never an issue for Oates.

"I said, 'You don't have to tell me that, I watch you.'"

Old teammates

Sundin and Sakic, of course, played together in Quebec before Sundin was traded to Toronto in the summer of 1994. Sundin recalls being nervous as he skated at his first practice with the Nordiques. Then Sakic skated over and said, "Hey kid, finally I have someone to play with," Sundin recalled.

Sakic, perhaps a little embarrassed, joked that he didn't remember it exactly that way.

Both players said they thought that if the NHL returned to Quebec City, as has been rumored for several years, now a team would thrive there.

"I don't think you're going to find anywhere where people are so passionate about the game," Sakic said.

Heroes for heroes

Gretzky wasn't in attendance at the question-and-answer session, but his name figured prominently for the inductees as Bure and Sakic named him as their favorite player growing up.

Bure recalled meeting Gretzky when he was a 10-year-old boy when Gretzky was in Russia during the offseason, then again as a junior player as part of a Canadian tour. When Bure's Russian squad visited Edmonton, Gretzky and Paul Coffey, another Hall of Famer, visited the team in their dressing room and shook hands with the players.

Sakic recalled playing against Gretzky in his 13th NHL game. He lined up for a faceoff in the Nordiques' end, and Gretzky took the puck from him off the draw and scored.

"It was the first minus of my career, but it was the best minus of my life," Sakic said.

Oates, from the Toronto area, grew up a Chicago Blackhawks fan and loved Bobby Hull. Later, of course, he would star with Hull's son, Brett, another Hall of Famer, in St. Louis.

Sundin grew up idolizing Mats Naslund and Mario Lemieux.

Stastny and son

Sakic had the rare opportunity of playing with fellow Hall of Famer Peter Stastny and Stastny's son, Paul, who currently plays for the Avalanche, the franchise with whom Sakic played his entire career and for which he still works as a special adviser and alternate governor.

"He's a great kid," Sakic said. "He's a different player than his dad, different personality, more laid-back."

Not just a helping hand

Oates, of course, is considered one of the game's greatest playmakers, but he joked that he did more than pile up assists.

"I did score a couple of goals," he quipped.

He described one of his most memorable goals coming in overtime off a faceoff where he beat Pat Lafontaine and pushed the puck forward and beat the goaltender.

"I hit it, and it went in," Oates recalled.

Bure, who scored 437 times in his career, said his most memorable goal was the double-overtime goal he scored against Calgary in the first round of the 1994 playoffs as the Canucks advanced to the finals that spring against the New York Rangers, losing in seven games.

Sakic recalled his goal in the gold-medal game of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, which sealed Canada's first gold medal in men's hockey in 50 years, as his top goal-scoring memory.

Sundin recalled fondly his 500th goal scored in Toronto against Calgary. He scored three on the night, and his 500th won it in overtime while the Leafs were short-handed.

"It was a special night," he said.

Dropping the gloves?

If the goals were memorable, the few fights the four skilled players had were less so.

Bure recalled fighting a member of the rival Flames when he was a youngster with the Vancouver Canucks and being knocked down immediately.

Oates had two fights in his career and recalled the first in October 1986 against Charlie Bourgeois of the St. Louis Blues near the end of a period. His teammates came by to congratulate him on the scrap in the dressing room.

"They were all laughing," Oates said.

Sundin's first fight was similar in nature, as he recalled duking it out with Dave Hannan of the Sabres in his rookie year. It was the second-to-last game of the regular season.

"I got punched 84 times," Sundin recalled.

Sakic just shook his head.

"I remember that," he said.

As for the classy center, he recalled fighting Doug Gilmour, who was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame a year ago.

"He started it," Sakic joked.

Cup memories

Of the four inductees, Sakic is the only one with his name engraved on the Stanley Cup. He was asked about the moment in 2001 when he took the Cup from Bettman and immediately handed it to Ray Bourque, another Hall

of Famer, in a poignant Cup moment. It was the only Cup Bourque would win, although Sakic said it wasn't something he'd thought about a lot before the moment.

"It just kind of happened," he said.

The longtime Avs captain joked that, had he not won a Cup earlier in his career (1996), it might have been different.

"If it was my first one, he wouldn't have touched it," Sakic quipped.

The other side

Theo Fleury had a great view of Pavel Bure's dramatic Game 7, triple-overtime goal in the 1994 playoffs. The goal helped Bure's Canucks eliminate Fleury's Flames.

"It was a great play," Fleury said. "There was a turnover in the neutral zone, and Pavel did what he did, he sneaked behind the defense, Jeff Brown made him a great pass and Bure went in alone and made a great move on Vernie [goaltender Mike Vernon]. That propelled them all the way to the [Cup] finals."

Added Fleury on Bure: "He's probably the most exciting player that's played for a long time."

Sundin's forte

Former teammate Gary Roberts was asked Sunday what he believed was Sundin's great skill as a player.

"I think the ability to skate with the puck and get to the net with 2-3 guys climbing on him," Roberts said. "I remember many nights he'd say to me, 'Just get to the net.' I knew he'd get there with 2-3 guys on his back. He was just a workhorse. The more he played, the better he played."

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ESPN / Theo Fleury: I have no sympathy for owners

By Scott Burnside and Pierre LeBrun

TORONTO -- Former star winger Theo Fleury didn't hold back when asked about the NHL lockout.

He's still a player at heart, even though he's not like today's player.

"The game has changed," Fleury said Sunday at the HHOF Legends game at Air Canada Centre. "There's a lot more money on the table. I think the players are a lot more business-orientated than we ever were. I was the guy that always said, 'Drop the puck, let's play hockey.' But here's how I see it: I do a lot of events all across Canada and I run into guys like Gordie Howe and Johnny Bower, who are still doing events. And I say, 'Why are you guys here?' They need to be there to make money. So I have no sympathy for the owners because of that. Because those are the icons of the game, the guys that I looked up to and wanted to emulate myself after. I'm fully behind the players and what they're trying to accomplish."

Gary Roberts, a former teammate of Fleury's in Calgary, now runs a successful business in the Toronto area as a high-end trainer for NHLers and young prospects. He's working with 60-goal man Steven Stamkos right now during the lockout.

"I'm involved with current players that I train, they're not different than us years ago, they want to play," said Roberts. "It's discouraging for sure for hockey fans. I'm a hockey fan. I want to see hockey being played. Hopefully, they can find a happy medium and all get back to work and move on."

The lockout didn't damper Sunday's Legends game where the Air Canada Centre was buzzing to see former stars on the ice.

"It's a great celebration of our game," said Fleury. "I honestly believe that I played in the greatest era of superstars and great hockey players and great people. So to be asked to be here to be part of it is a great thrill. It's nice to see people who appreciated the way we played the game."

Lockout irony hits Sundin

An NHL lockout in 1994-95 made Mats Sundin wait six-plus months after his June 1994 trade before finally making his Toronto Maple Leafs debut in January 1995.

That his Hockey Hall of Fame induction weekend is book-ended by another lockout isn't lost on him in terms of being ironic.

"It is, yes," Sundin said Sunday at Air Canada Centre. "But you know what, you can't control those things. Everyone wants the season to start, myself included as a hockey fan. But we're having a good time this weekend anyway. We had the fan forum today. To sit there with guys like Joe Sakic, Pavel Bure and Adam Oates, it's very humbling. To be recognized with all the great players in the Hall, it's really tough to take in, actually."

And for Sundin, it's doubly special, with the home fans here in Toronto here to cheer him on.

"The Toronto Maple Leafs is the team in my heart," said Sundin. "I'm very grateful to have been part of this team. ...

"It's very special. When I landed at the airport, I had dinner with friends and old teammates. ... Even though we live in Sweden now, every time I come here I feel like I'm coming home."

Sundin was a guarded player during his playing career, rarely showing any emotion. How he handles his speech Monday night will be intriguing.

"It's going to be very short," he said.

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ESPN / NHL, players meet briefly in NY

By Katie Strang

NEW YORK -- The NHL and NHL Players' Association met briefly Sunday in a failed attempt to tackle player contracting issues, leaving little hope a labor deal will be reached soon.

Both NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr and NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said they don't know how a labor agreement can be reached given Sunday's negotiations.

"I just don't, right now, given their opposition to addressing some of these issues, know where we go," Daly said.

The sides plan to touch base Monday -- when Fehr and NHL commissioner Gary Bettman plan to be in Toronto for the Hockey Hall of Fame ceremony - but have no immediate plans to meet again.

Both sides are digging in on player contracting issues. According to Fehr, the league said it has no plans to further negotiate what it previously offered.

The league's last full proposal Oct. 18 included several elements the NHLPA didn't like: long-term contract limits of five years; strict variance rules to avoid back-diving contracts; 28 years of age or eight professional years before free agency; two-year entry-level deals; and salary arbitration after five years of service.

"

Fehr The owners made it clear that there is no give with respect to any of their proposals. That unless players are prepared to take -- and this is my phrase, not theirs -- down to the comma, that there's nothing to do.

" -- NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr

And while several reports suggested the league was willing to bend on some of those -- although never the strict variance rules, believed to be of paramount importance to the owners -- that was not the message communicated across the table Sunday.

"The owners made it clear that there is no give with respect to any of their proposals," Fehr said. "That unless players are prepared to take -- and this is my phrase, not theirs -- down to the comma, that there's nothing to do.

"We're past the point of give and take. That's what I was told Gary (Bettman) said when I was out of the meeting."

Asked if an unwillingness to budge on its demands presented a non-starter to the union, Fehr said, "I don't know how you make an agreement if that's their position."

Daly, who had an informal lunch meeting with NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr and Los Angeles Kings forward Kevin Westgarth on Saturday to discuss a host of issues, said he realizes contracting issues are vital to players. However, he said the owners also are reluctant to make concessions in this area, particularly because they believe they made a "substantial" give in their latest "make-whole" offer last week.

The "make-whole" provision to honor existing player contracts, as well as the broader issue of hockey-related revenue, weren't discussed Sunday.

"We've always made clear that an agreement on the player contracting issues was as important to us as any other issue," Daly said.

"

We have proposals on the table. What we heard from the players' association is that they're not interested in our proposals, and that leaves us apart.

" -- NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly

When pressed further about whether the league would be willing to negotiate on these issues, Daly said, "We have proposals on the table. What we heard from the players' association is that they're not interested in our proposals, and that leaves us apart."

The league also feels like it has made meaningful concessions on a number of other areas.

According to a source, the NHL has moved toward the NHLPA on: a union guarantee of escrow and discretion to set rate; the existence of a performance bonus cushion in every year of the agreement; increases in minimum player salaries; increases in playoff pool dollars; the elimination of re-entry waivers; modifications to regular waivers; immediate effectiveness of no-trade clauses in contract extensions; and the reworking of the critical date calendar, among others.

Ever since Friday's contentious evening session -- several sources told ESPNNewYork.com that there were some heated exchanges between the sides before talks broke for the day -- dialogue has brought forth little positive news.

Fehr did, however, say he suspects it "won't be too long" before the sides meet again.

When they do, though, the union wants home-field advantage.

The NHLPA, which brought along its entire legal team, as well as Westgarth and fellow players George Parros and Chris Campoli for Sunday's meeting, has requested that talks shift to Toronto.

Fehr said the union has accommodated the league by having talks in New York -- particularly in the wake of Hurricane Sandy -- but would like his staff to have the opportunity to settle in back home.

"We'd like to get some of our staff back to their families," he said.

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NBCSports.com / Your casual reminder of just how good Pavel Bure was

Joe Yerdon

In anticipation of Monday's Hockey Hall of Fame induction ceremonies, PHT is taking an in-depth look at each of the four main entrants.

Whether it was before or during the dead-puck era of the 1990s and 2000s, Pavel Bure always proved why he was a Hall of Fame talent. The only thing that kept him from being an all-time career goal scoring leader were injuries.

Fans in Vancouver are busy debating whether or not they'll retire Bure's No. 10 but when you look at what his career entailed, there's no doubting he's a Hall of Famer, injuries and all.

Bure played 13 seasons in the NHL. Of those, he had three that went uninterrupted by injury (92-93, 97-98, and 2000-01). In those years he scored 60, 51, and 59 goals, the latter of which led the league.

In the Canucks' Stanley Cup finals year in 93-94, Bure missed just six games but led the league in goals with 60. In 1999-2000 with Florida, he missed eight games and scored a league-leading 58, 14 of which were game-winners (also a league-leading stat). Even in spite of the injuries, he still scored 437 goals.

Did you need more of a reminder of how good he was? Good, because YouTube is teeming over with Top Ten reels of his goals and other goodies, but two in particular show off his greatness.

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NBCSports.com / Fehr on contract issues: "I don't see a path to an agreement here"

Joe Yerdon

After saying recently that the two sides weren't far apart, NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr brought the mood down after today's round of bargaining.

The two sides spent their hour of negotiations discussing contracting issues. Afterwards, Fehr told reporters, "I don't see a path to an agreement here."

When it comes to the next round of meetings for the two sides, Fehr seemed positive they'd meet again in the near future saying he "suspects it won't be too long" before they get together again.

It's not all terribly negative, however, as NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly tells Renaud Lavoie of RDS, "PA give us 17 issues on players contract last week. We have a deal, or made progress on 14 of them."

Progress is being made in some areas but just not enough to get things settled.

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NBCSports.com / CBA meeting over after an hour and things didn't go well

Joe Yerdon

The two sides got together at the NHL offices in Manhattan at 1:30 this afternoon and things ended less-than amicably.

Renaud Lavoie from RDS hears from NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr that there was "discussion for 60 minutes on players contracting. I don't know when we'll get back together."

Even more ominously, Katie Strang of ESPN.com reports Fehr doesn't currently "see a path to an agreement" when it comes to the contracting issues. NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly tells Pierre LeBrun there was "no progress" in today's talks.

Meanwhile, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman reportedly said during the meeting that "we're past the point of give-and-take." With an already shortened season and the Winter Classic being canceled, the amount of revenue they're arguing about for this season is disappearing quickly.

Fehr tells Michael Grange of Sportsnet that Bettman expects the players to accept their deal "to the comma." So much for compromise.

If you're looking for a slight upside to all this, Fehr tells Strang "it won't be too long" before the two sides meet again and that the players' association would like to move talks back to Toronto.

For now, both Bettman and Bill Daly will head to Toronto for the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies. That shouldn't be too distracting.

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NBCSports.com / Adam Oates' five greatest accomplishments

Joe Yerdon

In anticipation of Monday's Hockey Hall of Fame induction ceremonies, PHT is taking an in-depth look at each of the four main entrants.

While he never won a Stanley Cup, Adam Oates has been at the heart of many great moments in hockey history. Being an Oates fan since I was a kid I can't list them all off, but here's five of them that will have you wondering what took the Hall of Fame voters so long to put him in.

1. He helped Brett Hull score 86 goals

Rewind it back to 1990-91 during Oates' short time with the St. Louis Blues and look at what he did while lined up with the "Golden Brett." Oates finished the year with 90 assists and 115 points while Hull poured in a career-high 86 goals. During the two and a half seasons he played for the Blues, Hull had the three greatest goal scoring seasons of his career (72, 86, 70). Coincidence?

2. He was the set-up man for three 50 in 50 seasons

Twice in Hull's career he scored 50 in 50 (or less). In his 86-goal season, he scored 50 in 49 with Oates' help. The following year, Hull potted 50 in 50 on the nose and did it before Oates was shipped off to Boston.

With the Bruins, Oates would help Cam Neely reach legendary status scoring 50 in 49 games in the 93-94 season. Of course, Neely did it while playing on bad knees that kept him out of action for half the year.

50 in 50 (or less) has only been done officially eight times and unofficially four other times (Neely's being one of them). Factoring in on three of them is astounding.

3. In case you didn't guess, he's an all-time great assist man

Think of the all-time greatest set-up men in NHL history. Obviously there's Wayne Gretzky. Even Mark Messier is up there too. So what about Oates? He's sixth all-time in assists.

For a guy who was never really regarded as a superstar talent, Oates just kept quietly doing his thing until he finished with 1,079 helpers. That's more than Mario Lemieux, Steve Yzerman, Gordie Howe, Marcel Dionne, Joe Sakic, or Doug Gilmour — all fellow Hall of Famers.

Not only that, he was in one of the most awkward commercials in NHL history.

4. He was once traded for a future Hall of Famer

Oates started his career with the Detroit Red Wings playing alongside Steve Yzerman. How did he not stay there and wind up winning his elusive Stanley Cup? Because he, along with current Senators coach Paul MacLean, were traded to the Blues for Bernie Federko and Tony McKegney.

Federko played one season with the Red Wings before retiring and was elected to the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2002. Meanwhile McKegney was traded to Quebec after 31 games. How about a do-over Detroit?

5. The championship he did win

While he never won a Stanley Cup (he appeared in two finals: 1998 with Washington, 2003 with Anaheim), he did win an NCAA national championship with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, NY in 1985. That year, he merely scored 31 goals and added 60 assists (91 points) in the Engineers' 38 games. His assist and points marks are still school records today.

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NBCSports.com / Even NHL guys in the AHL are well informed by Donald Fehr

Joe Yerdon

Apparently Donald Fehr isn't the poor communicator some in the NHL have pegged him to be.

While many locked out NHL players have rallied to Fehr's support, you had to wonder if the NHL guys currently playing in the AHL may have been out of the loop on negotiations. Apparently, that's not the case.

I asked Flyers forward Brayden Schenn, currently with the team's affiliate in Glens Falls, New York, if Fehr has been bad at communicating with the players like some on the NHL's side have alleged.

"I totally disagree with that," Schenn said. "He keeps the players involved, he has nothing to hide from us. We hired him. He's not there to try and make this go on longer than possible. That's definitely a false statement whoever started that."

What is Fehr doing? According to Schenn, it sounds like he's doing his job to the letter.

"He fully informs us. He comes out of the meetings and we've got an email an hour after. It's not like he can lie about it either. He has Ron Hainsey and [Kevin] Westgarth and other guys who have been in on the meetings. He has nothing to hide."

New Jersey forward Adam Henrique, currently with the Albany Devils, echoed those sentiments.

"I feel up to date. I might be a day or two behind, but as of this point where they are and all the knowledge I have of it and all the guys that are here that know, I feel we're up to date as best as we can."

Obviously guys playing in the AHL don't have the time or opportunity to go sit in on meetings while they're actually playing games and trying to win, but even in spite of all that they appear to be as in the loop as the players' union would want their guys to be.

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NBCSports.com / Players and owners to resume negotiations today

Joe Yerdon

While the heads of the NHL and NHLPA spent yesterday over a quiet lunchtime talk, it appears they'll get back to serious business this afternoon.

NHL Deputy Commissioner told ESPN.com's Pierre LeBrun he expects both sides to get back to the bargaining table this afternoon. Rob Rossi of the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review doubly confirmed this as well.

The two sides spent Saturday taking a breather after things got a bit heated on Friday. Those talks led to some on the owners' side of the equation to cast doubt on Fehr's leadership of the players. Those allegations have been refuted by many players.

With the two sides still far apart on many issues, especially the league's "make whole" concept, here's to hoping cooler heads prevail and smoother negotiations lie ahead.

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