

SPORT-SCAN DAILY BRIEF

NHL 11/25/2012

Chicago Blackhawks

644804 Bolland apologizes for controversial reNovember 24, 2012, 1:24 pm

Columbus Blue Jackets

644805 Lockout has chilling effect Downtown

Detroit Red Wings

644806 Flashback: Goalie Roger Crozier remains Red Wings' last rookie of year

644807 A hockey lockout Q&A

644808 Lockout threatens to wipe out entire 2012-13 season

Florida Panthers

644809 Florida Panthers' Peter Mueller anxious to play again

644810 NHL lockout threatens entire hockey season

Minnesota Wild

644811 Questions and answers about the NHL lockout that threatens the season

644812 Tom Powers' excitement solution for NHL: Give Russians shot at Stanley Cup

Nashville Predators

644813 Ex-Nashville Predator Blake Geoffrion begins road to recovery

New Jersey Devils

644814 For Players and Fans, a Return to the N.H.L. Game, Even if It's Only for One Night

644815 NHL Lockout Threatens Entire Hockey Season

644816 Rangers, Flyers, Devils players raise money for Hurricane Sandy victims in Atlantic City exhibition game

644817 NY Rangers' Henrik Lundqvist and Brad Richards, Devils' Martin Brodeur and 29 other NHL players compete in Ope

New York Rangers

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644819 Don Fehr meets with players in Atlantic City, reaffirms importance of protecting contracting rights in negotia

644820 Don Fehr responds to NHL's cancellation of more games, All-Star weekend saying player 'remain ready to negotia

644821 Rangers' Lundqvist, Devils' Brodeur star in charity hockey game in Atlantic City

Ottawa Senators

644822 Ottawa Senators prospect Cole Schneider scores the first 2 goals of pro career as Binghamton Senators win 6th

Philadelphia Flyers

644823 Inside the Flyers: NHL players take a break from lockout with a benefit game in Atlantic City

644824 Fehr won't halt decertification chatter

644825 Bettman ridiculed at A.C. benefit game

644826 Hartnell's Team Philly/NJ falls to Team NY in charity game

644827 Fehr uses AC charity game to update players

Pittsburgh Penguins

644828 Mario Lemieux builds second home worth \$20 million

Vancouver Canucks

644829 For Canucks keeping Luongo would be a big gamble

Washington Capitals

644830 Bettman: NHL, NHLPA 'still far apart'

644831 NHL lockout 2012: Donald Fehr says no real progress made

644832 NHL Lockout 2012: Roman Hamrlik at center of controversy

Websites

644833 NBCSports.com /What's been lost: Five best early December games you won't see

644834 NBCSports.com /Ray Whitney: restrictive CBA would handcuff good GMs

644835 NBCSports.com /Fehr claims canceled games don't make economic sense for NHL

SPORT-SCAN, INC. 941-284-4129

P644804 Chicago Blackhawks

Bolland apologizes for controversial reNovember 24, 2012, 1:24 pm

TRACEY MYERS

Blackhawks forward Dave Bolland made a bad decision regarding a retweet on Twitter on Friday afternoon. On Saturday, he apologized for it.

Bolland told TSN he was sorry for retweeting a fan's post about "wanting (NHL commissioner Gary) Bettman dead." The retweet was taken down shortly after.

"It was a mistake, I never meant to retweet that out," Bolland told TSN on Saturday. "I like to retweet for a lot of my fans and I just retweeted the wrong thing. I feel bad about it."

It's been a week of misspeaking, mis-tweeting and mis-retweeting for hockey players regarding NHL brass. Players' comments on Bettman have been anywhere from not-so-smart to completely uncalled for.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.25.2012

644805 Columbus Blue Jackets

Lockout has chilling effect Downtown

From this perch in Columbus, one can only applaud the dopes conspiring to extend the NHL lockout, now in its 70th day. Another chunk of the season, as well as the All-Star Game that was scheduled for Nationwide Arena, were officially wiped out yesterday. Burn, baby, burn. One can argue that the next best thing for Blue Jackets fans would be to kill the whole season.

There is just one caveat, and it is an important one:

The lockout has been an economic detriment to our area and it has hurt some people who can least afford it.

According to a 2008 study by the John Glenn School of Public Affairs at Ohio State, the Blue Jackets and Nationwide Arena have generated in excess of \$2 billion in economic activity since the arena doors opened. By this point, they are directly responsible for more than \$1 billion in spending by out-of-town visitors — an important figure as it represents "new money" entering Downtown.

The study was commissioned by the Blue Jackets, Nationwide Realty Investors and the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority, which now owns the building. The study serves their interests, so there is a debate to be had about how much weight to give its findings. For the purposes of this discussion, though, let us understate:

The Arena District represents a civic improvement over the old Ohio Pen; the building and their primary tenant have been fair economic generators; and the lockout has hurt Columbus more than it has helped.

The Blue Jackets in their front office have instituted a number of cost-saving measures — for instance, jobs have been pared through attrition — as they ride out the lockout. The real impact of a lost season has fallen on the part-time employees and the scores of volunteers who work game nights. Together, they number more than 1,000.

These people are not in the same tax bracket as, say, Boston Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs, who runs the corporation that runs the concessions at Nationwide. They are folks using a second or third job to make ends meet, or to put a few extra bucks in their pockets. They are youth-sports supporters trying to raise money for their kids. They cannot relate to NHL players, whose average salary is in the neighborhood of \$3 million.

The impact ripples out from the arena into the surrounding taverns, restaurants, shops and hotels. Thousands of bartenders, waiters, small-store owners, bellhops, cabbies and so forth are missing hockey a lot more than the fans or, for that matter, the sportswriters. These are people who most accurately gauge the pain of this stupid lockout. It hits them in the refrigerator.

For their sake, one only hopes the league and the union can settle their differences sooner rather than later and put the game back on ice. Yet, it does not look like that is going to happen — and if it does not, well, then we can consider the upside.

By not playing, John Davidson, the newly hired chief of hockey operations, has more time to apply his fingerprints to the organization and think about what he wants to do with Columbus' three first-round draft picks. By not playing, the Blue Jackets assure themselves of being in prime lottery position to draft Nathan MacKinnon, a potential franchise player. There are other points to be made in this case but, in sum, idle time is to the Jackets' benefit.

So, too, is postponing the Columbus All-Star Game. Who wants to be the host in the middle of a shortened season, coming off a labor dispute? Also, do the Blue Jackets even have an All-Star?

The Blue Jackets and their associates can now plan with greater care and throw a better party in, say, 2015. It is one thing they know how to do, as evidenced by the 2007 NHL draft — which was an unmitigated success.

My indelible memory is of a grizzled, cynical, high-profile hockey writer from Toronto standing atop a bar in German Village and bellowing, "The draft should be in Columbus every year!" His sentiment was fairly common among those who visited our fair city that weekend. It will be again, someday.

Michael Arace

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.25.2012

644806 Detroit Red Wings

Flashback: Goalie Roger Crozier remains Red Wings' last rookie of year

By Helene St. James

The NHL is in a deep freeze thanks to a labor dispute, but at the Free Press, hockey is always on the hearth. So until there are Red Wings games on the horizon, we present Flashback Features.

Today's topic: Roger Crozier

The cold facts: Born March 16, 1942, in Bracebridge, Ontario; died Jan. 11, 1996, from cancer in Wilmington, Del. Played for the Wings in 1964-1970, before finishing out his career in Buffalo and Washington. In 518 regular-season games, Crozier had a record of 206-197-70.

The warm memories: Crozier spent 15 games with the Wings in '63-64 (not enough to qualify as a full season). But he convinced management he was ready to become the starting goaltender at age 22, which prompted the Wings to release future Hall of Famer Terry Sawchuk during the summer of 1964. Crozier delivered 40 victories and six shutouts as a rookie, with a 2.42 goals-against average that was second-best in the NHL, and was named the NHL's rookie of the year in 1965.

Crozier's stellar play during the '65-66 season got the Wings into the playoffs and then all the way to a Stanley Cup final against the Montreal Canadiens. The Habs won -- but Crozier skated away with the Conn Smythe Trophy as the playoff MVP, a first for both a goaltender and a player on the losing side.

Over the next few years, Crozier's career was derailed by bouts with pancreatitis, though he returned from a brief retirement to play out the decade with Detroit.

Illness continued to hamper his efforts to re-establish himself with the Buffalo Sabres after 1970, and after the '72-73 season, Crozier played only 49 games the remaining four seasons of his career.

Crozier remains the last Red Wings player to have won the Calder Memorial Trophy.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.25.2012

644807 Detroit Red Wings

A hockey lockout Q&A

By Ira Podell

In question-and-answer form, here's a look at where things stand:

Q. What has been lost so far?

Including Friday's round of cancellations of all games through Dec. 14, there have been 423 games wiped out — including the New Year's Day Winter Classic — along with January's All-Star Weekend slated for Columbus, Ohio. More than one-third of the regular season has been removed from the calendar.

Q. How did things get to this point?

The collective bargaining agreement between owners and the players' association, that was in effect since the last lockout ended in 2005, expired on Sept. 16. Because a new deal wasn't in place then, the NHL locked out the players and said the new season wouldn't begin without an agreement. So far, the sides have been unable to find a solution on issues such as the division of revenue, free-agency rights and salary arbitration. The lockout entered its 70th day on Saturday.

Q. Is this the first time hockey has had such problems?

No. Since Gary Bettman became NHL commissioner in 1993, the league has had three lockouts that greatly affected seasons. The first in 1994-95 forced that regular season to be shortened to only 48 games per team — instead of 82 — after a deal was reached in January. The entire 2004-05 season was canceled, marking the first time a major North American professional sports league lost a full campaign to a labor dispute. The main issue then was the owners' insistence on obtaining a salary cap for the first time. It wasn't until after the season was canceled that players agreed to the cap.

Q. Are there any major philosophical issues such as a salary cap in dispute now?

No. Things are much more straightforward this time, but the sides can't agree on how to split up hockey-related revenue that reached a record \$3.3 billion last season. This week, the union made an offer that was based on a framework the NHL had given, which included a 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue and a \$393 million in a "make-whole" provision for players, who earned 57 percent of revenues in the collective bargaining agreement that expired in September. Because of that figure, guaranteed contracts would lift the players' share over 50 percent at the start of a new deal. The NHL offered \$211 million as a "make-whole" provision in an offer last month that took into account a full 82-game-per-team schedule. Players previously proposed they receive a guaranteed amount of revenue each year. Management wants a seven-year deal, which the union says is too long because fewer than half the current players will be active by the last season. NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr said the sides were \$182 million apart in a five-year deal, which comes to \$1.2 million annually for each of the 30 teams. Commissioner Gary Bettman said the sides are much farther apart. Management wants to increase eligibility for free agency to 28 years of age or eight seasons of NHL service, up from 27 years or seven seasons. The owners also proposed adding a year of service for salary arbitration eligibility, hiking it from 1-4 to 2-5 years of service, depending on the age a player initially signs.

Q. Are the sides still talking?

After a week in which the sides got together multiple times over four consecutive days, they had an eight-day break before reconvening on Monday. They met again for about 2 1-2 hours on Wednesday before talks broke off. Negotiators spoke by phone on Friday before the NHL made its latest round of game cancellations and might be in contact again this weekend. There are no current plans to return to the bargaining table.

Q: Why has there been so much labor unrest in America's major sports?

While the issues have varied somewhat among sports, it is notable that Major League Baseball — the only one among the four major sports without a salary cap — also was the only one among that didn't have a lockout. Some believe the absence of a salary cap gave baseball negotiators more wiggle room to bargain. Donald Fehr was the executive director of the Major League Baseball Players Association from 1983-09 before taking a similar position with the NHL Players' Association in December 2010 after a brief stint as a union adviser.

Q: Will there be hockey this season?

As more time is lost, additional games are canceled and the rhetoric on both sides increases, optimism wanes that a deal will be reached in time for the season to get going. History says that a deal can be made as late as January that will assure a season, While an 82-game-per-team schedule no longer is possible, a schedule of 60 games or 48 again can be salvaged. If so, those games will likely be limited to intra-conference matchups to cut down on travel and allow for more games to be crammed in.

From The Detroit News:

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20121124/SPORTS0103/211240372#ixz22DEJzfDXR>

Detroit News LOADED: 11.25.2012

644808 Detroit Red Wings

Lockout threatens to wipe out entire 2012-13 season

By IRA PODELL

The National Hockey League season was supposed to be in full swing by now.

Instead, like the NFL in 2011 and the NBA last season, the NHL is mired in a labor dispute, with the owners locking out the players and — so far — wiping out more than two months of the season.

In question-and-answer form, here's a look at where things stand:

Q: WHAT HAS BEEN LOST SO FAR?

A: Including Friday's round of cancellations of all games through Dec. 14, there have been 423 games wiped out — including the New Year's Day Winter Classic in the Detroit area — along with January's All-Star Weekend slated for Columbus, Ohio. More than one-third of the regular season has been removed from the calendar.

Q: HOW DID THINGS GET TO THIS POINT?

A: The collective bargaining agreement between owners and the players' association, that was in effect since the last lockout ended in 2005, expired on Sept. 16. Because a new deal wasn't in place then, the NHL locked out the players and said the new season wouldn't begin without an agreement. So far, the sides have been unable to find a solution on issues such as the division of revenue, free-agency rights and salary arbitration. The lockout entered its 70th day on Saturday.

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Q: ARE THERE ANY MAJOR PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES SUCH AS A SALARY CAP IN DISPUTE NOW?

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Macomb Daily LOADED: 11.25.2012

644809 Florida Panthers

Florida Panthers' Peter Mueller anxious to play again

By GEORGE RICHARDS

It would have been easy for Peter Mueller to skip Wednesday's informal workout in Pompano Beach. After all, the new Panthers forward said he had a noon flight to catch to spend Thanksgiving in Minnesota.

Mueller piled into his Chevy Avalanche at 11:15 a.m. and headed toward the airport.

But not before participating in the workout — he didn't even sneak out early.

Mueller, 24, signed a one-year deal with the Panthers on July 1 and can't wait to get this season started. Mueller hasn't missed a workout since arriving in South Florida.

On Wednesday, he made his flight. Barely. He would much rather have been suiting up for the Panthers that night. The NHL lockout, now in its third

month, has prevented Mueller and the rest of the Panthers from being able to do what they love.

"It's tough. I came in here ready to go," said Mueller, who has spent parts of the past three seasons with the Colorado Avalanche.

"This is the best I've felt since my rookie year. It's kind of tough to stand here right now. We're putting in all the work and not seeing the return of it. That's tough. But I'm optimistic. I'm hoping something gets done real soon."

A first-round draft pick (eighth overall) of the Coyotes in 2006, Mueller's talent level has never been questioned.

Mueller is viewed as a potential front-line scorer for the right team, and it looked like Colorado was going to be his home for a long time. Mueller was traded to the Avs in 2010 after scoring 39 goals with 68 assists in 207 games with Phoenix.

In Colorado, concussion issues sidelined his career progression. Mueller missed all but 15 games of the 2009-10 season and all of 2010-11 because of concussions, coming back to play in 32 games last year.

Mueller scored two goals in a game against the Panthers on Jan. 18 — just four games back from his most recent concussion problem.

"That shows you someone was paying attention that night," Stephen Weiss joked.

Mueller, who was medically cleared to play last year, said he hasn't been slowed by the concussions since then and added he's healthy and ready to play.

"I'm just so happy to be here," he said. "The past couple years have been tough. It's not anyone's dream situation. If you talk to any athlete and tell them they will miss that kind of time, it's going to hurt in some way. But everything is good now. I may sound like a broken record, but everything is behind me. I'm just excited to play."

When the offseason came, Mueller found the Panthers ready to offer a contract. It's most definitely a fresh start. The Panthers, who watched Mueller work out prior to the lockout, believe they pulled off a coup by getting him at such a discount.

"I've watched him for a while. He's a super-skilled guy who is going to fit in here nicely," Weiss said. "He's a perfect fit, a guy who will fill in for [Mikael Samuelsson] very well. They are the same kind of player, very smart, a [right-handed shot]. Hopefully he can fill those shoes there.

"For me, a guy with that kind of talent, play him with some guys who can score and make plays. That's where he's at his best. We're happy to have him. He's a talented player who can score goals. That's always needed."

Said Mueller: "This team we have here in Florida is so talented. You see what was accomplished here last year. I was thrilled to be able to come here and sign on for that. And it's nice to be able to walk outside every day in shorts."

Mueller isn't the only one ready to put this labor strife behind him and start playing hockey.

When and if this season does start, the Panthers plan on finally hanging their 2012 Southeast Division championship banner from the rafters at BB&T Center in Sunrise.

It would be the first hockey-performance banner to be unveiled at the Sunrise arena and first for the team since its 1996 Eastern Conference championship banner was won at Miami Arena.

The Panthers want to carry over some momentum from last year. Adding an offensive talent such as Mueller should help once things get going.

"It's a shame what has happened," defenseman Mike Weaver said. "The Panthers organization must be very disappointed that there is a lockout."

"The fans here, I feel for them. We feel the same way they do. It's a shame across the board. We had such a great feeling from the playoffs. That Game 7 was amazing. Our fans were amazing. I hope we get this thing taken care of and start playing. We don't want to lose our momentum from last year."

Read more here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/11/25/3112051/florida-panthers-peter-mueller.html#storylink=cpy>

Miami Herald LOADED: 11.25.2012

644810 Florida Panthers

NHL lockout threatens entire hockey season

By IRA PODELL

The National Hockey League season was supposed to be in full swing by now.

Instead, like the NFL in 2011 and the NBA last season, the NHL is mired in a labor dispute, with the owners locking out the players and - so far - wiping out more than two months of the season.

In question-and-answer form, here's a look at where things stand:

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A: Including Friday's round of cancellations of all games through Dec. 14, there have been 423 games wiped out - including the New Year's Day Winter Classic - along with January's All-Star Weekend slated for Columbus, Ohio. More than one-third of the regular season has been removed from the calendar.

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A: The collective bargaining agreement between owners and the players' association, that was in effect since the last lockout ended in 2005, expired on Sept. 16. Because a new deal wasn't in place then, the NHL locked out the players and said the new season wouldn't begin without an agreement. So far, the sides have been unable to find a solution on issues such as the division of revenue, free-agency rights and salary arbitration. The lockout entered its 70th day on Saturday.

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Read more here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/11/24/3112182/nhl-lockout-threatens-entire-hockey.html#storylink=cpy>

Miami Herald LOADED: 11.25.2012

644811 Minnesota Wild

Questions and answers about the NHL lockout that threatens the season

Article by: IRA PODELL , [Associated Press](#)

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Q: WILL THERE BE HOCKEY THIS SEASON?

A: As more time is lost, additional games are canceled and the rhetoric on both sides increases, optimism wanes that a deal will be reached in time for the season to get going. History says that a deal can be made as late as January that will assure a season. While an 82-game-per-team schedule no longer is possible, a schedule of 60 games or 48 again can be salvaged. If so, those games will likely be limited to intra-conference matchups to cut down on travel and allow for more games to be crammed in.

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.25.2012

644812 Minnesota Wild

Tom Powers' excitement solution for NHL: Give Russians shot at Stanley Cup

Pioneer Press

As comedian Bill Cosby once astutely noted: "A word to the wise ain't necessary. It's the stupid ones that need the advice."

With NHL games now canceled through Dec. 14, more than a third of the season already is lost. Also canceled is the All-Star Game, which was supposed to be held in Columbus.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly noted in his statement, "We feel badly for NHL fans and particularly those in Columbus ..."

Union leader Don Fehr declared in his statement that the cancellations were: "... disappointing for all hockey fans -- especially those in Columbus."

Common decency prevents me from using the language I'd like to use. Listening to those two makes my blood pressure rise to dangerous levels. Clearly, neither side cares about the fans. And they won't until it is time for those same fans to resume coughing up cash for overpriced tickets.

That said, I really hope there are a couple of guys with pocket protectors and horn-rimmed glasses locked in a room somewhere kicking around ideas. If play ever does resume, the NHL needs to come up with something special to create excitement. Because some of us are convinced that an end to the labor dispute will be met with a collective obscene gesture by the league's jilted supporters, at least by those who care enough to lift a finger.

Oh, the NHL has stepped in at this time. It is going to take something spectacular to reignite interest. After the last lockout the league introduced a whole new product:

shootouts, no red line, two refs, smaller goalie pads. ... It was enough to create a buzz. Certainly, they must have something up their sleeves this time, other than the promise of realignment, which we should have had by now anyway.

Of course, this being the NHL, there probably is no plan at all. So I'll offer one:

Invite the various European league champions over and tell them to bring their title trophies. Put all the hardware on a table, along with the Stanley Cup, and have a winner-take-all tournament. Winner gets to keep all the trophies for a year.

Think of the drama. Imagine the Stanley Cup, complete with freshly embossed Russian names, on display in Moscow for a full year! Man, they would be crowing over there, or in Oslo or in Stockholm. Or how about the NHL proving its ultimate superiority and grabbing all the hockey world's signature awards?

It could be done. Professional leagues in Sweden, Finland and Russia all run just about concurrently with a normal NHL season. So the champions of those leagues could be available for a playoff.

Now, this wouldn't be a World Cup-like event where people play for their home countries. No all-star teams and no national teams. This strictly would be for the various league champions playing under NHL rules.

The Kontinental Hockey League champs would bring the Gagarin Cup, named after cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space. They play at a high level in the upstart KHL, and they play rock 'em, sock 'em hockey the way the NHL used to. It's very rugged and very entertaining.

The champions of Finland's elite league would bring their Kanada-malja trophy. It is so named because it was donated by Canada's Finnish community in 1951. The Swedes would pack up the Le Mat trophy, which was donated by the father of Swedish ice hockey, Raoul Le Mat, in 1926. All are outstanding symbols but nothing like the Stanley Cup, the most tradition-rich and coveted trophy in sports.

The NHL also could invite the Czechs, Slovaks ... maybe eight championship teams from around the world. After the NHL conducts one round of normal league playoffs, whittling the field from 16 to eight, the remaining teams could be paired against the international teams. Geez, if we had just one NHL team competing and it got beat in the first international round, everyone would lose interest. So eight seems like a good number.

They'll also have to tinker with the seeding to make sure an NHL team gets to the finals. Overall, it would be pretty cool, and it would be worth the big paydays for the European teams to come over here. The key is that the Stanley Cup has to be up for grabs, at least theoretically. No phony trophy created for the event.

OK, the plan has some flaws. All the games are played in home cities of the North American playoff teams, which isn't exactly fair. But remember, this is

a tournament by invitation only. Plus, the Euro champs have to put their trophies on the line even though they get just one entry per country, while the NHL gets eight. But they have nothing to lose and everything to gain in terms of prestige. Plus, it's only for a year.

This special, one-time playoff format could work with more international teams involved, or maybe even fewer teams. I don't know, work with me here. I'm trying, at least. Is the NHL doing anything?

Pioneer Press LOADED: 11.25.2012

644813 Nashville Predators

Ex-Nashville Predator Blake Geoffrion begins road to recovery

Josh Cooper

Blake Geoffrion was home for Thanksgiving, and the former Predators prospect ate turkey.

The fact that he was able to return to Chicago, where he spends his offseasons, was a feat in itself.

Less than two weeks earlier, Geoffrion was undergoing emergency surgery for a depressed skull fracture he suffered during an American Hockey League game in Montreal.

"He's 24, he's young and in good shape, and that's partially why he has been able to recover from this injury so quickly so far," his father Danny said.

On Thursday, Geoffrion released a statement saying that he was cleared to return home for a three-week period before being reevaluated by team doctors.

"I want to sincerely thank all fans, friends, family members and everyone from the hockey world for the incredible support I have received," he said.

Geoffrion's road to recovery is still considered to be long and arduous. He hasn't exercised since the injury. Danny said his son could eat what he wants and goes for walks, but he is unable to do much else. Geoffrion's current team, the Canadiens, has said he will make a full recovery.

"Blake is going to have to be very patient in this whole cycle," Danny said. "Any athlete ... he's going to get antsy and antsy with every week that goes by and all that. He's going to have to discipline himself to follow the directions of the doctors and go by exactly what they say until one day they give him the green light."

The Predators selected Geoffrion, who grew up in Brentwood, in the second round of the 2006 draft. They traded him Feb. 17 as part of a deal for defenseman Hal Gill.

Geoffrion's grandfather, Bernie "Boom Boom" Geoffrion, and great grandfather, Howie Morenz, are in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Tennessean LOADED: 11.25.2012

644814 New Jersey Devils

For Players and Fans, a Return to the N.H.L. Game, Even if It's Only for One Night

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

ATLANTIC CITY — Boardwalk Hall was filled Saturday night for something that has become rare this lockout-marred fall: a hockey game with N.H.L. players.

"Fire Bettman!" many among the 10,792 fans chanted. They also cheered, "We want hockey!"

The crowd of fans starved for the sport got just that, an evening of fast-paced, no-checking hockey that was easily as good as any N.H.L. All-Star Game. The team led by the Rangers' Brad Richards beat the team led by

the Flyers' Scott Hartnell, 10-6, in a game called Operation Hat Trick that benefited families affected by Hurricane Sandy.

N.H.L. players have skated in a handful of charity games in Quebec, Los Angeles and Chicago since Commissioner Gary Bettman imposed the lockout on Sept. 16. But for most on the ice and in the stands Saturday night, this was the first N.H.L.-caliber game since last spring.

"It's great to have hockey back in my life," a fan who gave her name as Joan said. "I've missed it."

The 16 players on each team relished the experience of playing again.

"I got choked up when all those people started chanting that they want hockey back," Hartnell said.

Defenseman Dan Girardi, one of several Rangers on Team Richards, said, "I felt a bit rusty, but it was awesome to be playing again."

Displaying his dry humor, the Rangers' Marc Staal said, "The pace was pretty high at the start, but it died after 10 minutes."

James Neal scored four goals for Team Richards, the third one by shooting from behind the net and bouncing the puck in off Team Hartnell goalie Martin Brodeur. Two frequent fighters during normal times, Daniel Carillo and Arron Asham, squared off as if to trade punches, but were content to chirp at each other instead.

Team Richards goalie Henrik Lundqvist, who last played competitive hockey in May, when the Rangers lost to the Devils in the Eastern Conference finals, was brilliant. He stopped three breakaways, four penalty shots and 56 shots in all, showing the spectacular form that earned him the Vezina Trophy last season.

He did so despite having just flown in from Sweden, where he has faced only one shooter in on-ice sessions for the last month.

"Mentally, it's been terrible," Lundqvist said. "I want to play real games again."

Brodeur, who prevailed over Lundqvist in the Eastern Conference finals, stopped 35 shots wearing a white sweater with trim in Flyers orange and was treated to lusty derision from the Flyers and Rangers fans in attendance.

"Marty was caught in a perfect storm: Rangers fans hate him, and Flyers fans hate him," Hartnell said. "But I told him he's still a great guy, no matter what everyone says about him."

Brodeur said he let in 10 goals because he was wearing Flyers colors. "I'm not used to that orange," he said.

Besides Neal, who played for the Penguins before the lockout, the other goal scorers for Team Richards were Mike Komisarek (Toronto), Bobby Ryan (Anaheim), Daniel Alfredsson (Ottawa), Brian Boyle (the Rangers), Ville Leino (Buffalo) and Jeff Halpern (the Rangers).

For Team Hartnell, the goal scorers were Simon Gagne (Los Angeles), Wayne Simmonds (Philadelphia), James van Riemsdyk (Toronto), Justin Williams (Los Angeles), Andy Greene (the Devils) and David Clarkson (the Devils).

Before the game, Donald Fehr, the union's executive director, held a meeting with many of the players present for the game. The lockout, which has lasted 70 days, has resulted in the cancellation of hundreds of games and has placed the entire season in jeopardy.

Fehr said no new negotiations with the league were scheduled. The last session, on Wednesday, resulted in the league's rejection of the union's latest proposal.

But on Saturday night, actual hockey finally replaced the lockout as the main focus, even if the hockey was on the easygoing side. Vinny Guadagnino from "Jersey Shore" stood behind the Team Richards bench as an honorary coach. There were coolers of beer in the dressing rooms after the game.

Proceeds from the game, the first sellout for hockey at Boardwalk Hall since 1933, raised money for the Empire State Relief Fund, the Hurricane Sandy NJ Relief Fund and the American Red Cross. Organizers did not have a postgame estimate of the amount of money raised but said a figure would be released in the coming days.

"To do something for charity, for the city, for the state — anything that we can do as a group, we're going to do," the Rangers' Steve Eminger said.

New York Times LOADED: 11.25.2012

644815 New Jersey Devils

NHL Lockout Threatens Entire Hockey Season

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Instead, like the NFL in 2011 and the NBA last season, the NHL is mired in a labor dispute, with the owners locking out the players and — so far — wiping out more than two months of the season.

In question-and-answer form, here's a look at where things stand:

Q: WHAT HAS BEEN LOST SO FAR?

A: Including Friday's round of cancellations of all games through Dec. 14, there have been 423 games wiped out — including the New Year's Day Winter Classic — along with January's All-Star Weekend slated for Columbus, Ohio. More than one-third of the regular season has been removed from the calendar.

Q: HOW DID THINGS GET TO THIS POINT?

A: The collective bargaining agreement between owners and the players' association, that was in effect since the last lockout ended in 2005, expired on Sept. 16. Because a new deal wasn't in place then, the NHL locked out the players and said the new season wouldn't begin without an agreement. So far, the sides have been unable to find a solution on issues such as the division of revenue, free-agency rights and salary arbitration. The lockout entered its 70th day on Saturday.

Q: IS THIS THE FIRST TIME HOCKEY HAS HAD SUCH PROBLEMS?

A: No. Since Gary Bettman became NHL commissioner in 1993, the league has had three lockouts that greatly affected seasons. The first in 1994-95 forced that regular season to be shortened to only 48 games per team — instead of 82 — after a deal was reached in January. The entire 2004-05 season was canceled, marking the first time a major North American professional sports league lost a full campaign to a labor dispute. The main issue then was the owners' insistence on obtaining a salary cap for the first time. It wasn't until after the season was canceled that players agreed to the cap.

Q: ARE THERE ANY MAJOR PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES SUCH AS A SALARY CAP IN DISPUTE NOW?

A: No. Things are much more straightforward this time, but the sides can't agree on how to split up hockey-related revenue that reached a record \$3.3 billion last season. This week, the union made an offer that was based on a framework the NHL had given, which included a 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue and a \$393 million in a "make-whole" provision for players, who earned 57 percent of revenues in the collective bargaining agreement that expired in September. Because of that figure, guaranteed contracts would lift the players' share over 50 percent at the start of a new deal. The NHL offered \$211 million as a "make-whole" provision in an offer last month that took into account a full 82-game-per-team schedule. Players previously proposed they receive a guaranteed amount of revenue each year. Management wants a seven-year deal, which the union says is too long because fewer than half the current players will be active by the last season. NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr said the sides were \$182 million apart in a five-year deal, which comes to \$1.2 million annually for each of the 30 teams. Commissioner Gary Bettman said the sides are much farther apart. Management wants to increase eligibility for free agency to 28 years of age or eight seasons of NHL service, up from 27 years or seven seasons. The owners also proposed adding a year of service for salary arbitration eligibility, hiking it from 1-4 to 2-5 years of service, depending on the age a player initially signs.

Q: ARE THE SIDES STILL TALKING?

A: After a week in which the sides got together multiple times over four consecutive days, they had an eight-day break before reconvening on Monday. They met again for about 2 1-2 hours on Wednesday before talks broke off. Negotiators spoke by phone on Friday before the NHL made its latest round of game cancellations and again on Saturday. Donald Fehr said there was chance they would speak again on Sunday or Monday.

Q: WHY HAS THERE BEEN SO MUCH LABOR UNREST IN AMERICA'S MAJOR SPORTS?

A: While the issues have varied somewhat among sports, it is notable that Major League Baseball — the only one among the four major sports without a salary cap — also was the only one among that didn't have a lockout. Some believe the absence of a salary cap gave baseball negotiators more wiggle room to bargain. Donald Fehr was the executive director of the Major League Baseball Players Association from 1983-09 before taking a similar position with the NHL Players' Association in December 2010 after a brief stint as a union adviser.

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New York Times LOADED: 11.25.2012

644816 New Jersey Devils

Rangers, Flyers, Devils players raise money for Hurricane Sandy victims in Atlantic City exhibition game

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

For one night in Atlantic City, there was competitive hockey with NHL players.

In a battle between the Rangers and their Atlantic division rivals, a team with mostly New York players claimed a 10-6 victory in an exhibition that helped raise money for victims of Hurricane Sandy.

The "New York" team captained by Rangers forward Brad Richards included fellow Blueshirts Jeff Halpern, Taylor Pyatt, Arron Asham, Marc Staal, Steve Eminger, Dan Girardi and Brian Boyle. Joining them was Ville Leino, Matt Martin, Bobby Ryan, Corey Perry, James Neal, Daniel Alfredsson, and Mike Komisarek.

Flyers forward Scott Hartnell wore the "C" for the New Jersey/Philadelphia team made up of Wayne Simmonds, Daniel Carcillo, David Clarkson, Simon Gagne, Justin Williams, Jody Shelley, Steve Stamkos, James van Riemsdyk, Steve Downie, Kimmo Timonen, John Carlson, Braydon Coburn, Andy Greene and P.K. Subban.

The matchup between the pipes was a familiar one -- Henrik Lundqvist faced Martin Brodeur in a rematch of their last NHL game, a 3-2 overtime victory that sent the Devils to the Stanley Cup Finals last May.

Highlights included four goals from Neal, some shoving between Asham and Carcillo in the second period and penalty shots that replaced power plays when a staff of officials led by the retired Kerry Fraser called an infraction.

Lundqvist stopped all four of the penalty shots he faced and picked up right where he left off from a Vezina Trophy-winning season, saving 56 of 62 shots he faced.

"You'd think he'd have a little rust on him [after] not playing a game for five or six months," Hartnell said. "Seems like he's in playoff shape."

The result, of course, didn't matter. For a region hit so hard by Hurricane Sandy, it was the perfect way to raise money, with 10,792 tickets sold in a sellout. And for hockey-starved fans, it was a night that helped ease the pain of the ongoing lockout. But the game didn't make them forget completely -- multiple times, the arena was filled with "we want hockey" chants, as well as calls to fire commissioner Gary Bettman.

"I'd be lying if I didn't say I got choked up a little bit when you've got 11,000 people cheering they want hockey back," Hartnell said. "The energy in the building ... it was pretty incredible. Nothing but good things to say about the night."

Boyle, who played the game as a defenseman, expressed a similar sentiment.

"The crowd support was kind of overwhelming at one point, how much positive support we got," he said. "That's awesome, that's what you play for. To do it for a great cause was a ... no-brainer for us."

Though the charity game's organizers couldn't announce how much money was raised -- jerseys from the game are up for auction -- it was certainly a successful night for everyone involved.

"I want to play real games," Lundqvist said. "But it felt really good to be out there."

Star Ledger LOADED: 11.25.2012

644817 New Jersey Devils

NY Rangers' Henrik Lundqvist and Brad Richards, Devils' Martin Brodeur and 29 other NHL players compete in Operation Hat Trick charity game to benefit those affected by Hurricane Sandy

By Pat Leonard / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Thirty-two NHL players met Hurricane Sandy head-on Saturday night, just as this casino-filled South Jersey beach town did almost one month ago.

Henrik Lundqvist, Martin Brodeur, Brad Richards and stars from all over the league laced up their skates and took the sheet of ice inside historic Boardwalk Hall, a venue built in 1929 that hangs college hockey banners from its rafters and boasts a stage on the west side of the arena with glitzy gold columns and teal-colored walls.

The purpose of Operation Hat Trick was to raise money for victims of the natural disaster that ripped through the East Coast in late October, ravaging parts of Atlantic City and then working its way up the coast as the winds picked up and the damage got worse.

The result was a sold-out crowd of 10,792, the majority of them Flyers fans, with Blueshirts faithful sprinkled throughout the stands. They were there to show support both for the charity and for a sport that is still in lockdown as the owners and players battle over money and contract rights.

"A lot of the people who lost their homes are our fans, so we want to really give back to them," said defenseman Dan Girardi, one of nine Rangers to suit up. "We met some people from the Rockaways before the game. They were jacked to see us. They had lost their whole house and they were just excited to see us. Just us going in there and signing some autographs and talking to them -- hopefully it made their day a little better."

"We want hockey!" the fans chanted in the first period on Day 70 of the lockout. And they got it this night, particularly from Lundqvist, the Rangers' ultra-competitive goaltender who flew in from Sweden and seemed determined to steal the show.

"It seemed like he was in playoff shape," Flyers forward Scott Hartnell said, "and we were joking after the first period there that now the Rangers will want to play really bad because he's on fire right now."

Lundqvist made 56 saves, including 23 in a dazzling first period as Team New York, captained by Richards, defeated Brodeur, Hartnell and Team New Jersey, 10-6.

"I want to play real games," Lundqvist said afterwards, when asked if he were eager to take part in more charity games, "but it was probably the best feeling I've had in a long time."

Prior to the game, 25 of the players met with union executive director Don Fehr at Caesars Hotel prior to the exhibition. Fehr updated the players on issues just one day after the league announced the cancellation of the All-Star Game and all regular-season games through Dec. 14. Though there are no more official negotiations scheduled, Fehr said his idea of progress in any future bargaining session would involve the owners recognizing the "vital" nature of contracting rights to the players he represents – such as free agency, arbitration and terms.

Unfortunately, more of the recent chatter has centered on the potential of the union decertifying, or disbanding to clear the way for potential anti-trust litigation against the NHL from its 700+ players.

The NFL and NBA players' unions both resorted to decertification in their labor negotiations in 2011. The NHL missed no regular season games, and the NBA was playing by Christmas. Fehr would not discuss whether the players had discussed the decertification option, only saying: "You can check what's happened in the other sports."

What's happened in the other sports is they are playing – on the court, on the field.

The ice has been empty, which made Saturday night a temporary relief for the sport's fans, and hopefully, a permanent relief for the victims of Sandy still recovering and rebuilding what they've lost.

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/sports/hockey/thirty-two-nhl-stars-play-charity-game-sandy-victims-article-1.1207572#ixzz2DEMnU8wn>

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.25.2012

644818 New York Rangers

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New York Daily News LOADED: 11.25.2012

644819 New York Rangers

Don Fehr meets with players in Atlantic City, reaffirms importance of protecting contracting rights in negotiations with NHL

By Pat Leonard

A charity game at the beach headlined Saturday's hockey news. Still, the lockout follows the NHL everywhere these days.

Players' union executive director Don Fehr visited Atlantic City Saturday afternoon to meet with about 25 NHL players at Caesars Hotel & Casino, prior to the night's exhibition at Boardwalk Hall to benefit victims of Hurricane Sandy.

Fehr, as always, would not characterize the discussion, but when asked what he would consider 'progress' in any future meeting with the NHL's owners, Fehr responded: "We've been telling the NHL, staff, players, everybody for a very long time that the player contracting rights are vital on the players' side, and so far we don't have recognition of that from them."

It sounds simple: owners, give in on the contract demands; players, back off on your \$383 million ask on top of the 50-50 revenue reset, and let's play some hockey. Not that simple. As of Saturday afternoon, there were no new negotiations scheduled. NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr communicated on Friday and were due to speak again either Sunday or Monday.

Meanwhile, Fehr took at least one dig at commissioner Gary Bettman and the owners when asked about the candid recent comments of Capitals defenseman Roman Hamrlik. The veteran said he was "disappointed" with the negotiating process, questioned Fehr directly and called for a full player vote to get back on the ice.

"Look, democracy can be a bit of messy process sometimes, but if you believe in free speech, and you don't believe in censorship, and you believe everybody's entitled to their opinion, they speak it, and sometimes it's what they mean, sometimes people get angry and frustrated and they vent, and

then you talk to them, other players will talk to them from time to time, staff will talk to them make sure they get the questions answered," Fehr said. "We don't believe in censoring anybody. We don't believe in telling anybody they can't come to meetings and see for themselves. We're different (from) the owners."

Fehr also was questioned about whether the union has discussed decertifying in light of the league's recent cancellation of all games through Dec. 14 and the All-Star Game. Decertifying would disband the union as a bargaining agent for players and clear the way for potential anti-trust litigation against the NHL from all 700+ players, an unlikely tactic but an available one.

"There are two sets of laws which govern these situations, and what happens is from time to time, unions and sports unions have essentially said that there are circumstances in which the members would be better off without a union and taking action under the anti-trust laws," Fehr said, explaining the concept. "And that's all I can say about it. You can check what's happened in the other sports. I'm not going to discuss whether we've had any such discussions or if so what they are. I never discuss internal communications."

The NFL and NBA players' unions both resorted to decertification in their labor negotiations in 2011. Football's players decertified before the owners even locked them out in the spring. The NFL eventually reached a deal and did not miss any regular season games. The NBA's union decertified on Nov. 14, and the basketball season was underway by Christmas Day.

NHL players still could resort to decertification, though this would be an incredibly late juncture to make a decision that could slow the process to a crawl in the courts and lead to the cancellation of the entire 2011-12 season. Of course, it should be noted, the lockout is headed in that direction anyway.

Fehr was asked if he thought the NHL and union are closer to a deal now than they were a week ago, before the players' union made a proposal to the league on Wednesday.

"When we made our proposal on Wednesday I thought the answer would be yes, but we didn't get a response which suggested that we are," Fehr said. "When you make a move towards them, if you're gonna have an agreement, somebody has to say: 'Yes, and now I can do this.' Instead they said more or less: 'Yes and what else can you do for me?'"

"Everybody understands that negotiation is a process. So far, we seem to be doing all the negotiating."

The union's executive director seemed focused specifically on the player contracting rights. Thankfully, for at least one night, there were NHL players about to take the ice in Atlantic City to temporarily overshadow the league's depressing state of affairs.

"If the cap is going to be limited, the player contracting rights – which is where the individual player has an opportunity to get his share of the pie – have to be constricted too, those become more, not less, important to players as cap space is limited," Fehr said. "And so when you say we have to have with the right hand, and I'm going to give you with the left hand that's one thing. If they say we have to take with the right hand and we're gonna take with the left hand too, that becomes very difficult. When you add to that that the rights of the players they believe they must maintain are what they got in the last negotiation in return for massive concessions there, it becomes very difficult."

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.25.2012

644820 New York Rangers

Don Fehr responds to NHL's cancellation of more games, All-Star weekend saying player 'remain ready to negotiate'

By Pat Leonard

NHL players' association executive director Don Fehr released the following statement Friday afternoon on the NHL's cancellation of games through Dec. 14 and the 2013 All-Star weekend:

"On Wednesday, the players presented a comprehensive proposal, once again moving in the owners' direction in order to get the game back on the

ice. The gap that remains on the core economic issues is \$182 million. On Wednesday, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said that the league is losing \$18-20 million per day during the lockout, therefore two more weeks of cancelled games far exceeds the current economic gap. It makes the NHL's announcement of further game cancellations, including the 2013 All-Star Weekend, all the more unnecessary, and disappointing for all hockey fans – especially those in Columbus. The players remain ready to negotiate but we require a willing negotiating partner."

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.25.2012

644821 New York Rangers

Rangers' Lundqvist, Devils' Brodeur star in charity hockey game in Atlantic City

By ANDREW GROSS

ATLANTIC CITY – As much as the players and organizers wanted the focus of Saturday night's Operation Hat Trick charity game at Boardwalk Hall to remain on relief efforts for superstorm Sandy, the specter of the NHL lockout could not be avoided.

During player introductions, the first chant was "Fire Bettman" and anger against NHL commissioner Gary Bettman manifested itself throughout the evening, both in the stands and in the dressing rooms. Later, a "We want hockey" chant rang through the building which, with a crowd of 10,792, was sold out for a hockey event for the first time since 1933.

"It's frustrating," Rangers defenseman Marc Staal said. "We should be on the ice. We should be playing. It's unfortunate we're not. I think at some point both sides will figure out a way to get it done, but it's been a roller-coaster ride."

And until the NHL and the locked-out NHL Players' Association settle their differences, this game will have to do.

Team New York, captained by Brad Richards, won 10-6, behind 56 saves by Henrik Lundqvist and four goals from the Penguins' James Neal with obvious rust showing from both squads. The Devils' Martin Brodeur stopped 25 shots for Team Philadelphia/New Jersey, captained by the Flyers' Scott Hartnell. Not surprisingly, the crowd was a mixture of Rangers and Flyers fans with a good representation of Devils fans as well.

Thirty-two NHL players participated in the event – which raised funds for the Empire State Relief Fund, the New Jersey Hurricane Relief Fund and the American Red Cross – including Richards, Lundqvist, Dan Girardi, Brian Boyle, Steve Eminger, Arron Asham and Taylor Pyatt of the Rangers, David Clarkson and Andy Greene of the Devils and New Jersey residents James van Riemsdyk of the Maple Leafs, John Carlson of the Capitals and the Ducks' Bobby Ryan.

"We knew it would be a good turnout but we didn't expect it to be this kind of a turnout," said van Riemsdyk, who grew up in Middletown.

The players met with Sandy first responders before the game as well as a bus load of fans from Rockaway, many whose homes were devastated in the storm.

"It was awesome," Boyle said. "I can't really describe it much past that. Not to get too political, but the fact that the fans are passionate and they filled the building was unbelievable."

Despite the lack of an NHL season so far, Vincent Ciraulo, 8, of Manahawkin was attending his first-ever professional hockey game along with his father, Frank Ciraulo, 36, and grandfather Vincent Ciraulo, 63, of Barnegat.

"I really think it's a joke," Frank Ciraulo said of the lockout. "The players are making money, the owners are making money. Just come to a 50-50 split. I'll always be a hockey fan. It's just frustrating."

Much of the Ciraulo family lives on Staten Island and Frank Ciraulo said he had an uncle whose car was swept away three blocks by the flood waters and lost power for three weeks.

Outside Boardwalk Hall before faceoff, Kristen Ayd, 31, and David Ayd, 32, of Colonia introduced themselves to fellow Devils fans Cathleen Fee, 44, and her brother, Andrew Fee, 42, of Delran.

All four agreed that while they came to Atlantic City because they wanted to see a hockey game, knowing the proceeds went to aid those affected by Sandy made this a must-see event.

"I had to be here," said Kristen Ayd, who works for an Edison-based transplant facility for bone and tissue that lost one of its three buildings and had 130 workers displaced.

Ayd, a Devils season-ticket holder, did proudly mention that defenseman Carlson, who played for the Philadelphia/New Jersey squad, grew up in Colonia. And they've seen Brodeur's charitable side first-hand before. In 2010, Brodeur visited their daughter, Hannah, then 10, as she recovered from a procedure at Saint Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston.

The Fees reported their home made it through Sandy OK but they have "lots of family down at the Jersey Shore that were not so lucky." Cathleen Fee also was not optimistic there would be an NHL season.

"I don't see it," she said.

NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr was also talking before the game, conducting an impromptu press conference at nearby Caesars Palace.

Fehr would not directly answer questions about the union possibly decertifying – "You can check what's happened in the other sports" – and said no new meetings have been scheduled though the sides have talked.

"Everybody understands that negotiation is a process and, so far, we seem to be doing all the negotiating," Fehr said. "We've been telling the NHL, staff, players, everybody for a very long time that the player contracting rights are vital on the players' side and, so far, we don't have recognition of that from them."

Fehr led an NHLPA meeting before the game.

"I've never seen a group of players so united and on the same page," Clarkson said. "Obviously, we all want to play, but this is a little bigger than that right now."

Despite the seriousness of the labor negotiations, there was some levity, mainly at the expense of Lundqvist's performance. Though the goalie claimed he was "lucky," he appeared in regular-season form. At one point in the second period, he lost his stick and the other team – illegally – swept it up ice.

"The dang Rangers," Hartnell said. "They've got our number, that's for sure. You'd think [Lundqvist] would have a little rust after not playing five or six months. But it seems like he's in playoff shape. We were joking that now the Rangers will want to play real bad because he's on fire."

Bergen Record LOADED: 11.25.2012

644822 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators prospect Cole Schneider scores the first 2 goals of pro career as Binghamton Senators win 6th straight

Binghamton Senators

Winger Cole Schneider and defenceman Eric Gryba joined the goal-scoring party as the red-hot Binghamton Senators dumped the Bridgeport Sound Tigers 6-1 in AHL action at Broome County Veterans Memorial Arena Saturday night.

Schneider, a UConn product signed as a free agent by the Senators last March, scored his first pro goal at 18:43 of the first period, then added another with just over three minutes left in the second.

Gryba opened the scoring at 2:39 with his first of the season after returning from a hand injury, and got his second on a third-period power play.

Derek Grant and Andre Benoit added second-period goals for the B-Sens (10-4-1-1), who won their sixth straight. Starter Robin Lehner made 35 saves and lowered his goals-against average to 1.63.

The B-Sens have a break in the schedule before hitting the road to face the Adirondack Phantoms on Friday.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 11.25.2012

644823 Philadelphia Flyers

Inside the Flyers: NHL players take a break from lockout with a benefit game in Atlantic City

Sam Carchidi

ATLANTIC CITY - For more than two months, NHL players and owners have acted like spoiled brats, demanding they have their way, refusing to compromise in their labor war, and threatening to cause irreparable harm to the game.

On Saturday, though, we had the most productive day of an infuriating lockout that started in mid-September and has no end in sight.

Because of the work stoppage, about three dozen NHL players - mostly Flyers, New York Rangers, and New Jersey Devils, but also some of the sport's biggest names from other teams - got together for a benefit game in Atlantic City's venerable Boardwalk Hall to raise money for Hurricane Sandy victims.

Team New York, led by four goals by Pittsburgh's James Neal and standout goaltending by the Rangers' Henrik Lundqvist, defeated Team Philly/New Jersey, 10-6, in a game that had the most on-ice talent in North America since June. A hockey-starved, sellout crowd of 10,792 attended the game, billed as Operation Hat Trick because all proceeds go toward the New Jersey Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund, the Empire State Relief Fund, and the American Red Cross.

Gov. Christie estimated \$29.4 billion in damage was done to New Jersey by Sandy. Saturday night's benefit game won't make much of a dent in that, but it will create goodwill that is priceless to those affected in New Jersey and New York.

The Rangers' Brad Richards, who captained Team New York, was instrumental in bringing 150 people from the Rockaways - an area of Queens, N.Y., devastated by the hurricane - to the benefit game.

Atlantic City firefighters and police officers, the first responders when Sandy hit late last month, mingled with the players in the morning.

"It's an honor for us to meet them," Flyers winger Jody Shelley said. "They've done so much good."

Scott Evans, battalion chief of the Atlantic City Fire Department, experienced firsthand the devastation of the hurricane, especially when he performed duties in Seaside Heights.

"One home there was six blocks from its beach-block foundation," he said after talking with some Flyers.

Having the players come to Atlantic City "means a lot to the town," said Evans, who had two feet of water in his Atlantic City home during the hurricane. "It gives everyone an uplift and puts everybody in good spirits."

"For two, two and a half hours," Montreal defenseman P.K. Subban said before the game, "maybe the people will forget about what's happened here the last couple weeks. They'll never forget it, but maybe it'll take it off their minds for a while."

It was also nice for the players to forget about the lockout during most of their time in Atlantic City, though union boss Donald Fehr did interrupt things with a pregame meeting. Fehr later met with reporters and said both sides were farther apart in their labor dispute than they were the previous week.

Way to be a spoilsport and put a damper on the event, Don.

But it was his counterpart, Gary Bettman, the NHL commissioner, who was the fans' whipping boy.

"Fire Bett-man!" they began chanting during pregame warm-ups. Throughout the game, they also chanted "We want hockey!"

The labor dispute, however, was secondary for most of this night. The focus was on the players, the game, and the people being helped by the event.

"I've only been home for a short time, but as soon as my agent told me about it, I jumped on it because it's a great cause," said Flyers winger Wayne Simmonds, who recently returned from playing in Europe.

In a Friday interview on Sirius XM Radio, Steve Fehr, special counsel to the NHLPA, told listeners they should read the story Washington Post columnist Thomas Boswell wrote about his brother Donald. The piece basically talked about how Donald Fehr was a shark, and Steve seemed oh, so proud of his big brother.

Everyone should be proud of the players who sacrificed their time for a great cause Saturday night. No one should be proud of a man who has combined with the just-as-greedy NHL leaders to shut down the hockey season.

But at least for one night, we got to see the good in the sport.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.25.2012

644824 Philadelphia Flyers

Fehr won't halt decertification chatter

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. -- For NHL Players' Association executive director Donald Fehr, a trip to Caesars on Saturday night was like hitting the jackpot.

It was a chance to address nearly 30 of his constituents in a two-hour meeting and address the media without a rebuttal from the NHL.

Naturally, the hot topic of decertification came up, the 'word du jour' during this 71-day NHL lockout. Since presenting a full-length proposal on the NHL on Wednesday in New York for the first time, the idea of decertifying the union has been repeatedly leaked to the media.

Not surprisingly, Fehr wouldn't lead the media down the path of thinking decertification is a possibility, but he certainly wasn't about to squash the idea, either.

Here's the most important question and answer of the session:

Question: Is it too soon for the media to be talking about decertification?

Fehr: "I don't want to tell you what's too soon. You can look at what's happened in the other sports and make your own judgment about that."

In other words, Fehr hints at the possibility but won't commit to it. It's what you do in negotiations. As we wrote on Black Friday, the NHLPA needs to leak the threat of decertification, it's part of the MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) game theory.

Hockey is engaged in its own "Cold War," with the owners threatening the cancellation of the season and the players threatening to decertify and fight the lockout's legality in court. Both would blow up the season. Continue the threat, continue the possibility for compromise.

"There are two sets of laws which govern these situations, and what happens is from time to time, unions and sports unions have essentially said that there are circumstances in which the members would be better off without a union and taking action under the anti-trust laws," Fehr said of decertifying. "And that's all I can say about it. You can check what's happened in the other sports. I'm not going to discuss whether we've had any such discussions or if so what they are. I never discuss internal communications."

In more or less words, Fehr outlined the blueprint for making a deal. He continued to stress the players' interest in contracting rights. It would seem like in order for a season to be played, the NHL needs to bend a bit on their demands on player contracting rights and the NHLPA needs to continue to bend on the core economics.

The NHLPA and NHL are finally on the same page when it comes to definitions, language and they are using the same calculators. They are off on the dollar figures and percentages.

Ignore the rhetoric, focus on the facts.

"[We're] in a circumstance in which – if the cap is going to be limited – the player contracting rights, which is where the individual player has an opportunity to get his share of the pie, have to be constricted too," Fehr said. "And those become more, not less, important to players as cap space is limited. When you add to that that the rights of the players they believe they must maintain are what they got in the last negotiation in return for massive concessions there, it becomes very difficult."

No new meetings are scheduled at this point.

For the latest updates, follow Frank Seravalli on Twitter: @DNFlyers

Frank Seravalli @ 10:43 PM Permalink 4 comments

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.25.2012

644825 Philadelphia Flyers

Bettman ridiculed at A.C. benefit game

ATLANTIC CITY_ There were nasty chants directed at Gary Bettman, the NHL commissioner.

There was little defense, more than a dozen breakaways, and some sensational goaltending by the New York Rangers' Henrik Lundqvist.

The NHL returned, at least for a night, as Team New York defeated Team Philly/New Jersey, 10-6, in a benefit game before a sellout crowd of 10,792 hockey-starved fans at Boardwalk Hall on Saturday night.

"We want hockey!" "We want hockey!" they chanted as the official attendance was announced early in the third period. It was reportedly the first hockey sellout in Atlantic City since 1933.

Flyers winger Scvott Hartnell said he "got choked up hearing 11,000 people chant they want hockey back. We want to be playing and it's unfortunate we're not playing right now. But the energy in the building...was pretty incredible."

Before the game and during the latter stages of the third period, there were chants of "Fire Bettman!"

"Bettman sucks!" chants also echoed around the old arena.

The Penguins' James Neal scored four goals to pace New York. Martin Brodeur was the losing goalie.

The game, billed as Operation Hat Trick, raised money for three organizations that are aiding Hurricane Sandy victims.

"I'm very touched everyone came out to support the relief of Hurricane Sandy," Hartnell said.

The Team Philly/New York goal scorers were Justin Williams, Wayne Simmonds, James van Riemsdyk, Simon Gagne, Andy Greene and David Clarkson.

Hartnell was the captain for Team Philly/New Jersey, while Brad Richards captained Team New York.

Team Philly had a 23-10 shots advantage in the first period, but trailed, 4-0, because Lundqvist looked in mid-season form. He finished with 56 saves, many on point-blank shots.

"The dang Rangers. They've had our number, that's for sure," Hartnell said. "You'd think he'd have a little rust on him, not playing in five or six months....We were joking after the first period that the Rangers will want to play really bad now because he's on fire."

Brodeur, meanwhile, allowed 10 goals on 45 shots.

He kiddingly blamed his struggles on playing on the Flyers' side.

"I think that's why they scored 10 goals," he said. "I'm not used to that orange."

Breakaways. Vinny Guadagnino of Jersey Shore fame was listed as the New York coach, but Al Morganti of WIP/CSN actually handled the duties because of the actor's non-hockey background. Rick Tocchet coached Team Philly/NJ and said he hoped the fans' overwhelming response to the game would trigger a settlement...The game's organizers said they wouldn't have the amount of money raised for a few days.

Fehr is glum. While several NHL players were in Atlantic City for the benefit game, union leader Donald Fehr dampened the mood by gathering them for a pregame meeting.

Afterward, Fehr said he wanted to update the players on the labor talks, and he added that the sides were farther apart than they were a week ago because the NHL rejected the union's latest proposal on Wednesday.

Which is amusing because on Friday, Steve Fehr, Don's brother and special counsel for the NHLPA, said the sides weren't that far apart.

Donald Fehr also did not rule out the union decertifying and contesting to the courts that the lockout is illegal.

Fehr did have a funny line on playing the slots in AC: "Maybe I'll have better luck there than I do at the bargaining table," he said.

Follow Sam Carchidi on Twitter @BroadStBull.

Sam Carchidi @ 7:49 PM Permalink 6 comments

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.25.2012

644826 Philadelphia Flyers

Hartnell's Team Philly/NJ falls to Team NY in charity game

Follow @TPanotchCSN

ATLANTIC CITY -- A good cause, a good showing and a great turnout by hockey fans Saturday night at Boardwalk Hall.

Team New York, captained by Brad Richards, upended Scott Hartnell's Team Philly/New Jersey, 10-6, in "Operation Hat Trick." Proceeds from the event benefited relief efforts for Sandy victims in New York and New Jersey.

As Jody Shelley summed it up: "The fans stayed on their feet, cheered the entire game and even though it was a charity game, you try to work hard and the bottom line, it was fun and nobody got hurt."

This was a pretty fair All-Star Game and easily the best collection of NHL talent that we've seen anywhere in North America this non-season.

"It was great, I love it and I'd be lying if I didn't say I got a little choked up when you had 11,000 people cheering they want hockey back," Hartnell said.

"We want to be playing and it's unfortunate we're not," he continued. "The energy in the building ... it was pretty incredible and I was very touched people came out to support the relief of Hurricane Sandy."

No checking and no fights, even though Dan "Car Bomb" Carcillo, playing for Philly, had some words with Arron Asham of Team NY. The exchange was more of a setup to stoke the fans.

"Nah, Ash is a good dude and we became pretty close when we played here and we've remained friends. I was trying to get the fans going," Carcillo admitted.

James Neal scorched Philly goalie Marty Brodeur for four goals.

Ten goals overall against Marty?

"I think that is why they scored 10 goals," Brodeur kidded. "I am not used to that orange [jersey]."

Actually, it was a white jersey with orange trimmings.

Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist, who hates to give up goals in any kind of game, was reminded by reporters beforehand that this was for charity.

So what did King Henrik do in the opening period? He had 23 saves, including three from point-blank distance on Philly's Justin Williams, and a breakaway save on Simon Gagne.

"He was unbelievable but that is how he is -- he takes every practice seriously," Shelley said. "He take every puck serious."

Gagne got Philly's first goal on Lundqvist in the second period.

"The Rangers should call the league and tell them we should start playing pretty soon because [Lundqvist] is pissing away a lot of talent right now," Gagne said.

"Even a game for fun, we're taking real shots, real plays and he was very tough to beat."

Lundqvist was on pace for a 69-save performance. That came to an end in the second period, yet he still finished with 56 saves.

"Dang Rangers, they got our number, that's for sure," Hartnell said. "You'd think he'd have a little rust on him not playing a game in 5-6 months."

"It seems like he is in playoff shape. We were joking after the first period that now the Rangers want to play really bad because he's on fire."

The goalies had to play the entire way as there were no backups.

Brodeur yielded four goals on the first seven shots he faced.

"He was caught in the perfect storm," Hartnell said. "Rangers fans hate him and Flyers fans hate him. He'd make a great save, they'd boo. When they would score, they cheered. It was pretty cool. I told him he was a great guy no matter what anyone said of him."

Despite most of these guys having not played competitively since last season, their passing was very sharp. Neal had two early goals and both were off tic-tac-toe puck movement that seemed to delight the crowd.

South Jersey native Bobby Ryan, who wanted to play on Hartnell's squad but couldn't, also had a goal in the first period.

Lundqvist's luster dimmed as Philly opened the second period with goals from Gagne and Wayne Simmonds -- the Flyers' past and present -- to make it 4-2. Did we mention Carcillo, another ex-Flyer, assisted on Gagne's marker?

"Henrik is a competitor," Simmonds said. "He's not going to give up goals easily. You could see when we scored, we were checking his hole to see where they were going in. He's one of the best in the world. He's definitely not going to take it easy."

Over in Sweden, Lundqvist is facing one shooter a month to stay in shape.

"I've been skating with one guy and mentally, it's been terrible," Lundqvist said. "Technically, it's been pretty good."

Think you were rusty tonight?

"I think the start was important," he said, amid laughter. "Technically, the timing was a big question mark, but it was fun to get some action."

James van Riemsdyk made it a one-goal affair soon after and we had ourselves a real game for a while in the middle.

It was a 7-4 game heading into the final period, when Team New York pulled away once and for all.

"There was good tempo in this," Gagne said. "Not like the usual All-Star games where you see guys cruising around."

Loose pucks

Vinny Guadagnino from Jersey Shore was the coach in title only for Team New York. The actual bench coach was Al Morganti ... Rick Tocchet coached Team Philly/New Jersey ... Lauren Hart sang the national anthem ... Arena seating was readjusted to 10,792 seats from 10,000. Every seat was sold. Last hockey game that sold out in this building occurred in 1933 ... Hartnell and Richards each spoke to fans minutes before the game, thanking them and explaining how it came about ... CSN's Lisa Hillary did bench interviews during play, plus fan interviews during intermission ... Nine of 15 players from Team NY earned a point in the first period ... Penalties were settled with penalty shots ... Simmonds said he returned to the U.S. from Germany because of a family matter and that the racial taunting in Germany -- some of which he was originally unaware of until translated -- did not factor into his decision to come back to the U.S..

E-mail Tim Panaccio at tpanotch@comcast.net

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.25.2012

644827 Philadelphia Flyers

Fehr uses AC charity game to update players

Follow @TPanotchCSN

ATLANTIC CITY -- Nucky Thompson was nowhere to be found, but Donald Fehr was. Right beside the enormous Christmas tree at Caesars Atlantic City.

The executive director of the NHLPA said Saturday night he'd probably have better luck at the slot machines than at the bargaining table, where both sides continue to seem light years apart on reaching a new CBA.

No new talks are scheduled, Fehr said, after briefing about 25 players before Saturday's "Operation Hat Trick" hockey game at Boardwalk Hall to benefit Hurricane Sandy relief efforts.

There were no telephone discussions today, either.

"I wanted to take advantage of guys who came down to bring them up to the date on the situation," Fehr said. "Make sure we get all the guys' questions answered."

Fehr would not say whether the approximately two-hour meeting concerned the issue of union decertification, which has been bandied about in recent days.

"The only thing I'm going to say about that is this," Fehr replied, "there are two sets of laws which govern these situations.

"And what happens is, from time to time, unions and sports unions have officially said that there are circumstances where members would be better off without a union and taking action with the anti-trust laws. That's all I can tell you about it."

Pressed on whether it's too soon for media to assume decertification might occur, he said, "I don't want to tell you what is too soon. You can look at what's happened in the other sports and make your own judgments."

According to a player at the meeting, decertification "is a serious consideration right now."

Fehr also said he not spoken to Capitals defenseman Roman Hamrlik, who was highly critical of him recently, and that he had not personally talked to him in quite a while.

"Democracy can be a bit of a messy process at times," Fehr said. "If you believe in free speech and you don't believe in censorship, and you believe everybody is entitled to their opinion, they speak it. Sometimes, it's what they mean and sometimes they get angry and frustrated and they vent."

He said the remedy is for staff and players to reach out to that player and talk to them to answer questions.

As for whether the two sides are any closer ...

"When we made our proposal on Wednesday, I thought the answer would be, 'yes,' but we didn't get a response that suggested we are.

"When you make a move towards them, if you're going to have an agreement, somebody has to say, 'yes,' and 'now I can do this.' Instead, they said, 'yes,' and 'what else can you do for me?'"

Fehr added that the single biggest difference continues to be the league's unwillingness to accept that player contractual rights moving forward is critical to getting a new deal.

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Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.25.2012

644828 Pittsburgh Penguins

Mario Lemieux builds second home worth \$20 million

By Shelly Anderson / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Noting that locked-out NHL players might wince at the sight, the Journal de Montreal Saturday published pictures and a story detailing a \$20 million mansion that Penguins co-owner Mario Lemieux has built in the Laurentians, a resort area north of Montreal.

The French-language newspaper indicated the estate, under construction since September 2009, is ready for occupancy. It has 15,000 square feet, 23 rooms, 10 bathrooms, a pool and a tennis court and is near a golf course and ski slopes.

The Journal said skiers have been gawking at what it calls a stone-and-wood Swiss castle, and others have lingered at the gate hoping to see the Hall of Famer.

Through a spokesman, Lemieux declined to comment on his second home. His local residence is in Sewickley.

Post Gazette LOADED: 11.25.2012

644829 Vancouver Canucks

For Canucks keeping Luongo would be a big gamble

By Jason Botchford, The Province November 24, 2012

In Vancouver, it always comes back to the goalies.

No issue is quite like it and no year has ever been quite like this one.

Whenever the NHL ends its lockout, the Roberto Luongo situation will consume Vancouver sports landscape like a Mount Seymour-sized Hoover.

Most believe the Canucks will move quickly to trade him. He said in July it's time to "move on." And it is.

But to get the right trade, the Canucks are still willing to smoke it out. They've been prepared since the end of last season to start training camp and even the season with both Luongo and Cory Schneider.

Luongo is game. He's always been the consummate professional. He will handle it with class, and put aside his desire to be the No. 1 starter for the sake of the team. It's why he took the public U-turn over the summer. He went from the honest player who admitted a trade is in everyone's best interests to the honest player who said he realized he's OK with coming back. He came around on his own, reading the tea leaves and noticing the chances the Canucks were going to deal him before training camp were diminishing quickly.

Some contend the Canucks should reconsider, given the circumstances. They argue the Canucks should keep Luongo for a run at the Stanley Cup. With a condensed schedule, and a goalie in Cory Schneider who has never been an NHL starter, it's not without merit. It would provide mind-blowing depth and give the Canucks the best tandem in the league.

But, man, what a risk.

It's not just about the distraction a year of Luongo and Schneider will generate. It's the impact it could have on his trade market. Luongo has always thrived on a heavy schedule. No one can be sure how a year of sharing the job with Schneider, where he plays 50 per cent of the games or less, would have on him. If he struggles in the role, he'll be a 34-year-old goalie next summer coming off a down year. If people believe his contract is difficult to trade now, what would they think then? Good luck with that. And over the long run, the Canucks can't keep both. It's just too much invested into a position where only one player can start.

A Luongo deal can make the Canucks a more complete team, especially if they can get younger and get a third-line centre.

But how much will it weaken the position in net?

That depends entirely on Schneider. He's not going to have much of a safety net. This season will be on him. It's what he's always wanted but the pressure will be immense.

The backup goalie market is weak. There is Dan Ellis who has gone public with his interest in the Canucks, though the feeling has not yet been mutual. Maybe it should be. Ellis has been terrific playing for the Charlotte Checkers, the Carolina Hurricanes affiliate, where he signed a tryout deal. With a 5-2-2 record, a 1.71 GAA and a .948 save percentage, he's been on the AHL's best goalies. More importantly, he's been healthy. Ellis, who has proven resumé of being a successful starter for stretches in the NHL, played only 10 games last year because of groin issues. If last year's surgery fixed the problem, you'd be hard pressed to find a better possibility available.

From there, it gets dark fast. There's Dwayne Roloson, who is already coaching, Brent Johnson, who soon will be coaching, and Ty Conklin.

The Canucks can obviously get a goalie back in a Luongo deal. Toronto may be more willing than ever to part with Ben Scrivens, given the way Finnish netminder Jussi Rynnäs is impressing with the Toronto Marlies.

And, of course, there's Eddie Lack, the wild card already in the Canucks fold. He continues to show he's got a great personality, but this year he has been without the great stats. Lack is 7-4-1 this season with the AHL Chicago Wolves with a 3.02 GAA and a .898 save percentage.

Is he ready for the NHL? Would the Canucks bet on him?

It doesn't seem likely. He probably would have needed a sensational start to the AHL season to get into the conversation. Lack's game still requires a lot of refinement. Even on his own AHL team, you can make the argument his backup, Matt Climie, is the one who is more ready to sub in for stretches in the NHL.

None of these options is going to help the Canucks much. In a 60-game schedule, how many games is a backup not named Luongo going to get? Maybe 15.

If Schneider is injured or, more frightening, proves somehow he's incapable of handling the job, the Canucks season gets put on a roasting pan and tossed into the oven.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 11.25.2012

644830 Washington Capitals

Bettman: NHL, NHLPA 'still far apart'

Posted by Katie Carrera on November 21, 2012 at 8:35 pm

NHL labor negotiations hit yet another roadblock Wednesday as the league rejected the NHLPA's latest proposal for a new collective bargaining agreement.

"We're still far apart," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman told reporters in New York. "But hopefully there will have been some momentum from today's session that we can build off of to hopefully, again hopefully, bring this process to a successful conclusion."

The union's offer included a shift from its previous proposals as it based the players' share of hockey-related revenues on a percentage rather than a fixed amount. Hockey-related revenues would be split 50-50 in the first year of the players' five-year proposal but asks that owners contribute \$393 million for the "make whole" provision that ensures the value of existing contracts. The league's original "make whole" offer was for \$211 million.

"On the big things there was, as of today, no reciprocity in any meaningful sense," NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr told reporters in New York. "No movement on the players share, no movement on salary arbitration eligibility, no movement on free agency eligibility, no agreement on a pension plan."

Check out the players' full proposal here and some notable links below.

- Capitals defenseman Roman Hamlik criticized Donald Fehr in an interview in his native Czech Republic. TV Nova's Roman Jedlicka offered a translation on Twitter:

"I am disgusted. We have to push Fehr to the wall to get the deal. Time is against us. We lost 1/4 season, it is \$425 million. Who will give it back to us? Mr. Fehr? There should be voting between player. Four questions – YES or NO – then count it. If half of players say lets play, then they should sign new CBA. If there is no season he should leave and we will find someone new. Time is our enemy."

- Post columnist Thomas Boswell cautions the owners not to underestimate Donald Fehr.

If hockey wants to avoid losing a second season under Commissioner Gary Bettman's watch, it should widen its analysis from issues like "core economics" and "player contracting." The NHL had better figure out Fehr, how he runs a union, what his strategies are and, especially, why baseball got crushed time after time. The subtext of these negotiations is the Fehr factor.

Long negotiations have key junctures — like Wednesday. One Fehr method is to identify moments of discovery when his union can determine the other side's true intentions. The union pushes an aggressive proposal, one that usually addresses the concerns of moderate members in the union. That way, it either reaches an agreement soon or the membership toughens once it "discovers" that the actual strategy of the other side is a long fight.

Washington Post LOADED: 11.25.2012

644831 Washington Capitals

NHL lockout 2012: Donald Fehr says no real progress made

By Stephen Whyno

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Donald Fehr updated about 25 players on the state of the NHL lockout Saturday, but the bad news was there was no news or progress to report.

There are no official collective bargaining negotiation sessions planned, and it doesn't seem like the two sides are any closer to an agreement now than they were a week ago, before the most recent talks.

"When we made our proposal on Wednesday, I thought the answer would be yes. But we didn't get a response which suggests that we are," Fehr said from Caesars before the Operation Hat Trick charity game. "When you make a move towards them, if you're going to have an agreement, somebody has to say, 'Yes and now I can do this.' Instead they said, more or less, 'Yes and what else can you do for me?'"

There was communication between the owners and NHL Players' Association Friday, and Fehr expects that to continue either Sunday or Monday. It's unclear how much wiggle room the players have after their last proposal, which included more concessions in the owners' direction.

"Everybody understands that negotiation is a process, that's about all I can say. So far, we seem to be doing all the negotiating," Fehr said. "When you say, we have to have with the right hand and I'm going to give you with the left hand, that's one thing, if they say we have to take with the right hand and we're going to take with the left hand, too, that becomes very difficult."

Fehr pointed to player contract rights as a major issue that the owners are not conceding on. The league wants to limit new contracts to five years or fewer and constrict arbitration rights.

"In a circumstance in which if the cap is going to be limited, the player contracting rights, which is where the individual player has an opportunity to get his share of the pie, have to be constricted too. And those become more, not less important, to players as cap space is limited," Fehr said. "When you add to that, that the rights the players believe they must maintain are what they got in the last negotiation in return for massive concessions, it becomes very difficult."

Fehr said players have been clear that player contracting rights are "vital" but explained that there has not been recognition of that fact from the other side.

The next step in the process from the NHLPA side could be to decertify as a union. That would take away the union's ability to bargain for players, but it would also wrest control of the process from the league. It could be a messy process that lasts months or years in court challenging antitrust legislation, but the NBA and NFL players did so and came to agreements on new CBAs.

Fehr was not forthcoming about whether the players have discussed desertification as an option.

"There are two sets of laws that govern these situations and what happens is that, from time to time, unions and sports unions have essentially said that there are circumstances in which members would be better off without a union and taking action under the antitrust laws," he said. "And that's all I can say about it. You can check what's happened in the other sports."

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644832 Washington Capitals

NHL Lockout 2012: Roman Hamlik at center of controversy

By Stephen Whyno

Roman Hamlik this past week became one of the loudest voices of the NHL lockout. "Disgusted" with the process, he questioned NHL Players' Association head Donald Fehr and called for a vote of 700-plus to get back on the ice.

In the process, he was supported by one Washington Capitals teammate, ripped by another and became a symbol of dissension within the ranks.

"You can't crucify a guy for saying what he thinks," said Caps defenseman Karl Alzner, whose first reaction to Hamrlik's comments was to laugh. "You've got hundreds of other people, players, that don't necessarily agree with him, and he's going to get the backlash from it. But I don't think you can worry about it. It's just his opinion."

Goaltender Michal Neuvirth agreed with Hamrlik, telling a Czech news agency the lockout is "about several superstars with big contracts." Still, that wasn't a popular opinion around the league.

First, Montreal Canadiens forward Erik Cole took aim at Hamrlik in an interview with the Montreal Gazette. Then Caps alternate player representative Troy Brouwer explained he was upset with how Hamrlik handled the situation.

"He's been through this three times before. He should know the ramifications of what guys say, and so for him to come out and say this, in a position that he's in, I understand that he probably wants to play as long as he can, but he was a guy who was lucky enough to be a first-round pick, never played a game in the American Hockey League, always had everything easy for him," Brouwer said. "And now he might be on the last couple years of his NHL career if he wants to play."

"Everybody wants to play. ... You can't be that selfish and just make comments as far as, 'OK, I only have one year left on my deal, I don't care what happens with the CBA because I'm not going to be a part of it anymore after this season.'"

Hamrlik is 38 years old and has one season left on a two-year, \$7 million contract signed with Washington in July 2011. It came as no surprise to Alzner, ex-teammate Mike Knuble and others that the veteran defenseman had a strong opinion.

And he made it no secret to others that he opposed this lockout.

"He addressed me several times that he was not happy what's gone on with this CBA situation. I basically told him to talk to the NHL Players' Association," Hamrlik's agent, Petr Svoboda, said. "It's not the first time he's gone through it. I know the guys are getting very frustrated nowadays."

According to multiple people who have been closely involved on the players' side, Hamrlik has not voiced his opinion to the NHLPA publicly.

While Knuble said Hamrlik has "earned the right" to voice his opinion, doing so without speaking up internally drew sharp criticism.

"He's a guy that has not participated in any conference calls from the very beginning of the process. He hasn't bothered to attend any CBA meetings. He hasn't bothered to attend any NHLPA meetings," said one agent who spoke on condition of anonymity. "His opinion is not shared by 99 percent of the other players."

Brouwer agreed wholeheartedly with that sentiment, saying that other than Hamrlik and Neuvirth, the rest of the Caps' players were all on the same page. And also disagreed with Hamrlik's assertion that if the 700-plus players took a vote, they'd take the owners' latest offer to play.

"We've had discussions about whether or not we want to accept their last proposal and it was overwhelmingly no. There was not one person that was on the conference call that wanted to accept the deal that they had put in front of us the last time," Brouwer said. "Where these guys are making these assumptions, maybe it's just them talking for themselves and not representing the PA, which is what the rest of us are trying to do because the deal that's in front of us right now is something that's going to hurt the association for years to come. It's not going to be able to enable us to have any growth, any contracting rights, anything like that. As a PA we can't accept that for ourselves or for future players going forth here."

And while Hamrlik's age and NHL experience adds weight to his comments, his being in the twilight of his career puts him in an interesting spot.

"He wants to make his money because he legitimately thinks this could be the last year of his career. He's a guy that made already over \$58 million over the course of his NHL career. NHL players sacrificed for him in 1992, in 1994 and in 2004 so he could make that \$58 million," the agent said. "And instead of showing his gratitude to the NHLPA and the sacrifices former players made for him, he's motivated by his own self-interest. There's always a few bad apples in a wise group that only care about themselves."

Svoboda said as of Friday night he hadn't spoken with Hamrlik since his comments to Daily Sport in the Czech Republic. And while he didn't want to speak for his client, he stood up for him.

"I've known Roman for 20 years and he's not a selfish individual," Svoboda said. "I don't tell my guys what to eat, what to do. ... He's a great teammate. He's been a loyal NHLer through every [lockout]. It's very difficult for me to say anything right now because we don't know much about his situation."

Hamrlik is not one of eight Caps players to sign overseas. Several others said they'll remain in North America for a little while longer, possibly until the entire 2012-13 season is canceled.

It's uncertain what Hamrlik's next move will be. He did not respond to an email seeking comment. In an interview with Sportsnet 590 radio in Toronto, NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr said he hadn't spoken with Hamrlik or conferred with Don Fehr about the situation.

And while there was plenty of vitriol toward Hamrlik as the lockout approached its 70th day, Knuble said he was surprised the sentiment didn't come out from a player even sooner, even if he disagreed.

"I think it's only natural at this point, it's been going on for three months or whatever, that some people are going to step out and voice their opinions," Knuble said. "You have 700 guys, you have 700 opinions. And everybody has a breaking point and everybody's going to wait and they're going to say something when they feel they need to."

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644833 Websites

NBCSports.com /What's been lost: Five best early December games you won't see

Joe Yerdon

Unfortunately, labor discord has cost the NHL and its fans another two weeks worth of games through December 14 as well as the All-Star Game.

Now it's time for us to ponder what could've been (much like we've done before) and taking a look at the five games we'll miss the most between December 1-14.

December 1: Washington vs. Carolina

Alex Semin's not-so triumphant return to Verizon Center in Washington would've been a fun way to kick off the month. After wearing out his welcome with the Caps and teasing going to the KHL, Semin signed a monster one-year deal with Carolina to presumably torture Alex Ovechkin and his former teammates in the Southeast Division. You can't help but wonder how loud the boos would be for this game.

December 5: Washington vs. NY Rangers

Who doesn't love a playoff rematch? The Caps and Rangers played one of the tightest seven-game series in recent memory last spring and seeing new head coach Adam Oates send Ovechkin and Nicklas Backstrom into attack against Henrik Lundqvist and the Rangers would make for a fascinating game... If it happened.

December 8: Toronto vs. Boston

All right, you're probably tired of the Phil Kessel trade needling by now, but there was a good chance a fully armed and operational Bruins team with all pieces from that hotly debated deal would be on the ice. Sure there's Kessel against Tyler Seguin, but Dougie Hamilton too against a potentially poor Leafs team? It would've been a good night for lots of boos from the Leafs faithful.

Ric Flair always said, "To be the man, you gotta beat the man" and seeing the new look Wild against the defending Stanley Cup champions would've made for a fun one. After all, it'd be Zach Parise lining up against Anze Kopitar, Drew Doughty, and Jonathan Quick just like they did in June. Add in Ryan Suter, Mikael Granlund, and Charlie Coyle for the Wild and you would've had a heck of a showcase for young talent.

December 10: Detroit vs. Boston

So just how would the slightly new-look Red Wings fare against a potentially beastly Bruins team? Sure, the Wings would have Pavel Datsyuk and Henrik Zetterberg to dazzle and line up against Zdeno Chara, but how would a Nick Lidstrom-free Wings blue line be able to handle Seguin, Patrice Bergeron, and a healthy Nathan Horton? Niklas Kronwall and Carlo Colaiacovo would have their hands full handling them and Milan Lucic. Yikes. Maybe the Wings are better off missing out on this one.

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644834 Websites

NBCSports.com /Ray Whitney: restrictive CBA would handcuff good GMs

Jason Brough

Forget the players, what about the poor general managers? If the owners get their way, the NHL's new CBA – complete with maximum contract lengths and front-loading restrictions – will only serve to handcuff teams with a creative front office.

At least, that's what Ray Whitney thinks.

"There are some incredibly smart GMs out there, guys like Ken Holland and Lou Lamoriello," Whitney told ESPN.com on Friday. "They're not allowed to say anything but what the league is trying to do now is say, 'We don't trust you GMs, we want to put in a system that tells you how to run your teams now. We're going to cut your legs out. Kenny, I know you've got a genius mind when it comes to contracts and maneuvering things, but we're not going to allow that anymore. We're going to make it so the worst GM in the league can compete with you because your hands are tied.'"

The truth is, big-market teams love being able to throw their wallets around. Case in point, does anyone think the Flyers would've bothered trying to pry Shea Weber out of a place like Detroit? Of course not. The Red Wings would've matched a \$110 million offer sheet without blinking. But Philadelphia knew the Predators would have to think about it. Deep pockets are a huge competitive advantage in pro sports.

Where Whitney's argument could be challenged is the assumption that Holland is a genius when it comes to "contracts and maneuvering things."

First off, we probably shouldn't throw the word "genius" around when it comes to structuring NHL contracts. Offering money up front isn't something that's never been done in the history of business. That the league failed to anticipate back-diving contracts when it crafted the last CBA is, in retrospect, astonishing.

Secondly, let's consider some of the contracts that Holland has handed out. Are the Red Wings really going to be better off in the long run with Henrik Zetterberg (32 years old), Johan Franzen (32), and Niklas Kronwall (31) signed until 2021, 2020 and 2019, respectively? That's one of those "guess we'll have to wait and see" things. In that way, it's sort of like buying a company with a pile of debt. Might work out great. Might be a disaster. The actual taking on debt part is easy though, especially if it's not your money.

Of course, it's not the Red Wings the NHL is worried about. If those contracts go south, Detroit will survive. The teams the NHL is worried about are the ones that can't afford to operate in a market where players demand long-term, front-loaded contracts because teams like the Red Wings give them out.

At any rate, if Holland has been a "genius" at anything, it's drafting and developing players. And regardless of what's in the new CBA, that will remain a vital skill for GMs. As will hiring the right coach, selling free agents on the opportunity to win (not just make a lot of money), making trades, and creating the right mix of players.

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644835 Websites

NBCSports.com /Fehr claims canceled games don't make economic sense for NHL

Jason Brough

As per tradition, the NHLPA has released a statement on the heels of an NHL announcement that a block of games (this one through Dec. 14) has been canceled due to the lockout.

Here's the latest union declaration, courtesy executive director Donald Fehr:

"On Wednesday, the players presented a comprehensive proposal, once again moving in the owners' direction in order to get the game back on the ice. The gap that remains on the core economic issues is \$182 million. On Wednesday, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said that the league is losing \$18-20 million per day during the lockout, therefore two more weeks of canceled games far exceeds the current economic gap. It makes the NHL's announcement of further game cancellations, including the 2013 All-Star Weekend, all the more unnecessary, and disappointing for all hockey fans – especially those in Columbus. The players remain ready to negotiate but we require a willing negotiating partner."

Of course, the sum of \$182 million isn't the only gap separating the two sides. There's also a whole host of contractual issues, plus the owners probably don't like the players' request to be protected from the "aftermath" of the work stoppage.

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