

SPORT-SCAN DAILY BRIEF

NHL 11/27/2012

Anaheim Ducks

644854 NHL, players' association agree to let federal mediators look at labor dispute

Boston Bruins

644855 Federal mediators to join NHL labor talks

Buffalo Sabres

644856 NHL, NHLPA agree to meet with Federal mediator
644857 Poll: With NHL absent, have you attended games at other levels of hockey?

Calgary Flames

644858 Flames' union rep Stajan hopes mediation is helpful

Carolina Hurricanes

644859 NHL, players to try mediation

Chicago Blackhawks

644860 Federal mediators to assist NHL talks
644861 NHL fate in Bettman's hands, wallet
644862 NHL, NHLPA agree to mediation in labor talks

Colorado Avalanche

644863 Schwartz not looking back despite lockout

Columbus Blue Jackets

644864 NHL notebook: Sides bring in mediators for negotiations
644865 Michael Arace commentary: Players fight lockouts by dissolving union

Detroit Red Wings

644866 Red Wings' Todd Bertuzzi: 'I see us losing a year'
644867 Darren McCarty lined up for Red Wings vs. Avalanche viewing party
644868 Red Wings players giving up hope of having a season
644869 Miss the Detroit Red Wings? Some team alumni to take on Carhartt employees in charity game
644870 Federal mediators to meet with NHL, NHLPA this week when labor talks will resume
644871 Red Wings' Todd Bertuzzi believes season will be lost, says it will take years to repair damage
644872 Red Wings scouting report: Mikael Samuelsson will be needed to make up for lost production
644873 PAT CAPUTO: Wrong on both sides of ongoing NHL dispute

Edmonton Oilers

644874 Smyth remains hopeful as NHL, union agree to mediation
644875 Are you game? Join the Journal's Game On Oilers online league
644876 Oilers' Klefbom gone for season
644877 Confirmed: Klefbom's season done due to shoulder injury
644878 Oilers Klefbom under the knife
644879 Oilers' Taylor Hall, Justin Schultz, Jordan Eberle and Nail Yakupov grab spotlight

Florida Panthers

644880 Florida Panthers' Erik Gudbranson joins teammates for first workout since injury

Los Angeles Kings

644881 THERE USED TO BE AN ARENA – KEMPER ARENA

Minnesota Wild

644882 NHL/NHLPA to seek help from federal mediators; Wild player updates

Montreal Canadiens

644883 For Eller, hockey sun still rises in Finland
644884 NHL labour talks headed to mediation

Nashville Predators

644885 Nashville Predators' workouts keep group size steady

New Jersey Devils

644886 Federal Mediators Will Oversee Negotiations on Lockout
644887 How the N.H.L. Players' Union Would Decertify
644888 NHL lockout: Will federal mediators help more than in 2004-05?
644889 NHL lockout update: NHL, NHLPA agree to use federal mediators
644890 NHL lockout mediator Guy Serota's Twitter account hacked, later deleted after inappropriate jokes

New York Rangers

644891 Mediator Guy Serota removed from NHL & NHLPA negotiations due to stir caused by 'allegedly hacked Twitter acco
644892 NHL and NHLPA agree to federal mediation in CBA talks, hoping objective perspective leads to progress toward d
644893 Federal mediators to oversee NHL labor talks

NHL

644894 Concussed Henderson had to plead to play in '72 Summit Series
644895 Mediation 'did not work in football and basketball,' but NHL will give it a go on Wednesday

Ottawa Senators

644896 Ottawa Senators defenceman Marc Methot raves about trip to Northwest Territories
644897 Ottawa Senators defenceman Marc Methot and other NHLers work out with the Carleton Ravens

Philadelphia Flyers

644898 NHL, players association agree to try federal mediation
644899 Mediators will try to end NHL labor war

Pittsburgh Penguins

644900 Mediators step into labor situation between NHL, Players' Association.
644901 NHL lockout: Crosby closer to playing overseas
644902 Federal mediators to join NHL lockout talks

Tampa Bay Lightning

644903 Lightning's St. Louis still in Tampa as NHL lockout drags on
644904 Tampa Bay Lightning's Marty St. Louis "baffled" at state of negotiations but not bolting to Europe

Toronto Maple Leafs

644905 NHL lockout: Labour talks mediator removed over Twitter postings
644906 NHL lockout: NBA players feel hockey brethren's pain
644907 NHL lockout: Mediators called in for meetings this week
644908 Maple Leafs goalie James Reimer anxious for chance at redemption

Vancouver Canucks

644909 Canucks player rep Cory Schneider says union decertification a last resort
644910 NHLPA willing to travel tricky decertification route but only as a last resort
644911 Burrows ready to play on any line when play resumes

Washington Capitals

- 644912 NHL, NHLPA to meet with federal mediators
- 644913 NHL lockout 2012: Federal mediation part of the talks
- 644914 DALY: For Capitals' Roman Hamrlik, time may be ticking away

Websites

- 644919 ESPN / Mediators aren't miracle workers
- 644920 NBCSports.com / A look at NHL-NHLPA mediators...and the one that got removed because of his weird Twitter account
- 644921 Sportsnet.ca / Spector on mediation: New level of ridicule

Winnipeg Jets

- 644915 Pavs joins Finnish cellar-dweller
- 644916 Another chapter added to Pavelec's European adventure
- 644917 Jets' Hainsey cautiously optimistic about NHL mediation
- 644918 Ondrej Pavelec has tryout with SM-Liga team Lahti Pelicans
SPORT-SCAN, INC. 941-284-4129
- 644854 Anaheim Ducks

NHL, players' association agree to let federal mediators look at labor dispute

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service is expected to begin meeting with league and union officials this week. Recommendations from mediators are not binding. The league locked players out on Sept. 15.

By Helene Elliott

November 27, 2012

The NHL and NHL Players' Assn. agreed Monday to allow the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to bring fresh perspective to a dispute that's threatening to devour the 2012-13 season.

The FMCS, a government agency that has no ties to either labor or management, helps resolve conflicts in industry, government agencies and communities. Mediators' recommendations are not binding.

Scot Beckenbaugh, acting head of the FMCS during an unsuccessful effort to resolve the 2004-05 NHL lockout, was assigned to the negotiations with John Sweeney, the FMCS' director of mediation services. They are expected to begin meeting with league and union officials Wednesday in Washington or New York. A third mediator, Guy Serota, was removed after agency head George H. Cohen — who mediated the NBA's labor dispute last year — found "issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account" associated with Serota.

Framoze Virjee, a partner in the labor and employment group in the Los Angeles law office of O'Melveny & Myers, said the FMCS mediators will probably get both sides together before separating them to listen to each side's concerns. Virjee said the "positional bargaining" or posturing that can complicate collective bargaining talks will be minimized because each side can speak confidentially to the mediator.

"What they do is a lot of listening," Virjee said of mediators. "They ask a lot of questions and try to fashion a solution based upon what they hear. So most of the time they'll go back and forth between the sides and they won't be, in the beginning, carrying any kinds of offers or counteroffers. They'll just be gaining information.

"In the end, they may fashion a proposal of their own that they think meets the needs of both sides. Maybe it's been an issue of vocabulary or a misunderstanding between the parties as to what both sides really need. Or maybe in private both sides give the federal mediator a greater understanding of what their bottom line is."

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said the league has "no particular level of expectation going into this process." He added, "It's something new. Maybe it can help change positions."

NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr said players look forward to the FMCS' involvement "as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners."

The NHL, which locked players out on Sept. 15, has canceled regular-season games through Dec. 14 and its All-Star festivities. The league and union are only \$182 million apart on dividing hockey-related revenue, but players oppose the NHL's proposals to limit contracts to five years and toughen standards for free agency and salary arbitration.

Virjee said sometimes opposing sides will accept federal mediation merely to avoid being perceived as "the bad guy" in a dispute.

"So it's not unusual for a mediator to not be successful," he said. "Sometimes it's done for context and atmosphere. Sometimes it's done in earnest. And often it's done for both reasons.

"It's also not usual for a good mediator — and the FMCS is full of good mediators — to defy expectation and bring the parties together to reach an agreement because really the parties were posturing or they weren't hearing each other."

LA Times: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644855 Boston Bruins

Federal mediators to join NHL labor talks

By Kevin Paul Dupont, Globe Staff

In desperate need of finding middle ground in their stalled negotiations aimed at forging a new collective bargaining agreement, the NHL and the NHL Players' Association agreed Monday to include at least one Federal mediator at their next bargaining session, possibly as early as Wednesday.

The mediation process is non-binding, meaning the two sides are not obligated to follow or accept any recommendations rendered by the mediators.

George H. Cohen, director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service in Washington, D.C. said in a statement:

"I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement. At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices. I have assigned Deputy Director Scot L. Beckenbaugh, Director of Mediation Services John Sweeney, and Commissioner Guy Serota to serve as the mediators."

The two sides sought the aid of Federal mediators during the NHL's lockout of 2004-'05, but the move did not succeed in forging a deal. The entire season was finally scrubbed in January and the parties finally negotiated a deal without the help of mediators in July '05.

The NHL lockout, the third in league history, began Sept. 16. On Friday, the league cancelled all regular-season games through Dec. 14 as well as the January All-Star game scheduled for Columbus. Previously this month, the league also cancelled its iconic Winter Classic game, slated for Jan. 1 at the University of Michigan between the Red Wings and Maple Leafs.

Boston Globe LOADED: 11.27.2012

644856 Buffalo Sabres

NHL, NHLPA agree to meet with Federal mediator

The NHL and its players' association, who are at a prolonged standstill in their search for a collective bargaining agreement, have agreed to bring a third party into the talks.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Director George H. Cohen issued the following statement today:

"I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement. At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the

agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices.

"I have assigned Deputy Director Scot L. Beckenbaugh, Director of Mediation Services John Sweeney, and Commissioner Guy Serota to serve as the mediators."

The NBA and NFL used a mediator to help end their labor disputes, but the NHL canceled the 2004-05 season shortly after enlisting the help of a mediator. Any findings by the FMCS will not be binding.

"We welcome a new approach in trying to reach a resolution of the ongoing labor dispute at the earliest possible date," NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly told the Canadian Press.

---John Vogl

Buffalo News LOADED: 11.27.2012

644857 Buffalo Sabres

Poll: With NHL absent, have you attended games at other levels of hockey?

The reminder comes often: Hockey isn't limited to the NHL. There's plenty of proof near Buffalo.

With no Sabres to cover, I've made my way to rinks featuring various levels of hockey. There have been trips to Rochester to see the Amerks and the American Hockey League. I've wandered to Buffalo State to watch Canisius, Niagara and NCAA hockey. This weekend, I drove to Erie, Pa., to watch Kitchener visit the Otters in an Ontario Hockey League junior game. Plus, I've seen more of my son's youth contests than the previous three seasons combined, I bet.

Anyone else been catching hockey despite the absence of the NHL?

---John Vogl

Buffalo News LOADED: 11.27.2012

644858 Calgary Flames

Flames' union rep Stajan hopes mediation is helpful

By RANDY SPORTAK ,Calgary Sun

All those who have followed the NHL lockout with cynicism can see Monday's decision to bring in a mediator as nothing more than a publicity stunt.

Or worse, just another swerve in a road that is slowly meandering to a hard-to-find destination.

Considering how absurd the spat between the NHL and players' association, it's hard to find any positives these days.

Calgary Flames NHLPA rep Matt Stajan, although as frustrated with the lockout as anybody, has high hopes the decision unveiled Monday to meet with the U.S. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service will at least kickstart the stagnant talks.

"As this process has gone on, we've made every effort — especially with our last proposal last week — to engage in a negotiation that will get this thing finished," Stajan said.

"Obviously, that didn't work out, so hopefully, bringing in a mediator will help the process get moving and get it resolved. We want to get back playing."

If the sides were willing to bring in an arbitrator, then hockey fans could be excited.

A mediator will simply listen to both sides and help try to broker a deal.

Worth noting is the fact during the 2004-05 lockout, which cost an entire season, mediators were part of the process a few times and it didn't help.

After all, if one side or the other doesn't agree with what the mediator says, they can simply ignore it.

Still, having a different voice can't hurt.

"That's the hope," Stajan said. "We're committed to getting a deal done. If it does, great. If it doesn't, we'll look at other options. It seems like we keep negotiating against ourselves."

Of course, it's possible the NHLPA pushed so hard for mediators to check that off the box before going through the decertification process.

If the union was to go to that route, it could mean a quick end to the lockout — as was the case with both the NFL and NBA — or a long legal process.

"It's something we're looking at and might be the way we go if things don't get going soon," Stajan said. "We have our lawyers and people in the office have looked into it, and the players are getting informed about it. It's something we're definitely looking at in the not-too-distant future."

Butler to Sweden

Flames defenceman Chris Butler is the latest player to head to Europe. He announced late Sunday on Twitter he's off to skate in Sweden.

Calgary Sun: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644859 Carolina Hurricanes

NHL, players to try mediation

By Chip Alexander - calexander@newsobserver.com

The NHL and NHL Players Association have agreed to some outside assistance — from federal mediators.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service director George H. Cohen issued a statement Monday saying he had held separate, informal discussions with key representatives of the NHL and NHLPA. He said "at the invitation of the FMCS" and with agreement from both the league and the union, collective bargaining negotiations would be "conducted under our auspices."

NHL labor talks are expected to resume Wednesday in an attempt to end the impasse over a CBA that has had the NHL in a lockout since Sept. 15 and jeopardized the 2012-2013 season.

Cohen said he had assigned deputy director Scot L. Beckenbaugh and director of mediation services John Sweeney to serve as mediators. He said the agency would have no further comment on the schedule of meetings or the status of the negotiations because of the "extreme sensitivity" of the talks.

Federal mediators can make a difference. Since 2008, FMCS has helped settle 87 percent (2008), 86 percent (2009 and 2010) and 85 percent of mediated collective bargaining cases, according to the agency's 2011 annual report.

Mediation is not arbitration. Nothing is binding. But given the differences between the league and the union over CBA issues, mediators could offer advice and help foster a compromise on such contentious issues as the league's "make whole" provision on honoring existing player contracts.

"We look forward to their involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners," NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr said Monday in a statement.

FMCS was involved in the CBA disputes of both the NBA and the NFL last year. Federal mediation also was used during the NHL's CBA squabble in 2005, but mediators did not enter the process until February 2005 and could not prevent the 2004-2005 season from being canceled.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly, in a statement, said the league had "no particular level of expectation" in using mediators, but noted the league welcomed "a new approach in trying to reach a resolution of the ongoing labor dispute at the earliest possible date."

The league has canceled all regular-season games through Dec. 14 and the 2013 Winter Classic game that was to be played New Year's Day. The 2013 NHL All-Star Weekend also has been canceled.

News Observer LOADED: 11.27.2012

Federal mediators to assist NHL talks

By Chris Kuc

The NHL and the players association will get some help in an effort to work toward a deal on a new collective bargaining agreement and end the lockout.

The sides have agreed on mediation and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service has assigned three men to the case in an effort to ease the stalemate between the owners and players that began Sept. 15 and has caused the cancellation of the 2012-13 regular-season schedule through games of Dec. 14 and also the axing of the Winter Classic and 2013 NHL All-Star Game.

"We are able to confirm that we have agreed to a request by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to engage in meetings with the Union that will involve the participation of Federal Mediators," NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement to the Tribune. "While we have no particular level of expectation going into this process, we welcome a new approach in trying to reach a resolution of the ongoing labor dispute at the earliest possible date. We have no further comment on the upcoming meetings at the current time."

NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr said in a statement: "The NHLPA has agreed to the addition of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) to our ongoing negotiations. We look forward to their involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners."

Chicago Blackhawks defenseman Steve Montador is a member of the NHLPA's negotiation committee and said via e-mail that he hopes the addition to mediators will help move the process along.

"I'm glad there's mediation in play right now and I hope it is taken seriously," Montador said. "Beyond that, it just won't matter. There's no power the mediators have to enforce anything, so I hope it helps to engage the NHL in negotiations."

FMCS Director George H. Cohen initially assigned Scot L. Beckenbaugh, John Sweeney and Guy Serota as mediators. While they can assist in the negotiations, they do not have the authority to force an agreement as any decision is not binding.

"I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement," Cohen said in a statement. "At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices." "Due to the extreme sensitivity of these negotiations and consistent with the FMCS's long-standing practice, the Agency will refrain from any public comment concerning the future schedule and/or the status of the negotiations until further notice."

Not long after making the announcement of the assignment of the mediators, Cohen removed Serota after the latter's Twitter account was allegedly hacked.

"Within one hour after I issued a press release announcing that further negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA would be conducted under the auspices of the FMCS, it has been called to my attention that there are issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account associated with Commissioner Guy Serota, one of the mediators I assigned," Cohen said in a statement. "Accordingly, in order to immediately dispel any cloud on the mediation process, and without regard to the merits of the allegations, I have determined to take immediate action, namely to remove Commissioner Serota from this assignment."

"There will be no further comment from the FMCS on this matter."

According to its website, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service is an independent U.S. government agency whose mission is to preserve and promote labor-management peace and cooperation.

While an NHL spokesman said no formal negotiations are currently scheduled, it's likely they will resume in the next few days.

NHL fate in Bettman's hands, wallet

By Barry Rozner

What would it take to make a deal?

It's a question asked millions of times a day as NHL fans suffer through another lockout.

Unfortunately, it misses the point because a deal is already on the table, waiting to be approved by the owners.

The reason there's no agreement yet is that Gary Bettman has made promises he can't keep. And if he doesn't keep them and loses half an NHL season — or more — in the process, he will be out of a job that pays him \$8 million a year.

That's why there's been little negotiation from the NHL. That's why there's no hockey. And that's why there won't be hockey until the owners order Bettman to sit down and negotiate, or a union decertification forces the league to bargain instead of bleed.

See, Bettman promised seven or eight owners that he could get another lopsided deal. If he doesn't get it after losing a billion dollars in league revenue, he's probably out of a job.

So Bettman is holding up the game to save himself, and one imagines he's still convincing a small group of men that he can squeeze more from the players. That small group of owners, in turn, is keeping the arenas silent.

When Bettman danced in celebration seven years ago, jubilant in the face of a lost season and a 24-percent salary rollback, he was facing an empty suit across the table. Without understanding the players had Don Fehr this time, he told the owners a lockout would get them all they wanted again.

It has not happened. The players have come more than halfway, while Bettman is still talking about offers that went stale months ago.

Many fans don't have a side in this fight. They want their hockey and wish a pox upon both houses, which they view as greedy and unreasonable.

What they should understand is Gary Bettman did this. Gary Bettman and a few owners — who want more for them and less for the players — did this to hockey. It's their team, their house and their game. They have the puck and until they drop it, there's no NHL.

But their only current strategy is to blame Don Fehr for holding hockey hostage, and when they say it enough times, people begin to believe it.

Having covered many work stoppages in baseball, I can assure you that Fehr doesn't dictate union policy.

He hands his players all the information and an honest assessment of what they can expect. He offers them strategies, gives them options and lets them pick the course.

Fehr does not give orders. He takes them. The players, having given a lot, have asked the owners to finally move. They have not, so the players sit and wait for Bettman, who does not budge.

So Fehr continually asks union leadership what it wants to do. Give less? Give more? Give in? What do you want to do?

The players have decided that going more than halfway is more than fair, especially considering some of the men on the other side of the table.

Owners spent hundreds of millions signing players in the days leading up to the lockout, but the moment the work stoppage was official, those same owners signing their names said the agreements weren't worth the paper they were printed on, and that they couldn't afford those deals.

This literally occurred the weekend of the lockout. And Bettman has the nerve to talk about good faith?

No, this has little to do with Don Fehr, and it matters because Bettman is more concerned with the state of public opinion and slanting media coverage than getting back to the table.

When he starts blaming Fehr and claiming the union boss doesn't speak for the players who want to make a deal, it's probably a sign we're near the end.

When top aide Bill Daly says decertification would mean the end of the season, it's a sign we're near the end.

When the NHL is swinging at shadows, it's a sign we're near the end.

Whether it's the end of the process — federal mediation announced Monday guarantees nothing — or the end of the season, is up to the owners.

They are using scare tactics in a swipe of desperation. The NHL wants the players to know that they are willing to wipe out another season and that the players must come crawling back — begging for their jobs, hat in hand — just as they did seven years ago.

That doesn't seem likely, so the question of whether there will be an NHL season in any form rests with Gary Bettman.

Can he separate his own interests — his \$8 million salary — from those of the game?

If he can't, and the owners don't force him back to the table, there will be no hockey and Bettman will fall back on blaming Fehr.

Sadly, that will be the only NHL game in town.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 11.27.2012

644862 Chicago Blackhawks

NHL, NHLPA agree to mediation in labor talks

TRACEY MYERS

After months of not agreeing on much, the NHL and NHLPA have agreed to have a third party come in and help these languishing negotiations.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation service director George H. Cohen said in a statement on Monday that he's had "separate, informal discussions" with the league and PA's top representatives during these negotiations.

Blackhawks player representative Steve Montador hopes this leads to something.

"I think it's important to move the process along," Montador said via email. "If there's merit in this, that's great. While the mediators have no decision making powers to enforce anyone to do anything, I hope the process is taken seriously and a deal can be struck."

Cohen has assigned deputy director Scot L. Beckenbaugh and director of mediation services John Sweeney to be part of the negotiations. Commissioner Guy Serota was also slated to be one of the mediators, but after a mid-afternoon flap regarding Serota's Twitter feed -- most of which has been deleted -- Cohen removed him from the process.

Cohen said in a statement that "it has been called to my attention that there are issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account associated with Commissioner Guy Serota, one of the mediators I assigned. Accordingly, in order to immediately dispel any cloud on the mediation process, and without regard to the merits of the allegations, I have determined to take immediate action, namely to remove Commissioner Serota from this assignment."

As for the FMCS' part in any upcoming collective bargaining negotiations, Cohen released this statement:

"At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices," Cohen's statement continued. "Due to the extreme sensitivity of these negotiations and consistent with the FMCS's long-standing practice, the agency will refrain from any public comment concerning the future schedule and/or the status of negotiations until further notice."

The subject of mediation has come up a few times during these negotiations, which haven't yielded much progress over several months.

Could it help? It certainly couldn't hurt. The league and players' association last met before Thanksgiving, when the PA came with its latest proposal. But the league rejected it, and on Friday canceled the 2012-13 All-Star game and regular-season games through Dec. 14.

Blackhawks forward Jamal Mayers, when asked recently if a mediator would be a good idea, said this:

"That was suggested by (NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr) maybe a month ago. Don's focus all along has been getting a fair deal. It's not about saving face, looking good in the media. It's more about the present and getting a deal done that's fair," he said. "If it means mediation to get to that, both sides should seriously consider it."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.27.2012

644863 Colorado Avalanche

Schwartz not looking back despite lockout

Former CC player skating in AHL

NEAL REID

The NHL may be in the midst of a lockout with no end in sight, but former Colorado College star Jaden Schwartz isn't second-guessing his decision to leave college early for the pro ranks.

Schwartz, an All-American during the 2011-12 season, was offered a professional contract by the St. Louis Blues in March after leading the Tigers in scoring as a freshman (17 goals, 30 assists) and a sophomore (15 goals, 26 assists). He made an immediate impact, scoring goals in each of his first two games — including on his first shot — but he was left off the Blues' playoff roster.

The 20-year-old heard rumblings about labor strife this summer and was disappointed to see the lockout become a reality.

"It was something I had a feeling would happen," said Schwartz, who had three points in seven games for the Blues. "I was hoping they'd get a deal done, but obviously they didn't. I didn't expect it to drag on this long, but with things like that you never know what will happen."

"You don't want to see that happen, and it's definitely not ideal."

While the NHL's Players Association and the league have been negotiating, Schwartz has been playing with the American Hockey League's Peoria (Ill.) Rivermen, the top affiliate of the Blues. He has played in 18 games and is tied for fifth on the team with eight points (5 goals, 3 assists).

Schwartz has been enjoying his time on the ice, especially considering many NHL players are struggling to find places to play.

"It's always nice to play hockey," he said. "No one wants a lockout, but at the same time, I'm doing something I love to do with a good group of guys. This is my first full year in pro hockey, so I'm just getting used to it all, learning each day and trying to get better."

Schwartz isn't sure where he would have ended up in the Blues' organization if the NHL season had begun on time, but he's working to make the most of his opportunity.

"I'm learning, and I learned a lot last year when I went up with St. Louis," Schwartz said. "I'm just trying to make my overall game better and have been working on things that, when the NHL does start up, I'll be ready, and will give myself the best opportunity to make the NHL. I'm just trying to improve as much as I can and to win hockey games."

His experience in March was a thrill Schwartz won't soon forget.

"I didn't expect to jump in right away like that and have some success early on," he said. "I was just trying to contribute and learn as much as I could. I was really nervous and excited, and it was a dream come true to be there."

"I jumped into a really good hockey team with a lot of really good players, so I was fortunate that way. The guys welcomed me very well and gave me a lot of advice. It was a dream come true, and something I'll never forget."

Just because he's at peace with his decision to leave CC early doesn't mean Schwartz doesn't miss his time with the Tigers.

"Any time an NHL team asks you to go join their club right away and they tell you you're going to play NHL games right away, it's hard to say no to," Schwartz said. "That's everyone's dream, and I was really excited to get that opportunity. I had a lot of good relationships, good friendships and had a lot of fun my two years there (at CC), and there are a lot of fond memories I won't forget.

"I definitely miss it, but, at the same time, I made my decision and am happy with it."

Colorado Springs Gazette: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644864 Columbus Blue Jackets

NHL notebook: Sides bring in mediators for negotiations

By Aaron Portzline

With collective bargaining talks at a standstill, the NHL and NHL Players' Association have turned to federal mediators in the latest attempt to save the 2012-13 season.

The two sides agreed to include the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services in the process, with three mediators listening to their positions as soon as Wednesday. The hope is that the mediators will help them find common ground toward an agreement, although they will not issue a binding ruling.

"While we have no particular level of expectation going into this process, we welcome a new approach in trying to reach a resolution ... at the earliest possible date," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said.

The NHLPA has publicly supported mediation for many weeks. This could delay, if only temporarily, the union's consideration of decertification as a means to move the talks along more quickly.

The NHL lockout already has canceled 422 regular-season games, the Winter Classic outdoor game and the All-Star Game, which was to be hosted by the Blue Jackets in Nationwide Arena.

There have not been any negotiations since Nov. 21.

Gary Cohen, director of the mediation agency, appointed three mediators to work the lockout: Scot Beckenbaugh, John Sweeney and Guy Serota.

But, in a bizarre turn later yesterday, Cohen removed Serota from the case after he was alerted to offensive messages on Serota's Twitter feed. Serota told Cohen his account was hacked.

According to the New York Times, Cohen has provided mediation for the NFL, NBA, Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer during the past 20 years.

Cohen said the agency would not be commenting publicly on the status of the negotiations until further notice.

Murray meeting

Blue Jackets general manager Scott Howson plans to meet with defenseman Ryan Murray this morning to discuss injury rehab plans for Murray's right shoulder.

The Jackets' No. 2 overall pick last June was injured earlier this month while playing for his junior club in Everett, Wash. Season-ending surgery is an option.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.27.2012

644865 Columbus Blue Jackets

Michael Arace commentary: Players fight lockouts by dissolving union

By Michael Arace

When collective bargaining agreements between professional sports leagues and their players' unions expire, lockouts follow apace. CBA is up, doors are shut. What a strange phenomenon this is.

Lockouts are instituted because the owners want leverage. If leagues stop playing, owners stop paying — and once the players miss a few paychecks, they get pliable. It seems a curious way to do business, with all the collateral damage to fans, sponsors, local businesses and the sport itself, but so it goes.

The response from labor has been to decertify its unions. It is a trend. The NFL and NBA players' unions willfully broke up, albeit temporarily, last year in a counter-effort to gain leverage. The NHL Players' Association may be headed this way. It is the story of the moment as the lockout creeps into its 11th week.

By decertifying and dissolving their union, the players can file antitrust lawsuits against the owners. Generally speaking, it works like this:

Restrictions on the marketplace — from salary caps to free-agent rules to rookie wage scales — are agreed upon in collective bargaining. When the players remove the union's power to negotiate on their behalf, they are no longer bound by these restrictions, and they are free to file antitrust suits and argue that owners have unlawfully fixed the market.

Lockouts can be an antitrust violation and they are the targets of the first suits. NFL players, with Tom Brady as a lead plaintiff, sued to end the football lockout last year. NBA players, in multiple filings, sued to end the basketball lockout last year.

The aim is to spook the owners. Do they want to wrestle these suits and risk monetary damages? Do they want to contemplate the distant threat of destroying the way a league regulates its marketplace?

In June, NFL players initially won their case, the lockout was lifted and the league was thrown into chaos before the ruling was overturned.

In the case of the NBA last year, the union was dissolved and players began suing in mid-November, a tentative settlement was reached by the end of the month, the union re-formed on Dec. 1 and a new CBA was ratified a week later.

The NHL should be so lucky.

NHL players have not yet started the federal decertification process, which can take up to two months. Given this time frame, a step down this path might mean killing off the rest of the 2012-13 season. NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly has noted as much.

What a lovely dance this is: lockout, union dissolution, lawsuits, cha-cha-cha, kill the season, screw the fans, give the sport another black eye.

The players have little choice but to follow this tune. They got destroyed in the last go-around, when they agreed to a salary cap and a 24-percent salary rollback. They did not go the decertification route then, but they may have to now. Their negotiating partner has been too intractable.

The players have conceded much while the league has conceded little. The players have drafted the most recent proposals and the league has not only dismissed them, it has refused further negotiations. Despite all of this, the two sides are not all that far apart on the key issues. Why is there no deal? Many players believe the league is willing to sacrifice another season in an effort to break the union.

Thus, the decertification movement is gathering momentum. Last week, it gained voice when Buffalo Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller told The Globe and Mail of Toronto that he was all for dissolution. Although Miller made it clear that he was not speaking for any other player, it is fair to say his contention — that owners "want to see if we will take a bad deal because we get desperate, or if we have the strength to push back" — is not isolated. Besides, there is history to consider: The league used the same playbook eight years ago.

Yesterday, it was announced that both sides had agreed to sit down with a federal mediator. That is good news, but it does not mean peace is at hand. The NHL tried mediation eight years ago and it did not work. The NBA tried mediation last year and there was no bargain until the antitrust suits started flying.

Such is the modern sports paradigm. It all starts with a lockout.

Michael Arace is a sports reporter for The Dispatch.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 11.27.2012

644866 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Todd Bertuzzi: 'I see us losing a year'

By Helene St. James

Detroit Red Wings veteran Todd Bertuzzi expressed little hope today that there will be an NHL season.

"Not very optimistic," he said after a scantily attended players-run practice today at Troy Sports Center. "I see us losing a year."

The NHL has been shuttered since Sept. 16, the day owners locked out players after failing to reach a new collective bargaining agreement. The last time the two sides were at odds over a CBA, the entire 2004-05 season was wiped out.

Any hope the 2012-13 season would start up in early December was shattered Wednesday, when the NHLPA made what it believed to be a significant step toward reconciliation, only to be told by the league that the sides are still far apart.

"I think the owners, at this time, are strong-holding it and putting their foot in the sand and not budging," Bertuzzi said. "They want what they want, and that's plain and simple.

"Unfortunately, it's going to take years to build back the revenue. It's going to take a long time. These people are (ticked) right now. They're not just -- 'I don't care, I'll come back,' or whatever. Fans are (ticked) now. They're getting to a point where they're not even really paying attention anymore to what's going on. They're sick and tired of hearing the same (stuff) coming out of both sides' mouths, and who can blame them? It's frustrating."

There has been talk lately of decertification within the players' association, which essentially means the association would be dissolved. That would then mean the lockout would be illegal, and players could individually sue owners, arguing that owners are negligent regarding existing contracts.

That's a pretty drastic step, though, and would not lead to any faster resolution.

"So players go after owners, we sue them -- how long is that going to take?" Bertuzzi said. "Four to five to six, seven months. So that means the season is gone. So if anything, it hurries up the process of ending this thing, so guys aren't sitting around waiting to see what's going to be next."

The lack of progress possibly influenced the meager attendance today: The only Wings who skated were Bertuzzi, Cory Emmerton, Darren Helm, Jonas Gustavsson and Jonathan Ericsson, along with Patrick Eaves, who is on long-term injured reserve.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.27.2012

644867 Detroit Red Wings

Darren McCarty lined up for Red Wings vs. Avalanche viewing party

Posted by James Jahnke

The Detroit Red Wings will hold a "Relive the Rivalry" viewing party of their brawl-filled 1997 game against the Colorado Avalanche at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at PB's Sports Grille in St. Clair Shores (24301 Harper Ave.).

Former Wing Darren McCarty, whose flailing fists made Claude Lemieux turtle in the March 26 game at Joe Louis Arena, will be on hand to sign autographs and answer questions. (Spoiler alert: He also scored the overtime winner in the 6-5 victory.)

Team play-by-play announcer Ken Kal will emcee the event.

Attendees also can win autographed Red Wings memorabilia in an evening-long trivia contest. Festivities begin at 6:30 p.m.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.27.2012

644868 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings players giving up hope of having a season

By Ted Kulfan

Todd Bertuzzi takes a breather during a recent workout in Troy.

Troy — At the start of this NHL lockout Red Wings players would get together at Troy Sports Center to work out and stay in shape for when the work stoppage would end.

The enthusiasm the Red Wings had early on appears to be waning.

Only eight players were on the ice Monday, five of them Red Wings — Patrick Eaves, Darren Helm, Todd Bertuzzi, Johan Gustavsson and Cory Emmerton — the other three being Kyle Wellwood (Winnipeg Jets), and Sergei Samsonov and Trevor Nill, who are without NHL teams right now.

Optimism that the season will take place appears to be waning.

"No, not very optimistic," Bertuzzi said. "I see us losing a year. So, you just move on to different things."

The latest development in the work stoppage is the inclusion of a federal mediator in talks between the NHL and the NHL Players Association.

The mediator is an independent third party whose recommendations aren't binding.

The NHLPA appeared to move closer to the owners' position last week, but was quickly shot down by the owners.

Commissioner Gary Bettman said the league presented its best offer a month ago, and with the continuing losses of the lockout, a better offer isn't forthcoming.

There are no formal negotiations planned for this week.

Bertuzzi said he's staying busy coaching his son's youth team.

He has noticed the dwindling number of Wings players at the optional skates.

"I'm pretty sure it's going to start slowing down," Bertuzzi said. "We were five-on-five, then three-on-three, you start to see a trend here. We'll see what happens, see if anybody starts talking and if anyone moves."

Most players — Bertuzzi included — are frustrated by the owners' apparent unwillingness to budge.

"You keep hearing our proposal isn't good enough and it's back in our corner again to try to keep coming back," Bertuzzi said. "It's frustrating we're not playing."

"The owners, at this time, are strongholding and putting their foot in the stand and not budging. They want what they want and that's plain and simple.

"Unfortunately it's going to take years to build back revenues (to where they are currently)."

Bertuzzi runs into numerous fans around town and says the mood isn't good.

"People are (angry) right now," Bertuzzi said. "They're getting to the point where they aren't really paying attention anymore. They're sick and tired hearing the same stuff from both sides and you can't blame them. It's frustrating."

Detroit News LOADED: 11.27.2012

644869 Detroit Red Wings

Miss the Detroit Red Wings? Some team alumni to take on Carhart employees in charity game

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

DEARBORN, MI - In the absence of actual Detroit Red Wings games due to the NHL lockout, now in its 72nd day, organizers of a charity match between Carhartt employees and former Red Wings players are calling the event "what could be the biggest game of the season."

The Carhartt workers and former Red Wings players go head-to-head on Friday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. in the Dearborn Ice Skating Center in an annual game that raises money for the thousands of area residents with disabilities served by the Macomb-Oakland Regional Center.

General admission tickets are \$10.

Among some of the former Red Wings players participating in the event are Mickey Redmond, Paul Ysebaert, John Ogrodnick, Darren McCarty, Kirk Maltby and Joe Kocur.

The Carhartt employees participating in the game are established hockey players themselves, organizers of the event say.

"Great hockey, great price, great way to help a lot of people with disabilities with MORC," John Pepera, a Carhartt employee and organizer of the game, said in a release. "We expect a sell-out crowd for our Anti-Lockout Game where hockey fans can beat their hockey blues and all of your \$10 for a ticket goes to people who really need it."

This is the eighth time the Carhartt workers have taken on Red Wings alumni for charity. Highlights from last year's game can be seen below.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.27.2012

644870 Detroit Red Wings

Federal mediators to meet with NHL, NHLPA this week when labor talks will resume

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

The NHL and the NHL Players Association will meet with federal mediators this week.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Director George H. Cohen issued the following statement Monday on the ongoing labor negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA:

"I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement. At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices. I have assigned Deputy Director Scot L. Beckenbaugh, Director of Mediation Services John Sweeney, and Commissioner Guy Serota to serve as the mediators.

"Due to the extreme sensitivity of these negotiations and consistent with the FMCS's long-standing practice, the Agency will refrain from any public comment concerning the future schedule and/or the status of the negotiations until further notice."

Update: Cohen has issued a follow-up statement:

"Within one hour after I issued a press release announcing that further negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA would be conducted under the auspices of the FMCS, it has been called to my attention that there are issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account associated with Commissioner Guy Serota, one of the mediators I assigned. Accordingly, in order to immediately dispel any cloud on the mediation process, and without regard to the merits of the allegations, I have determined to take immediate action, namely to remove Commissioner Serota from this assignment.

"There will be no further comment from the FMCS on this matter."

There were some bizarre tweets reportedly posted on the account belonging to Serota (@GuySerota). The tweets were removed and Serota claimed his account had been hacked.

In any event, NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly, in an email, said the recommendations of the mediators are not binding.

NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr issued the following statement:

"The NHLPA has agreed to the addition of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) to our ongoing negotiations. We look forward to their involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners."

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.27.2012

644871 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Todd Bertuzzi believes season will be lost, says it will take years to repair damage

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

The veteran forward said Monday that he does not believe there will be hockey this season.

"No, not very optimistic," Bertuzzi said. "I see us losing a year.

"Just move on to different things. I'm coaching now. I was just in Toronto coaching my son's team. You move on, try to make the most of your time."

Bertuzzi was among six Red Wings skating at the Troy Sports Center.

Many players' hopes for a settlement took a blow last Wednesday, when the NHL rejected what the union believed was a significant proposal that moved considerably in the owners' favor.

Union chief Donald Fehr said the sides are \$182 million apart over five years and remain at odds on a number of contracting issues (free agency, salary arbitration, etc.). NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said the sides are "far apart" and the league is losing \$18-20 million a day.

The league on Friday canceled all games through Dec. 14 as well as the Jan. 27 All-Star game in Columbus. No further bargaining sessions are planned.

Bertuzzi said when the lockout began on Sept. 16 he believed there was a 50-50 chance the season would be scrapped. Now, he feels almost all hope is lost.

"I think the owners at this time are strong-holding it and putting their foot in the sand and not budging," Bertuzzi said. "They want what they want and it's plain and simple."

Bertuzzi said it will "take years" to build back the revenue the sport has lost and repair the damage with a disgruntled fan base.

"It's going to take a long time," Bertuzzi said. "These (fans) are (angry) right now. They're not just, 'I don't care, I'll come back.' They're getting to a point where they aren't really even paying attention anymore.

"They're sick and tired of hearing the same crap coming out of both sides' mouths, and who can blame them. It's frustrating."

The NHL Players Association reportedly is exploring the possibility of decertification. Bertuzzi said he's not too familiar with the procedure, but he knows it would be a lengthy process.

"If anything, it hurries up the process of ending this (season)," he said.

Count forward Cory Emmerton among those who remain optimistic.

"Obviously, everything doesn't sound great so far, but I think it can change so quickly with one meeting," Emmerton said. "Things can get rolling. I guess we'll stick tight and hope for the best. No one wants to have a season canceled or miss more games. Right now it's kind of wait and see."

Emmerton is back skating with teammates following surgery on Oct. 16 to repair a shattered right index finger sustained in his first game in Finland.

Bertuzzi believes players still fully support the union.

"I play hockey, that's why we have lawyers and people in those positions to do what's best in our interest," Bertuzzi said. "From what I hear, they seem

to be doing the job we need them to be doing, but it's frustrating that we're not playing still."

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.27.2012

644872 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings scouting report: Mikael Samuelsson will be needed to make up for lost production

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

Mikael Samuelsson

Position: Right wing

Age: 35

Height/weight: 6-2/218

How acquired: Signed as a free agent on July 1, 2012.

Contract: Two years at a salary-cap hit of \$3 million.

2011-12 stats (with Vancouver and Florida): 54 games, 14 goals, 17 assists, 31 points, plus-1 rating, 20 penalty minutes.

Career stats: 669 games, 148 goals, 194 assists, 342 points, plus-57 rating, 364 penalty minutes.

What he's doing during the lockout: He was skating with several teammates at a local rink, but has stayed off the ice the past few weeks due to a sore knee that he said isn't serious.

Strengths: Has a good, hard shot and isn't shy about using it. Has been productive on the power play, where he can man the right point. He is responsible defensively.

Weaknesses: Coming off an injury-plagued season and turning 36 on Dec. 23, his durability is a concern. Doesn't always use his size to compete in the hard areas of the ice. Has limited playmaking ability.

2011-12 in review: Had three points in six games for Vancouver. ... Traded, with Marco Sturm, by Vancouver to Florida for David Booth, Steve Reinprecht and a third-round draft-pick on Oct. 22. ... Missed 22 games due to a pulled groin (Oct. 20-Dec. 5). ... Missed five games with a back injury (Dec. 22-31). ... Had 13 goals and 15 assists in 48 games for Florida. ... Equaled career-high with seven power-play goals (did it on four other occasions). ... Had no goals, five assists and a minus-1 rating in five playoff games.

2012-13 outlook (season pending): The club needs Samuelsson to make up for some of the production it lost with Jiri Hudler's departure (25 goals). He'll be competing for a spot on one of the top two lines. Having played here for four seasons, he is familiar with many of the players, coach Mike Babcock and the team's way of doing things, which will help his transition. One of the keys is staying healthy, after missing 27 games with injuries last season. Having another right-handed shooter will benefit a team loaded with lefties. He can man the right point on the second power-play unit.

Should Samuelsson be among the team's top six forwards, or he is better suited for the third line? Is he capable of equaling Hudler's 25-goal output from last season? Or is 18-to-20 goals a more realistic expectation?

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.27.2012

644873 Detroit Red Wings

PAT CAPUTO: Wrong on both sides of ongoing NHL dispute

While we have become used to labor stoppages in professional sports, we have yet to become immune to them.

They are a sports disease. Evidently, there is no cure.

These are self-inflicted wounds by the leaders of their respective sports. They don't care about the collateral damage - the various vendors, the businesses surrounding venues, the support staff, etc.

These labor stoppages haven't always been selfish. There have been times when they were necessary and involved genuine divide about core issues, and served as self-correcting mechanisms, on occasion for both the players and the owners.

The reserve clause baseball held until the mid-1970s was just wrong. Marvin Miller, who headed the Players Association in baseball at the time, did great work in that fight. It was necessary.

The NHL needed more cost assurance. The sport was bleeding. Getting a salary cap, a fight which cost the league an entire season, was worth the mess.

Most of the time, though, these stoppages have little do with actual substance, but more about egos involved with leadership.

It's, "Who will blink first." or "Who won?" when it is over.

Truth is, there are only losers.

But I don't think, if you go back through history, you will ever see a more nonsensical labor stoppage than the one currently involving the NHL.

It took the league a long time to grow its financial pie to a reported \$3.3 billion annually. Finally, there is a major American network, NBC, actually interested in the league for reasons other than insanity or pity, and who is willing to build a sports network around the NHL's product. The salary cap didn't hurt the players. They've never had it better. Yeah, they were asked to give back on the percentage of revenues, and have in the current negotiations, but it was more than reasonable given the league's projected growth.

But the sport isn't going to grow on the sideline. It's already regressed, and the damage can't be undone.

And for what?

Normally in these instances, I am quick to blame NHL commissioner Gary Bettman.

He is the worst commissioner in the history of professional sports. He understands little about the beauty and appeal of his sport. He has not only taken Detroit's hockey tradition, which is second to none in the United States, for granted, but at times stepped all over it.

I am not into name-calling, and I think it is wrong Red Wings' defenseman Ian White used a derogatory term in reference to Bettman recently, but I understand where he is coming from. However, I also think White and the players must share culpability here. When they decided to hire Donald Fehr to spearhead their association, they should have known Fehr is infamous for being part of labor stoppages that don't make sense. It was his modus operandi when he headed the Players Association in baseball. He is a disciple of Marvin Miller and fought hard for the ball players. Problem is, after awhile, that fight became for an excess of riches rather than for basic rights and common sense.

You can question whether Fehr was just doing his job, but it was always a fight with owners in baseball, never a compromise for the good of the game. It was particularly disturbing when the world started to become enlightened about the use of steroids in baseball. You can make a case Fehr, and the power the Players Association held in baseball, is what enabled the use of performance enhancing drugs to such a large degree (Drug testing? How dare they even think about it).

Later, Fehr did go before a Congressional hearing, and state he would have done things differently in retrospect. However, a strong argument can be made the Players Association didn't stop wielding its power in a manner that was irresponsible for the good of the game until Congress stepped in and knocked Fehr and his cronies down a necessary notch or two.

Baseball's Basic Agreement was up recently. A new one was agreed to both parties quickly and without issue. Fehr wasn't involved.

Fehr and labor peace are seldom mentioned in the same sentence. The same can be said for Bettman.

Is it a coincidence these two are driving the NHL down such a destructive road?

I would think not.

Macomb Daily LOADED: 11.27.2012

644874 Edmonton Oilers

"At the end of the day both sides have to realize that the harm to this game is far different than last time (2004-05). The potential damage will not be quickly be undone. We're facing our own fiscal cliff."

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644875 Edmonton Oilers

Are you game? Join the Journal's Game On Oilers online league

Think you can beat us in GM Connected mode, gamers? We dare you to try!

By RENATO PAGNANI AND RAMIN OSTAD, Edmonton Journal November 26, 2012

EDMONTON - Now the game's really on!

If you've been with us so far, then our coverage in this column of our virtual Edmonton Oilers and the Game On Oilers blog has staved off some of your NHL starvation or any thoughts of becoming an NBA fan.

Now, we're upping the ante: an opportunity to get physically involved in the virtual action — with your thumbs, at least.

Beginning Tuesday, Dec. 11, we'll be creating the Game On Oilers Hockey League (GOOHL) through the GM Connected mode on the PlayStation 3 version of NHL 13. You'll need a PS3, a copy of NHL 13 and a stable Internet connection to join up.

We'll run the Oilers (because, well, it's our league, so tough luck) and we need some cannon fodder. Yes, we're that confident! Each GM who'll take part will have a first-come, first-serve opportunity to pick one of the 29 remaining teams.

We're looking for 25 others to manage their own teams (one contestant per team) throughout a virtual NHL season all the way to the playoffs.

GMs will play against each other online, and the GM who wins the GOOHL's Stanley Cup will be awarded a shiny new Taylor Hall jersey signed by the man himself.

The GOOHL will have all the features of a real hockey league: trades, injuries, trash-talk, drama, intrigue — you name it.

GMs will have a number of games they are required to play each week before the season can move forward. Of course, we take into account that things come up in our real lives, and some GMs may not be able to complete every game in a given week. If the GM is not able to complete some games, those games will be simulated when the league moves forward to the next week.

Now, you're probably wondering why we said 25 GM's when there are 29 teams open. That's because we're bringing some friends in — namely Edmonton Journal sportswriter Chris O'Leary, Brittney Le Blanc, member of the Journal's Capital Ideas team, Dana DiTomaso, CEO of digital-marketing firm Kick Point and CBC Radio technology columnist, and Billy Buskell, associate producer of Bioware's Mass Effect. Each brings digital and gaming street cred, so we're expecting them to be somethin' tough.

So sign up! It's simple — head to edmontonjournal.com, then click on our button under Contests & Offers (scroll down a bit, it's on the right-hand side) to access the Game On Oilers league contest page with information on how to apply. Deadline to put your name in is Tuesday, Dec. 4. We'll examine each offer and pick the lucky 25.

Odds 'n' end rushes

The Blue and Orange had a stellar week, including a Shawn Horcoff hat-trick in a 8-3 thrashing of the Phoenix Coyotes and a two-goal performance by Magnus Paajarvi that led to shutout victory over the Calgary Flames. Read all about it on the Game On Oilers blog.

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644876 Edmonton Oilers

Oilers' Klefbom gone for season

Smyth remains hopeful as NHL, union agree to mediation

Veteran Oilers winger lost entire 2004-05 season to a work stoppage

By Jim Matheson, Edmonton Journal November 26, 2012

EDMONTON - The NHL and NHL Players' Association have finally agreed to mediation as the labour

battle enters its 11th week.

"Mediation? I'm all for it," said Edmonton Oilers winger Ryan Smyth, who has already lost one season (2004-05) to a work stoppage and, at age 36, is in no mood to do so again.

Negotiations between the league and the NHLPA on a new collective bargaining agreement have stalled, so U.S. federal mediators Scot L. Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney were brought in on Monday.

Beckenbaugh was also called in just before the last lockout ended in February 2005, but it didn't help after NHL commissioner Gary Bettman cancelled the entire season.

"I wish they had done it sooner. Maybe this will force things along. I'm sick of not playing hockey," said Smyth, who is all for having an objective voice help solve the dispute.

The mediators' suggestions or rulings will not be binding on either side, but after cancelling 422 regular-season games through Dec. 14, the all-star game in Columbus and the Jan. 1 Winter Classic, the two sides opted to get outside help. There is also growing fan apathy to contend with as they argue how to divvy up what is a \$3.3-billion US business.

Both sides maintain they're all for mediation, anything to break the endless soap opera. But will mediation work? Both sides said their best proposal is on the table and they're not budging, no matter the cost.

The NHL said it's losing about \$20 million a day during the lockout. The players will lose five paycheques up to Dec. 14 — they have just 13 pay periods a season.

Both sides have dug in deep, with some players taking shots at Bettman. Veteran defenceman Roman Hamrlik even fired a shot at NHLPA executive director Don Fehr last week.

Smyth said "the business side of this is taking all the fun out of the game. I don't know how many games we could get in. I'm sure they'd cram in as many as they could. Me? I'd settle for one game and go from there. All I know is I thought this would be over in mid-November and it's past that. I just read where (Todd Bertuzzi) says the season's over, but I think there's too much at stake to throw in the towel.

"Everybody's entitled to their own opinion, but it's kind of disappointing. I've played with Roman and he's a good person and a good player. He's as frustrated as everybody else, but Don is a smart guy. He's in this for the long haul."

There has been much talk in recent days about the players possibly decertifying their union. Dissolving the NHLPA could force the league's hand with anti-trust lawsuits, but that's a time-consuming process. It's thought to be more a union threat than anything.

"Everybody in the hockey world, no matter what side of this conflict ... is hoping a portion of the season can be saved," said longtime agent Steve Bartlett. "Once you go down the decertification route of a union, it's an acknowledgment that there's no possible deal because of the length of time it would take to push that along. The season would be over. I still think the focus in all of this is to find common ground and I really believe we're not that far apart.

"There's risk involved in a decertification because you don't know which side the courts will rule. There's protection for players in a union. Things are heavily bargained with a union. If that goes away, everybody is on their own. Stuff isn't collectively bargained. The purpose of decertification quite frankly isn't to have that be the endgame. It's to use the courts to put the threat of not only a loss on the owners, but also the threat of potentially triple damages for things protected under anti-trust laws," said Bartlett.

Second-best blue-line prospect in Oilers organization will need surgery on left shoulder

By Jim Matheson, Edmonton Journal November 26, 2012

EDMONTON - Taylor Hall might want to text Oscar Klefbom with a "I feel your pain" message.

The highly touted Swedish defenceman was informed Monday that he will need major surgery to repair damage to his left shoulder. He will miss the rest of the Swedish Elite League season.

Klefbom, the flip side to the puck-moving Justin Schultz as the second-best blue-line prospect in the Edmonton Oilers organization, was hurt six weeks ago. He fell to the ice while playing for Farjestads BK in a game against Vaxjo, the team former Oilers winger Liam Reddox plays for.

He wasn't drilled on the play, but experienced some bleeding in the muscle after the game and the shoulder never got any better. Klefbom flew to Edmonton and saw Oilers trainer T.D. Forss and team doctors, who said he'll be undergoing surgery, just as Hall did late last season.

"We're trying to fit in when Oscar will have the surgery. He's out for the year, for sure," said Oilers general manager Steve Tambellini. "It's a similar injury and time frame to Taylor's. Normally that's six months or so.

"We're not worried (about the injury) at all. He's a big, strong kid."

The Oilers had considered assigning the 19-year-old Klefbom to the Oklahoma City Barons, their American Hockey League affiliate, where Hall, Schultz, Jordan Eberle and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins are getting plenty of points during the NHL lockout.

But the Oilers were assured Klefbom would get considerable ice time back home. And he did turn into a top-four defenceman in 11 games for fourth-place Farjestads. Unfortunately, the two-way blue-liner, a steal for the Oilers at 19th overall in the 2011 entry draft, wrecked his shoulder.

"He had the highest minutes of any defenceman there (Farjestads) and that speaks volumes to his progression. That's a mature league and they play a heavy brand of hockey," Tambellini said on the Oilers website.

"He'd have been a big part of their (Sweden's junior) team at the Christmas (world hockey championship in Russia)."

Hall, named the AHL's player of the week after scoring one goal and adding eight assists in three games for the Barons, didn't play from mid-March until early November when he saw his first game action with the Barons.

The shoulder surgery and ensuing rehabilitation should have Klefbom healthy by next summer. He should be ready for training camp in fall 2013, where he's expected to seriously challenge for a spot in the Oilers' top six. He might very well eventually become Schultz's blue-line partner.

"It's a good comparison (being the flip side of Schultz)," said Tambellini. "Oscar isn't going to be a slick offensive player, he's going to be a meat and potatoes guy."

Tambellini does see a Schultz-Klefbom pairing at some point, although he wouldn't guarantee the young Swede would make the Oilers right away. He might need time to mature in the AHL.

"Eventually Justin and Oscar could play together here. Will that be in a year or two? Who knows? I think Justin has the skill-set to play with a lot of different guys. He could play with Nick Schultz, too," said Tambellini.

The Oilers are developing a cadre of blue-liners, with Schultz, Dillon Simpson (University of North Dakota), David Musil and Martin Gernat (Edmonton Oil Kings of the Western Hockey League), Martin Marincin, Colten Teubert and Taylor Fedun (Oklahoma City) in the mix.

Klefbom has had a series of injuries since he was drafted. Last season, he was slashed on his thigh by a skate blade and developed an infection. He also took a blow to the chin in a team practice and, while there was no concussion, he was shaken up. Then he did suffer a concussion when he was drilled by a Russian player later in the season. Now, the season-ending shoulder injury.

Klefbom was a star at last year's world junior championship in Edmonton and Calgary, making the first all-star team.

"Oscar's had a concussion, but everybody is susceptible to those things," said Tambellini.

Justin Schultz, who leads the AHL in points with 28 and has a plus-14 rating, was named AHL player of the week in October and was also the top player for that month.

Hall has 15 points in 10 games, which puts him 40th in overall league points.

And ...

Eberle has 26 points and is second in goals with 11 to Syracuse Crunch (Tampa Bay Lightning AHL affiliate) forward Tyler Johnson. Nugent-Hopkins is fifth in AHL scoring with 20 points ... Oilers centre Sam Gagner has six goals and 12 points in 12 games for Klagenfurt in Austria, while defenceman Corey Potter has four points in 16 games in Vienna ... Theo Peckham has played four games in San Francisco in the ECHL (no points, 11 penalty minutes) ... Forward Jujhar Khaira, the Oilers' third-round draft pick last June, has done nicely as a freshman at Michigan Tech with eight points in 10 games ... Russian power forward Daniil Zharkov (Round 3, 91st overall pick in 2012), who boasted he'd like to be better than Nail Yakupov, the first overall pick in June, is struggling to put up points with the Belleville Bulls in the Ontario Hockey League. He has just nine points in 25 games ... Flashy winger Tobias Rieder (fifth-round pick, 2011) was one of the OHL's best forwards last season and has 23 points in 25 games for the Kitchener Rangers ... Reddox has eight points in 22 games for Vaxjo.

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644877 Edmonton Oilers

Confirmed: Klefbom's season done due to shoulder injury

Posted by:

David Staples

Swedish journalist Johan Eriksson reports that the season of Oilers prospect Oscar Klefbom is done due to a shoulder injury.

"Klefbom will undergo surgery which means his season is over," Eriksson reports on Twitter. "Should be in Edmonton right now actually."

Tough for Klefbom. Tough for the Oilers.

The 2011 19th overall pick's strong start to the season had been one of the real positives for the Edmonton Oilers this year, my colleague Jonathan Willis reported when Klefbom first got hurt. After being relegated to a depth role for much of the 2011-12 campaign, Klefbom had won a top defensive job on the Farjestad blue line this season, playing significant minutes and leading the Elitserien with a plus-7 rating over 11 games at the time of his injury.

Klefbom is expected to compete for a job on the Edmonton Oilers' blue line for the 2013-14 NHL season.

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644878 Edmonton Oilers

Oilers Klefbom under the knife

Robert Tychkowski

You'll have to forgive Oscar Klefbom if he's a little grouchy, surgery can have that affect.

Especially when it means you're done for the season, as is the case with the Edmonton Oilers draft pick.

The 19-year-old defenceman, who's been bothered by a sore shoulder since an on-ice collision in early October, met with Oilers doctors who recommended he go under the knife.

"If there's a point in the year where this is going to happen, I guess it's better (to happen) now because we know he's going to have time to prepare and be ready when it counts next season," said Oilers GM Steve Tambellini, who's confident Klefbom will be 100%, ala Taylor Hall, by next season. "I don't think there's any doubt in anyone's mind that he can't come back even stronger than what he is now."

The Oilers selected Klefbom 19th overall in 2011. In 10 games with Farjestad in the Swedish Elite League, Klefbom led his team with a plus-7 rating.

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644879 Edmonton Oilers

Oilers' Taylor Hall, Justin Schultz, Jordan Eberle and Nail Yakupov grab spotlight

By Robert Tychkowski ,Edmonton Sun

EDMONTON -

Taylor Hall is the AHL player of the week on the strength of nine points in three games, Justin Schultz leads all minor league defencemen in scoring, Jordan Eberle leads all forwards and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins is close behind on a team that could contend for a Calder Cup.

And in Russia, Nail Yakupov was named KHL rookie of the month after 10 goals in his first 13 games.

Steve Tambellini isn't ready to declare this the Best Lockout Ever, but in terms of making the best of a bad situation, his Edmonton Oilers are leading the league.

"I think the biggest thing is there's a large amount of people in OKC who are going to get a chance to play together at the next level," said the Oilers general manager, just back from the Oklahoma City Barons weekend sweep in Charlotte.

"It's about growth not only as individuals, but as teammates. They're learning how to work together and win together, that's such a valuable thing, going through those experiences together."

The Oilers haven't had a winning atmosphere since the spring of 2006, so the chemistry and experience these cornerstone players are soaking up right now is like mother's milk.

Oklahoma City might not be as scenic or glamorous as Stockholm or Austria, but Tambellini has no doubt this is better for them than being spread out all over Europe, playing non-contact shinny.

"I think it's as good as what the situation allows us," he said, adding the players are well aware of the unique and special opportunity OKC affords them during a lockout at this point in their careers. "Guys have also chosen to be there. Taylor Hall didn't necessarily have to go to Oklahoma City, he could have played wherever he wanted to play, but he wanted to be with that group.

"There are good signs at a lot of different levels."

They aren't just playing together on North American ice, they're picking up speed — 6-2-1-1 in their last 10 games. They're getting better and they're getting closer, which is all any GM wants for his franchise players.

"They're with each other a lot more as an entire group, more than what you would see in the National League, and I think that's part of growing together, getting to really know somebody," said Tambellini. "You know what guys can do on the ice, but to get to the next level you have to get to know the person, so this is an invaluable time."

Who knows, if the Barons go deep in the post-season and develop that playoff mettle, the Oilers might even look back at this lockout as being one of the most beneficial seasons in years.

"I think so," said Tambellini. "Because it hasn't been all easy down there, either. There are lots of games, whether it's because of a great performance from the other side, or opposition toughness, where it hasn't all come easy. And that's a good thing."

As for Yakupov, he can't play in the minors, but the lockout allows him to essentially do it anyway, gaining experience and confidence in a league that's a big step up from Junior, but not quite the NHL.

Perfect.

"If I had a choice, and if he had a choice, he would have rather probably been playing with our guys in Oklahoma City, but I think he's made the best of his situation," said Tambellini. "I think you have to recognize the fact he's playing against top players from that league and top players who are over there from the NHL. For what he's done as a young person I think is impressive."

So what would happen if the NHL was on and they were all Oilers? Tambellini doesn't even want to ask.

"I want them focused on their teams, being good teammates and having continued growth," he said. "That's what I want."

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644880 Florida Panthers

Florida Panthers' Erik Gudbranson joins teammates for first workout since injury

By GEORGE RICHARDS

About 40 minutes into a workout on Monday morning, Erik Gudbranson made himself at home at center ice, plopping down to rest by using the dasher boards as back support.

It was obvious Gudbranson's first on-ice workout since September had taken its toll.

"I'm not going to lie," the Panthers' 20-year-old defenseman said, "this is tough."

Gudbranson, the third overall pick of the 2010 draft who completed his first NHL season last year, joined a number of his teammates at Glacier Ice Arena in Lighthouse Point for the first time since he injured his shoulder.

Gudbranson says he has been working his lower body since having surgery at Doctors Hospital in Coral Gables, but he hadn't strapped on the skates in almost three months.

He might have been gassed but seemed happy to be back on the ice. Gudbranson didn't do much more than skate as he gingerly lifted soft shots toward goalies Jose Theodore and Tomas Vokoun.

"It felt really good to be out there. I'm a little surprised at how good it felt," Gudbranson said after the workout with teammates such as Tomas Fleischmann, Ed Jovanovski and Stephen Weiss as well as NHLers Marian Hossa and Radek Dvorak.

"Things are coming along. The training staff I've been working out with at home [Ottawa, Ontario] are great. This is a tough thing, but I'm excited about it getting better."

Gudbranson is still a long way away from being hockey ready, although he says his legs have never been stronger, adding 10 pounds of muscle since the injury.

When he's able to play — his timetable is sometime in January — Gudbranson is expected to start the season with the Panthers' AHL affiliate in San Antonio even if the lockout is over.

Had Gudbranson not gotten injured, he likely would have joined the Rampage for training camp in September. Gudbranson is now eligible to play minor league hockey even during the lockout.

Only Gudbranson got hurt. And, because the injury didn't happen on the ice, he's locked out — and not being paid — like everyone else.

Gudbranson's injury had been shrouded in secrecy as teammates declined to talk about it, saying "you need to speak with Erik."

On Monday, Gudbranson finally came public about how he got hurt, telling The Miami Herald it happened while wakeboarding on a lake in Ontario with his buddies.

"I wasn't being stupid; it was just an unfortunate, awkward fall," Gudbranson said.

Gudbranson said he talked to general manager Dale Tallon about the injury, stressing to Tallon alcohol played no role in the accident. Gudbranson said he and his pals have wakeboarded — which is a combination of surfing and water skiing — for years.

The accident, Gudbranson said, happened early in the morning on the first run of the day. He pulled up when the rope he was holding onto, while being pulled by a boat, slacked up. Gudbranson slammed into the water and dislocated his shoulder in the process. "I should have let go," he said.

Gudbranson is very contrite about the injury and said he has repeatedly apologized to the Panthers — and called each of his teammates individually after it happened. Gudbranson said his wakeboarding days are done. He even sold his wakeboard.

"I wasn't hurt playing hockey. I have learned from my mistakes," Gudbranson said. "I needed to be honest with them. The players have been transparent during the lockout and I felt it was my duty to the Panthers to be transparent and honest with them. I hurt myself and it was unfortunate. I learned something the hard way. But I'm doing everything I can to get back on the ice."

Upon finding out how Gudbranson got hurt -- there had been speculation it happened on the ice in Coral Springs during a workout before the lockout started — the Panthers declared it a non-hockey related injury.

Had Gudbranson been hurt doing something hockey-related, it's possible the Panthers would have continued to pay him as they supervised his rehabilitation as was the case with Kris Versteeg.

After starting the lockout under the care of the Panthers, Versteeg — who had offseason hip surgery — has since been cleared and released for contact. He is no longer being paid and is locked out like the rest of his teammates.

Versteeg is back in his native Alberta, working as a volunteer assistant coach while he attends classes and skates with the team at the University of Lethbridge.

"There is obviously an element of danger in [wakeboarding] and I wasn't very smart. And the timing couldn't have been worse," Gudbranson said. "But I could have been playing beach volleyball and blown out my knee. I'm disappointed. I worked very hard this summer and was in the best shape of my life. But I don't think it's right just to sit around during the offseason and do nothing."

Gudbranson has been in contact with his surgeon in Miami but cannot speak to Panthers' head athletic trainer David Zenobi because of the NHL lockout.

Instead of having a workout sketched out by Zenobi, Gudbranson is basically on his own. He said he was heading back to Ottawa and would continue his on-ice workouts there.

The Panthers won't comment on individual players during the lockout.

"I'm very sorry this happened, but I'm working hard and I feel great now," Gudbranson said. "Now it's all about skating and getting ready to play some hockey."

Miami Herald LOADED: 11.27.2012

644881 Los Angeles Kings

THERE USED TO BE AN ARENA – KEMPER ARENA

Posted by Bob Miller on 26 November 2012, 12:09 pm

The Kansas City Scouts of the National Hockey League played in Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Missouri, for two seasons – 1974-75 and 1975-76 – before moving to Denver. They were not very successful, to say the least, winning only 27 games, losing 110 and tying 23 in those two seasons.

Kemper Arena was built in 18 months in 1973-74 at a cost of \$22 million. It stood on the site of the former Kansas City Stockyards, just west of downtown. Capacity for hockey was 17,647.

The Los Angeles Kings played a total of four games in Kemper, winning three and losing one. One Kings' win especially stands out in my memory.

The date was March 30, 1976, and the Scouts were in the midst of another terrible season in which they wound up losing 56 games, and winning only 12. However, on this night the Scouts jumped out to a 3-0 lead over the Kings on goals by former King Randy Rota, Denis Dupere and Jim McElmury in the first 8:21 of the game against Kings' goalie Rogie Vachon. The Kings then started a comeback on goals by Tommy Williams and Larry Brown. After K.C. took a 6-5 lead at the end of the second period, the Kings next scored two consecutive goals by Mike Corrigan and Bob Murdoch to take a 7-6 lead. This upset the Scouts fans that proceeded to litter the ice with game programs, beer and soft drinks.

Our broadcast location in Kemper was in one of the suites just at the top of the lower bowl with the fans seated down in front of us. At the time I said on our radio broadcast, 'This shows the mentality of these fans, stupidly littering the ice with debris.' The fans could hear our comments and I heard one fan say in a loud, gruff voice, 'Did you hear what he said about us?' I looked down and this angry man, about – 6'5" – stood up and came toward our booth. He didn't go in to the aisle, instead he just started stepping over the backs of seats to get to us. He leaned on the short glass in front of me and stared at me from about a foot in front of my face. I wasn't sure what he was going to do, perhaps throw a soft drink in my face or something worse. My partner, Dan Avey, was swinging his hand held microphone as if he was ready to use it to hit the fan. Dan then told a little usherette to go get security. She left and never returned, nor did security. I had to look around the fan to do the play-by-play and I was determined not to let him distract me.

When Williams scored his third goal of the game to give the Kings the lead, I really poured it on, just to upset the fan even more. By this time he was spitting mad and in his frustration he tore up his ticket stubs, threw them at me and said, 'I'll see you later.' You could come into our booth from the concourse so I spent the rest of the game alternating between calling the play-by-play and looking over my shoulder but my "friend" never showed up. The Kings won the game 8-6 in their final appearance ever in Kemper Arena.

The new Sprint Center in Kansas City opened in 2007, managed by the Kings owners, Anschutz Entertainment Group. Kemper Arena still stands and in 2013 will be the home of the Kansas City Renegades of the Champions Professional Indoor Football League.

The Scouts played only two seasons in Kansas City before moving to Denver to become the Colorado Rockies of the NHL. After six seasons in Denver, the franchise moved to New Jersey and became the very successful New Jersey Devils.

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644882 Minnesota Wild

NHL/NHLPA to seek help from federal mediators; Wild player updates

Posted by: under Wild off-season news Updated: November 26, 2012 - 3:57 PM

In an effort to perhaps breathe some life into a locked-out league in a deep freeze, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service has offered to act as a mediator between the NHL and NHL Players' Association.

Mediators can't act to end the lockout, which began Sept. 15 and has cost the 2012-13 season games until at least Dec. 15, as well as the Winter Classic and All-Star Game. They're simply an objective third party that can only offer assistance to try to bridge the two sides together.

In 2004-05, the NHL and NHLPA also met with a mediator from the National Labor Relations Board. As you know, the season was ultimately canceled Feb. 16, 2005.

This latest process will start Wednesday with mediators expected to initially meet with both sides separately.

"The FMCS reached out to both sides independently, and apparently we both agreed that we were prepared to explore the process," NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly wrote in an email to the Star Tribune. "I have no

level of expectation at this point. We'll see how it goes and perhaps something good will come of it."

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Director George H. Cohen issued the following statement today on the ongoing labor negotiations between the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association:

"I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement. At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices. I have assigned Deputy Director Scot L. Beckenbaugh, Director of Mediation Services John Sweeney, and Commissioner Guy Serota to serve as the mediators."

"Due to the extreme sensitivity of these negotiations and consistent with the FMCS's long-standing practice, the Agency will refrain from any public comment concerning the future schedule and/or the status of the negotiations until further notice."

The move comes in the midst of the players considering a process that would decertify the union. The NHL's Board of Governors are also scheduled to meet Dec. 5. The latest talks between the NHL and NHLPA broke off again last week.

Update: The NHLPA's non-statement statement:

NHLPA STATEMENT FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DON FEHR

TORONTO (November 26, 2012) – Don Fehr, National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA) Executive Director, released the following statement today:

"The NHLPA has agreed to the addition of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) to our ongoing negotiations. We look forward to their involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners."

My take: Can't hurt, but I've got no expectations of this working.

In Wild news:

-- Mikko Koivu is on his way back to the Twin Cities. Koivu and a couple other Finnish players had to leave their Finnish teams by a certain date due to tax reasons. If the lockout continues, I'd suspect Koivu will return to play for TPS in January. Koivu had five goals and five assists in 10 games.

-- Wild prospect Nick Seeler, who hails from Eden Prairie, was supposed to play the Gophers this weekend for the first time in his career. But the freshman at Nebraska-Omaha, who has been playing so well, was hurt last weekend against Huntsville Alabama and is likely not playing this weekend.

-- In four games for the Ontario Reign of the East Coast Hockey League, Devin Setoguchi has three goals and three assists.

-- Jared Spurgeon has three goals and four assists in 13 games for the SCL Tigers in the Swiss Elite League. He is minus-10 for the worst team in the 12-team league.

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.27.2012

644883 Montreal Canadiens

For Eller, hockey sun still rises in Finland

By Dave Stubbs, The Gazette November 26, 2012

MONTREAL — Lars Eller would like to tell you that he sees the light at the end of the lockout tunnel.

But in Jyväskylä, Finland, where the Canadiens centreman is playing during the NHL shutdown, the sun rises these mornings just after 9 a.m. and sets a couple minutes after 3 p.m.

"It's pitch dark by 4 o'clock," Eller said Monday from his adopted home, which lies at almost precisely the same latitude as Yellowknife, N.W.T.

"I've seen the sun maybe twice in the two weeks I've been here. It's been pretty much cloudy and rainy."

So in a bid to be helpful, you remind the 23-year-old that while Montreal's Monday skies were radiantly bright, at least he is spending his too-short days going to and from hockey games.

The lockout is both a million miles away and in Eller's face every waking moment.

"I kind of try not to think too much about it," he said, keeping himself well-informed through the Internet and conversations with fellow players.

"I have a hope in the back of my mind that it's going to settle but, the way things look right now, and have looked several times throughout the negotiations, I honestly don't have a lot of faith.

"The ball is kind of in the owners' court as we speak," he said with a sigh. "Those things can change quickly. I'm mostly disappointed with the way that Gary (Bettman) has been treating the players. I'm not really getting the sense that (owners) are working with us. It should be a partnership.

"In the big perspective, not only just with this lockout and this CBA but in years to come, if players cave in now and give the owners what they want, then these lockouts will continue CBA after CBA.

"Players need to take a stand and let (owners) know we're for real. Hopefully, they'll start to respect us, which I think they don't right now. That's the only chance we have that this won't continue. If we give them what we want, then they know the way (Bettman) is negotiating is working for them. If we cave in now, it will be the same pattern next time."

Like many of his teammates, Eller believes that Canadiens owner Geoff Molson, the man who figuratively signs his paycheck, would much rather be playing hockey.

"Even though we know Geoff cares about his team and that he's a fan of the game, he happens to be an owner as well," said Eller, who signed a two-year, \$2.65-million Habs contract in July. "So we're standing on our own sides of the river."

Eller is four games into his lockout stint with the SM-Liiga's JYP Jyväskylä Oy, the defending champion in the 14-team league. The native of Rodovre, Denmark, has four goals (five, counting shootout) and two assists, having scored the shootout winner in his three-goal debut on Nov. 16.

He is seeing plenty of ice as JYP's first-line centre, coach Jyrki Aho using him at even strength, on the power play and the penalty kill. He figures he's playing roughly 20 minutes per game for a club that stands sixth after 25 of 58 scheduled games.

"It's a lot of fun, getting that kind of playing time," said Eller, who averaged 15:19 in 79 Canadiens games last season, scoring 16 goals and adding a dozen assists.

"So it's up to me to produce and hopefully that's going to turn into more wins for our team."

If the Finnish language is a tongue-twister — he says "it's not remotely close to anything at all" — the hockey hasn't been a struggle. He has Boston Bruins' Rich Peverley and a few native Canadians as teammates and says that most everyone converses in decent English or Swedish, languages he speaks, too.

Eller's club plays in a 4,628-capacity arena, "which is definitely not like the Bell Centre. But whatever arena you're in, if it's packed, the atmosphere is still good. The fans here care."

This was Eller's first off-season in the past three that hasn't seen him rehabbing from shoulder surgery. So he returned home to Denmark from the end of the 2011-12 NHL season through mid-August armed with personal trainer Jean-François Gaudreau's workout, supplement and meal-plan programs, combining all three with "a lot of discipline" to produce what he says is the best physical shape of his life.

Hockey in Europe was always on his radar in the event of a lockout, though family life was a major part of the equation. Eller and his wife, Julie, had their first child about six weeks ago, then all headed to Scandinavia for the rest or some of the Finnish season, depending on how the lockout pans out.

He had a brief chat with Canadiens coach Michel Therrien before the Sept. 15 shutdown, laughing when he said: "I did most of the talking.

"(Therrien) has some things in mind and we may see him try me in different places. I'll say what I've said the last two seasons: if I could choose, I'd play

centre. It's where I'm most comfortable and where I think I can help the team most.

"But I'm never going to put myself in front of the team's interests. If the coach thinks I can help more on the wing, that's where I'll play. Being able to play both can't hurt you. And if anything, it will give the coach more options and benefit you in the end."

Eller admits the SM-Liiga won't soon be confused with the NHL, the latter's charter flights and four-star hotels replaced by the former's bus coaches rolling through the long, dark Finnish nights.

"But it's good playing and getting into the routine again," he said. "I did a lot of hard work this summer and it feels good to not be wasting it by doing nothing."

"I miss Montreal and playing at the Bell Centre, but this is the next best thing and it will have to do for now."

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.27.2012

644884 Montreal Canadiens

NHL labour talks headed to mediation

Posted by Stu Cowan

The Canadian Press reported on Monday afternoon that the NHL and NHL Players' Association are turning to mediation in an effort to solve their labour dispute.

With negotiations stalled, the sides have agreed to allow U.S. federal mediators into the process. The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service says the negotiations "will now be conducted under our auspices."

Deputy director Scot L. Beckenbaugh, director of mediation services John Sweeney and commissioner Guy Serota have been assigned to the case.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in an email to The Canadian Press that he hopes they'll be able to sit in on a session as soon as this week. The NHL and NHLPA haven't met since last week.

The lockout, now in its 11th week, has forced the NHL to cancel all games through Dec. 15.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.27.2012

644885 Nashville Predators

Nashville Predators' workouts keep group size steady

Josh Cooper

Since the NHL lockout began on Sept. 15, Predators captain Shea Weber has tried to hold his group in Nashville steady.

He's even attempted to bring in some other Predators who are training in other cities.

But as the collective bargaining impasse between the NHL and NHL Players' Association drags on, Weber remains optimistic that he can keep a good-size group in Nashville until a deal is reached.

"I think we've all got hopes still and that's why we're here," Weber said on Monday. "We're still practicing. I think we're so close there's no reason why we can't get a deal done. Obviously we're still working towards that, and hopefully we can get something figured out."

As the lockout has continued, the same core group of players has remained at A-Game Sportsplex. It includes defenseman Hal Gill, along with forwards Mike Fisher, Martin Erat, Brian McGrattan, Matt Halischuk and Nick Spaling. Defenseman Scott Hannan, an offseason acquisition, recently has started practicing with the group.

In the event of further cancellations — the schedule through Dec. 14 already has been eliminated — Gill said he would likely stay in Nashville. He has a young family with children in school.

"I know guys want to go and play and get on with their lives, but right now everyone is waiting to see what happens in the next few weeks and hope something could get done," Gill said. "I think we're taking steps to hopefully get a deal done and we'll see what happens."

Happy for Vanderbilt: Growing up in Sicamous, British Columbia, Weber didn't have a college football team to cheer for.

So when he came to Nashville to play for the Predators, he adopted Vanderbilt as his squad of choice.

The Commodores won their eighth game of the season by defeating Wake Forest on Saturday. They hadn't won eight games since 1982.

"It's great; I enjoy cheering for them," Weber said. "Great to see them win eight games, and they should be in a bowl game I'm guessing. Should be great for the school and the city."

Fitzgerald returns: Tom Fitzgerald, the first captain in Predators history, returned to Nashville on Monday to take part in an event at Zanies Comedy Club.

Fitzgerald, now assistant to the general manager with the Penguins, joined Predators play-by-play man Pete Weber, TV analyst Terry Crisp and radio analyst Stu Grimson to share some behind-the-scenes stories from the hockey world.

Tennessean LOADED: 11.27.2012

644886 New Jersey Devils

Federal Mediators Will Oversee Negotiations on Lockout

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

The N.H.L. and its players association have agreed to mediation in an effort to break the stalemate in negotiations between the two sides, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service announced.

"At the invitation of the F.M.C.S., and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices," George H. Cohen, the service's director, said in a statement Monday, the 72nd day of the N.H.L. lockout.

Three mediators will be involved in the negotiations, including the deputy director Scot L. Beckenbaugh and the director of mediation services John Sweeney. Commissioner Guy Serota was originally assigned to the talks, but Cohen announced his removal later Monday because of off-color comments made on a Twitter account with Serota's name.

Beckenbaugh served as a mediator during the 2004-5 N.H.L. lockout, when the season was canceled.

"While we have no particular level of expectation going into this process, we welcome a new approach in trying to reach a resolution of the ongoing labor dispute at the earliest possible date," Bill Daly, the N.H.L.'s deputy commissioner, said in an e-mail. "We have no further comment on the upcoming meetings at the current time."

The two sides last met last Wednesday, when the N.H.L. rejected most parts of a union proposal that moved in the owners' direction on several issues. A league spokesman, Gary Meagher, said no negotiating sessions were scheduled as of Monday afternoon.

Donald Fehr, the executive director of the N.H.L. Players' Association, said in a statement that the union looked forward to the mediators' involvement.

William B. Gould IV, a former chairman of the National Labor Relations Board and a professor emeritus at Stanford Law School, said it was impossible to say whether mediation would help bring a settlement.

"You can't gain any hope as a result of this, per se," said Gould, who has served as an arbitrator in baseball and will appear as an expert witness for the N.H.L. at a Quebec labor board hearing next week on whether the lockout is lawful under the province's laws. "But look, it's better than the alternative. If the parties had said they don't want to go to mediation, that

would be downright discouraging. So the fact they're willing to do it, that they have some things to discuss, is in itself hopeful."

The presence of federal mediators was credited with helping to bring about settlements in the N.F.L. and N.B.A. lockouts last year, but mediation did not lead to a successful resolution of the 2004-5 N.H.L. lockout.

On Feb. 13, 2005, Beckenbaugh, then the acting director of the federal mediation service, ordered the league and union to meet in Washington one day ahead of a deadline for cancellation of the season imposed by Commissioner Gary Bettman. It was the third time, all in February, in which mediators intervened in the lockout.

At that bargaining session, the union agreed for the first time to discuss acceptance of a salary cap. Over the next two days of talks, the league offered a salary cap set at \$42.5 million a team, and the union offered a salary cap set at \$49 million. But the gap was too wide for the owners, and Bettman announced the season's cancellation Feb. 16.

That 2005 gap, calculated leaguewide, came to \$195 million for the season. Mediators in the current talks will try to close an estimated gap of \$182 million over five seasons, or \$36.4 million a season. But issues pertaining to free agency, arbitration and contract limits also remain unresolved.

Cohen said in his statement that he "had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations."

Cohen will not take part in the mediation. He did participate last year during the N.B.A. and N.F.L. lockouts and in 2010, when he helped avert a strike by the Major League Soccer players union.

According to his biography on the F.M.C.S. Web site, Beckenbaugh has mediated agreements in the cereal, heavy equipment manufacturing, aluminum and meatpacking industries. Calls to Beckenbaugh and Sweeney were referred to John Arnold, the service's director of public affairs.

"The goal of mediation is to assist the parties in reaching a mutually acceptable agreement," said John Arnold, the service's director of public affairs.

He added that federal mediators were neutral third parties and would say little about negotiations, even though Cohen made fairly extensive comments following bargaining sessions during the N.F.L. and N.B.A. lockouts.

New York Times LOADED: 11.27.2012

644887 New Jersey Devils

How the N.H.L. Players' Union Would Decertify

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

Momentum is building for the N.H.L. Players' Association to decertify as a union and use the threat of antitrust lawsuits to pressure Commissioner Gary Bettman and the league's owners to come to a quick settlement, ending their 10-week lockout.

Last week Sabres goalie Ryan Miller told a Canadian newspaper that he favored decertification. He cited the decertification of the N.F.L. and N.B.A. players' unions for helping to bring prompt ends to those leagues' 2011 lockouts. (Only the N.B.A. players' move succeeded – they decertified quickly, filed two lawsuits, and the league settled within a couple of weeks. The football players had to wait four months for a settlement after decertifying.)

Also last week, the top two officials in the N.H.L. players' association, Donald Fehr and Steve Fehr, declined to comment substantively when asked about the tactic by reporters. Meanwhile, Bill Duffy, the agent for the Canadian N.B.A. star Steve Nash, said the N.H.L. players should "absolutely" decertify, although, he added, they should have done it three months ago.

Decertifying would be a big step for the N.H.L. players – and a time-consuming one. Here's how it would work for the 23 player labor units in the United States. (The seven Canada-based units would have to follow

separate decertification procedures in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia.)

1) First, the membership must sign a petition to decertify. If at least 30 percent of the members sign, the process begins.

2) The petition goes to the National Labor Relations Board.

a) If 30 to 49 percent of the membership signed the petition, the board sets a decertification election date, usually about 60 days after approving the petition.

b) If 50 percent or more signed, the employer may immediately withdraw recognition of the union. But the N.H.L. would be unlikely to do so because it would allow the players to immediately begin filing antitrust lawsuits against the league.

3) Once the labor relations board sets an election date, the union holds a decertification vote on that date. If a majority votes in favor, the union is decertified and its status changes to trade association.

4) The trade association can file antitrust lawsuits against the employer.

It would likely take at least two months for the N.H.L. Players' Association to decertify, so if the qualifying petition were submitted by Dec. 1, the filing of antitrust lawsuits could not begin until Feb. 1. Even if the N.H.L. buckled immediately, that would probably be too late to save the season. That may have been the basis for Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly's assertion last week on Toronto radio that decertification would "likely lead to the end of the season."

But even the submission of a qualifying petition could signal to the owners that the union is on the road to antitrust court actions – and that threat alone may be real enough to break the owners' intransigence. That is basically what happened with the N.B.A. last year, and what Miller and the militant faction of N.H.L. players are advocating now.

New York Times LOADED: 11.27.2012

644888 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout: Will federal mediators help more than in 2004-05?

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

The NHL and NHL Players' Union have agreed to allow federal mediators to get involved in the process as they attempt to negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement.

Mediation is non-binding and it could not prevent the 2004-05 season from being canceled when federal mediators were used.

"The NHLPA has agreed to the addition of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) to our ongoing negotiations," NHLPA executive director Don Fehr said in a statement. "We look forward to their involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners."

There was a rocky start today when Guy Serota, one of the mediators assigned to the talks, was pulled from involvement because his Twitter account had been hacked. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service director George H. Cohen issued a statement:

"Within one hour after I issued a press release announcing that further negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA would be conducted under the auspices of the FMCS, it has been called to my attention that there are issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account associated with Commissioner Guy Serota, one of the mediators I assigned. Accordingly, in order to immediately dispel any cloud on the mediation process, and without regard to the merits of the allegations, I have determined to take immediate action, namely to remove Commissioner Serota from this assignment.

"There will be no further comment from the FMCS on this matter."

Federal mediators were involved on three occasions in '04-05, including three days before the NHL season was canceled on Feb. 16, 2005.

Discussions with federal mediators will likely begin Wednesday.

Star Ledger LOADED: 11.27.2012

644889 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout update: NHL, NHLPA agree to use federal mediators

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

It was just last week that there were rumblings about the potential of the players' union decertifying, starting a process that could get the courts involved in the continuing lockout.

Instead, the next step is mediation.

George H. Cohen, the director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, issued a statement today in which he said "the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices" after both sides agreed to use mediators, which also came from an "invitation" by the FMCS.

A source told ESPN's Pierre LeBrun that the first mediated meeting will be on Wednesday, a week after talks broke off. He also pointed out Cohen has worked with Major League Baseball (as outside counsel for the strike in 1994) and with both the NFL and NBA in their recent work stoppages.

"I have no level of expectation at this point. We'll see how it goes and perhaps something good will come of it," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said, via The Star Tribune's Michael Russo, who also mentioned mediation was part of the process during the 2004-05 lockout when a season was completely canceled. So there are no guarantees this will be the step that ends the lockout, especially since mediation isn't binding.

At least the two sides are trying something new after struggling to come to an agreement.

Star Ledger LOADED: 11.27.2012

644890 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout mediator Guy Serota's Twitter account hacked, later deleted after inappropriate jokes

Serota's deleted account had contained several either inappropriate or simply strange remarks, including messages directed at comedian Sarah Silverman.

By Pat Leonard / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

While the NHL lockout continues, Twitter accounts of the mediators are getting hacked and causing a distraction.

The NHL's season is being hijacked by a lockout. Its mediators' Twitter accounts are being hacked.

Federal mediators joined hockey's bargaining process Monday to help facilitate negotiations, but after only an hour they had become a distraction.

The Twitter account of mediator Guy Serota, one of three appointed to hockey's case, created such a stir with inappropriate jokes that it was deleted altogether. Then a new account, @GuySerota, appeared with Serota's photo and a message that he had been "temporarily hacked." Then Serota claimed in an e-mail to ESPN that the new account was not him at all.

George H. Cohen, director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), therefore announced he was removing Serota due to an "allegedly hacked Twitter account." Serota's deleted account had contained several either inappropriate or simply strange remarks, including messages directed at comedian Sarah Silverman.

"In order to immediately dispel any cloud on the mediation process, and without regard to the merits of the allegations, I have determined to take immediate action, namely to remove Commissioner Serota from this assignment," Cohen said.

FMCS deputy director Scot L. Beckenbaugh and director of mediation services John Sweeney remain on the case, and the first NHL bargaining session with mediators present is expected to take place on Wednesday at an undisclosed location.

Mediation brings a neutral third party into bargaining as a facilitator and, as the FMCS web site points out, "it may or may not lead to an agreement." The process is different from arbitration, in which the arbitrator imposes a binding agreement. Neither party in this instance is interested in having a decision made for it.

"While we have no particular level of expectation going into this process, we welcome a new approach in trying to reach a resolution of the ongoing labor dispute at the earliest possible date," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement on Day 72 of the lockout.

"We look forward to the (mediators') involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners," NHL Players' Association executive director Don Fehr said.

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.27.2012

644891 New York Rangers

Mediator Guy Serota removed from NHL & NHLPA negotiations due to stir caused by 'allegedly hacked Twitter account'

By Pat Leonard

You can't make this stuff up.

Hours after the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service announced it had assigned three mediators to the NHL's collective bargaining negotiations, FMCS director George H. Cohen released a second statement saying he had removed one of the mediators, Guy Serota, from the assignment.

Here's the catch – Serota was bounced due to inappropriate comments made on an "allegedly hacked Twitter account," @GuySerota, that then were deleted.

"Within one hour after I issued a press release announcing that further negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA would be conducted under the auspices of the FMCS, it has been called to my attention that there are issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account associated with Commissioner Guy Serota, one of the mediators I assigned," Cohen said in the statement. "Accordingly, in order to immediately dispel any cloud on the mediation process, and without regard to the merits of the allegations, I have determined to take immediate action, namely to remove Commissioner Serota from this assignment."

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.27.2012

644892 New York Rangers

NHL and NHLPA agree to federal mediation in CBA talks, hoping objective perspective leads to progress toward deal

By Pat Leonard

The NHL and NHL players' association have agreed to sit before federal mediators in their collective bargaining negotiations, hoping objective points of view can help the two parties break their stalemate and get hockey back on the ice. Meetings reportedly will resume Wednesday.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Director George H. Cohen issued a statement describing the decision:

"I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement. At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices. I have assigned Deputy Director Scot L. Beckenbaugh,

Director of Mediation Services John Sweeney, and Commissioner Guy Serota to serve as the mediators.

"Due to the extreme sensitivity of these negotiations and consistent with the FMCS's long-standing practice, the Agency will refrain from any public comment concerning the future schedule and/or the status of the negotiations until further notice."

Cohen also has presided over mediations of negotiations between the NFL and NFL players' association and the NBA and the NBA players' union.

Both the NHL and NHLPA confirmed they had agreed to mediation and offered statements on how they plan to proceed:

"While we have no particular level of expectation going into this process, we welcome a new approach in trying to reach a resolution of the ongoing labor dispute at the earliest possible date," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said.

Don Fehr said the players "look forward to the (mediators') involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners."

Mediation is different from arbitration. Mediation, as defined by the FMCS web site "is a voluntary process, bringing a neutral third-party into a negotiation as a facilitator. It may or may not lead to an agreement between the parties. Arbitration is a process agreed to by the parties in which, at its conclusion, a neutral third-party will impose a binding agreement on both parties."

In other words, arbitration would cede control of the negotiations' result to the arbitrator and take it out of the league's and players' hands. Neither side is interested in having a decision made for them.

The decision to include mediators is a positive step because it indicates both the league and players' association are seeking a constructive alternative to an agreement. In recent days, many people have speculated the union would choose to decertify, another potential path to an agreement but a much longer and uglier one which, especially at this late of a juncture, would not be the optimal route.

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.27.2012

644893 New York Rangers

Federal mediators to oversee NHL labor talks

By STEVE ZIPAY steve.zipay@newsday.com

The NHL and NHLPA will receive a new perspective on the three-month lockout this week, but whether the stalled negotiations will advance is anybody's guess.

Unable to break the impasse in the labor talks themselves, the NHL and NHLPA Monday agreed to allow federal mediators to begin overseeing the process.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service director George H. Cohen, who was involved in the recent NFL and NBA labor negotiations, reached out separately to the league and the union, and both agreed to the non-binding intervention, which will begin in either New York or Washington. The sides are to meet separately with the mediators Wednesday.

"With the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices," said Cohen, who has been speaking informally with the two sides, and initially assigned deputy director Scot L. Beckenbaugh, director of mediation services John Sweeney and commissioner Guy Serota to be the mediators.

Cohen later removed Serota because of "issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account associated with [Serota]."

The sides have been deadlocked on a new collective bargaining agreement, triggering the cancellation of 434 games through Dec. 15, the Winter Classic on Jan. 1 and the All-Star Game on Jan. 26.

The two sides have not bargained since last Wednesday, when a union proposal for a five-year deal was not greeted warmly. NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr said the sides are \$182 million apart on honoring

current contracts over the term of the deal, but not close on issues such as free agency eligibility.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644894 NHL

Concussed Henderson had to plead to play in '72 Summit Series

Roy MacGregor

It's been quite a fall for Paul Henderson.

On Sept. 28 the country celebrated the 40th anniversary of The Goal of the Century that he scored in Moscow to win Game 8 and the 1972 Summit Series.

On Nov. 10, he and Eleanor – they began dating in little Lucknow, Ont., when he was 17, she 16 – celebrated their 50th anniversary. As he likes to say, "When young love turns to old love, it is the best love."

And just this past week he was officially named to the International Ice Hockey Federation's Hockey Hall of Fame.

There has been so much talk of that famous goal – "Here's a shot ... Henderson makes a wild stab for it and falls ... here's another shot, right in front, they score ... Henderson has scored for Canada!" – that it has given the scorer much pause for reflection.

If what we know today had been known back then, he says, he would never have scored.

Nor, for that matter, would he have scored the do-or-die winning goals in Games 6 and 7 to keep Canada's chances alive if they hoped to win that now iconic hockey series. Take those three goals away and you can take Paul Henderson out of the IIHF Hockey Hall of Fame.

"I wouldn't have been let play," he says on a cool morning in Louisville, Ky., where he has come to visit a daughter and her family and give a motivational talk to a convention of RV dealers.

"They wouldn't have let me go back on the ice."

In Game 5 of the series, the first to be played in Moscow, Henderson had scored to put Team Canada up 3-0. Shortly after, he tripped and went so hard into the boards he had to be helped off the ice. Dr. Jim Murray told him he'd suffered a concussion and that would be it for him. He was out of the game.

Today, strict protocol would mean no arguing. But this was 1972. Henderson was adamant he be allowed to go back out on the ice. Coach Harry Sinden came in to confer with the doctor and Henderson pleaded his case: "Harry, don't do this to me!"

Sinden wasn't sure, but he figured if Henderson was going to be so insistent, "I'm not going to stop you."

Out Henderson went, scored the goal to put Canada up 4-1 – a lead they could not hold, unfortunately, as the Soviets came back to win 5-4. Henderson played the next three games, however, and history was made.

Henderson accepts it would be different today and now counts himself among the legions who are concerned about head injuries, however received, in the game. "It's not hypocritical to think differently about a serious issue in retrospect," is how he puts it. He counts himself lucky that none of the concussions he suffered in hockey – and remember, he was among the first to wear a helmet – appears to have had any lingering effects.

That month of glory changed Paul Henderson's life. Today he devotes his time to The Leadership Group, serving as mentor to other men attempting to find a spiritual life. His positive, upbeat message is all the more impressive when one realizes that Henderson has been battling cancer – chronic lymphocytic leukemia – since 2009. Ever optimistic, he is already making plans to attend the IIHF induction ceremony that will take place in Stockholm during the 2013 world hockey championship.

Wherever Henderson goes – even on Sunday, as he switched planes in Cleveland – people come up to him and want to talk about The Goal. And

after they get that moment out of the way, he laughs, "Nine out of 10 of them want to talk about the Hall of Fame."

He doesn't mean the IIHF Hall, but the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto, the one that already holds Richard, Béliveau, Orr, Hull, Howe, Gretzky and assorted other gods of the national game.

In fact, Paul Henderson will be in this Hall of Fame Tuesday, as he gives a talk to members of an automobile manufacturer. He figures he has spoken "more than 100 times" at the Hall. But he's never been asked to stay.

Many Canadians find this outrageous, but he doesn't. He knows there have been petitions and a "put-paul-in-the-hall" Facebook campaign, but he himself will never say a word about whether he should be in.

He knows there are lesser lights than him in the Hall, but will not say anything because he is acutely aware that there are a great many brighter lights than him there, as well.

If he is kept out solely because his career is known for a single goal more than anything else, then supporters argue that the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown has inducted Bill Mazerowski, who with one swing of the bat in the fall of 1960 gave the Pittsburgh Pirates the World Series.

Mazerowski could never get enough votes to make it in the many years he was on the ballot. He failed to make it the first year the veterans' committee considered him, finally reaching the Hall in 2001.

One series-winning swing of the bat that became The Greatest Home Run Ever.

Three game-winning goals, including the series winner they called The Goal of the Century, in the greatest hockey series ever played.

Not to mix sports metaphors, but sounds like a slam dunk.

Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.27.2012

644895 NHL

Mediation 'did not work in football and basketball,' but NHL will give it a go on Wednesday

JAMES MIRTLE

So long decertification. Hello mediation.

Frustration? It's not going anywhere.

On Day 72 of a lockout that feels as if it has another few rounds in it, the NHL and the National Hockey League Players' Association agreed on Monday to allow U.S. federal mediators in on the party.

The proceedings will resume on Wednesday in a secret location.

The two sides will be joined by specialists from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service – deputy director Scot Beckenbaugh and director of mediation services John Sweeney – who will attempt to bridge the narrow gap that has led to the cancellation of the first two months of the season.

(A third mediator, commissioner Guy Serota, was turfed from the case due to an off-colour Twitter account mere hours after being put on the case. So the FMCS is off to quite a start.)

"While we have no particular level of expectation going into this process, we welcome a new approach," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told reporters on Monday.

Mediation isn't a surprise at this point. Both the NFL and NBA went through it during their lockouts in 2011 and, other than consuming a few days, the non-binding process didn't solve much. The NBA experience was particularly relevant as it came almost exactly 12 months ago during what was supposed to be the early portion of that league's regular season.

George Cohen, the mediator in that case, coaxed the league and players into three marathon days of meetings that were kept largely out of the media. The end result, however, wasn't much progress.

"No useful purpose would be served by requesting the parties to continue the mediation process at this time," Cohen said at the end of Day 3.

And that was it.

Jeffrey Kessler, a high-profile New York lawyer who served as the lead negotiator for the National Basketball Players Association last year, took part in the mediation sessions during both the NFL and NBA lockouts.

In the end, Kessler said the entrenched positions involved are the main reason why mediation solves little in professional sports labour disputes.

"It did not work in football and basketball," Kessler said. "Bargaining came to a standstill and mediation wasn't able to break through it.

"We tried," Kessler added. "In the end, the only thing that eventually led to a resolution was ending the union and litigating."

If that sounds familiar, it's because that's where decertification would come in. Multiple sources on the players' side said Monday that dissolving the union remains in play if negotiations continue to falter, even if a few days of mediation delays the legal manoeuvrings that would make that possible.

The players believe they made significant concessions again in their offer last week, which included getting to a 50-per-cent share of revenues by Year 4 and working off the league's framework on a deal.

With no counteroffer apparently coming from the league, their frustration has led to talk of wiping out the union altogether as a means of gaining some leverage.

Kessler has been down the decertification road with the other two leagues – some would argue he was the one driving the bus – and remains a strong proponent of using the courts to push stalled negotiations forward.

"The only advice I can give to NHL players, is that it is a very viable option," he said. "It's one which I think greatly benefited players in the NFL and NBA when those decisions were made. They should consider it, along with their other options."

He doesn't hold out much hope for mediation, in other words.

"The reality is, in professional sports, you have very smart, sophisticated negotiators on both sides," Kessler said. "There's no one who's more experienced in negotiating labour agreements than Don Fehr [executive director of the NHLPA]. And equally so I'd say Gary Bettman [NHL commissioner] and Bill Daly are very experienced negotiators.

"I don't know that the mediators are really the problem. The problem is the positions are so intractable."

Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.27.2012

644896 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators defenceman Marc Methot raves about trip to Northwest Territories

By Don Brennan ,Ottawa Sun

A trek made by locked-out NHLers to the Northwest Territories for three charity games was popular both for residents and visitors, by all accounts.

Something similar might again be organized by John Chabot if the season doesn't start soon.

Chabot, who brought the players to Yellowknife and surrounding areas to make a positive, impressionable mark on youths, wouldn't have a hard time selling Senators defenceman Marc Methot on a second expedition.

"Absolutely," Methot said Monday, when asked if he would take part in a similar trip. "I wouldn't even care where it was.

"That's the one small bright spot (of the lockout), we get to go around and play in front of these people that aren't exposed to much NHL in person. It doesn't matter if it's all-star style no hitting, we're still there and they can see we're having a good time on the ice. Sometimes that might be more entertaining, just to see us messing around and having a good time out there. Especially for the kids, they can see us skating and that we're just like them, in a sense, especially with (Nashville's Jordin) Tootoo, growing up where he grew up and making it to the NHL. That shows there's a lot of hope for these kids that want to play hockey. It's a positive thing."

"The biggest thing I can say, is the people were so over the top friendly, and accommodating," added Methot. "It made our trip that much better. Anything we needed or wanted, they were there for us. They just seemed delighted to help us all the time."

Methot's personal highlight was riding a dogsled with Winnipeg Jets defenceman Grant Clitsome.

"We had a lot of beauties on our trip, guys that like to have fun and are always joking around," he said. "It made the trip a lot more fun. Even if some of the days had a lot of travel, long plane rides, we always found a way to get a good laugh."

ICE CHIPS: C Zack Smith is expected to join Senators teammate Colin Greening by signing with the Aalborg Pirates in Denmark ... Milan Michalek wound up with 16 penalty minutes after starting a brawl by charging the net in a Czech League game Sunday. The 6-foot-2 Michalek dropped 5-foot-9 defenceman David Zucker. Michalek, who had only 32 PIMs all last season, has been in just three fights during his 526-game NHL career. He also has six goals and three assists in 10 games for Ceske Budejovice.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 11.27.2012

644897 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators defenceman Marc Methot and other NHLers work out with the Carleton Ravens

By Don Brennan ,Ottawa Sun

Ottawa Senators practise with Carleton Ravens

Ottawa Senators' Daniel Alfredsson shoots on Carleton Ravens' goalie, Matthew Dopud, during practice with the Ravens' mens hockey team at the Ice House at Carleton University Monday, Nov. 26, 2012. Darren Brown/Ottawa Sun/QMI Agency

Like after almost every other first-snowfall-of-the-year in his life, Marc Methot brushed off his vehicle and headed to the rink.

On this Monday, however, the Senators defenceman was going back to school in the process. He and a handful of his fellow locked out NHLers were joining the gracious Carleton Ravens for an early-morning practice at the 'Ice House.'

"The last time I wasn't playing hockey at this time of year, I would have been three years old," said Methot, now 27 and anxious to begin his first season with his hometown team. "That kind of speaks volumes, doesn't it?"

What it says is what you know — on Day 72, the lockout was already 1,728 hours too old.

"I don't know what to do with myself," said Methot. "I'm skating, I'm working hard. This morning we were almost puking after the bag skate we had.

"I don't want to be doing this. I want to play. It's great and classy for Carleton to invite us out, but I'd obviously rather be playing in the NHL right now.

"I just want to get this started. And I don't want to play under the terms we're being offered right now. I don't think it's even remotely fair. But if we can get a little closer, maybe we can start agreeing on some things and get it going."

Perhaps the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service can help.

"Mediation, eh? Interesting," said Methot. "The biggest thing for me is that it will bring clarity, to both sides, and it sorta 'calls out' whoever is out of line."

The smart money is on the owners — as in, it's the owners who are out of line. While both sides deserve blame, they made the mistakes they're demanding the players fix.

And it's the owners who appear to be refusing to negotiate — or move from their heel marks in the sand.

"It's like they have an agenda right now," said Methot. "At first we had to figure out the economics, the revenue sharing. The economics side isn't even an issue anymore. Now they're going after our contracting rights. It almost seems like they're only after whatever they can get now.

"They've given us one proposal, and they won't budge."

Last week, NHLPA executive director Don Fehr met with a group of players, including Senators captain Daniel Alfredsson, in Phoenix. Decertification of the union was mentioned as an avenue, though not likely one Fehr wants to cross.

The complicated process would bring all the ugliness to a court room, but it's lengthy and could also wipe out the rest of the season.

"That's not for sure," said Methot. "It can also put a little pressure on the owners to maybe settle on something a little more reasonable. If it puts pressure on everybody to get something done, I'm all for it. I think everyone feels that way, as long as we get something somewhat fair."

Methot, who was playing for the OHL's London Knights during the last lockout, spent six seasons before July 1 as a Columbus Blue Jacket. That means he has moved from a team finishing fourth lowest in average attendance last season to one that was sixth highest.

Methot isn't too concerned about the future of his former team — even though the now cancelled 2013 all-star game was slated for Nationwide Arena.

"The one thing you can really appreciate about Columbus...they are legit sports fans," he said. "The unfortunate truth with the Blue Jackets is just that we weren't winning a lot of hockey games.

"I know a lot of businesses in the area were probably relying on (the all-star game), and that sucks. But I think (Columbus) can handle (lockout damage). You're not playing in Canada, but I can't talk (crap) about them there. They're supportive."

Methot thinks true fans will be in the rinks when hockey returns.

"You might lose people who go to games just to go to games for the novelty," said Methot. "But ultimately, the real hockey fans are going to come back, you would think. That's what the owners know; that's why we're all in this big mess. They know that as much as there is complaining, most of these fans are going to come back to the games."

Even if there are none until just before next year's first snowfall, which is both a good thing and a sad thing, really.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 11.27.2012

644898 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL, players association agree to try federal mediation

Sam Carchidi, Inquirer Staff Writer

Posted: Tuesday, November 27, 2012, 2:07 AM

With negotiations at a standstill, the NHL and the players union have turned to federal mediators as they attempt to end their long labor dispute.

The mediation, announced Monday during the 72d day of the lockout, is nonbinding.

"Both sides are prepared to try a new approach," said Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service will try to steer the sides toward a new collective bargaining agreement.

Before getting your hopes up, remember this: Mediation was also used during the 2004-05 lockout, which ended with the entire season canceled.

On a positive note, the Sporting News reported that the FMCS has had an 85 to 87 percent success rate in each of the last four years.

George Cohen, director of the FMCS, said he had "separate, informal discussions" with key representatives of the NHL and the NHL Players' Association. "At the invitation of the FMCS and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices," he said.

The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday.

Cohen said he assigned Scot Beckenbaugh, deputy director, and John Sweeney, director of Mediation Services. They are employed by the federal government and are not being paid by the NHL or the NHLPA, said a federal spokesman.

On Saturday, Donald Fehr, executive director of the NHLPA, did not rule out the possibility of union decertification, which could have challenged the legality of the lockout in the courts.

For the moment, that is on the back burner.

The mediators will comb through numbers that don't compute.

The NHL says it is losing \$18 million to \$20 million a day in the dispute, which has caused the season to be canceled through Dec. 14. Yet, it turned down a plan that would have cost about \$20,000 per game per team to erase those losses - and start earning revenue.

Where's the logic in that?

"Maybe they have a different motivation," Steve Fehr, NHLPA special counsel, said the other day. He did not elaborate but seemed to be hinting that the NHL wants to break the union.

Last Wednesday, the league rejected the NHLPA's "make whole" offer. That money goes toward guaranteeing the players' contracts.

The NHLPA requested \$393 million, while the NHL had offered \$211 million. If you take the difference - \$182 million - and divide it by 30 teams and spread it over five years, it comes to \$1.2 million per team.

Broken down further, the \$1.2 million would cost teams \$20,000 per game, assuming 60 games are played this season.

Daly said it was "too simplistic" to say the labor woes were wrapped around the "make whole" provision. He said there were many other issues that were "separating the parties."

Issues such as length of contracts, free agency and, apparently, the salary cap. The players do not want it to drop below \$67.25 million at any point during the five-year agreement.

Donald Fehr said he and the union look forward to the mediators' involvement in the process.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.27.2012

644899 Philadelphia Flyers

Mediators will try to end NHL labor war

With negotiations at a standstill, the NHL and the players' union are turning to federal mediators to help end their labor dispute.

The mediation is non-binding.

"Both sides are prepared to try a new approach," said Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

Before getting your hopes up, remember this: Mediation was also used during the 2004-05 lockout, which ended with the entire season canceled.

On a positive note, the Sporting News reported that the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), which is involved in this labor dispute, has had an 85 to 87 percent success rate in its cases in each of the last four years.

George Cohen, director of FMCS, issued the following statement about his role:

I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement. At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices. I have assigned Deputy Director Scot L. Beckenbaugh, director of Mediation Services John Sweeney, and Commissioner Guy Serota to serve as the mediators. (A few hours later, Serota was removed from the case because of controversy over his Twitter account, which he said was hacked.)

Due to the extreme sensitivity of these negotiations and consistent with the FMCS's long-standing practice, the Agency will refrain from any public comment concerning the future schedule and/or the status of the negotiations until further notice.

The mediators, who will attend an NHL/NHLPA meeting on Wednesday, will comb through numbers that don't compute.

The NHL says it is losing \$18 million to \$20 million a day in its labor dispute, which has caused the season to be canceled through Dec. 14. Yet, it is refusing to agree to a plan that would cost about \$20,000 per game per team to erase those losses - and start earning revenue.

Where's the logic in that?

"Maybe they have another motivation," Steve Fehr, special counsel to the players' union, said the other day.

Fehr didn't elaborate, but he seemed to be hinting that the NHL wants to break the union.

On Monday, the lockout reached its 72d day.

Last Wednesday, the league rejected the NHLPA's "make whole" offer. That money goes toward guaranteeing the players' contracts.

The NHL offered \$211 million, while the NHLPA has asked for \$393 million. If you take the difference _ \$182 million _ and divide it by 30 teams and spread it over five years, it comes to \$1.2 million per team.

Broken down further, the \$1.2 million would cost teams \$20,000 per game, assuming 60 games are played this season.

Daly said it was "too simplistic" to say the labor woes were wrapped around the "make whole" provision. He said there were many other "critical issues" that were "separating the parties."

Issues such as length of contracts, free agency and, apparently, the salary cap. The players do not want it to drop below \$67.25 million at any point during the five year agreement.

The mediators are federal employees and are not paid by the NHL or the NHLPA. An employee with the mediation service said that all three mediators do not necessarily have to all be at the bargaining table, adding that they will abide by whatever makes both sides comfortable.

Follow Sam Carchidi

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.27.2012

644900 Pittsburgh Penguins

Mediators step into labor situation between NHL, Players' Association.

By Rob Rossi and Josh Yohe

Mediators will referee the chippy labor game between the NHL and its Players' Association.

The Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service will oversee negotiations between the league and union, FMCS director George Cohen said in a statement Monday.

"At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices," Cohen said.

The FMCS mediators assigned to the NHL/NHLPA negotiations are Scot L. Beckenbaugh, deputy director, and John Sweeney, director of mediation services.

FMCS commissioner Guy Serota was removed as a mediator late Monday because of "an alleged hacking" of his Twitter account, Cohen said in a statement.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said, in a statement, that the league has "no particular level of expectation going into this (mediation) process," but added he welcomed a "new approach."

Added NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr: "We look forward to (FMCS) involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both players and owners."

Cohen said FMCS policy is not to comment on negotiations.

An owners' lockout of players will hit Day 73 Tuesday. Games are canceled through Dec. 14, and the league and union cannot even agree if they are close to a deal.

The league and union last negotiated Wednesday, when the NHL did not approve the NHLPA's latest proposal. The most significant differences between the sides are related to revenue definitions and split, money designated for current contracts and contracting issues such as max term limits and free agency.

Players' talk in recent days about possible union decertification — a tactic used by the NFL and NBA unions during 2011 lockouts in those leagues — may have drawn interest from the FMCS, a local expert said.

However, the NHL's impact on United States' commerce was likely a bigger reason for FMCS involvement, said Jared Simmer, a local mediator and arbitrator.

A Penguins home game was worth about \$2.1 million last season, official tourism agency VisitPittsburgh reported in September. NHL clubs are the primary tenants in 20 of 30 buildings, including Consol Energy Center.

"In most cases the FMCS never gets involved, but in big contracts like this they're going to get involved whether you ask them or not," said Simmer, director of the Piedmont Private Adjudication Center and a public policy professor at CMU.

"Sometimes the FMCS is involved for many months, so this doesn't mean it will be a successful or quick resolution - just that FMCS thinks it's important enough to enter into the process."

Simmer said the involvement of federal mediation is an indication the NHL and NHLPA "think they are stuck, and as a way to save face publicly they want FMCS to come in and help clean things up."

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and Fehr have each expressed their frustration with the lack of movement since negotiations for a new labor contract began in July. The old contract expired Sept. 15.

The NHL lost its 2004-05 season to a labor dispute. That marked the first time in the history of major North American professional sports that a season was not played because of labor strife. Mediators were unsuccessful in saving the NHL's 2004-05 season.

Penguins star center Sidney Crosby was not part of that lockout, but this one is wearing on him as he continues to attend workouts at the club's Southpointe practice facility. He called the process of these negotiations "frustrating."

"I wouldn't say I'm as optimistic as I was last week - just still trying to hold on and hear some good news, like everyone else," he said. "I don't really think anyone can really describe how frustrated we are at this point. We've been through it for a while now. Getting frustrated over it isn't going to change it. It's up to everyone to find a way to make it work."

Tribune Review LOADED: 11.27.2012

644901 Pittsburgh Penguins

NHL lockout: Crosby closer to playing overseas

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Sidney Crosby has yet to settle on a country, let alone select a team.

Even so, he acknowledged Monday that the chances of him playing in Europe this winter have improved significantly of late as the NHL lockout continues.

And while he hasn't booked a flight across the Atlantic Ocean just yet, Crosby made it clear that playing there has moved beyond the theoretical stage.

Well beyond it, actually.

"You know what? It's a lot more possible right now," Crosby said after a player-organized workout at Southpointe. "I probably hadn't thought about it quite as much as I have the past few days.

"It's definitely been something ... with the way things are looking now, it's not looking too good."

Crosby made those observations a few hours before news broke that federal mediators will get involved in the dispute between the NHL and the NHL Players' Association. The mediation is nonbinding.

The lockout has shut down the league since mid-September. There have been no negotiations in nearly a week, although there are indications that the parties and mediators will get together Wednesday.

Games through Dec. 14 have been canceled, and the league acknowledged weeks ago that it will not be possible to play an 82-game schedule in 2012-13.

"Hopefully, we can still get a good chunk of games in, if we figure something out," Crosby said.

That might happen, but it's entirely possible that even if the NHL does get back in business at some point this winter, it won't happen until after Crosby has spent some time in Europe.

He said that his agent, Pat Brisson, has spoken with multiple teams in Russia -- where teammate Evgeni Malkin is playing for his hometown club, Metallurg Magnitogorsk -- and Switzerland, and did not rule out discussions with teams in other countries.

Brisson could not be reached for comment, but this fall projected that insuring Crosby's contracts with the Penguins -- before the lockout, they were scheduled to pay him \$11.9 million over 13 seasons -- could cost between \$200,000 and \$400,000, a fee that likely would be borne by the European club that lands him.

Presumably, that insurance would be pro-rated to reflect Crosby playing less than a full season.

"I don't know, specifically, if I've gotten to that point where I'm looking at [particular] teams, but I think I'm more or less thinking that playing is becoming a little more and more important here, the longer we go," Crosby said. "Especially in my case, where I've missed so much hockey in the last little bit."

A concussion limited him to 41 games in 2010-11 and the lingering effects of that, along with a neck injury, forced him from the lineup for all but 22 games last season.

While it's conceivable that the fresh eyes and ears of the mediators will help the negotiators to develop and maintain traction, the talks to this point have been sporadic and unproductive. That, Crosby suggested, has compounded the exasperation players feel about being idled.

"I think a lot of guys are frustrated with ... the not talking," he said. "We understand the business side, that there are negotiations and proposals going back and forth, that kind of thing.

"But I think the whole process is frustrating. If we really want to get something done, I feel like we have to be there every single day, no matter what.

"Whether or not that's going to happen, I don't know, but the process is probably more frustrating than anything."

Crosby has steadfastly supported the NHLPA before and during the lockout, but defended the right of players such as defenseman Romas Hamrik and goaltender Michal Neuvirth, both of Washington, to express opinions critical of the union.

"They have a right to say what they think," Crosby said. "To be honest, to get 750 guys to have the exact same outlook on every single detail is pretty tough. Pretty much impossible."

Whether the same will be true of forging a new CBA in time to salvage at least a portion of the 2012-13 season could become more evident over the next few weeks.

That means Crosby and hundreds of colleagues will continue to monitor every twist and wrinkle in the negotiations, something few likely anticipated when choosing their line of work.

"This whole process, it wears on you a little bit," Crosby said. "This isn't what we grew up thinking hockey is about.

"It's unfortunate it's come to this point, but you need to get that enjoyment back, the fun side of the game. And that's being out there playing."

Even if, in his case, it means crossing an ocean sometime soon to do it.

Post Gazette LOADED: 11.27.2012

644902 Pittsburgh Penguins

Federal mediators to join NHL lockout talks

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Federal mediators are getting involved in the NHL lockout.

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service director George H. Cohen announced today that deputy director Scot L. Beckenbaugh, director of mediation Services John Sweeney and commissioner Guy Serota will mediate negotiations to end the lockout that has shut down the league since mid-September.

"I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement," Cohen said in a statement.

He added that both sides agreed to the mediation, which is non-binding.

Mediators also were involved in the 2004-05 NHL lockout before that season was canceled.

Post Gazette LOADED: 11.27.2012

644903 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning's St. Louis still in Tampa as NHL lockout drags on

By ERIK ERLÉNSSON | The Tampa Tribune

BRANDON --

Marty St. Louis and the current state of NHL labor talks have something in common – neither is going anywhere soon.

While St. Louis had a self-imposed deadline of Thanksgiving before heading to Europe to play during the league-imposed lockout, the veteran forward said on Monday he has no intentions of heading overseas at this time.

"It's tough right now," St. Louis said after a gathering of 10 players held a workout at the Ice Sports Forum. "I'm baffled that we are where we are."

In addition, Lightning all-star center Steven Stamkos has no intentions of heading to Europe at this time, his agent, Mark Guy, confirmed on Monday, and will continue to workout in his hometown near Toronto.

The NHL locked out its players on Sept. 16, when the collective bargaining agreement with the NHL Players' Association expired. The league canceled all games through Dec. 14 – more than one-third of the season – plus the Winter Classic outdoor game and All-Star weekend, both in January.

The sides have not talked since Wednesday, but on Monday federal mediators entered the stalled negotiations.

St. Louis, 37, has said since September he needed to play in games to maintain his conditioning and timing, so he could be ready to go whenever the NHL season begins. Having a consistent group of players – upwards of 10 or more – to workout with on the ice three times a week in town has helped in that process, even if it doesn't come close to replicating game speed or full practices.

"That's why you need a good week of work before we start," St. Louis said. "But whenever we do start, and I don't care what you did all summer, when you get into getting hit, it takes you about two weeks to catch up. But once you get into games, it's like (the snap of a finger). It comes back, so I'm not too worried about that."

"And (working out in Brandon) is better than nothing."

Unless the league cancels the remainder of the season, St. Louis could remain in town.

"It's very possible," he said. "Because if you do the math (on CBA negotiations) it's not that far apart."

Tampa Bay captain Vinny Lecavalier, who will also remain in town instead of looking to play in Europe, hopes there is a breakthrough soon, but said some movement needs to come from the league. Lecavalier and St. Louis sat in on negotiations in New York last week.

"With how proactive (the players) are, it's the opposite with them," Lecavalier said. "It's like negotiating with yourself. But we'll see what the week brings. I still like to think that there is reason to be optimistic."

"And it's tougher times now, especially after last week, but everything that we have offered and everything that we have done, it would be ridiculous not to start the season."

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 11.27.2012

644904 Tampa Bay Lightning

Tampa Bay Lightning's Marty St. Louis "baffled" at state of negotiations but not bolting to Europe

Tampa Bay Lightning star Marty St. Louis said he is "baffled" by the state of negotiations between the Players' Association and league on a new collective bargaining agreement.

"Do the math," he said about the union's last proposal that has the sides \$182 million apart over a five-year deal. "Thirty teams, it's not that much."

Added captain Vinny Lecavalier: "For everything we've offered and how proactive we've been, it's the opposite for (the league). It's like negotiating with nobody. ... But I still think with everything we've offered and everything we've done, it would be ridiculous not to start the season."

With no negotiations since Tuesday and none scheduled, there is nothing to indicate that will happen soon. Even so, St. Louis, 37, isn't ready to find an alternate place to play. The wing, who during the 2004-05 lockout played in Switzerland, said over the summer that if negotiations dragged he would play in Europe, and he is keeping his options open. But it is clear St. Louis, with his wife and three sons in Tampa, would rather not make the move.

We know Lecavalier, expecting in March his third child with wife Caroline, is not going anywhere. Star center Steven Stamkos apparently has no immediate plans to go to Europe, either.

In the meantime, St. Louis, Lecavalier and a small group of teammates (Stamkos pops in from time to time) will continue skating three times a week at the Ice Sports Forum in Brandon, on Monday in front of three fans.

"I'm trying to entertain a few people," St. Louis said and added with a laugh, "our season ticket holder."

Bottom line, he said of the workouts, "This is better than nothing."

Posted by Damian Cristodero

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 11.27.2012

644905 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: Labour talks mediator removed over Twitter postings

Kevin McGran

Now Twitter is getting in the way of the NHL collective bargaining talks.

In what could only be described as a bizarre twist, mediator Guy Serota was removed from the talks only an hour after being appointed due to the odd postings on his Twitter account (@GuySerota). Some of the tweets included references to masturbation and religious attacks on comic Sarah

Silverman. He said it was hacked. It has since been deleted and replaced with nothing controversial on it.

He was replaced as a mediator by John (Jack) Sweeney, director of mediation services, once the hockey world got a look at Serota's sometimes awkward musings on the social media site that has famously seen its share of hoaxes (recently during Hurricane Sandy), impersonators and the humbling of celebrities, like Alec Baldwin.

Social media sites had their doubts Serota's Twitter account had really been hacked, given the fact the posts had been up so long.

Regardless, Serota was gone from the process before it even started.

"Within one hour after I issued a press release announcing that further negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA would be conducted under the auspices of the FMCS, it has been called to my attention that there are issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account associated with Commissioner Guy Serota, one of the mediators I assigned," wrote Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Director George H. Cohen in a statement.

"Accordingly, in order to immediately dispel any cloud on the mediation process, and without regard to the merits of the allegations, I have determined to take immediate action, namely to remove Commissioner Serota from this assignment."

Collective bargaining talks aimed at saving the NHL season are expected Wednesday at an undisclosed location with the new mediation team.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.27.2012

644906 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: NBA players feel hockey brethren's pain

Kevin McGran

If it's any consolation to an NHL player, the guys in the NBA feel your pain.

"I can relate to what the hockey players are going through," said Matt Bonner of the San Antonio Spurs. "For them, it's got to be more frustrating because last time around they missed a whole season. To get locked out twice in a row and to miss two seasons definitely has to be a hard thing to swallow."

Bonner — who picked up the nickname "The Red Rocket" when he was a Toronto Raptor — was a member of the NBA Players Association negotiating team last year when the league locked out its players and the union had to turn to decertification to get a deal done.

"It was incredibly tedious and frustrating," said Bonner.

NHL labour talks have been frustrating, too. Mediators were called in Monday, a potential last-ditch effort before the players play what might be their final card: decertification.

It was about this time last year the NBA players voted to decertify their union, leaving the league open to a potential anti-trust lawsuit if the two sides didn't come to an agreement. Within two weeks, the NBA had a deal with its players.

Having gone through it, Bonner says the decertification ploy has risks for both sides and shouldn't be a path chosen lightly.

"It's hard because it throws everything into chaos," said Bonner. "It just adds a huge degree of uncertainty to the situation. It's a tough decision for the players to make and it's tough for the owners to deal with. That's a possible strategy to get the owners to move, to budge."

From an NHL point of view, if the union decertified, teams would have to deal on an individual basis with players for things like pensions and benefits, matters the union deals with now. The draft could be deemed an illegal restraint of trade. All players without contracts, not just ones of a certain age, could be deemed to be unrestricted free agents. But players could lose some benefits, including minimum salaries and guaranteed contracts.

"The bottom line is we did everything we could to get a deal up to that point," said Bonner. "We reached an impasse where we didn't feel they were negotiating and we had to do something drastic to negotiate with."

"That's the decision we made. It throws everything into uncertainty. You don't know what the outcome is going to be."

Within two weeks of the NBAPA decertifying, the players reached a deal and were on the court by Christmas.

Just how big a role decertifying played in spurring the deal, Bonner cannot be sure.

"I think only David Stern and the owners can answer that. I'm sure they never would tell us," said Bonner. "Obviously it caused the deal to get done pretty soon thereafter. You could argue that helped the process."

"Or you could argue they had a timeline in mind anyway and were going to get a deal no matter what. Or you could argue they were going to push us to that point and squeeze us for every last drop and then cut a deal. I don't know. They'll never tell us."

"I don't envy the position the hockey players are in."

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.27.2012

644907 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: Mediators called in for meetings this week

Kevin McGran

In what could well be a breakthrough, the NHL and the NHL Players' Association have agreed to allow mediators take control of their broken-down collective bargaining talks.

Or, in the words of one labour negotiation expert, an adult is going to supervise the next round of talks — likely Wednesday in an undisclosed location.

"While we have no particular level of expectation going into this process, we welcome a new approach in trying to reach a resolution of the ongoing labour dispute at the earliest possible date," said NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly.

NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr welcomed the mediators.

"We look forward to their involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners," said Fehr.

The U.S. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), an independent government agency, reached out to both sides independently and discovered both would agree to let mediators guide future discussions.

MORE:Toronto Star lockout coverage

Scot L. Beckenbaugh, deputy director, and John Sweeney, director of mediation services, are to serve as the mediators. In an odd twist, commissioner Guy Serota was removed as a mediator after his Twitter account was hacked. The mediators will meet with both sides independently before sitting them down in the same room together.

"What it means is they recognized they need professional help," said George Smith, a lecturer in labour issues at Queen's University. "It (mediation) can be a last-ditch attempt, for sure. If mediators are meeting with people who are wanting to do a deal, then that can be useful."

"They have not yet been able to do it on their own, so I think we have to see it as a positive."

Talks that have been punctuated by long sessions of rhetoric moments after they've broken down now promise to go quiet for the time being.

"Due to the extreme sensitivity of these negotiations and consistent with the FMCS's long-standing practice, the agency will refrain from any public comment concerning the future schedule and/or the status of the negotiations until further notice," FMCS director George Cohen said in a statement.

The NHL locked out its players Sept. 16. Fehr said he believes the two sides are about \$182 million apart over five years. There are other issues,

such as contract restraints demanded by the owners, that have also yet to be resolved.

Any potential talks come at a time of great pessimism on the side of the players. The skate by Toronto players downtown is on hiatus due to increasingly smaller turnouts.

The likes of Sidney Crosby and George Parros are invoking the word "decertification" as a potential next step. Decertifying the union and pursuing an anti-trust suit is a dangerous path but did — on the surface — seem to have spurred the NBA to reach a deal with its players last year.

But worse, veteran Red Wing Bertuzzi told USA Today on Monday from Troy, Mich., that he was not at all optimistic about getting a deal.

"I see us losing a year," said Bertuzzi. "I think the owners, at this time, are strongholding it and putting their foot in the sand and not budging. They want what they want, and that's plain and simple.

"Unfortunately, it's going to take years to build back the revenue. It's going to take a long time."

Mediation is not binding, meaning neither side has to give or take what the mediators suggest.

But the effect of hiring mediators is twofold: It mollifies the doves in both camps who are eager to play and it reaches out to frustrated fans.

"It shows . . . they're not playing around, they're actually trying to get a deal and taking another step to do that," said Smith. "And it's a message to fans who are getting more vocal about their displeasure.

"Any fan will understand if the marriage is bad, you go for marriage counselling."

Mediators were involved in both the recent NFL and NBA labour disputes.

Mediation may not be the silver bullet towards a deal. Mediators were involved on three separate occasions during the lockout that cost the 2004-05 season, including Feb. 13, 2005 — three days before the season was cancelled.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.27.2012

644908 Toronto Maple Leafs

Maple Leafs goalie James Reimer anxious for chance at redemption

By Ken Wiebe, Winnipeg Sun

WINNIPEG -

James Reimer is eager to put the frustration and disappointment of last season behind him.

The Morweena, Man., product endured some tough times in the crease of the Toronto Maple Leafs, but feels like he was able to take some positives from it, thanks to a long summer of reflection after his team missed out on the Stanley Cup playoffs.

"You just get tougher," Reimer said in a recent interview before returning to Toronto. "I don't know if there's one thing I can pick out to improve on, but overall it's maybe your perseverance and your endurance. When you're not playing as well as you'd like to play, in a market that demands it, it's tough on you, it's tough on your character and it challenges you.

"I think I grew as a person and that will only help me going forward."

Now, if only the NHL and NHLPA could find a way to end the lockout.

"It's been interesting, different, that's for sure," said Reimer, who signed a three-year extension with the Leafs worth \$5.8 million in June of 2011. "It's the first time in a while I haven't been playing organized hockey at this time of the year. Having said that, going to NHLPA meetings this summer and talking to the veteran guys and some of the guys that have been through it, they kind of prepared us and got us ready for it. Obviously, you'd rather be playing. Hopefully, we can get a deal done."

After signing a contract extension, Reimer struggled at times last season, posting a 14-14-4 record with a 3.10 goals against average and .900 save percentage in 34 games.

A year earlier, he was 20-10-5 with a 2.60 goals against average and .921 save percentage in 37 games.

There has been plenty of speculation that the Maple Leafs are one of the teams looking at acquiring Roberto Luongo from the Vancouver Canucks, once the lockout finally comes to an end — something Maple Leafs general manager Brian Burke and Canucks GM Mike Gillis have repeatedly denied

Reimer has come to learn that dealing with the rumour mill is a fact of life when you play in a passionate Canadian market.

"It's funny, obviously there have been a few rumours going around but most of it is far from the truth," said Reimer. "Especially when I was (visiting) Vancouver, it kind of blew up. At the end of the day, you can't control it, so why worry about it."

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.27.2012

644909 Vancouver Canucks

Canucks player rep Cory Schneider says union decertification a last resort

By Elliott Pap, Vancouver Sun November 26, 2012

VANCOUVER - As the NHL and its locked-out players agreed Monday to mediation, Vancouver Canuck netminder Cory Schneider admitted that union decertification remains a last resort.

Decertification would enable players to file antitrust lawsuits, a tactical manoeuvre that helped both NBA and NFL players when they were locked out last year.

"The appetite for decertification is much stronger than it was before," Schneider said following a skate at UBC. "Through this whole process, we've viewed that as a last means. We didn't want it to come to that so we've always pushed to negotiate, negotiate.

"We've moved \$800 million in their direction depending on whose math you view and, for them to just look at us and smile and say 'we appreciate it', it tells us they either don't take us very seriously or they don't really have any motivation to negotiate and do a little give-and-take and make this deal happen."

According to Schneider, decertification is not something to be taken lightly.

"As players, one of the only options we have to really apply a little pressure on them and show them that we're serious is to decertify," continued Schneider, a member of the NHLPA bargaining committee. "We've seen that the only way the other leagues got a deal done was that the unions decertified or started the process. It's a very serious decision and something we would have to consider very closely. That's why we're a little reluctant to just charge ahead with it.

"It's a drastic measure but when you're dealing with this group of owners and a commissioner who have shown time and time again that they're willing to lock you out until they get exactly what they want, there is not much choice either."

Some reports indicate it would take two months for the decertification process to be completed and, by then, the entire 2012-13 season could be lost. It all depends on how much stomach both sides have to allow it to reach that point. The owners have already shown they will cancel an entire season (2004-05) to further their aims.

Schneider said players aren't prepared to swallow hard and accept the owners' last proposal just to get the game back on the ice, although he conceded he is getting very anxious to play again "whether here or abroad." He is personally forfeiting paycheques from the new \$4 million deal per season he signed last June.

"Yeah, we can say we saved the game and took the raw deal to do it and seven years from now, we have to do it again?" Schneider responded. "And five years after that, do it again? And again and again? Obviously if you just keep giving them what they want without them giving anything back, they're just going to keep doing it. It's a bit of a conundrum to us, honestly. We feel that we can get this done pretty quickly if they would simply move a few inches and they just steadfastly refuse to do so."

Schneider reiterated a long-held union belief that the owners have a certain date in my mind at which point they'll start to negotiate in earnest. However, with more than two months of games already cancelled, along with the Winter Classic and all-star game, that date may be next year.

He said he was extremely frustrated that last week's union proposal was quickly shot down by the league.

"I mean, in the moment, it's almost maddening," he explained. "Then you step back if you're going to understand why they did it – beg for us to make a proposal and then to come back and say nothing is changed on our end, well, what was the point? The point was they just got a little more from us and they didn't have to give anything up. I feel, and the group feels, they're going to continue to do so until whatever date it is they have in mind they've got what they needed, or they've squeezed enough out of us."

Defenceman Dan Hamhuis wondered aloud Monday whether the owners truly care about the game.

"They say they care about the game and the fans and stuff but their actions are speaking a lot louder than their words right now," he said. "For people who follow it closely, you'll see one side is negotiating and the other side is not."

Fellow defenceman Kevin Bieksa figures "a lot" of owners do care but their voices haven't been heard due to the fact they've been muzzled by commissioner Gary Bettman under the threat of heavy fines.

"Unfortunately I don't think every single owner has been given a fair shake in this deal," Bieksa said. "I think Gary has his small group and I think there are a lot of owners left in the dark."

Vancouver Sun: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644910 Vancouver Canucks

NHLPA willing to travel tricky decertification route but only as a last resort

By Ben Kuzma

VANCOUVER — Cory Schneider sounded like he was in a missile silo.

The Vancouver Canucks goaltender was explaining Monday what could occur if the NHL Players' Association decided to decertify. Like a Cold War, the threat could destroy the season instead of being a catalyst to end the NHL lockout. And although the normally optimistic Schneider spoke of a doom-and-gloom scenario, at least the key hasn't been turned to launch the decertification warhead.

"This whole process we've viewed that [decertification] as a last means and that's why we've always pushed to negotiate," stressed Schneider, a member of the 31-player NHLPA negotiating committee. "They [owners] don't take us seriously and don't have any motivation to negotiate and do some give-and-take to make it happen. One of the only options we have to apply a little pressure on them and show we're serious is to decertify. I can't speak to whether it's going to happen or what the thought mindset is right now."

It's not good. Former Canucks winger Todd Bertuzzi has lost hope to salvage the season while Buffalo Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller believes decertification is the right route. A year ago, the NBA players' decertified and struck a new collective bargaining agreement in two weeks. It took the NFL players' union 18 weeks to reach the same objective in July, 2011.

As for the NHL impasse, with both sides agreeing Monday to allow U.S. federal mediators to join the negotiation process Wednesday — it will only be of the non-binding variety — there's always hope it may help stimulate a settlement. Then again, seven years ago the appointment of a mediator led to NHL commissioner Gary Bettman cancelling the 2004-05 season just three days later. The decertification process could take up to two months and by that time, this season could also be in jeopardy.

"That's a very real possibility," added Schneider. "That's why we've chosen not to go this direction yet and the hope is that the owners understand, too. They've got an awful lot from us and to not worry about losing another season, it's doesn't make a lot of sense from either end. Decertification is not something you do half-heartedly. You can't start to decertify in hopes that you're going to get a deal done. If it doesn't, you still have to push forward with it. Once the wheels are in motion, there's no stopping. It's a

very serious decision and that's why we're a little reluctant to charge ahead without thinking."

The risk for players in becoming a trade association through decertification goes beyond guaranteed contracts. There are health and pension concerns, but leverage gained with the threat may work because Bettman said the league is losing \$18-\$20 million US a day during the lockout and the players \$8-\$10 million. However, easing the transition into a new CBA remains a major sticking point with the league offering \$211 million to help protect contracts and the NHLPA asking for \$393 million. And with the league seeking to alter length of deals, arbitration and free agency, the players have their backs up.

"Gary said we're a billion dollars apart and now we're \$182 million, so we've moved \$800 million in their direction, depending on who's math you use," argued Schneider. "They begged for us to make a proposal [last Wednesday] and then said nothing has changed on our end. They could get a little bit more from us without giving anything up and as a group, we feel they're going to continue to do that until they have a date in mind where they got what they needed and have squeezed enough out of us."

On Friday, the league cancelled games through Dec. 14. On Dec. 5, the NHL Board of Governors meets and if there's a deal in principle, it could be ratified to allow a shortened season to optimistically commence mid-month.

"Nobody trusts anything they [owners] do," cautioned Schneider. "We could agree to their number on make whole [transition] and they would still say it's \$100 million or no money or because you agree to that, we're going to give less."

And that doesn't sound good.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644911 Vancouver Canucks

Burrows ready to play on any line when play resumes

By Ben Kuzma, The Province November 26, 2012

The pursuit of Shane Doan could have been interpreted as a slight by Alex Burrows.

It suggested the Vancouver Canucks are lacking in their top-six mix and need a proven leader to complement Henrik and Daniel Sedin — anything to get back to the Stanley Cup final with that window to win narrowing.

Had Doan done the unexpected and ditched the desert for the West Coast, the coveted unrestricted free agent would have changed the dynamic of the top line and changed Burrows' role.

When both wingers signed a day before the NHL lockout — Doan staying with the Phoenix Coyotes with a four-year, \$21.2-million US deal, despite franchise ownership uncertainty; and Burrows agreeing to a four-year, \$18-million extension — it ended one drama and added urgency to another.

"I look at it that it would have been great to add another great player to our core group and give us a chance to succeed — because I'm at that point in my career where I want to win, and the better players we can have, the better for me," said the 31-year-old Burrows, who's back training in Vancouver.

"Honestly, I probably have the best job playing with the twins, but if I have to go down and play with Kes [Ryan Kesler] or Lappy [Maxim Lapierre] or Manny [Malhotra], you're always playing with someone who can play, because we have such good depth on our team.

"Kass [Zack Kassian] in the minors is showing flashes of what he can bring to the NHL and other guys who didn't have good years can rebound stronger. I'm sure with everybody pushing, we'll be able to do the right things and find the right time to play our best hockey."

There's the rub.

At no time did the Canucks play their best hockey in the postseason, outside of a Game 4 triumph in Los Angeles, when Daniel Sedin returned after missing a dozen games with a concussion.

Then again, you could argue that the second line was the first problem for the Canucks all season and never really got on track when it mattered

most. Of the eight goals scored against the Kings in the conference quarterfinal series, none came from those normally associated with a second line that was in constant flux.

Mason Raymond missed the season's first 25 games while recovering from a compression vertebrae fracture that threatened his career. David Booth was just finding his stride, and the net, before a December knee injury cost him 18 games. Chris Higgins was sidelined by two severe bouts of staph infection in December and January that dropped his weight, zapped his energy and sidelined him for 11 games.

As expected, Kesler returned weeks early from a July 25 hip labrum procedure and endured occasional hip-flexor stiffness. He then injured his left shoulder in a Feb. 9 collision and also played with tendon damage in his left wrist. Kesler had a May 8 procedure to mend his shoulder and a June 27 surgery to right the wrist — so it wasn't surprising his goal output dropped from 40 to 22 goals.

The versatile Higgins had 18 goals, his most since 2007-08, while Booth managed 16 goals in 56 games, but just one in his final 16 games.

Which invites the question: If the second line can stay healthy — especially Kesler, who won't return until January if the season is saved — is there really cause for concern? Or does general manager Mike Gillis need to consider bolstering the ranks?

At one point, the Am/Ex alignment of U.S.-born Higgins, Kesler and Booth looked like they were going to cash in, until injuries and illness set in, and Gillis gives his players every chance to succeed.

"Those three guys all have potential to score 25 goals in any given year and have good speed and a good set of skills," added Burrows. "It's a matter of finding the right chemistry and the right mix for them. If they stay healthy, it's a big plus."

It's a bigger concern than finding a third-line centre or figuring out who will eat up the second-line minutes until Kesler returns. And when he does, expect a methodical return. It took Burrows a month to feel right after offseason shoulder surgery in 2010 and he had just one goal in his first 10 games back. He knows Kesler will have to tailor his game in order to remain healthy and productive. Easier said than done.

"Mostly, it's the mental side, so you don't doubt or question yourself," said Burrows. "If you're going to get hit, do you try to protect yourself with the other shoulder, or move out of the way instead of taking a hit? He has to be smart about it. I'm sure he'll pick his spots a little bit better and know when to go through the wall, or when to hold back a bit."

If anything, a shortened season might actually help the Canucks. If it begins by mid-December, Kesler would only miss two weeks while Alex Edler (back) and Jason Garrison (groin) will be healthy. And knowing how to handle a tough travel schedule is nothing new to the defending Presidents' Trophy winners.

"It's going to mostly be about being system-ready," said Burrows. "We know what to expect from the coaching staff and we've been around the core players a long time.

"Other teams have new coaches and a new core and we will have a better transition."

As long as they stay healthy.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 11.27.2012

644912 Washington Capitals

NHL, NHLPA to meet with federal mediators

Posted by Katie Carrera on November 26, 2012 at 4:36 pm

With NHL labor negotiations locked in a stalemate, the two sides have agreed to try a new approach and involve the help of federal mediators in reaching a new collective bargaining agreement.

Before going any further, it's important to note that the mediation is not binding. The mediators bring a neutral third-party perspective to help advance negotiations, but the two sides are not forced to accept the suggestions.

"The NHLPA has agreed to the addition of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to our ongoing negotiations," NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr said in a statement. "We look forward to their involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners."

According to ESPN's Pierre LeBrun, the NHL and NHLPA are expected to meet with mediators Wednesday. It will mark the first formal session between the two sides since the league rejected the union's most recent proposal on Nov. 21. During the 2004-05 labor negotiations, the NHL and NHLPA met with mediators to no avail.

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service announced the news Monday. Deputy Director Scot L. Beckenbaugh, Director of Mediation Services John Sweeny and Commissioner Guy Serota will serve as mediators.

"I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement," FMCS Director George Cohen said in a statement. "At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices."

Cohen served as a mediator between the NFL and NFL Players Association and NBA and NBA Players Association in 2011 and helped the NFL reach an agreement with its referees earlier this fall.

Washington Post LOADED: 11.27.2012

644913 Washington Capitals

NHL lockout 2012: Federal mediation part of the talks

NHLPA considering decertification

By Stephen Whyno

Talk to any NHL player about the lockout and, at some point, each one will say he wants to play hockey. Even in supporting the Players' Association, getting back on the ice and earning a living again is the goal.

What if there were a way to make that happen? On Monday, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service joined the fray in the hopes of getting a deal done.

"I think both sides are prepared to try a new approach," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in an email. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

Federal mediation could help the process along, but it's nonbinding and certainly not foolproof. Because of that, decertification of the NHLPA could be a gamble the players take to try to end the lockout before the 2012-13 season is canceled.

"I think at this point, both sides don't seem to be making significant progress and it does seem that a catalyst is needed," said Gabriel A. Feldman, Tulane associate professor of law and director of the sports law program. "That might be the catalyst that's necessary."

It's a complicated process with risks, like the fact that owners could call the players' bluff and let the process go through antitrust law in court for months, if not years. But one player who is informed about the situation said it's the real deal and something the NHLPA is seriously considering.

Even with mediators becoming involved, decertification still is an option.

The NFL and NBA players associations decertified last year. Both lockouts ended, the NBA's 12 days after decertification.

"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. And that's all I can say about it," NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr said. "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."

Most are remaining tight-lipped about decertification, which would dissolve the union and make players individual entities the league must bargain with. Once decertification occurs, players could argue through antitrust laws that

the lockout is illegal; owners, if found in violation of U.S. labor law, would be responsible for damages.

Quarterbacks Drew Brees and Peyton Manning were among the plaintiffs in March 2011 when players filed an antitrust suit seeking an injunction to end the NFL lockout. The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a federal court did not have that power.

As it stands, the NHL and other sports leagues are protected from antitrust laws because of players unions that agree to collective bargaining agreements.

In an interview with Sportsnet 590 in Toronto, Daly said he was not scared by the idea of the NHLPA decertifying. He called it a "time-consuming process" that would "likely lead to the end of the season."

"Decertification would be a death knell to the season," Daly told Sirius-XM radio.

Not so fast, at least at the beginning of the process.

"Dissolving the union, whether through disclaimer or decertification, isn't the bomb denotation that many claim it to be," Feldman said. "It has the potential, if it plays its way through the courts. But it can be just a quick leverage shifter. Or it could be something that can solidify the players and the Players' Association and cause enough of a leverage shift to get an agreement done quickly."

The leverage the players would have is taking control of the lockout from the owners. Think of it as a power play.

"I think this is done to put some pressure on the owners and allow players to go on the offensive," Feldman said. "This is not a silver bullet if the players decide to take this step. But the hope is that it creates enough uncertainty that it brings both sides back to the table and gets an agreement."

In order to decertify, at least 30 percent of players must sign a petition that would then go to the National Labor Relations Board. The board would set an election date for a decertification vote. The NHL and NHLPA could continue talking throughout the process.

Another option is the union disclaiming interest in the players, which would not require any vote and could happen almost immediately.

Once players vote in favor of decertification or interest is disclaimed, the union would cease to exist and antitrust lawsuits can be filed; players can seek damages worth three times their salary. The league and players would be subject to U.S. law, though Feldman said it's unclear if the NHL's seven Canadian teams would have to go through separate litigation.

Far more likely than going through that process would be the sides coming to an agreement. That's why so many are talking about decertification.

But does it make hockey more likely to return? There's no simple answer.

"There's not enough history to sort of guide us in this," Feldman said. "I don't think decertification by definition means we get a quicker deal or a slower deal. It can work both ways. It's too hard to tell."

It's an unknown because no one knows what the league's response to decertification would be. Fighting the battle in court against the players, who have an ex-National Labor Relations Board member as general counsel in Don Zavelo, likely would take long enough that the season would be canceled. The league could argue that it's a sham decertification designed to gain leverage, leaving it to the courts to decide the next move.

But the threat of decertification could be the means to an end for the players.

"We're getting informed about it. It's not like it's a priority in our minds right now," Washington Capitals alternate NHLPA representative Troy Brouwer said. "We're still working toward getting a deal. But as time goes on here, it looks like it's getting tougher and tougher because the owners aren't willing to really negotiate."

Frustration over the current stalemate in CBA talks is making decertification a hot topic, but it's believed that Fehr and others in the NHLPA have been researching it. Special counsel Steve Fehr told Sportsnet 590 that he would not reveal internal conversations but added that "all things are under consideration, and we'll see where it goes."

If the decertification movement goes anywhere, it could happen sooner rather than later because waiting almost certainly would cost the season.

Perhaps that's why Donald Fehr wouldn't say it's too soon in this lockout for the subject to be broached.

"You can look at what's happened in the other sports and make your judgments about that," Fehr said.

In the NBA, it worked like a charm. From dissolution of the union to antitrust suit to new CBA, it took only a couple of weeks.

But decertification itself won't end the lockout in the way these sides want.

"My sense is that the calendar will speak louder than litigation at this point. Because litigation can shift leverage; litigation doesn't get a deal done. A court is not going to write a collective bargaining agreement for these parties," Feldman said. "At the end of the day, this gets done in a negotiating room, not in a courtroom."

Washington Times LOADED: 11.27.2012

644914 Washington Capitals

DALY: For Capitals' Roman Hamrlik, time may be ticking away

By Dan Daly

Madness isn't just afoot in the NHL, it's skating figure eights. (And any day now, it'll probably land a quadruple Axel.)

Once again, a season — all of it — is in jeopardy. It's enough to make you want to hijack a Zamboni and drive it through Gary Bettman's office door. And if it's enough to make you feel that way, imagine how it makes Roman Hamrlik feel.

Hamrlik, the Washington Capitals' durable defenseman, came into the league 20 years ago. Or to put it another way, he came into the league three lockouts ago. The first, in 1994-95, cost him nearly half a season — 34 games. The second, in 2004-05, cost him a whole season — 82 games. And the current one might cost him another whole season if the two sides can't find common ground.

Add it up, and you get 198 games. That's a career for some guys. In fact, it's exactly how many games Kris Beech, the Caps' first-round pick in 1999, played in the NHL. Only a handful of active players have sacrificed as much for the labor cause as Hamrlik has.

So it shouldn't surprise anyone if Roman is starting to glance at his watch and tap his foot. But it certainly upset a lot of players last week when he told a Czech reporter he's "disgusted" with the pace of negotiations and thinks union head Donald Fehr should put the owners' latest offer to a vote. Troy Brouwer, the Capitals' alternate player representative, accused him of being "selfish," of not looking at the bigger picture.

To which I reply: If anybody has a right to speak his mind about hockey's sorry state of affairs, it's Roman Hamrlik. Besides, only the concussed would believe there's unanimity in the player ranks, so it's not like Hamrlik has told us anything we don't already know. It was just nice to get a few moments of unguarded honesty from somebody before Fehr and Bettman resumed their smoke-blowing.

Hamrlik, by the way, is back in his native Czech Republic, spending some time with his daughter Natalyia and watching his brother Martin play for Zlin, his hometown team. I talked to him Monday on the phone. There were some things he wanted to clarify, things that "maybe somebody misunderstood."

For starters, "I'm just frustrated like everybody else," he said — more so, perhaps, "because of my own experience, being in the lockout in 2004 and the one before that. I told some guys we should have started talking [to the owners] in January instead of waiting until after the finals. Then maybe this wouldn't have happened. We didn't give ourselves much time to compromise."

To some of his peers, Hamrlik is just a veteran who has made his money — millions — and isn't too concerned about the future; all he wants is to squeeze out another well-paid season or two before he retires. (He has a year left on the two-year, \$7 million contract he signed with the Capitals.)

Roman would take issue with that characterization. Yes, he's 38, and yes, "I got my money. But it's not about the money for me. I want the best deal for

the players. When I was younger, the older guys were sacrificing. Now I'm in the same spot.

"For me, it's more: This is maybe my last chance to play for the Cup. I grew up in a communist republic, and my dream was to win the Cup. I think I can play another year or two, but time is flying. In 2004, there were so many older guys who sacrificed and then didn't come back [after the lockout ended]. That could happen to me."

We tend to forget that, forget that Hamrik grew up in a country that had communism shoved down its throat for more than 40 years. And now he's playing in league that has shoved three lockouts down his throat. Think he might react a little differently to being caught in the labor-management vise than, say, a Canadian does?

"I was lucky [to play so long]," he said. "We're all so lucky to play this game. We're making a great living. The life is beautiful. In Canada, every kid wants to be in our shoes. But for me right now, it's more about winning the Cup with the Capitals. And hopefully I can still bring something to the table."

When Hamrik heard Brouwer was upset with him, he called his teammate and they talked. Talked across generations. Talked across cultures. "He's a great teammate," Roman said. "I don't have a problem with any comment he makes. We talked as friends, and that was it."

Then he hung up and went back to waiting and waiting. For Roman Hamrik, there has been way too much waiting.

Washington Times LOADED: 11.27.2012

644915 Winnipeg Jets

Pavs joins Finnish cellar-dweller

By: Staff Writer

ONDREJ Pavelec's European adventure will feature another chapter.

Allan Walsh, the agent for the Winnipeg Jets' goaltender, has confirmed that Pavelec has signed a six-game contract with the Lahti Pelicans of the Finnish SM-Liiga. He could be in their lineup as early as today against defending Finnish champion Jyvaskyla.

Lahti is second-last in the league, 13th overall.

It was initially believed Pavelec would return to North America after his contract with HC Liberec Tigers of the Czech Extraliga expired earlier this month -- either to Winnipeg or to Montreal, where he had been training before initially heading overseas.

Pavelec posted sub-par numbers with Liberec (a 3.50 goals-against average and .896 save percentage) but the 25-year-old did help the Czech Republic win the recent Karjala Cup, posting a 1-0 win over Finland and a 2-1 victory over Russia. Pavelec stopped 64 of the 65 shots he faced in the event.

Pavelec signed a new five-year, \$19.5-million deal with the Jets in late June. Less than a month later it was revealed Pavelec had been convicted of drunk driving after a car crash in his native Czech Republic -- which took place before he re-signed and one which Jets management was not aware of when the deal was struck.

-- Tait

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 11.27.2012

644916 Winnipeg Jets

Another chapter added to Pavelec's European adventure

By: Staff Writer

Ondrej Pavelec's European adventure is going to feature another chapter.

Allan Walsh, the agent for the Winnipeg Jets' goaltender, has confirmed that Pavelec has signed a six-game contract with the Lahti Pelicans of the Finnish SM-Liiga. The Pelicans' website also indicated Pavelec could be in their lineup as early as Tuesday against defending Finnish champion Jyvaskyla. Lahti is second-last in the league, 13th overall.

It was initially believed Pavelec would return to North America after his contract with HC Liberec Tigers of the Czech Extraliga expired earlier this month -- either to Winnipeg or to Montreal, where he had been training before initially heading overseas -- but this latest signing will keep him in Europe through early next month and maybe longer.

During his stay with Liberec, Pavelec posted sub-par numbers (a 3.50 goals-against average and .896 save percentage) but the 25 year old did help the Czech Republic win the recent Karjala Cup, posting a 1-0 win over Finland and a 2-1 victory over Russia. Pavelec stopped 64 of the 65 shots he faced in the event.

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 11.27.2012

644917 Winnipeg Jets

Jets' Hainsey cautiously optimistic about NHL mediation

By Ken Wiebe ,Winnipeg Sun

The NHL and NHLPA are turning to mediation as they attempt to bring the lockout to an end.

The next meetings are expected to take place on Wednesday.

"Well, I'm not sure if going into mediation will solve this or not," Winnipeg Jets player representative Ron Hainsey said via text message on Monday night. "But it will be a new perspective injected into this, with the intent of seeing if they can bring us closer together. I think it is an avenue worth a shot."

It's important to note that mediation is non-binding, so they can't actually force an end to the lockout.

"I have had separate, informal discussions with the key representatives of the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association during the course of their negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement. At the invitation of the FMCS, and with the agreement of both parties, the ongoing negotiations will now be conducted under our auspices," Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service director George H. Cohen said in a statement. "Due to the extreme sensitivity of these negotiations and consistent with the FMCS's long-standing practice, the Agency will refrain from any public comment concerning the future schedule and/or the status of the negotiations until further notice."

The NHL and NHLPA released separate statements on Monday afternoon, suggesting both sides are keeping an open mind.

"We look forward to their involvement as we continue working to reach an equitable agreement for both the players and the owners," said NHLPA executive director Don Fehr.

"While we have no particular level of expectation going into this process, we welcome a new

approach in trying to reach a resolution of the ongoing labor dispute at the earliest possible date," said NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly.

The lockout will hit Day 73 on Tuesday.

Winnipeg Sun LOADED 11.27.2012

644918 Winnipeg Jets

Ondrej Pavelec has tryout with SM-Liiga team Lahti Pelicans

Winnipeg Sun

Ondrej Pavelec is joining the Lahti Pelicans of the SM-League in Finland.

After his contract with the HC Liberec Tigers of the Czech Extraliga expired, the Winnipeg Jets goalie has inked a six-game pact with the Pelicans, who currently sit 13th in the SM-League standings with a record of 8-17.

Pavelec's agent Allan Walsh confirmed the news on Monday morning.

The Pelicans lineup includes Carolina Hurricanes defenceman Jamie McBain and former NHL first rounders Ryan O'Marra and Angelo Esposito.

Pavelec signed a five-year extension with the Jets after winning a career-high 29 games while appearing in a career-high 68 games.

The 25-year-old netminder was 4-10 with a 3.50 goals against average in 14 games with Liberec, but had a strong showing while suiting up for the Czech Republic at the Karjala Cup, posting a 0.50 goals against average and .984 save percentage.

Winnipeg Sun LOADED 11.27.2012

644919 Websites

ESPN / Mediators aren't miracle workers

By Scott Burnside

ESPN.com

It was just this past weekend that I was talking to Ottawa-based sports/labor lawyer Eric Macramalla about the threat of NHL players decertifying their union. Macramalla's advice in the wake of Monday's news that the NHL and its locked-out players agreed to third-party mediation with federal mediators?

Don't throw away the decertification materials.

Wasn't Macramalla caught up in the optimism that accompanied the news that the two warring sides were ready to pound their swords into labor plowshares?

"To be honest with you, no," said Macramalla, a partner at a national law firm who has a special interest in sports law. You can find him on Twitter at @EricOnSportsLaw.

Rats.

Macramalla has been involved in mediation and points out that opposing sides agree to get a third party involved for a variety of different reasons, including assuming or hoping that said third party will support their position versus their labor adversary.

There's also the fact that mediation, unlike arbitration, is nonbinding, and the two sides can opt out at any point.

Bettman & Cohen & Fehr

A mediator was brought in before during the last NHL lockout and the 2004-05 season was still canceled.

"Absolutely, it doesn't guarantee anything," he said.

Back during the 2004-05 season lockout, the NHLPA and the league tried mediation and lost an entire season shortly thereafter, although the two sides were at a vastly different point in their negotiations, so comparing the two is difficult.

On the plus side, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service has a proven track record in helping parties find labor peace. Between 2008 and 2011, FMCS settled between 85 percent and 87 percent of cases through mediation, according to the organization's annual report. But the FMCS was involved in both the NBA and NFL labor disputes in the last couple of years and could not mediate a settlement in either instance.

In fact, the players' unions in both cases explored various forms of decertification in spite of efforts at mediation. Both sports ultimately reached agreements with their players without going through decertification.

It's interesting to note, of course, that the NHL and its players did agree to mediation only after there was much discussion internally and publicly about whether the NHLPA would decertify as a way of trying to break the labor deadlock.

Was the threat of NHLPA decertification -- a dramatic strategy that Macramalla described as escalating from a battle to a war -- enough to prompt the two sides to agree to mediation?

Perhaps. But the fact that the two sides will engage in mediation beginning Wednesday at an undisclosed location doesn't preclude the players from pursuing decertification at some point in time.

More to the point, the specter of decertification reflects how great the gulf that divides the two sides has become and is a reminder of the challenges that face the mediation team assigned to the two sides.

Still, in the face of the black hole that these negotiations had become, mediation is something.

As deputy commissioner Bill Daly said Monday, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

And we will certainly find out something about these two sides through this process.

For instance, we will find out if there is a genuine desire to get a deal done.

There has been much toing and froing about whether one side or the other really wants a deal.

The players insist the owners are more interested in crushing the union than getting the game back on the ice, and the owners believe NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr is on some sort of mission to avenge their alleged wrongdoing regardless of the cost to the game.

It seems ludicrous that either side would be happy to forgo a season or more to make a point, but anyone who's followed this process knows that logic got kicked to the curb a long time ago.

One would hope that agreeing to talk with a third party reflects a genuine desire to get a deal done on the part of both the owners and players.

Mediators, of course, aren't miracle workers (although hockey fans would be OK with a miracle worker or two showing up to help speed things along). One of the key issues for deputy director Scot L. Beckenbaugh and director of mediation services John Sweeney, who were assigned by FMCS director George Cohen to the hockey case, is trying to build some element of trust between the two sides.

This won't be about the two sides battering each other publicly about the lack of proposals submitted or the shortcomings of those that were delivered, but rather trying to find an understanding of what lies at the heart of the divide that separates them.

It seems like such a simple thing, trust, yet it is integral to getting a deal done, mediators or no mediators.

It is also something that's been in critically short supply since the process began in mid-July.

The atmosphere surrounding this process has been poisoned for some time now, and that poison has acted as a deterrent to meaningful give-and-take even as the two sides inched closer together on core issues like a split of hockey-related revenues and the owners' agreeing to honor existing contracts.

Maybe, just maybe, having a third party in the room will help release those toxins and the two sides can get down to the business of saving at least part of the 2012-13 season.

Or maybe what has divided the two sides in the weeks leading up to mediation will continue to divide them and this is just a brief pit stop on the way to another ruined season.

ESPN LOADED: 11.27.2012

644920 Websites

NBCSports.com / A look at NHL-NHLPA mediators...and the one that got removed because of his weird Twitter account

Mike Halford

George Cohen

As reported earlier, the NHL and NHLPA have agreed to bring in federal mediators to help negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement.

So, who are the key figures?

Here's a quick primer...

George H. Cohen, Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Director

Cohen (pictured) was appointed to his FMCS post by President Barack Obama in 2009, and has since served as chief mediator for the NBA and NBPA during the 2011 work stoppage. He was also an early lead mediator during the 2011 NFL lockout.

Cohen is perhaps best known for representing the MLBPA before U.S. District Judge Sonia Sotomayor in 1995.

"He is the lawyer who argued before Judge Sotomayor the day she issued the injunction that ended the baseball strike," said MLBPA Executive Director Michael Weiner.

As for his ties to hockey? Cohen formerly served on the NHLPA Advisory Board.

Scot L. Beckenbaugh, FMCS Deputy Director

Was cited for his work in helping the NFL and NFL Referees Association reach an eight-year labor agreement, the longest deal with game officials in league history. The deal was struck on Sept. 27, two days after the controversial Seattle-Green Bay finish on Monday Night Football.

Beckenbaugh was also acting director of the FMCS during the NHL's last lockout.

John (Jack) Sweeney, Director of Mediation Services

Sweeney currently serves the FMCS in the Northeastern United States (New York, New Jersey, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island.)

Guy Serota, Comedic Relief

Serota, who was involved in NHL-NHLPA negotiations during the 2004-05 lockout, was initially assigned to this current mediation...then came Monday's bizarre Twitter fiasco.

Here are the lowlights, courtesy The Sporting News:

Serota caused some initial waves — a Twitter account appearing to belong to him (@GuySerota) made the rounds after the initial announcement. It was, for lack of a better term, weird, and filled with bizarre tweets at celebrities and vulgar jokes. Upon discovery, it was deleted almost immediately, then came back scrubbed of the bizarre tweets.

Serota, as is custom with this sort of thing, seemed to say he was hacked, which is almost certainly not true—the weird stuff had been up for months.

Shortly thereafter, Cohen issued a statement saying Serota had been removed from the mediation. ("Hand in your keyboard, Serota! You're off the case!")

"Within one hour after I issued a press release announcing that further negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA would be conducted under the auspices of the FMCS, it has been called to my attention that there are issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account associated with Commissioner Guy Serota, one of the mediators I assigned.

"Accordingly, in order to immediately dispel any cloud on the mediation process, and without regard to the merits of the allegations, I have determined to take immediate action, namely to remove Commissioner Serota from this assignment."

ESPN's Pierre LeBrun later asked Serota via email if his Twitter account had been hacked.

Serota replied yes.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.27.2012

644921 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Spector on mediation: New level of ridicule

Mark Spector

We interrupt this session on union decertification for this urgent announcement on mediation.

You want bizarre? Even the august organization that is America's Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service could not remain unscathed by this ridiculous lockout, getting smeared by association within an hour of the news that National Hockey League and its Players' Association had agreed to accept non-binding mediation.

Within minutes Guy Serota -- sing it (to the tune of My Sharona): G' G' G' Guuuuy Serota! -- one of three mediators assigned to the job was outed as one of two things: a man who would tweet racist, demeaning comments towards a Jewish woman, or an upstanding member of the mediation community whose twitter account had been (cough, cough) hacked.

What would mediation mean to the NHL's negotiation process? Who cares, we asked, when one of the mediators thinks that Kardashians "are what is wrong with this country," and wears a t-shirt that sports a mohawk wearing skull overtop the word "AssMode."

It was an all-out reporting offensive which, against all odds, found a new level of ridicule inside this NHL labour situation.

Clearly, there is no more sour-faced character in this drama than Donald Fehr, nor a more Napoleonic figure than Gary Bettman. So instead, the great scriptwriter in the sky injected Serota into the storyline, to infuse some yucks into this soul-destroying process.

On Monday Serota absolutely overshadowed what could have been an important day in this process, much as Toronto mayor Rob Ford's Term of Buffoonery stole any lasting thunder from the Argonauts' Grey Cup victory.

Finally Serota's boss at the FMCS, one George H. Cohen, could stand no more, and issued this statement:

"Within one hour after I issued a press release announcing that further negotiations between the NHL and NHLPA would be conducted under the auspices of the FMCS, it has been called to my attention that there are issues involving an allegedly hacked Twitter account associated with Commissioner Guy Serota, one of the mediators I assigned. Accordingly, in order to immediately dispel any cloud on the mediation process, and without regard to the merits of the allegations, I have determined to take immediate action, namely to remove Commissioner Serota from this assignment."

"This is not," Serota's hacker tweeted late Monday afternoon, "how I thought my week would begin. I am ashamed and sorry that I could not be more effective."

That's OK, Guy Serota's hacker. We didn't think our entire winter would unfold like this. The mistake you made was getting involved with a bunch of hockey writers who have far too much time on their hands.

Now, unless Cohen replaces Serota with Eddie Shack, those idle hockey writers will re-enter their new world as labour experts. We just started to get our heads around what decertification meant, and now we must delve into mediation and what the process could mean for this lockout.

Michael McCann, SI.com columnist and legal analyst, recalled how mediation was used in both the NFL and NBA lockouts.

"George Cohen ... attempted to bridge the divisions of both leagues and players' associations, but was unable," McCann writes. "Mediation can work -- two sides agree to allow a completely independent and neutral person to direct the negotiations. But mediation isn't binding and, by bringing a new person into the discussion, can further complicate the situation."

Anyone who has watched this league's serial lockout approach, and witnessed the level of distrust between NHL owners and players, would have directed the two sides to mediation long ago.

However, if the greedy players are not willing to get to 50 per cent of revenues within a year or two, or the draconian owners refuse to move off the take-it-or-leave-it stance they mistake for negotiating, then this mediation will be useless.

Finally, Twitter gave us this little nugget, courtesy our friend Chris Johnston of The Canadian Press: "The NHL and NHLPA met with federal mediators on Feb. 13, 2005.

"Three days later the season was cancelled."

