

SPORT-SCAN DAILY BRIEF

NHL 11/29/2012

Anaheim Ducks

- 644994 Ducks blog ~ The latest on the Anaheim Ducks, by the Orange County
- 644995 NHL, union get back to bargaining with mediators

Buffalo Sabres

- 644996 Amerks moving another game to Buffalo, will play Dec. 28 in First Niagara Center

Carolina Hurricanes

- 644997 DeCock: NHL might need Army to settle lockout

Chicago Blackhawks

- 644998 NHL, NHLPA meet with federal mediators
- 644999 Forbes ranks Blackhawks 4th most valuable NHL team
- 645000 Blackhawks are 4th most valuable NHL team, reports Forbes
- 645001 Toews still torn about heading overseas
- 645002 Forbes' 2012 team values: Blackhawks No. 4

Dallas Stars

- 645003 Sherrington: NHL doing everything it can to kill hockey, and it's succeeding 'without question'
- 645004 Stardate: Nov. 28, 2003: Stars shut door on defending-champion Devils

Detroit Red Wings

- 645005 Kalamazoo, others take advantage of ongoing NHL lockout
- 645006 Forbes: Red Wings are sixth-most valuable franchise in NHL
- 645007 Bunch of Red Wings slated to play in charity game in Windsor
- 645008 NHL deal might be near, but not lasting
- 645009 Riley Sheahan's arrest in Teletubby costume: How others see it
- 645010 Red Wings goalies Jimmy Howard, Jonas Gustavsson struggle to stay sharp during lockout
- 645011 Forbes: Red Wings are NHL's sixth-most valuable franchise, worth \$346 million
- 645012 Red Wings scouting report: Veteran Todd Bertuzzi would face tough recovery if season is lost

Florida Panthers

- 645013 Diagnosed with MS, Harding plans to continue NHL career
- 645014 NHL, union get back to bargaining with mediators
- 645015 Florida Panthers 24th in NHL at \$170M; Maple Leafs top Forbes list at \$1 billion
- 645016 Gudbranson injured shoulder wakeboarding, suspended by Panthers

Minnesota Wild

- 645017 Harding grateful to doctors, Wild for support after MS diagnosis
- 645018 Wild's Harding starts battle with MS
- 645019 Minnesota Wild: Forbes says they're worth \$218 million

Montreal Canadiens

- 645020 Players on Canadian teams dinged on pension
- 645021 Little to report from first day of NHL mediation
- 645022 Habs 1992-93 season flashback: Roy gets little help in loss to Canucks

Nashville Predators

- 645023 Predators draft pick Brendan Leipsic tones down style for more offense
- 645024 NHL, union get back to bargaining with mediators

New Jersey Devils

- 645025 Devils' Henrique to Have Surgery
- 645026 Mediators Join N.H.L. Talks as Report Details Teams' Finances
- 645027 NHL franchise value: Devils ranked 19th by Forbes at \$205 million
- 645028 Devils' Adam Henrique will undergo thumb surgery; out 4-6 weeks
- 645029 NHL franchise prices continue to rise

New York Islanders

- 645030 After Barclays move, Forbes' boosts Islanders' valuation

New York Rangers

- 645031 NY Rangers center Brad Richards urges NHL owners to speak up, encourages Roman Hamrlik to attend meetings
- 645032 NHL franchise prices continue to rise

Ottawa Senators

- 645033 Senators coach pays surprise visit to minor hockey team
- 645034 Players on Canadian teams get dinged in NHL pension plan
- 645035 Ottawa Senators captain Daniel Alfredsson weighs potential lockout options
- 645036 Ottawa Senators defenceman Jared Cowen tries to stay positive after hip surgery

Philadelphia Flyers

- 645037 Timing is key in NHL mediation, expert says
- 645038 Sports in Brief: Maple Leafs most valuable NHL team
- 645039 Wellwood's wakeup call with Phantoms
- 645040 Agent offers little update on injured Giroux
- 645041 'Tinky Winky' had too much to drinky?
- 645042 Agent: Giroux doing 'well'
- 645043 Forbes: Flyers worth \$336 million, 8th in NHL
- 645044 Giroux not concussed, feeling 'really fine'
- 645045 Forbes: Flyers NHL's 8th-most valuable team
- 645046 NHL Notes: Crosby talking to teams in Europe

Phoenix Coyotes

- 645047 Penguins' Sidney Crosby, other NHL players itchin' for ice time

Pittsburgh Penguins

- 645048 NHL lockout: Union, league negotiators meet with 2 mediators for first time

San Jose Sharks

- 645049 Marleau to skate in Arizona
- 645050 Forbes values Sharks at \$223 million

St Louis Blues

- 645051 Blues players stand together during lockout
- 645052 Forbes ranks Blues' value last in NHL

Tampa Bay Lightning

- 645053 Lightning rank 23rd on Forbes list of NHL franchise values
- 645054 Lightning prospect Brown opening more eyes
- 645055 Forbes: Lightning 23rd on list of NHL team values
- 645056 Tampa Bay Lightning lost \$13.1 million last season but value stays constant, Forbes says

Toronto Maple Leafs

- 645057 NHL lockout: Maple Leafs first hockey team worth \$1 billion, according to Forbes magazine
- 645058 Maple Leafs coach Randy Carlyle has sights fixed on Marlies
- 645059 Maple Leafs extend reign as NHL's most valuable team -- Forbes

645060 Leafs become first NHL team worth \$1-billion: Forbes

Vancouver Canucks

- 645061 Vancouver Canuck Cory Schneider's new team not a Swiss League powerhouse
- 645062 Ex-Canuck assistant Mike Johnston in hot water with WHL
- 645063 Forbes says Canucks worth \$342 million
- 645064 Cory Schneider heading to Europe
- 645065 Despite a costly lost summer, Manny Malhotra's not giving up
- 645066 Profitable NHL clubs look to higher profits down the road
- 645067 Canucks goaltender Cory Schneider heading to Europe
- 645068 WHL hammers Portland Winterhawks for league violations

Washington Capitals

- 645069 Caps season ticket holders vent about the lockout
- 645070 NHL, union get back to bargaining with mediators

Websites

- 645078 ESPN / Why would Crosby risk playing in Europe?
- 645079 ESPN / Claude Giroux getting treatment
- 645080 ESPN / Sidney Crosby monitors options
- 645081 FOXSports.com / Kings' Clifford getting work in ECHL
- 645082 NBCSports.com /Mediation talks wrap for the day, expected to resume tomorrow
- 645083 NBCSports.com /Daly and Jets deny columnist's claim Jacobs bullied them in meeting
- 645084 NBCSports.com /Henrique to have surgery on left thumb, out 4-6 weeks
- 645085 NBCSports.com /PHT Morning Skate: Donald Fehr speaks on Marvin Miller's passing
- 645086 NBCSports.com /Raising Arizona: Glendale City Council votes to approve Coyotes lease agreement
- 645087 NBCSports.com /Jason Chimera leaves his Czech Republic team
- 645088 NBCSports.com /Steve Ott is organizing a charity game as well
- 645089 NBCSports.com /Don Cherry to coach CHL/NHL Top Prospects game
- 645090 NBCSports.com /Donovan McNabb's nephew rockets up 2013 Draft Board — the NHL Draft Board, that is
- 645091 NBCSports.com /Columnist: Blame Jacobs for NHL lockout
- 645092 NBCSports.com /Maple Leafs worth \$1 billion, says Forbes
- 645093 NBCSports.com /NHL and NHLPA to meet with mediators today
- 645094 YAHOO SPORTS / Hey, NHL & NHLPA: Here's how to follow mediator to middle ground and make a deal

Winnipeg Jets

- 645071 Reprimand 'fabrication' denied by Jets, NHL
- 645072 Last gasp at labour peace?
- 645073 Jets' value skyrockets after first season
- 645074 Jets, NHL deny Jacobs reprimanded Jets rep over lockout criticism
- 645075 Ladd welcomes addition of mediators to bargaining
- 645076 NHL must learn from Jets 22% increase in value
- 645077 Told to shut up or not, Jets have little say in NHL lockout
- SPORT-SCAN, INC. 941-284-4129
- 644994 Anaheim Ducks

Ducks blog ~ The latest on the Anaheim Ducks, by the Orange County

posted by Eric Stephens, Staff writer

Speculation has it that the Ducks have been one of the handful of teams that have driven the NHL lockout into its 11th week but there's been little beyond informative educated guesses to prove if that is indeed true.

The Ducks surely don't want a \$1 million fine from the commissioner's office for discussing their role during this work stoppage and league owners have never been known for throwing open their financial books for the public to

see. Beyond what owner Henry Samueli says publicly about his sports business — and that's a rarity — we won't truly know how the club does on the bottom line.

Forbes magazine, which deals with the business of money, took its most recent stab at determining how much NHL teams are worth and concluded that the Ducks have a value of \$192 million. It certainly is well above the \$75 million that the Samuelis paid in 2005 when they bought the team, but that doesn't take into account how much they've spent or made in revenue over the last seven years.

But the \$192 million only puts the Ducks at 21st in the NHL, ranking just behind the New Jersey Devils and Winnipeg Jets and above the Buffalo Sabres and Tampa Bay Lightning. The franchise, according to Forbes, was worth \$184 million in 2011 and ranked 19th, \$188 million and 18th in 2010 but that's down from \$202 million and 14th in 2009.

The publication also lists the Ducks as having brought in \$91 million of revenue in 2011-12 but took a \$10.8 million operational loss last season that was the fourth-largest in the league. A poor record and no postseason along with no NBA team sharing the HOnda Center were cited as key reasons.

In short, the franchise's hockey-related revenue growth apparently isn't keeping pace with the NHL's on average.

So does this all jibe with the Ducks reportedly being one of the league's "hawks" who've lined up beside — or behind — Commissioner Gary Bettman and Boston Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs? Would there be less money lost during a canceled season than if one is played? And are they really that much of a hard-liner if they'll finally begin receiving revenue sharing in the next collective bargaining agreement?

Or are they banking on Bettman and Jacobs' push for a much more owner-friendly CBA — on top of that owner-friendly CBA negotiated in 2005 that cost an entire season? (By the way, the Ducks have to decide whether to break the bank for pending 2013 unrestricted free agents Corey Perry and Ryan Getzlaf?)

All interesting questions with no clear answers.

Henry Samueli gave his most recent inkling into the Ducks' finances before the 2010-11 season when he said that his team has lost "double digits of millions" during a Register question-and-answer session. But that didn't him and his wife, Susan, from going ahead with a \$20 million arena facelift, making the soon-to-be 20-year-old facility more attractive to an NBA team that's considering relocation.

Meanwhile, Forbes claims that Toronto Maple Leafs have become the first NHL team to be worth \$1 billion based on being owned by one of Canada's largest telecommunications companies and a fan base that continues to fill Air Canada Centre despite no playoff games since the 2004-05 lockout and a Stanley Cup drought that stretches back to 1967.

The rest of Forbes' top five include the New York Rangers (\$750 million), Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million), Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$348 million). The bottom five are the St. Louis Blues (\$130 million), Phoenix Coyotes (\$134 million), Columbus Blue Jackets (\$145 million), New York Islanders (\$155 million) and Carolina Hurricanes (\$162 million).

The Kings, boosted by their Stanley Cup triumph, checked in at 10th in value at \$276 million according to Forbes. It is an increase of \$42 million over last year. Parent company Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) was put up for sale by founder Phil Anschutz in September.

Orange County Register: LOADED: 11.29.2012

644995 Anaheim Ducks

NHL, union get back to bargaining with mediators

By IRA PODELL / AP Sports Writer

Whether federal mediators will provide enough help to end the NHL lockout in time to save the hockey season is still unknown.

At least they had a good first day.

Negotiators from the NHL and the players' association returned to the bargaining table Wednesday for the first time in a week and the first time with outside voices contributing to the talks.

The location was secret, and so was what was discussed, but the talks went well enough that the sides will be back at the negotiating table Thursday.

"No comments," was all NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly would say Wednesday night in an email to The Associated Press.

NHLPA executive director Don Fehr issued a short statement, saying: "A small group of NHLPA staff and players met today with two experienced FMCS mediators. We expect that these discussions will resume on Thursday."

It was the first meeting between the sides since a get-together that lasted just over two hours last week in New York after the locked-out players' association made a new comprehensive proposal that was quickly rejected by the NHL.

The sides agreed Monday to use the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. George Cohen, the service's director, assigned deputy director Scot Beckenbaugh and director of mediation services John Sweeney to the negotiations. Beckenbaugh and Sweeney met separately with the two sides before talks began in full Wednesday.

It wasn't immediately known how long negotiations went on before they ended in the early evening.

In the previous meeting last week, Fehr said the sides were \$182 million apart in a five-year deal, which comes to \$1.2 million annually for each of the 30 teams.

The NHL wants to increase eligibility for free agency to 28 years of age or eight seasons of service, up from 27 years or seven seasons. The league has also proposed adding a year of service for salary arbitration eligibility, hiking it from 1-4 to 2-5 years of service, depending on the age a player signs.

On Oct. 16, the NHL proposed a 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue, down from the players' 57 percent portion of \$3.3 billion last season. With guaranteed contracts likely to push the players' share over the halfway mark at the start of the next deal, management wants that money to come out of future years to bring the overall percentage down to an even split over the length of an agreement.

Players previously had proposed they receive a guaranteed amount of income each year.

Fehr said players proposed they get \$393 million over the length of the deal, while the NHL is at \$211 million. Owners want a seven-year deal, which the union says is too long because less than half the current players will be active by the last season.

This is the league's third lockout since 1994. The first was settled on Jan. 11 and the last one led to NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman announcing the cancellation of the 2004-05 season on Feb. 15. That marked the only time a major professional North American sports league lost an entire season because of a labor dispute.

This lockout, which reached its 74th day Wednesday, has already forced the cancellation of all games through Dec. 14, the New Year's Day Winter Classic, and All-Star Weekend that was slated for Columbus, Ohio, in January.

Orange County Register: LOADED: 11.29.2012

644996 Buffalo Sabres

Amerks moving another game to Buffalo, will play Dec. 28 in First Niagara Center

John Vogl

The Rochester Americans are coming back to Buffalo.

The Sabres' minor-league affiliate will announce today it will play Dec. 28 in First Niagara Center, a Sabres spokesman said this morning. The Amerks hosted Hamilton in Buffalo on Oct. 23 and drew 10,936 for the Tuesday

night game. They will host the Lake Erie Monsters, the affiliate for the Colorado Avalanche, on a Friday night at 7.

"There are Buffalo fans in Rochester, and I want to make sure there are Amerks fans in Buffalo," Sabres President Ted Black told the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, which first reported the story Thursday night. "By choosing that Friday game, we do want to expose more Buffalo fans to the Amerks."

The game will be held regardless of whether the NHL and its players' association come together on a new collective bargaining agreement. NHL games are canceled only through Dec. 14, but Dec. 28 was an open date for Buffalo's arena. Rochester was set to host four games in six days, so the move was made to alleviate the market pressure.

Ticket information will be announced. The prices ranged from \$15 to \$25 for the October game.

Buffalo News LOADED: 11.29.2012

644997 Carolina Hurricanes

DeCock: NHL might need Army to settle lockout

By Luke DeCock

Federal mediators on Wednesday tried to do what common sense, so far, has not: Bring the NHL and the NHL Players Association together in time to save the hockey season.

Before anyone gets too optimistic, remember that the two sides met with mediators during the last lockout, on Feb. 13, 2005. Three days later, the rest of the season was canceled.

The only Federal agency that might be able to get some traction is the Army. The two sides are so entrenched in their positions, heavy artillery might not even be able to dislodge them, but it might have the best shot.

Forget about revenue splits, "make whole," contract restrictions, decertification or any of the jargon that's been flying around for months now. This entire dispute comes down to two opposing principles.

The owners – the hard-liners backing commissioner Gary Bettman – appear dedicated to imposing their will on the union. The owners don't want to negotiate. They only want to dictate.

The players, having crumbled eight years ago, are dedicated to standing firm. They're willing to negotiate and compromise, but they won't capitulate.

And that's why, even though the last exchange of proposals left the two sides squabbling over pocket change relative to the league's pre-lockout revenue, not even Federal mediators can broker a peace.

This won't be settled by one side bending. It will only be settled by one side breaking.

So whether it's the big-market owners who are hemorrhaging money pushing Bettman toward a deal or the players doing an end run behind Donald Fehr's back as they did eight years ago to Bob Goodenow, someone's going to have to implode before the NHL gets back on the ice, barring a sudden and unexpected outbreak of sanity.

There is one back door to a settlement, however. Both the NFL and NBA unions, when faced with intransigence, followed differing paths to decertification, which eliminates the union as a bargaining partner and opens the door to class-action antitrust lawsuits.

(The basic business between a league and its players – free agency, contract terms, drafts – is all illegal outside the framework of collective bargaining with a union.)

An actual decertified world would be a train wreck, but it's very unlikely it would come to that. As much as they might complain, pro sports leagues need unions to maintain order. Decertification is a nuclear weapon: The mere threat of it is a negotiating tool.

Two weeks after the National Basketball Players Association decertified – technically, it was a "disclaimer of interest," where the union dissolves itself as opposed to the players voting to dissolve it, but the result is the same –

and filed a mess of antitrust lawsuits, labor peace arrived and the Christmas Day basketball games were saved.

It's too late to save the Winter Classic, but if the NHLPA goes that route, it may be the only chance left at saving the season.

Either that, or send in the Army.

News Observer LOADED: 11.29.2012

644998 Chicago Blackhawks

NHL, NHLPA meet with federal mediators

Sports Xchange

A federal mediator met with the NHL and its players union Wednesday in an effort to end the lockout that has cancelled the first 2 1/2 months of the season.

The parties met in New York at an undisclosed location for about six hours. They plan to meet again today.

"A small group of NHLPA staff and players met today with two experienced FMCS mediators. We expect that these discussions will resume Thursday," NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr said in a statement.

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman did not respond.

It was the first labor meeting since the NHL turned down the Players Association's latest proposal last Wednesday.

ESPN.com reported that each side spent long periods of time meeting separately with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services mediator.

The FMCS has been involved in labor disputes in the past year involving the NFL and the NBA.

Games already have been cancelled through Dec. 14 as well as the Winter Classic and the All-Star Game in Columbus, Ohio.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 11.29.2012

644999 Chicago Blackhawks

Forbes ranks Blackhawks 4th most valuable NHL team

Staff

The Toronto Maple Leafs are the first ice hockey team to be worth \$1 billion, more than triple the average value of National Hockey League (NHL) franchises, according to an annual survey released by Forbes on Wednesday.

The Maple Leafs, who were acquired by Rogers Communications and telecom provider BCE a year ago, topped the list for the seventh consecutive year despite their failure to make the NHL playoffs since 2004.

The NHL's 30 teams are worth an average \$282 million, a 17.5 percent rise over last year, due largely to what Forbes said was the league's ability to raise ticket prices, increase attendance and renew or secure lucrative sponsorships.

But the spread between rich and poor teams proved dramatic as the NHL's top five teams are worth an average \$605 million versus the \$145 million average value of the bottom five teams.

The New York Rangers (\$750 million) and Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million) were the second and third top valued teams on the list and together with the Maple Leafs accounted for 83 percent of the NHL's income.

The Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$348 million), Stanley Cup champions in 2010 and 2011 respectively, rounded out the top five while the reigning Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings were ranked 10th with a value of \$276 million.

The Forbes report was released with the NHL in the midst of a bitter labor dispute with players that began mid September.

The dispute has already wiped out a third of the regular season with the two sides still at odds over how to split up revenues.

Forbes top NHL 10 teams:

1. Toronto Maple Leafs (\$1 billion)
2. New York Rangers (\$750 million)
3. Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million)
4. Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million)
5. Boston Bruins (\$348 million)
6. Detroit Red Wings (\$346 million)
7. Vancouver Canucks (\$342 million)
8. Philadelphia Flyers (\$336 million)
9. Pittsburgh Penguins (\$288 million)
10. Los Angeles Kings (\$276 million)

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 11.29.2012

645000 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks are 4th most valuable NHL team, reports Forbes

Staff

Forbes magazine ranks the Chicago Blackhawks as the fourth most valuable hockey team in the NHL, with a value of \$350 million. The Toronto Maple Leafs is valued at \$1 billion, the top-ranked team, Forbes reports.

The Toronto Maple Leafs are the first NHL team worth \$1 billion, according to Forbes magazine.

The Leafs, who have not won a Stanley Cup since 1967, are worth \$250 million more than the next most valuable franchise, the New York Rangers. The Montreal Canadiens are worth \$575 million.

Least valuable of the 30 teams are the St. Louis Blues at \$130 million and the Phoenix Coyotes at \$134 million.

The Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings are worth \$276 million, 10th overall.

Forbes says the NHL's total revenues were \$3.4 billion for the 2011-12 season. Fueled by that 9 percent increase, the average NHL team is worth \$282 million, 18 percent more than a year ago.

With the players locked out by owners, the NHL already has canceled 422 regular-season games. Forbes reports that 13 teams lost money last season.

The Leafs, Rangers (last Stanley Cup in 1994) and Canadiens (last title in 1993) account for 83 percent of the league's income, with Toronto the most profitable franchise at \$81.9 million, followed by the Rangers at \$74 million and Montreal at \$51.6 million.

The Winnipeg Jets, in their first season after moving from Atlanta, increased in value by \$30 million to \$200 million.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 11.29.2012

645001 Chicago Blackhawks

Toews still torn about heading overseas

TRACEY MYERS

Jonathan Toews thinks about it every day -- the possibility of having to play overseas as the NHL lockout continues. And while the Blackhawks captain knows he has options, he's waiting for "something to push me over the edge in that direction."

"I guess, maybe if it's at the point where the NHL has the nerve to cancel the season, then that would be the tipping point right there," Toews said after Wednesday's informal practice. "Until then, it's still an uncertainty."

Several Blackhawks have been considering overseas options for some time now. Those who have remained here have cited hopes that the NHL and NHLPA will work through their differences and get a new collective bargaining agreement in place. The two sides did meet with a federal mediator on Wednesday.

For Toews, the overseas decision is a tough one. He is certainly missing the routine he'd be in during this time of year, the game schedule, the practices, all of it. And the burgeoning lockout frustration doesn't help.

"A lot of us have waited patiently so far," he said. "But when you constantly see the rejection and lack of negotiation, you get the ugly feeling it's not going anywhere. It's a tough thing to do, to sit around and think about it even more."

But Toews is also looking at the other side of it. He's healthy, he's still doing everything to keep in shape -- including all those informal practices -- and he wants to do everything he can to ensure he'll have a long and healthy career. And not going through a grinding playing schedule has its benefits.

"Until now I think I've taken advantage of the time to take care of my body. I almost see this as an advantage," he said. "You play so many games during the year and you're so busy, and this is a sport that takes a tremendous toll on your body. To be sitting on your butt is one thing. But to take advantage of this time off, to make yourself better and take care of your body, that's everything. That's what's going to get you (not only) where you want to go and perform as well you want to, but to keep doing it for a long time."

"I'm not thinking of just this year or the next one. I'm thinking further down the road than that," Toews said. "It's a good thing to take care of yourself that way."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.29.2012

645002 Chicago Blackhawks

Forbes' 2012 team values: Blackhawks No. 4

NINA FALCONE

Since the NHL lockout began, revenue sharing has been a hot topic. We knew the financial differences between organizations was rather hefty, but Forbes' release of each team's worth on Wednesday further illustrated the differences.

The "Original Six" teams lead the way in terms of the organizations' value, and the Blackhawks are listed as the fourth-highest, totaling \$350 million. But the Maple Leafs are the ones that really turned heads, becoming the first NHL franchise to be valued at \$1 billion.

Let's do the math.

While the Rangers sit at the No. 2 spot at \$750 million, there's still a \$250 million gap between New York and Toronto, and there are still another 27 teams in between before you reach the last-place Blues who are currently worth \$130 million.

Forbes pointed out the tremendous differences in value between the league's most profitable and weaker markets:

The five most valuable teams--the Maple Leafs (\$1 billion), New York Rangers (\$750 million), Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million), Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$348 million)--are worth \$605 million, on average. The five least valuable--the Carolina Hurricanes (\$162 million), New York Islanders (\$155 million), Columbus Blue Jackets (\$145 million), Phoenix Coyotes (\$134 million) and St. Louis Blues (\$130 million)--are worth just \$145 million, on average.

To top it all off, Forbes' report states that the Maple Leafs, Rangers and Canadiens currently make up 83 percent of the NHL's operating revenue.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.29.2012

645003 Dallas Stars

Sherrington: NHL doing everything it can to kill hockey, and it's succeeding 'without question'

SportsDayDFW.com

SportsDay columnist Kevin Sherrington answered reader questions during a live chat on Tuesday. Here are some highlights:

How about you remove the "Stars" tab from the website and replace it with one that says "FC Dallas". You know, since they actually play. Hockey is kind of a stupid sport anyway. I mean, ice skating? Really. It is about time to shut this thing down. Surely the NHL will be defunct in the next 20 years, right?

Kevin Sherrington: Isn't it just soccer on ice? The NHL is doing everything in its power to kill the sport, and it is without question succeeding. Where it leads is hard to say, but soccer surely will pass it in the decades to come.

Pick on hockey, but for almost a decade when the Mavericks, Rangers and Cowboys could only brag about how much money they had or the big name they signed, the Stars were a hell of a fun story. Give me guys who have a pool party with their trophy over some of the arrogant millionaires chasing balls in this market.

Kevin Sherrington: Hey, I was picking on hockey, not the Stars. I was there in Buffalo when the Stars won in the middle of the night. A great scene. No better trophy than the Stanley Cup. And you're right about the Stars partying with it, although it probably wasn't such a good idea to do it in the pool. As I recall, didn't someone throw it from a balcony and put a ding in it?

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645004 Dallas Stars

Stardate: Nov. 28, 2003: Stars shut door on defending-champion Devils

SportsDayDFW.com

A series of Stars games and moments that happened on a specific date. The following appeared in the Nov. 29, 2003 editions of The Dallas Morning News.

The Stars made a loud and clear statement Friday: The early-season slump is over.

A 2-0 win over the defending Stanley Cup champion New Jersey Devils makes it official.

The Stars thought they were on their way to forgetting about their sluggish start after winning three of the last four games. But those were wins over Minnesota, Los Angeles and Phoenix, which, like the Stars, are hovering around .500.

On Friday, the Stars (11-10-3-0) proved they could get the job done against the hottest team in the NHL. Dallas ended a 13-game unbeaten streak for the Devils, which tied a franchise high, and handed New Jersey its first loss in the last 15 road games and its first loss in a month.

"It was a good test for us," Stars coach Dave Tippett said. "We've played some good games during the year, but for us to win this game we were going to have to play better. And a positive sign was we did."

Before Friday's win, the Stars played seven games against teams currently in the top 10 in the league. They lost all seven. They were shut out three times and outscored, 24-5.

All those trends changed Friday. And it started with a focus on playing patient and smart hockey in the defensive zone. In other words, the Stars beat the Devils at their own game.

Dallas fought hard for pucks along the boards, made crisp passes and cleared the area around the net. The Stars didn't try to do too much. They just played solid, positional hockey and took some chances on offense when they were available.

The Devils got a few chances too, buzzing near the end of the second period and for a stretch in the third, but goalie Marty Turco held his ground, preserving the team's first shutout of the season.

Tippett called Turco's performance his best of the season. Turco stopped all 21 shots he faced and seemed to always be in the right position. He made a few nice glove saves, but for the most part he was patient and let pucks hit him or allowed the defensemen to get them out of harm's way.

As usual, it was Bill Guerin who took care of the offensive end. Guerin scored his 15th goal of the season and seventh on the power play. The Stars are becoming a force with the man-advantage, scoring five power-play goals in the last three games. Guerin, who has a six-game points streak, also added an assist on Jason Arnott's goal with 3:25 to play.

"It was a good measuring stick in where our game is going," said Guerin, who is on a 50-goal pace. "It tells us we can play with the best in the league."

The Stars had a scary moment with 2:37 left in the game when defenseman Philippe Boucher was hit with a puck near his left eye. He has a cut on his cheek and above the eye and was going for X-rays. It was not the same eye Boucher injured a few years ago.

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645005 Detroit Red Wings

Kalamazoo, others take advantage of ongoing NHL lockout

ECHL general manager vows 'good family entertainment'

By Denis Gorman

TRENTON, N.J. -- While the NHL and its players remain engaged in a boardroom battle over dollars and cents, professional hockey still is being played across the U.S.

Philadelphia, New York and Washington, of course, are not hockey hotbeds these days. Los Angeles, Detroit and St. Louis aren't, either. But for towns like Toledo and Kalamazoo, and even here in the capital city of New Jersey, players are still walking through the tunnel and onto the ice to the delight of fans. The East Coast Hockey League may be a much smaller scale than the NHL, and the talent disparity is more than evident.

But say what you will about this lower-level minor league. At least, the games are still being held.

A few hours after the NHL announced the cancelation of games last week through Dec. 14 -- including All-Star Weekend -- the ECHL opened its doors for another night of "good family entertainment" Friday. Those were the words of Trenton general manager Rich Lisk as the Titans attempt to cash in on a two-state market raised on -- and starving for -- NHL hockey.

But the Flyers, just down the road from the Titans and the parent organization of the team, and the Devils, the defending Eastern Conference champions, are nowhere to be seen these days. A charity game is being played by them here and there, sure. Some are renting ice on their own to practice, and others are overseas on temporary pro contracts. But none of that helps the die-hard NHL fan over the long term.

That's where the ECHL comes in.

"It's very much a developmental league. You'll see young guys here," Lisk said prior to Friday night's 3-2 win over Evansville (Ind.). "But the level of play has really jumped up."

Once known as a "goon league," the ECHL used to rely heavily on journeyman players, living out their final days on the ice by brawling with each other and pandering for the crowd. It was cheap shots and a cheap

date, something that resembled the Federal League in the 1977 cult classic "Slap Shot."

But times have changed. While there is still fighting in the ECHL, the league is now much more of a developmental system for the NHL and its primary minor outfit, the American Hockey League. The ECHL is more analogous to Double-A baseball with 23 franchises tucked into midsize cities throughout the nation.

"First and foremost, the talent level in the league has gone up tremendously," Lisk said. "I would say there are 11-to-13 (former ECHL) guys that are under contract to the NHL, where normally we would have five or six. You see the numbers have jumped up. The level of play has definitely, definitely gone up."

But how do you market that these days? Even without much competition for the hockey dollar, most of these ECHL cities are not thriving metropolises, and let's face it, the ECHL game is neither as fast nor as crisp as an NHL or even an AHL game. But there is action, there is atmosphere, and with a little cost-conscious creativity, the league is making it work.

"If you compare the first five (home) games of last year to the first five games of this year, we're up 15%," Lisk said. "We're up 20% in season tickets. We're up to about 800 season tickets. My goal is to get it to a thousand by the end of this year."

It's a distinct possibility. Without competition from the Flyers, Devils, and New York Rangers, the Titans are experiencing the best of both worlds. There are the true ECHL fans, the loyal bunch that will still be in the building after the lockout. And there are also the NHL fans, who Lisk believes are "testing the waters."

Catching up with the two nearby teams:

Toledo

Affiliated with the Red Wings and the Blackhawks, the Walleye lead the North Division. Goalie Jordan Pearce, a Detroit prospect, is seventh with a 2.34 GAA.

K'zoo Wings

The Canucks' affiliate in Kalamazoo is led by Brett Lysak, 31, who is playing his first season in North America since 2005-06.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.29.2012

645006 Detroit Red Wings

Forbes: Red Wings are sixth-most valuable franchise in NHL

By Helene St. James

Fun midweek financial facts from Forbes: The business magazine has the Detroit Red Wings pegged as the sixth-most valuable club among NHL franchises.

In what's an Original Six sweep at the top, Toronto comes in at No. 1, with a value of \$1 billion, the New York Rangers (\$750 million) are next, Montreal (\$575 million) is third, Chicago (\$350 million) is fourth, and Boston (\$348 million) is fifth. Detroit is estimated to be worth \$346 million.

Here's Forbes' breakdown on the Wings: "The Red Wings have made the playoffs for 21 consecutive seasons, the longest active streak in the NHL, 13 more seasons than the San Jose Sharks, who own the next-longest streak. Billionaire Michael Ilitch (aside: he's apparently Mike only to we locals), owns Olympia Entertainment, which controls the Red Wings, Little Caesars AAA hockey club and baseball's Detroit Tigers, as well as their stadiums."

The bottom three teams on the list are St. Louis, worth \$130 million, slightly less than 29th-place Phoenix (\$134 million) and 28th-place Columbus (\$145 million).

Forbes also put out a list of the highest-paid NHL players. Sidney Crosby, one of the rare NHLers to pad his salary with endorsements, is first, at \$12.7 million. No Wings were among the group.

Contact Helene St. James: 313-222-2295 or hstjames@freepress.com. Follow her on Twitter @helenestjames.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.29.2012

645007 Detroit Red Wings

Bunch of Red Wings slated to play in charity game in Windsor

By Helene St. James

Locked out by owners, a band of NHL players led by Detroit Red Wings forward Danny Cleary will stage a game next month to aid charities and provide local hockey fans a chance to see numerous stars on ice.

Scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Dec. 8 at the WFCU Center in Windsor, Cleary will be joined by fellow NHLPA members James Neal, Keith Yandle and Shawn Horcoff, along with numerous Wings teammates and possibly Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews.

"We're going to have two teams, have a nice little game," Cleary told the Free Press. "We're going to sign sticks, jerseys and have drawings for fans."

Cleary said proceeds will go to Sparkles from Above, which assists children with cancer.

Cleary easily recruited from the pool of players with whom he has been skating regularly at the Troy Sports Center, in lieu of the routine of NHL practices and games. The league has been shut down since Sept. 16, when owners locked out players after the sides failed to reach a new collective bargaining agreement.

There has been scant progress toward an accord, but should a miracle occur between now and Dec. 6, the charity game would be canceled.

Otherwise, dozens of NHL regulars will be at the game, including Wings Niklas Kronwall, Johan Franzen, Jimmy Howard, Todd Bertuzzi (who spent his Tuesday evening playing in a beer-league all-star game in Kitchener, Ont.), Darren Helm, Justin Abdelkader and Ian White, along with Adam Burish, Jamal Mayers, Brenden Morrow, Steve Ott, Jordan Leopold, John-Michael Liles, Matthew Lombardi and Kyle Wellwood, among others.

Cleary said Toews "is trying to figure out if he can make it. We tried to get Sidney Crosby, but he couldn't because his insurance is too much. Insurance covers everyone else."

As one of the organizers, Cleary said the idea came while "me and Horc and Steve Ott, we figured guys are sitting around, let's get a game together. It's a win-win for everybody. Fans can see some decent hockey, some good names. It'll be a fun event."

Tickets can be obtained at the WFCU Centre (8787 McHugh Street in Windsor) or by calling 866-969-9328 or visiting www.wfcu-centre.com.

Contact Helene St. James: 313-222-2295 or hstjames@freepress.com. Follow her on Twitter @helenestjames.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.29.2012

645008 Detroit Red Wings

NHL deal might be near, but not lasting

By Gregg Krupa

A hockey fan holds up a sign pleading for an end to the NHL lockout during an NBA game this month between the Boston Celtics and Utah Jazz in Boston.

They talked in a mediated session Wednesday, and there was some evidence that, amid the obvious anger, bitterness and disrespect, the NHL and the NHLPA got closer to an agreement a week ago, when they met in New York.

Hope remains obscure, but there is some anticipation hockey will be played in January. That is about the best that can be imagined now.

Should fans be happy with an end to the lockout? No.

Games were missed. A prospective 48-game season will seem like a plaything.

Lives poured into businesses that rely on the NHL schedule are in shambles. Families that regularly spend hundreds of dollars to attend a game are left to feel abused.

Another consequence, however, is far worse: It appears likely it will happen again.

In fact, while they will not declare it, the strategy of the owners who appear to be calling the shots and commissioner Gary Bettman is a redo.

What is clear from the disorder in the NHL is that little, if anything, discussed since the start of the lockout is intended to avoid the same unpleasant circumstances in the future. Indeed, the very design for labor negotiations going forward appears to guarantee it.

"Is there anything here that is likely to lead to labor peace?" said Scott Rosner, a professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, an expert in sports negotiations. "The answer is likely no."

Rosner and others believe that in an era in which NFL, NBA and NHL owners seek considerable concessions on salaries after decades during which the players were ascendant, the NHL, at least, appears locked into its bargaining strategy for successive negotiations.

"When we talk about the course of negotiations, you run the risk that an initial offer that is extreme can kill a deal even before the talks really begin," Rosner said. "It sounds as if, from an outside perspective, that was the effect throughout these NHL negotiations."

"Is the takeaway that maybe if your first offer is not so draconian, you know, 'Hey, we learned from this negotiation to prevent future disputes ...' "

"I just don't think that is a likely scenario. I do not think lessons learned here are preventative."

Bettman takes hard line

While Major League Baseball virtually stumbled into circumstances that provide for no recent work stoppages, the NHL, in particular, seems lost in a dark age in which the owners' only negotiating tactic is draconian demands followed by a lockout, canceled games and the threat of losing a full season.

Bettman and some owners may proclaim that a 50-50 split of revenues and other concessions from players in the current bargaining will secure the future of the league.

They are likely wrong, just like they were the last time.

Then, their bargaining tactics were almost precisely the same. Now, the results are likely to be comparable, leading to similarly tortuous circumstances when the new agreement expires.

That seems particularly likely if one of the main actors, Bettman, who is taking his league through a third disastrous lockout, is still in office.

"I think a big driver in this is the commissioner," said Michael LeRoy, a professor of labor relations and law at the University of Illinois, who has written extensively on work stoppages in the major sports leagues.

"He has repeatedly taken an intransigent, draw-a-line-in-the-sand stand. If Bettman is around, I find it hard to see them coming around to a peaceful solution."

At no point since last summer have Bettman, the owners and the players engaged in the sort of negotiating or planning that would provide the basis for something approaching rational bargaining the next time.

Contraction likely needed What could change?

Experts on labor negotiations and the economics of sport say a great deal would have to change in the NHL to avoid almost exactly the same situation next time.

While the owners will accomplish some objectives by forcing the players to work for 50 percent of revenues, a 12.3 percent decrease from their current 57 percent share, in the future, the league must still increase revenues or change the business model, the experts contend.

Contraction, discarding the big money-losing franchises, would eliminate some operating costs, and it has been proposed by many and rejected by Bettman, whose declared mission is to increase revenues.

Bettman's tactic has been a constant campaign to achieve a truly national footprint in the United States.

It has not worked.

"The larger problem that hangs over hockey is, in my view and in the view of many others, it is mismanaged," said Andrew Zimbalist, a professor of economics at Smith College and an expert and consultant on the economy of sport.

"As long as it is mismanaged, a good chunk of teams are going to be losing money.

"One of the ways this is mismanaged is that Bettman has been steadfast in refusal to admit expanding willy-nilly in the South was a big mistake. Those franchises are struggling massively.

"There are opportunities to move to Canada, and they resist that. I believe it is a big mistake."

The latest evidence Zimbalist and others are right is a report from Forbes on Wednesday that the Jets are 63 percent more valuable, an increase from \$135 million to \$200 million, since they moved from Atlanta to Winnipeg before the start of last season.

Quebec City awaits a team. A new arena is proposed for metropolitan Toronto, which could house a second NHL team. Hamilton is another possibility.

And, while the NBA and the NFL have long desired tapping the European market, only the NHL seems positioned to do it.

About 20 percent of NHL players last season were born in Europe. At least a half-dozen countries have competitive national teams. The sport is played in the Czech Republic, Finland, Russia, Slovakia and Sweden.

"Not pursuing integration with the Europeans is a big mistake," Zimbalist said. "Hockey is currently the only sport where you can say that, at the professional level."

Europe looks ready

The point is that if revenue cannot be grown to finance the owners' ambitions to assemble winning teams and the desire of players to be well-paid, an alternative is contraction.

Expansion, on the other hand, is far more desirable.

Traditional fans may not like it, and Canadians may rue it as yet another sign that they are "losing" a game they claim as their own.

But there are more fertile homes for hockey in Europe than in Georgia or Arizona.

"It requires the sort of forward thinking Bettman is not able to engage in, but it would be massively beneficial for the league and its fans," Zimbalist said.

"Bettman is too worried about protecting Phoenix and, until recently, Atlanta, and that has spelled trouble.

"But if players through their union have no say, and player compensation continues to be tied to revenue and revenue will not grow as it should, it means more trouble ahead.

"Fifty percent might sound good today. But if one-third or one-half of the franchises in the sport do not grow and take advantage of opportunities, we will be right back where we started."

Detroit News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645009 Detroit Red Wings

Riley Sheahan's arrest in Teletubby costume: How others see it

Peter J. Wallner

A Freedom of Information Act request by MLive prompted release of the arrest record, which showed Sheahan allegedly had a blood-alcohol content of .30 and was wearing the costume of a purple Teletubby, also known as Tinky Winky.

The Huffington Post:

Riley Sheahan Arrested: Detroit Red Wings Prospect Charged With Driving Drunk In Teletubby Costume, Reports Say

Riley Sheahan isn't just a super prospect for the Detroit Red Wings' organization -- he also faces a "super-drunk" charge after his arrest for drunken driving in Grand Rapids, Mich.

ESPN:

'Super drunk' charge for Wings pick

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. -- A Detroit Red Wings prospect faces charges under Michigan's tough "super drunk" designation following a traffic stop during which police discovered him clad in a Teletubby costume.

USA Today:

NHL prospect arrested for being 'super drunk' in Teletubby costume

Having your name in the news for being arrested is never a good thing. Having your name in the news for being "super drunk" is definitely not a good thing. Having your name in the news for driving drunk and wearing a Tinky Winky costume is just plain silly.

Yahoo! Sports

Red Wings prospect Riley Sheahan was wearing Teletubby costume during 'super drunk' driving arrest

On Oct. 22, Detroit Red Wings 2010 first-round draft pick Riley Sheahan went out looking for something memorable to wear the following weekend. "Out searching for Halloween costumes," he tweeted. "No luck so far but hopefully we'll find something special."

Sheahan never followed up with what that special costume turned out to be and no photos surfaced (yet), but if the report from his Oct. 29 DUI arrest is any indication, it was a purple Teletubby outfit.

The London Daily Mail:

Eh-oh! 'Super drunk' hockey star Riley Sheahan charged with DUI - while dressed in purple Teletubbies suit

He may be one of hockey's rising stars, but Detroit Red Wings prospect Riley Sheahan's antics are raising eyebrows off-the-ice.

Sheahan, 20, of Ontario, Canada, who now plays with the Red Wings minor league affiliate the Grand Rapids Griffins, was pulled over in a bizarre drunken driving arrest back on October 29.

Deadline Detroit.com

Red Wings' Prospect Riley Sheahan Nabbed in Tinky Winky's Teletubby Costume, DUI

You can't make up a police blotter item more colorful than this arrest report obtained by MLive:

A professional hockey player is charged with driving around midnight with a blood alcohol content nearly four times the legal limit, using an older player's ID and wearing a purple Teletubby outfit from a children's TV character known as Tinky Winky.

thescore.com

Red Wings' prospect Riley Sheahan's drunk driving charge is straight out of Mad Libs

Riley Sheahan is a 20-year old Red Wings prospect currently playing for the Grand Rapids Griffins of the AHL. On October 29th he was pulled over in scary, dangerous condition. Here's what you need to know:

He was going the wrong way on a one-way street in a 2012 Jeep Wrangler. That'll get you pulled over pretty consistently.

He failed two sobriety tests before refusing to blow into the breathalyzer.

He was wearing a purple Teletubby costume. ...Stay with me here.

The officers thought they pulled over his teammate Brendan Smith because they were shown Smith's ID, which Sheahan later admitted he carries to get into bars. As in, he must have given that one to them by mistake.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.29.2012

645010 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings goalies Jimmy Howard, Jonas Gustavsson struggle to stay sharp during lockout

Ansar Khan |

TROY – Every locked-out NHL player who didn't latch on with a team in another league misses high-tempo practices and competitive situations.

It is particularly difficult for goaltenders to stay sharp when the only work they're getting is at sparsely attended informal practices three times a week.

That's the challenge facing Detroit Red Wings goalies Jimmy Howard and Jonas Gustavsson.

"Especially when you only have 10 guys out here, makes it tough to even have a full-ice practice," Howard said. "Playing these cross-ice games (width of rink), even though they're fun, they're just not realistic.

"Just got to find a way to stop pucks so when the time comes you're ready."

All games through Dec. 14 have been canceled, and it does not appear the work stoppage will end anytime soon. But, players must be ready, just in case.

"It's a bit different, but it's better than nothing," Gustavsson said. "At least you get to feel the puck a little bit. When you don't have a lot of guys, the pace isn't going to be as high as a normal practice. That's the tough part for me, to get that quickness and tempo up."

That is where the many NHL goalies who have been playing in Europe during the lockout will have an edge if the season is salvaged. But many others are in the same boat as Howard and Gustavsson.

"It's just going out there, no matter what the situation is, and trying to keep the competitive fire burning inside of you," Howard said. "Just try to stop as many pucks as possible."

"The timing is probably the hardest part to get here." -- Jonas Gustavsson

Coaches are not permitted to have contact with players during the lockout, so Howard and Gustavsson can't go through any drills with goaltending coach Jim Bedard. But Howard isn't concerned about slipping in the mechanical aspects of the game.

"I'd say it's more along the lines of your timing and picking the puck up through traffic, I find that's the hardest part out here," Howard said. "Even in practice you get a couple of guys in front of you and the next thing you know you have no idea where the shooter is. That's where regular, high-tempo practices and exhibition games is when you start getting that rhythm back and that timing back, reading the plays a little better."

Said Gustavsson: "The timing is probably the hardest part to get here because the pace of the game is a bit quicker when (NHL play) starts. I feel my stamina is pretty good right now. The toughest part is those game situations and the timing; you can't really get that from doing cross-ice and a few shooting drills. That's what you're missing from playing games."

Howard has been reluctant to pursue an opportunity in Europe, not wanting to leave his wife and 1-year-old son behind. But, he said he will start looking soon if the lockout lingers.

"I think sooner rather than later I got to go play somewhere," Howard said. "Even if it is a totally different game over there, where it's pass first, shoot second, just being out there in game situations is something you can't get here."

Gustavsson is hesitant to go to Europe until the NHL season is canceled.

"I've been talking to my agent once in a while, said to him if this is going to keep going I'd like to go over there, but we'll see," he said. "As a goalie, it's tough to get a good job over there. Teams are taking a risk of losing a goalie they just brought in if the season would start here."

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.29.2012

645011 Detroit Red Wings

Forbes: Red Wings are NHL's sixth-most valuable franchise, worth \$346 million

Ansar Khan

Forbes ranks the Detroit Red Wings as the sixth-most valuable NHL franchise, worth an estimated \$346 million.

"Through last season the Red Wings have sold out 70 consecutive games at Joe Louis Arena, including the playoffs, an amazing streak considering the city's economic plight," Forbes wrote.

The Red Wings amassed revenues of \$128 million in 2011-12, with an operating income of \$20.8 million, the Web site reported.

The Toronto Maple Leafs are the most valuable franchise, worth \$1 billion, the first NHL team to reach that figure. Interestingly, the top six are the Original Six teams. The average NHL club is worth \$282 million.

Forbes blames the lockout in the increasing disparity between the most valuable clubs and the least valuable teams.

"The spread between the rich and poor teams is dramatic," Forbes writes. "The five most valuable teams – the Maple Leafs (\$1 billion), New York Rangers (\$750 million), Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million), Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$348 million) – are worth \$605 million, on average. The five least valuable – the Carolina Hurricanes (\$162 million), New York Islanders (\$155 million), Columbus Blue Jackets (\$145 million), Phoenix Coyotes (\$134 million) and St. Louis Blues (\$130 million) – are worth just \$145 million, on average."

Forbes ranked the Red Wings No. 2 on its list of teams that have been the best per payroll dollar spent since the last lockout in 2004-05. Detroit's player cost-to-win ratio was 124, behind only San Jose at 125, over the past seven seasons.

The Web site said each team's final score represents how much better or worse it performed compared to the average team since the last lockout. A score of 120 means the team outperformed the league average by 20 percent in terms of games won per payroll dollar spent.

"Detroit is perhaps the league's best example of how high player costs can pay off on the ice." -- Forbes.

"Detroit is perhaps the league's best example of how high player costs can pay off on the ice," Forbes wrote. "The team has ranked among the top ten teams in player spending in five of the last seven seasons, but heavy spending helped create a superstar lineup that is consistently one of the NHL's top teams. Since the 2004-05 lockout the Red Wings have collected 11 playoff series wins, made three trips to the Western Conference finals and collected a Stanley Cup victory in 2007-08."

Toronto ranked last, with a score of 77.

Forbes said Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby is the highest-paid player in the league, with a total income of \$12.7 million (\$8.7 million in salary and \$4 million in endorsements). No Red Wings cracked the top 15.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.29.2012

645012 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings scouting report: Veteran Todd Bertuzzi would face tough recovery if season is lost

Ansar Khan

Todd Bertuzzi

Position: Right wing/left wing

Age: 37

Height/weight: 6-3/229

How acquired: Signed as a free agent on Aug. 18, 2009.

Contract: Two years remaining at a salary-cap hit of \$2.075 million.

2011-12 stats: 71 games, 14 goals, 24 assists, 38 points, plus-23 rating, 64 penalty minutes.

Career stats: 1,093 games, 303 goals, 448 assists, 751 points, minus-30 rating, 1,436 penalty minutes.

What he's doing during the lockout: He is taking part in informal practices with several teammates at a suburban rink.

Strengths: Good hands, can still score 15 goals a season and set up teammates. Has earned coaches' trust defensively because he back-checks hard. Uses his size and strength to win battles down low. Effective in shootouts with his slow approach and unique spin move and backhand shot. Doesn't fight often, but stands up for his teammates when needed.

Weaknesses: Is prone to long scoring droughts. Not nearly as physical as he once was. Injuries have taken their toll. Has a penchant for taking bad penalties. Commits too many turnovers (tied for third on team with 40). Probably should shoot more, especially when playing alongside Pavel Datsyuk. He averaged 1.66 shots per game last season, compared to 2.63 shots per game in 2009-10.

2011-12 in review: Had a career-best plus-23 rating, tied for first on the team. ... Posted lowest point total since 1997-98 (33 points) in any season in which he played at least 60 games. ... Did not score a power-play goal for the first time in his 16-year career. ... Posted a career-low 64 penalty minutes, excluding injury-shortened seasons in 1998-99 and 2006-07. ... Converted on 5-of-10 shootout attempts, four of which were game-winners. ... Missed five games due to a sinus infection (Nov. 5-17). ... Sat out four games with a strained groin (March 6-13). ... Experienced prolonged goal-scoring slumps of 19 games (Oct. 8-Dec. 6) and 15 games (Feb. 6-March 17). ... Equalled career highs in assists (four) and points (four) and posted a plus-5 rating in 7-2 win over Columbus on March 26. ... Had no points and a minus-5 rating in five playoff games.

2012-13 outlook (season pending): The club's oldest player realizes it would be difficult for him to recover after missing a full season due to the lockout. If there is hockey this season, Bertuzzi will be competing for a spot on a top-two line with younger players Damien Brunner and Gustav Nyquist. He must be more effective on the power play (no goals, four assists last season).

Can Bertuzzi still be effective in a top-six role? Should he be paired with Datsyuk again? Or is he better suited for the third line at this stage of his career?

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.29.2012

645013 Florida Panthers

Diagnosed with MS, Harding plans to continue NHL career

By MICHAEL RUSSO

EDINA, Minn. -- Sitting on a white leather couch in the living room of his suburban Minneapolis home, Josh Harding doesn't get emotional as he tells his story.

He looks completely healthy. He doesn't seem scared. He speaks so confidently, so courageously, you'd never know his life has been altered forever.

"I don't look at this like I've got to take a new path," said Harding, drafted 10 years ago by the Wild and months off signing a new three-year contract. "This is a little bump in the road. I've had lots in life."

Harding, 28, has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, an incurable autoimmune disease in which the body randomly attacks and eats away the protective lining of his nerves and causes them to scar. It causes problems with balance, fatigue and blurred vision. There are 25,000 new cases diagnosed in the United States every year.

"I had a couple days where I felt bad for myself, but no more," said Harding, who plans on continuing his career. "There's things in life that happen. Sometimes you can't explain it. You deal with it."

After keeping the disease private from everyone other than his immediate family for more than a month, Harding began calling friends Wednesday. He spoke to nearly every one of his teammates. He called Wild General Manager Chuck Fletcher and coach Mike Yeo.

"Josh's competitive fire has led him to a successful career in the NHL and we know he will approach this new battle in the same manner," Fletcher said.

And Harding has made clear that MS will not end his career.

"There's going to be some good days and bad days, but I think if you talk to anybody in life, there's going to be some good days and bad days," Harding said.

It started with a tweak in his neck. That evolved into dizziness, seeing black spots and numbness in his right leg.

"I just knew that something wasn't right," Harding said. "Honestly, I hadn't felt normal for a bit."

It was Sept. 27, and Harding went in for a Magnetic Resonance Imaging test on his neck. Wild doctor Dan Peterson noticed an abnormality and summoned Harding back to his Edina practice for an MRI of his brain.

Peterson discovered lesions and called Harding back to his office that night.

"I told him I thought it was MS, and he wasn't like, 'Woe is me,'" Peterson said. "He's like, 'What do we do? Tell me how to go forward.'"

Over the next few weeks, Harding underwent a battery of tests to rule out other afflictions. He met with neurologist Jonathan Calkwood of the Minneapolis Clinic of Neurology, whom Peterson calls the "MS guru." Peterson's diagnosis was confirmed.

For six weeks, as Harding tried to gain control of the disease with the support of his parents, Tim and Eileen, sisters Stephanie and Becky, and his fiancée, Sara, Harding didn't work out. He didn't show up to skate with fellow locked-out players, who grew worried.

He has been put on an aggressive treatment of medication in order to prevent new lesions and thus further episodes of "immune system flareup."

"It bodes well that we got on it right away before he got into a cycle of getting run down," Peterson said. "Maybe he never has another episode. Seventy percent of people with MS still go on to live long, productive, fulfilling lives. And from the first day, Josh hasn't lost that 'I'm going to kick its butt' attitude, so he can do this. There's no doubt he can keep playing."

Two weeks ago, Harding was cleared to skate again.

"The (other players) said after six weeks off, I didn't look out of place, which was big for me to hear," Harding said.

'I don't want people moping'

Harding has decided to tell his story for two selfless reasons.

The first is he is still optimistic the NHL lockout will end in time to have a shortened season.

"I'm a team-first guy," Harding said. "If we play a 41- or 60-game season, you lose seven in a row, you're not going to catch up. Let the distraction be now rather than when we're on a four-game road trip, we need to win and all of a sudden it leaks out."

Harding also wants to create awareness and be an example for those suffering with MS. He's already considering a charitable foundation.

"Even if it changes one person's life to show that I'm not letting this come between me and my goals, that would be awesome," Harding said.

Still, Harding can't seem to catch a break. He's endured the physical toll of hip surgery and reconstructive knee surgery, the emotional toll of losing close friends Derek Boogaard and Rick Rypien in 2011.

"Still here though. Still here," Harding said, smiling. "You can let it get you down for a bit, but you've got to move past it. I know what my overall goal is to be, and that's a No. 1 goalie of the Minnesota Wild and to win a Stanley Cup here. It would make me happy to overcome this. Not just overcome this, but to really succeed with it."

"I don't want people treating me different, I don't want people feeling bad for me, I don't want people moping around. I want this to be a story where when we look back, it was a happy story."

Read more here:

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/11/28/3118196/diagnosed-with-ms-harding-plans.html#storylink=cpy>

Miami Herald LOADED: 11.29.2012

645014 Florida Panthers

NHL, union get back to bargaining with mediators

By IRA PODELL

Whether federal mediators will provide enough help to end the NHL lockout in time to save the hockey season is still unknown.

At least they had a good first day.

Negotiators from the NHL and the players' association returned to the bargaining table Wednesday for the first time in a week and the first time with outside voices contributing to the talks.

The location was secret, and so was what was discussed, but the talks went well enough that the sides will be back at the negotiating table Thursday.

"No comments," was all NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly would say Wednesday night in an email to The Associated Press.

NHLPA executive director Don Fehr issued a short statement, saying: "A small group of NHLPA staff and players met today with two experienced FMCS mediators. We expect that these discussions will resume on Thursday."

It was the first meeting between the sides since a get-together that lasted just over two hours last week in New York after the locked-out players' association made a new comprehensive proposal that was quickly rejected by the NHL.

The sides agreed Monday to use the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. George Cohen, the service's director, assigned deputy director Scot Beckenbaugh and director of mediation services John Sweeney to the negotiations. Beckenbaugh and Sweeney met separately with the two sides before talks began in full Wednesday.

It wasn't immediately known how long negotiations went on before they ended in the early evening.

In the previous meeting last week, Fehr said the sides were \$182 million apart in a five-year deal, which comes to \$1.2 million annually for each of the 30 teams.

The NHL wants to increase eligibility for free agency to 28 years of age or eight seasons of service, up from 27 years or seven seasons. The league has also proposed adding a year of service for salary arbitration eligibility, hiking it from 1-4 to 2-5 years of service, depending on the age a player signs.

On Oct. 16, the NHL proposed a 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue, down from the players' 57 percent portion of \$3.3 billion last season. With guaranteed contracts likely to push the players' share over the halfway mark at the start of the next deal, management wants that money to come out of future years to bring the overall percentage down to an even split over the length of an agreement.

Players previously had proposed they receive a guaranteed amount of income each year.

Fehr said players proposed they get \$393 million over the length of the deal, while the NHL is at \$211 million. Owners want a seven-year deal, which the union says is too long because less than half the current players will be active by the last season.

This is the league's third lockout since 1994. The first was settled on Jan. 11 and the last one led to NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman announcing the cancellation of the 2004-05 season on Feb. 15. That marked the only

time a major professional North American sports league lost an entire season because of a labor dispute.

This lockout, which reached its 74th day Wednesday, has already forced the cancellation of all games through Dec. 14, the New Year's Day Winter Classic, and All-Star Weekend that was slated for Columbus, Ohio, in January.

Read more here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/11/28/3117858/nhl-union-get-back-to-bargaining.html#storylink=cpy>

Miami Herald LOADED: 11.29.2012

645015 Florida Panthers

Florida Panthers 24th in NHL at \$170M; Maple Leafs top Forbes list at \$1 billion

By Craig Davis November 28, 2012 05:08 PM

The gulf is wide between the haves and have-nots in the NHL with the Toronto Maple Leafs topping the list as the league's first \$1 billion franchise in the Forbes rankings of the 30 teams.

The Florida Panthers, not surprisingly among the lower echelon, nonetheless moved up two spots in 2012 to 24th with a slight increase in value to \$170 million. Forbes attributed that to better performance by the team that produced the first playoff appearance since 2000.

Despite a 6-percent boost in attendance, The Panthers ended \$12 million in the red, according to Forbes, which said the team's gate receipts were among the league's lowest due to huge giveaways of tickets.

The Panthers also ranked last in local television audience with just 13,400 viewers per game for 2011-12. Forbes noted that the Panthers will benefit from a more lucrative cable deal beginning this year along with the 10-year extension on the naming rights deal with BB&T that is expected to net the team \$37 million.

However, the lockout by the owners has the entire 2012-13 season in jeopardy. The Panthers were counting on a revenue boost from the new Club Red premium seating area.

So far the league has canceled 422 regular-season games, including the Winter Classic, plus the All-Star Game. In a hard-nosed stance in negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement, NHL owners are aiming to significantly lower payroll costs. Players receive 57 percent of hockey-related revenue, which Forbes estimated at \$3.4 billion for 2011-12.

The players, in stating their case that the system is working well as it stands, can point to the league's 9-percent increase in revenue from the previous year. During that time the average value of NHL teams increased 18 percent to \$282 million, Forbes said.

The Panthers ranked just behind the Tampa Bay Lightning, valued at \$174 million. The St. Louis Blues were last at \$130 million.

Cliff Viner purchased the Panthers for \$200 million in 2009.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.29.2012

645016 Florida Panthers

Gudbranson injured shoulder wakeboarding, suspended by Panthers

Because second-year player was injured in non-hockey related injury he used his own doctors for shoulder surgery and rehab

By Harvey Fialkov, Sun Sentinel

LIGHTHOUSE POINT — Panthers defenseman Erik Gudbranson returned to the ice this week for the first time since sustaining a dislocated shoulder while wakeboarding with friends in early September.

Gudbranson's agent Mark Guy confirmed the off-ice, non-hockey related incident occurred and that his 20-year-old client has been suspended by the Panthers until he is medically cleared for contact.

"It was a freak accident," Guy said. "He was wakeboarding with a lot of [friends] in the summer and unfortunately he fell off and hurt his shoulder.

"If a player can't pass a physical as a result of a non-hockey related injury then the club has the right to suspend the player. The suspension ends once he's able to pass the physical and is set to play. He hasn't been cleared for contact and probably won't be for approximately another month."

At first, a source close to Gudbranson said he had sustained the injury during a, "training accident," and his teammates played dumb when asked.

If Gudbranson had hurt his shoulder while training for the season, the Panthers would've been responsible for his medical costs, ensuing surgery and first month's paycheck.

Guy said that Gudbranson, a long-time wakeboarder, immediately told the Panthers and General Manager Dale Tallon how he was injured, but the second-year blue-liner didn't wish to discuss it publicly at the time.

If and when the NHL season starts, Gudbranson, the third overall pick in the 2010 draft, will most likely start his season playing for the Panthers' AHL affiliate in San Antonio.

NHL contracts contain injury-related clauses that allow teams to withhold payment if the players sustain an injury while participating in risk-related sports or hobbies. Riding motorcycles, skydiving and apparently, wakeboarding, fall into that category.

Gudbranson stayed with veteran defenseman Ed Jovanovski and family while rehabbing the shoulder the last few months. After skating with his teammates at Glacier Ice Arena for the first time on Monday, Gudbranson returned home to Ottawa to continue rehab.

"We were all young and adventurous," Jovanovski said Wednesday after an informal practice. "I'm not going to lie. I water-skied as a youth in the league. Unfortunately, things happen.

"It was a tough position for him. I told him stuff happens. He was definitely [remorseful]. It could've been playing or scrimmaging with your buddies. You take it as a learning experience. He's still young and has got 20 years left in this league to figure it out."

Defenseman Mike Weaver, the Panthers player's representative, said he immediately reached out to Gudbranson when he heard about the accident in September.

"Young guys don't realize that the player's association is there to protect them," Weaver said. "Obviously, it would've hurt us if the season started, but everybody in this dressing room would've supported him.

"For him to own up to that in a situation he knows he screwed up is kudos to him."

The lockout has actually given Gudbranson more time to get healthy.

"For him it's worked out pretty good so far, but for us it hasn't been so good," Jovanovski smiled.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.29.2012

645017 Minnesota Wild

Harding grateful to doctors, Wild for support after MS diagnosis

Michael Russo under Wild off-season news Updated:

When Wild goalie Josh Harding was first officially diagnosed with multiple sclerosis last month (read the Star Tribune's story that will be in Thursday's newspaper here), "I didn't know anything about MS. I wish I did. Everybody hears about it, but nobody knows much about it unless you're affected by it."

That's why Harding is so grateful to Wild doctor Dan Peterson and neurologist Jonathan Calkwood of the Schapiro Center for Multiple Sclerosis and the Minneapolis Clinic of Neurology.

"I just can't tell you how much both these doctors have gone above and beyond for me," Harding said. "There's no cure for it. It'll be here the rest of my life. It's something I've already accepted."

Besides being provided with the basic education of the disease, Harding says Peterson is constantly a phone call away and "is just a great, great man" and that Calkwood has spent hours counseling him through every detail of treatment.

"There's so much for myself to learn about MS," Harding said. "I've already learned a lot, but there's so much I want to learn."

On Wednesday, Harding also made the difficult phone calls to inform Wild GM Chuck Fletcher and coach Mike Yeo what he's going through.

"I wanted to be the one to tell them," Harding said. "And this will tell you what type of people these guys are. I didn't know what to expect, how they'd react, if they'd be like, 'What am I going to do? We're going to have to get another goalie.'

"But not once did either talk about hockey. They were worried about my health. I don't know. It was a really good feeling getting off the phone with both of them. When your GM and coach don't look at the hockey side and are like, 'Anything you need, just call,' it was an awesome feeling."

Fletcher said in a statement: "Our thoughts and prayers are with Josh and his family following the news that he has been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Josh's competitive fire has led him to a successful career in the NHL and we know he will approach this new battle in the same manner."

MS is "life changing," Harding said, but he is thankful to his fiancée, Sara, who has been a rock at his side during episodes of fatigue and other symptoms. In fact, Sara is pregnant, meaning Josh is about to become a father for the first time.

"She knows I don't want anybody feeling sorry for me, and she's kept strong," Harding said. "I don't know if she goes in the bathroom and cries or whatever, but she's been amazing and if there's anybody this has been toughest on, it's Sara."

He said his mom, Eileen, dad, Tim, sisters, Stephanie and Becky, his agent, Craig Oster, and Sara's parents have been "amazing" throughout with their support.

Harding said a huge weight was lifted off his shoulders Wednesday when he spent morning to night calling friends because he didn't want them to find out of his diagnosis in Thursday's Star Tribune.

He said when he was first diagnosed, he didn't know if he should tell anybody. Then when he'd be in conversations with friends, whether he should tell them would be running through his head, and essentially, he didn't act like himself for weeks.

He had been skating with fellow locked-out players here in town. Suddenly, he disappeared for no reason for six weeks. I had gotten an inkling that he had a neck injury, but he had been seen out in public, like Timberwolves games, so I didn't bother him. That's what his teammates were told, too.

"But to miss six weeks with a neck injury, I don't know if any of the boys bought it," Harding said.

Suddenly after being cleared two weeks ago, he returned to Mariucci for skates. But he would leave the ice with no reason after 45 minutes because he didn't want to push it. Teammates knew something was up and said, "I don't know what's going on, but at least you're OK."

On Wednesday, Harding began to call those teammates. Cal Clutterbuck even said to him, "We knew something was up. We just didn't know what."

Harding talked to buddies like Niklas Backstrom, Kyle Brodziak, Darroll Powe, Tom Gilbert, Mikko Koivu.

Remember, Harding's been in the Wild organization his entire pro career. Drafted in 2002, this is a guy who actually played in Houston during the last lockout with Koivu, Pierre-Marc Bouchard and Stephane Veilleux. He signed a three-year, \$5.7 million deal this past summer to stay here in Minnesota.

"I needed to call these guys and let them hear this from me," Harding said. "They're my family. People are a little worried, but once I explain everything, everybody has been incredible.

"I tried to hide it for this long and that was tough enough. It's time to let everybody know and get it out, but I wanted to get back on the ice and make sure I was good first. I'm happy with the direction I'm going. But

there's still a mental game. You let a goal in and you wonder, 'Would I have let that in eight months ago?'"

As I mentioned in the story, Harding got a huge emotional lift when teammates who still didn't know what Harding had been dealing with were amazed that after six weeks off, he didn't miss a beat.

Now he wants to tell his story to 1) get it out so it's a distraction right now rather than if the season starts and it gets out then; 2) tell everybody that he will not allow MS end his career; 3) be a positive example for those afflicted with MS.

Dr. Peterson says there are 25,000 new cases diagnosed in the U.S. every year. MS usually hits people between ages 18-40, more women than men. The cause of MS is not known, but some say it's genetics, some say it's activated from virus, Peterson says.

Harding does have an uncle with MS.

"Thirty percent have a second episode in a year, 20 percent may take 2-5 years. It bodes well that we got on it right away before he got into a cycle of getting run down or his immune system flaring up. Maybe he never has another episode."

Doctors are treating Harding's case real aggressively with medication in an attempt to make sure no new lesions develop.

There is "no doubt" in Harding's mind he can play hockey despite MS.

"The way I feel right now, my attitude, the pressure I put on myself to succeed, the support group I have with my awesome doctors and my incredible family, there's no doubt in my mind," Harding said.

"Nobody thought I'd come back from a torn ACL and MCL as a goalie. I feel good out there. I feel I can compete. I feel like I'm seeing the puck good. Craig [Oster] even said, with the knee, I was farther behind. That was nine, 10 months. This is five, six weeks, and now I'm back at it. I'm way ahead."

WHAT IS MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a potentially debilitating disease in which your body's immune system eats away at the protective sheath that covers your nerves. This interferes with the communication between your brain and the rest of your body. Ultimately, this may result in deterioration of the nerves themselves, a process that's not reversible.

Symptoms vary widely, depending on the amount of damage and which nerves are affected. People with severe cases of multiple sclerosis may lose the ability to walk or speak. Multiple sclerosis can be difficult to diagnose early in the course of the disease because symptoms often come and go — sometimes disappearing for months.

There's no cure for multiple sclerosis. However treatments can help treat attacks, modify the course of the disease and treat symptoms.

MAYOCLINIC.com

Also, in Wild news, defenseman Clayton Stoner has signed with Banská Bystrica in Slovakia. He leaves Thursday. He becomes the third Wild locked-out player playing elsewhere and my suspicion is there will soon be more. Jared Spurgeon is playing for the SCL Tigers in Switzerland and Devin Setoguchi is playing for the Ontario Reign in California.

Mikko Koivu is back in the States after a short stint with Turku in Finland. He's in Anaheim on vacation right now.

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.29.2012

645018 Minnesota Wild

Wild's Harding starts battle with MS

Article by: MICHAEL RUSSO , Star Tribune

The 28-year-old Wild goalie is refusing to let the disease define him and plans to turn the diagnosis into an inspirational success story.

Multiple Sclerosis Signs These (5) Uncommon Signs of MS Appear Early. Identify Them Now. advice-community.com

Sitting on a white leather couch in the living room of his Edina home, Josh Harding doesn't get emotional as he tells his story.

He looks completely healthy. He doesn't seem scared. He speaks so confidently, so courageously, you'd never know his life has been altered forever.

"I don't look at this like I've got to take a new path," said Harding, drafted 10 years ago by the Wild and months off signing a new three-year contract. "This is a little bump in the road. I've had lots in life."

Harding, 28, has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, an incurable autoimmune disease in which the body randomly attacks and eats away the protective lining of his nerves and causes them to scar. It causes problems with balance, fatigue and blurred vision. There are 25,000 new cases diagnosed in the United States every year.

"I had a couple days where I felt bad for myself, but no more," said Harding, who plans on continuing his career. "There's things in life that happen. Sometimes you can't explain it. You deal with it."

After keeping the disease private from everyone other than his immediate family for more than a month, Harding began calling friends Wednesday. He spoke to nearly every one of his teammates. He called Wild General Manager Chuck Fletcher and coach Mike Yeo.

"Josh's competitive fire has led him to a successful career in the NHL and we know he will approach this new battle in the same manner," Fletcher said.

And Harding has made clear that MS will not end his career.

"There's going to be some good days and bad days, but I think if you talk to anybody in life, there's going to be some good days and bad days," Harding said.

Discovery and treatment

It started with a tweak in his neck. That evolved into dizziness, seeing black spots and numbness in his right leg.

"I just knew that something wasn't right," Harding said. "Honestly, I hadn't felt normal for a bit."

It was Sept. 27, and Harding went in for a Magnetic Resonance Imaging test on his neck. Wild doctor Dan Peterson noticed an abnormality and summoned Harding back to his Edina practice for an MRI of his brain.

Peterson discovered lesions and called Harding back to his office that night.

"I told him I thought it was MS, and he wasn't like, 'Woe is me,'" Peterson said. "He's like, 'What do we do? Tell me how to go forward.'"

Over the next few weeks, Harding underwent a battery of tests to rule out other afflictions. He met with neurologist Jonathan Calkwood of the Minneapolis Clinic of Neurology, whom Peterson calls the "MS guru." Peterson's diagnosis was confirmed.

For six weeks, as Harding tried to gain control of the disease with the support of his parents, Tim and Eileen, sisters Stephanie and Becky, and his fiancée, Sara, Harding didn't work out. He didn't show up to skate with fellow locked-out players, who grew worried.

He has been put on an aggressive treatment of medication in order to prevent new lesions and thus further episodes of "immune system flareup."

"It bodes well that we got on it right away before he got into a cycle of getting run down," Peterson said. "Maybe he never has another episode. Seventy percent of people with MS still go on to live long, productive, fulfilling lives. And from the first day, Josh hasn't lost that 'I'm going to kick its butt' attitude, so he can do this. There's no doubt he can keep playing."

Two weeks ago, Harding was cleared to skate again.

"The [other players] said after six weeks off, I didn't look out of place, which was big for me to hear," Harding said.

'I don't want people moping'

Harding has decided to tell his story for two selfless reasons.

The first is he is still optimistic the NHL lockout will end in time to have a shortened season.

"I'm a team-first guy," Harding said. "If we play a 41- or 60-game season, you lose seven in a row, you're not going to catch up. Let the distraction be

now rather than when we're on a four-game road trip, we need to win and all of a sudden it leaks out."

Harding also wants to create awareness and be an example for those suffering with MS. He's already considering a charitable foundation.

"Even if it changes one person's life to show that I'm not letting this come between me and my goals, that would be awesome," Harding said.

Still, Harding can't seem to catch a break. He's endured the physical toll of hip surgery and reconstructive knee surgery, the emotional toll of losing close friends Derek Boogaard and Rick Rypien in 2011.

"Still here though. Still here," Harding said, smiling. "You can let it get you down for a bit, but you've got to move past it. I know what my overall goal is to be, and that's a No. 1 goalie of the Minnesota Wild and to win a Stanley Cup here. It would make me happy to overcome this. Not just overcome this, but to really succeed with it.

"I don't want people treating me different, I don't want people feeling bad for me, I don't want people moping around. I want this to be a story where when we look back, it was a happy story."

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.29.2012

645019 Minnesota Wild

Minnesota Wild: Forbes says they're worth \$218 million

From news services

The Minnesota Wild rank 17th out of 30 NHL teams with a value of \$218 million, according to a Forbes magazine study released Wednesday, Nov. 28.

The Toronto Maple Leafs, who have not won a Stanley Cup since 1967, are the first NHL team worth \$1 billion, according to Forbes. They are worth \$250 million more than the next-most valuable franchise, the New York Rangers. The Montreal Canadiens are worth \$575 million.

Least valuable of the 30 teams are the St. Louis Blues at \$130 million and the Phoenix Coyotes at \$134 million.

The Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings are worth \$276 million, 10th overall.

Forbes says the NHL's total revenues were \$3.4 billion for the 2011-12 season.

With the players locked out by owners, the NHL already has canceled 422 regular-season games.

Pioneer Press LOADED: 11.29.2012

645020 Montreal Canadiens

Players on Canadian teams dinged on pension

By Pat Hickey

MONTREAL — Players with Canadian-based National Hockey League teams face a higher tax burden than most of their U.S.-based counterparts.

But taxes aren't the only area in which players on Canadian teams get dinged financially.

The NHL pension plan is funded and administered jointly by the league and the players' association. For the first 160 games of a player's career, he gets \$24,000 a season in his pension fund, regardless of where he plays. But things get more complicated after a player has logged the equivalent of two full seasons in the NHL.

The annual payments jump to about \$50,000 a year — the actual amount varies depending on exchange rates — but Canadian tax laws cap pension contributions at \$24,000. A Canadian player gets \$24,000 dumped into his

pension account and receives a cheque for the remaining amount — after the tax man takes his cut.

"You end up with about \$13,000, and if you're smart you invest that," Mathieu Darche said.

Darche added that the NHLPA is lobbying the federal government for an exemption that would allow more money to be placed into the pension fund.

"The difference is huge," Darche said. "A player who plays 15 seasons with a U.S. team will have about \$1 million in his pension account, while a player with a Canadian team would have \$375,000."

And in case you were wondering what the NHL does with the fines it collects, the money does not go to fund the NHL head office Christmas party or those board of governors meetings at Pebble Beach.

No, the money goes to the NHL Players Emergency Assistance Fund, and one of its main responsibilities is to make pension payments for players whose careers are ended by injury.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.29.2012

645021 Montreal Canadiens

Little to report from first day of NHL mediation

Stu Cowan

The NHL and the players' association began mediation on Wednesday, but there wasn't much to report.

The Canadian Press reports that the sides met separately with mediators Scot L. Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney at an undisclosed location. The non-binding sessions are intended to try and help the sides find some common ground, and will continue Thursday.

The NHLPA released the following statement from executive director Don Fehr following the meeting:

"A small group of NHLPA staff and players met today with two experienced FMCS mediators. We expect that these discussions will resume on Thursday."

You can read more by clicking here.

SI.com's Stu Hackel wrote a good column on fan anger rising during the lockout "with the NHL on road to brand suicide." You can read the column by clicking here.

And Pierre LeBrun reports on ESPN.com that Sidney Crosby is getting closer to playing in Europe. You can read that column by clicking here.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.29.2012

645022 Montreal Canadiens

Habs 1992-93 season flashback: Roy gets little help in loss to Canucks

Stu Cowan

As we wait and hope for an end to the NHL lockout, Canadiens fans can relive the 1992-93 season — the last year the Habs won the Stanley Cup — at HIO as we post game stories from that season.

The Habs took a 16-5-3 record into a game against the Vancouver Canucks on Nov. 28, 1992 at the Forum

Patrick Roy wants his associates to know he doesn't hold a grudge.

Oh, it's true that 37 Vancouver shots along with 44 by the Canadiens represent major league shoot-and-run offence which can cost teams games, such as last night's 6-5 loss to the Canucks. But, says Roy, keep 'er goin', chaps.

"The only thing that beat us," said Roy, "is a little breakdown in communications. On the first goal, for example, I thought I had the puck, but it was in the net.

"I could play the same game against Buffalo on Monday, allow four goals, and that would be enough to win the game."

What the Canadiens learned last night is that offence is fine, but there will be nights when the game plan can be just as appealing and as productive for the opposition.

What's clear, as well, is that the Canucks did it the hard way: they worked for it. What that means is that although they led briefly, 2-1, in the first period, they didn't move in front to stay until they came from behind three times.

Petr Nedved, who's been on fire lately after absorbing a generous amount of heat from Vancouver management, once again was the Canucks' big shooter, with goals in the first and third periods. His second goal in the third minute of the final period was his 14th of the season and provided Vancouver with the first two-goal margin either team enjoyed on this night.

Other Vancouver goal scorers were Sergio Momesso, Gerald Diduck, Greg Adams and Pavel Bure.

Mathieu Schneider, Mike Keane and Kirk Muller provided the Canadiens with a 3-2 lead in the first period.

Ed Ronan's goal early in the second lifted them into a 4-3 lead, but the Canucks put this one away with three consecutive goals.

This was high and hard shooting at its finest which, at the very least, represented quality entertainment.

It had large chunks of everything, except restraining tactics, which is why two of the National Hockey League's premier goaltenders – Roy and Kirk McLean – went through a night that neither one is likely to retain among his treasured memories.

"You could say," said Roy, "there wasn't too much defence out there, but it's something I've got to expect now and then. It didn't work for us tonight, so I'm not happy, but it's worked most of the time.

"It was spectacular ... a great show for the fans, but what we need is a little more work in our zone."

The game, in every way, was precisely what somebody up there had in mind when the National Hockey League introduced rules aimed at removing restraining tactics. Wide open stuff. Teams Whoosh! So it was that fewer than two minutes into the game, Schneider's shot struck Robert Dirk's skate during a power play, the deflection eluded McLean – and the fun game was on.

The best, by far, however, was yet to come.

There's the matter, for example, of second effort by a chap named Momesso, for a Vancouver goal only a couple of minutes later. Then, it's Nedved, courtesy of Eric Desjardins, who was victimized at the beginning and end of a play gone awry. First, Desjardins was stripped of the puck several feet outside his blue line. Then, he struck an airball in his attempt to intercept a Geoff Courtnall pass. Courtnall had pilfered it in the first place.

This was vintage offence – by both sides. Up, down ... highs and lows from moment to moment. Wide-open hockey at its best. Bottle and sell it across the counter, chaps.

Obviously, it was an easy sell right up to the last moment. There's no other way to describe the thunderous ovation which greeted the Canadiens' final goal – by Desjardins late in the third period. It lifted the Canadiens to within a goal of the Canucks – which always makes the opposition fair game in this part of town.

The goal came after some intense pressure in the Vancouver zone, but that's as far as the Canadiens got on a night when the Canucks weren't prepared to capitulate. On the other hand, Patrice Brisebois was in a position to tie the score when he was confronted with a gaping open side with three minutes remaining. Patrice (sigh) flubbed his shot.

The loss – only the Canadiens' second in 14 home games, may turn out to be costly. Guy Carbonneau stopped a shot with his instep in the third period and was dispatched to the hospital for X-rays.

NOTES – Defenceman J.J. Daigneault left the game with a bruised knee after the first period... . Benoit Brunet won't accompany the team on its four-game road trip, which starts in Boston on Thursday.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 11.29.2012

645023 Nashville Predators

Predators draft pick Brendan Leipsic tones down style for more offense

Written by Josh Cooper

BRENDAN LEIPSIC

- Drafted: Third round (89th overall) in 2012.
- Height/weight: 5-9/170.
- Age: 18.
- Hometown: Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- Team: Portland Winterhawks (WHL).

Something had to change with Brendan Leipsic. The balance in his game was off and he knew it.

Through nine contests of the 2012-13 Western Hockey League season, the forward had six points for the Portland Winterhawks. An agitator by trade, the Predators' third-round pick this year had too much annoyance in his game and not enough offense.

Once he realized he had to tone himself down, the scoring came in a big way — 32 points in the next 13 games. Through his hot streak he morphed into a potential sleeper pick from the 2012 draft.

"The way I play I'm a physical player, but I'm limiting the hits I give and take and focusing more on my offensive game, but still being a bit of an agitator and getting under guys' skin," Leipsic said. "I'm trying to play in between."

The Predators saw Leipsic's talent the season before the draft, and they thought his skills translated into the type of two-way scrappy mold they like.

As the 2012 draft in Pittsburgh moved into the third round, the Predators saw an opportunity to move up and grab him. So they traded their third-round pick in 2013 to the Rangers, who had the 89th overall selection.

"He was a guy we targeted," said Jeff Kealty, chief amateur scout for the Predators.

There was an expectation that the 5-foot-9, 170-pound Winnipeg native would improve somewhat offensively, but not to the level he has shown this season. Last year Leipsic had 58 points in 65 games. This year he has 38 points in 22 games — almost a full point more per game.

"He has that agitating-type style, but he also has a very good skill level," Kealty said. "I think the key for him is trying to find a balance for the two where he is still getting people off their games and dishing out some big hits, but not getting too caught up in that stuff where he's not contributing with his skill and his offensive game.

"As you can see with his production right now, he's finding that balance."

It's still too early to gauge Leipsic's NHL potential, but Kealty hopes the youngster can be similar to Bruins forward Brad Marchand.

In the 2011 Stanley Cup playoffs, Marchand's pest-like ways kept opponents off their games and opened up his offense. He notched 19 points in 25 games, while also picking up 40 penalty minutes, and was a key contributor in Boston's Stanley Cup championship.

"We've looked at him in that role," Kealty said. "I think you're just seeing the development of his skills and his production over the course of his junior career. He has taken a big step this year so far with that, and we're happy with the way it's going."

Tennessean LOADED: 11.29.2012

645024 Nashville Predators

NHL, union get back to bargaining with mediators

Written by Ira Podell

With the help of federal mediators, the NHL and the players' association got back to bargaining Wednesday after a week apart.

The location was secret, and so was what was discussed. The talks went well enough that the sides will be back at the negotiating table Thursday.

"No comments," was all NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly would say Wednesday night in an email to The Associated Press.

This marked the first meeting between the sides since a get-together that lasted just over two hours last week in New York after the locked-out players' association made a new comprehensive proposal that was quickly rejected by the NHL. The sides agreed on Monday to use the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

The lockout, which reached its 74th day Wednesday, has already forced the cancellation of all games through Dec. 14, the New Year's Day Winter Classic, and All-Star Weekend that was slated for Columbus, Ohio, in January.

Tennessean LOADED: 11.29.2012

645025 New Jersey Devils

Devils' Henrique to Have Surgery

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Devils center Adam Henrique will have a procedure to repair a ligament in his left thumb after he was hurt playing for the team's A.H.L. affiliate, the Albany Devils. He is expected to be sidelined up to six weeks.

New York Times LOADED: 11.29.2012

645026 New Jersey Devils

Mediators Join N.H.L. Talks as Report Details Teams' Finances

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

League and players union officials met separately with federal mediators Wednesday in an effort to jump-start stalled negotiations on the 74th day of the N.H.L. lockout.

Commissioner Gary Bettman and Donald Fehr, the executive director of the union, were believed to be meeting with Scot L. Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, but neither the league nor the union provided details. "We expect that these discussions will resume on Thursday," Fehr said.

It was the first time the league and the union had met since a Nov. 21 bargaining session, when the union made a new proposal that moved within \$182 million of the league's offer over a five-year deal. But Bettman said the two sides remained far apart.

Wednesday's meeting took place on the same day that Forbes magazine released its annual team valuation report.

The Maple Leafs top the list at \$1 billion, the first N.H.L. team to reach that level. The Rangers are next, valued at \$750 million, followed by the Montreal Canadiens at \$575 million.

The least valuable of the 30 clubs were the St. Louis Blues at \$130 million and the Phoenix Coyotes at \$134 million, according to the magazine.

The Maple Leafs, the Rangers and the Canadiens generated 83 percent of the league's income last season, according to the valuations. Thirteen of the N.H.L.'s 30 clubs lost money.

That division may lie at the heart of Bettman's resistance to making a deal unless virtually all of the league's demands are accepted by the union.

Five teams lost \$12 million or more last season, according to Forbes, and forcing player salaries as far down as possible could be of vital importance to their battered bottom line.

NEW COYOTES LEASE The Coyotes got a lift Tuesday night when the city council in Glendale, Ariz., approved a revised 20-year, \$320 million arena lease agreement with Greg Jamison, who is seeking to buy the team.

New York Times LOADED: 11.29.2012

645027 New Jersey Devils

NHL franchise value: Devils ranked 19th by Forbes at \$205 million

Rich Chere/The Star-Ledger

The value of the Devils franchise has been estimated at \$205 million, which ranks 19th in the 30-team NHL, according to Forbes magazine.

Topping the NHL are the Toronto Maple Leafs, worth \$1 billion, followed by the Rangers at \$750 million.

Star Ledger LOADED: 11.29.2012

645028 New Jersey Devils

Devils' Adam Henrique will undergo thumb surgery; out 4-6 weeks

By Rich Chere/The Star-Ledger

Devils center Adam Henrique, playing in Albany (AHL) during the NHL lockout, will undergo surgery on his left thumb Thursday.

Henrique suffered ulnar collateral ligament damage during the first period of Sunday's game against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton that was played in Atlantic City. He did not believe the injury was serious, but an MRI on Monday showed the damage.

"It's unfortunate," Devils GM Lou Lamoriello said. "I was at the game. He thought it was a sprain. We waited until Monday and had an MRI (in Albany) and felt it was better to have it repaired than to wait.

"He'll be in a cast for four weeks and then rehab for two weeks."

Consequently, if the NHL and its players can negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement in the next 4-5 weeks, the Devils will be without Henrique when the shortened season begins.

In 16 games for Albany, Henrique has eight points (five goals, three assists). His presence in the Albany lineup had been a benefit to the team's less-experienced players.

"I think so," Henrique said. "I'm still a young guy, but I think having a year in the NHL learning from guys like Zach (Parise), Marty (Brodeur), Patty (Elias) and Kovy (Ilya Kovalchuk) is something I can share with the guys here. I want to be a leader here for guys who want to ask questions if they feel they need to. They watch guys who've played in the NHL, how they act around the rink, away from the rink and how they prepare. I watched last year and it definitely benefitted me."

Star Ledger LOADED: 11.29.2012

645029 New Jersey Devils

NHL franchise prices continue to rise

By MARK EVERSON

Brooks on The Forbes estimates of NHL franchise values supports the game's need for increased revenue sharing, a lynchpin of the Players' Association's vision for hockey's future.

But it also vividly demonstrates why the owners have put such faith in Gary Bettman, now in his third destructive lockout. When he became the first NHL commissioner in 1993, replacing the last NHL president, Gil Stein, a franchise could be bought for some \$40-50 million. Forbes says the average franchise is worth \$282 million, and even the Islanders are worth \$155 million.

The sale of the Blues at \$130 million is regarded as a pittance.

Such an increase in value cements owner attitudes that will be tough for federal arbitrators to undo. The owners and the union resumed negotiations Wednesday with arbitrators on hand, a week after the union's last offer was rejected, basically with 'Thanks, but no thanks.'

The sides will be back at the negotiating table Thursday.

Forbes says the Rangers are the second-most valuable franchise, worth some \$750 million, behind the \$1 billion Maple Leafs. It claims the value of the franchise rose 48 percent mainly because of the revenue enhancements coming from the renovations to the Garden. It says the operating revenue for the Rangers, which it equates with profit, was \$74 million last season.

The Devils are listed at No. 19 worth \$205 million, but with debt at 112 percent of that figure, making \$2.8 million last season, going to the finals. The Islanders are said to have lost \$16 million.

Forbes says the Leafs, Rangers and Canadiens accounted for 83 percent of the league's profits, and 13 of the 30 teams lost money last season.

***Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist's mask was sold at auction for \$66,000 to Ranger fan Molly Heines of New York, with the proceeds to benefitting victims of Hurricane Sandy. ... Devils center Adam Henrique will miss 4-6 weeks with Albany when he undergoes surgical ligament repair on his left thumb today.

New York Post LOADED: 11.29.2012

645030 New York Islanders

After Barclays move, Forbes' boosts Islanders' valuation

By ARTHUR STAPLE

The Islanders' planned move to Brooklyn is already paying dividends, according to Forbes magazine. The publication valued the Islanders at \$155 million in its annual list of NHL franchise valuations, up 4 percent from last year's number.

The Isles also moved up in Forbes' National Hockey League rankings to 27th from 29th in the 30-team league. The average team value is \$282 million.

The Islanders' revenues during in the 2011-12 season, Forbes found, rose to \$66 million from \$63 million in 2010-11, another reason for the uptick in value. However, the magazine said, the team took a \$16 million loss, twice as much as the previous season. But the future looks brighter, not just with the promise of new revenue streams and potentially better ticket sales at Barclays Center.

NHL owners have locked out the players and have canceled 422 regular-season games for the 2012-13 season, but the Islanders are likely to benefit from a revenue-sharing proposal when the lockout is settled.

The Islanders, who declined to comment on the Forbes report, were barred from receiving revenue-sharing money under the previous collective bargaining agreement because of their relatively large market. The new proposal would benefit teams struggling the most.

"You can see how the new CBA in the NBA helped smaller-market team values, like in New Orleans and Memphis," said Mike Ozanian, the Forbes writer who puts together the list.

The move to Brooklyn comes with some drawbacks, notably the small capacity for hockey -- the Islanders are hoping for a seating capacity of 15,000 once some reconfigurations are made before they move in for the start of the 2015-16 season.

The Toronto Maple Leafs lead the Forbes list with a \$1 billion value, and the Rangers were second at \$750 million.

But for the first time in years, there's promise.

"It's not an emerging market they're moving to -- Brooklyn's hot," said Andrew Zimbalist, sports economics expert and a professor at Smith College. "... It's already emerged."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.29.2012

645031 New York Rangers

NY Rangers center Brad Richards urges NHL owners to speak up, encourages Roman Hamrlik to attend meetings

By Pat Leonard

Rangers center Brad Richards has been incredibly active during the lockout, and he was at it again Tuesday at New York Vintners near City Hall, revealed as the face of the men's fashion apparel line UNTUCKit.

He also spent about 10 minutes with several of us talking about the NHL lockout, on topics from mediation to decertification to Roman Hamrlik's anti-Don Fehr outburst to the need for owners to speak up for the good of hockey.

I wrote about some of Richards' most poignant comments in Wednesday's Daily News, but below are several of his other answers that I wasn't able to fit in the story:

ON HOW NEGOTIATIONS GOT HERE: "We pushed to some kind of offer that would show them that we would want to negotiate, and we thought that might happen, and when it doesn't, it really brings into question, 'What is this all about?' Is it a negotiation, or is it take-it-or-leave-it? It's just not going to work that way. It might have united the players even more towards that stance, but we just wanted to see some kind of give on something. There was nothing. They (the owners) actually went backwards in some issues. So it just gets more confusing for our membership."

ON DECERTIFICATION (OR REALLY, DISCLAIMER OF INTEREST -- A SIMILAR BUT QUICKER PROCESS THAN DECERTIFICATION, IN WHICH THE UNION RESCINDS ITS RIGHT TO REPRESENT THE PLAYERS, DISBANDING THE UNION): "It's been discussed. I mean everybody knows it's been discussed. There's so many details into that that as players we've got to learn about, and that takes time. The one thing that our leadership has done is we're informed every inch of the way, and we know everything before anything is done. And Don's not gonna -- just because it's a popular word right now -- doesn't mean we're absolutely doing it. He wants to make sure everyone knows what it (entails): the risks, the pros and cons, because it's not just let's do this and everything is going to be great. There are a lot more details to it."

HOW MUCH TIME IS LEFT UNTIL THIS SEASON WILL BE CANCELED?: "Well last time they were still negotiating in late January. I don't like that idea, but in the end it's all gonna be up to when they (the owners) think there's no time to play games left. As players, we want to play now, but in a month from now if you told us we could still play, we're all gonna be definitely on board. We're not gonna take off on vacation. So we're gonna be holding in here until someone says it's over, but I think there's lots of ways you can get a different amount of games in."

ON WHETHER RICHARDS HAS THOUGHT MORE ABOUT PLAYING ELSEWHERE: "(You have) the thought, but I'm here until someone tells me -- at least until the New Year, maybe I'll re-evaluate that -- until someone tells me there's no NHL this year. I'd like to think I'm gonna be here, but as time goes you do start to think about it more because you want to play. That's what we do."

ON WHETHER ROMAN HAMRLIK'S COMMENTS INDICATE A CRACK IN PLAYER RANKS OR IF HE'S JUST ONE GUY: "There's probably more guys in there. He's frustrated. We're all frustrated. He's allowed to do that. It's not about -- I think he made one quote about superstars -- no matter what deal we get, superstars are gonna get their money. So it's frustrating to see a player and not really know what he's talking about sometimes. Encourage him to get over and get into meetings and see the other side and how they function and how it all operates, but he's allowed to say what he wants. It's his third one. I'd be frustrated too, and who knows how many games he's gonna play. So we all are, but by no means -- there's way more positives and we're behind what's going on and we want to get a solution together to what's going on."

ON WHETHER ATTENDING MEETINGS IN NYC CONFIRMED WHAT RICHARDS ALREADY KNEW, OR WHETHER IT MADE HIM MORE PESSIMISTIC: "The only thing it does is it gets you informed, because we can all sit back and say, 'Why can't we get a deal? Why don't we offer this, why don't we offer that? But when you see it all take place, you really start to understand the process. I'm not going to get into that, but it's a lot different than people think on the outside."

OWNERS DON'T TALK PUBLICLY. DO THEY NEED TO?: "We encourage everybody that cares for the NHL and the game of hockey to speak up. That's what we need. Players are allowed to talk to Don on any issue, we can push, we can talk publicly, we can do what I'm doing right now, whatever we want, but we need a little push from the other side, too. If they really care about hockey, it's going down the wrong road."

ON OWNERS' PLAN: "I don't really know how that whole thing works over there. No one does. And that's upsetting to the players: We're not sure what their gameplan is and where they're going with it. We kind of knew last time. They wanted a salary cap. They made that clear. The fight was not to have one, and obviously that fight was lost. But this time, that's what's frustrating. You don't know what the fight is about now. There've been a lot of changes already."

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645032 New York Rangers

NHL franchise prices continue to rise

By MARK EVERSON

Brooks on The Forbes estimates of NHL franchise values supports the game's need for increased revenue sharing, a lynchpin of the Players' Association's vision for hockey's future.

But it also vividly demonstrates why the owners have put such faith in Gary Bettman, now in his third destructive lockout. When he became the first NHL commissioner in 1993, replacing the last NHL president, Gil Stein, a franchise could be bought for some \$40-50 million. Forbes says the average franchise is worth \$282 million, and even the Islanders are worth \$155 million.

The sale of the Blues at \$130 million is regarded as a pittance.

Such an increase in value cements owner attitudes that will be tough for federal arbitrators to undo. The owners and the union resumed negotiations Wednesday with arbitrators on hand, a week after the union's last offer was rejected, basically with "Thanks, but no thanks."

The sides will be back at the negotiating table Thursday.

Forbes says the Rangers are the second-most valuable franchise, worth some \$750 million, behind the \$1 billion Maple Leafs. It claims the value of the franchise rose 48 percent mainly because of the revenue enhancements coming from the renovations to the Garden. It says the operating revenue for the Rangers, which it equates with profit, was \$74 million last season.

The Devils are listed at No. 19 worth \$205 million, but with debt at 112 percent of that figure, making \$2.8 million last season, going to the finals. The Islanders are said to have lost \$16 million.

Forbes says the Leafs, Rangers and Canadiens accounted for 83 percent of the league's profits, and 13 of the 30 teams lost money last season.

***Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist's mask was sold at auction for \$66,000 to Ranger fan Molly Heines of New York, with the proceeds to benefitting victims of Hurricane Sandy. ... Devils center Adam Henrique will miss 4-6 weeks with Albany when he undergoes surgical ligament repair on his left thumb today.

New York Post LOADED: 11.29.2012

645033 Ottawa Senators

Senators coach pays surprise visit to minor hockey team

By ALLEN PANZERI, Ottawa Citizen November 28, 2012

Senators coach pays surprise visit to minor hockey team

Senators coach Paul MacLean and his staff surprised the Gloucester Rangers major atom A team by showing up to run their practice Tuesday.

The 10-year-olds on the Gloucester Rangers major atom A team figured something was up.

After all, it was curious that they were being asked to bring their game sweaters to an ordinary practice.

What's up with that? Team picture?

Maybe.

But nothing could have prepared them for the moment when their coach, Kevin Graham, introduced Ottawa Senators head coach Paul MacLean as their guest for the day.

The sharp intake of breath across the dressing room was audible. Eyes couldn't have been any wider.

"I was excited, but in shock, too," said right wing Tyler Vezina.

"I didn't really see that coming."

Other teams across the city can expect to be similarly shocked over the next few weeks. Ottawa's coaching staff already has a schedule of surprise pop-up visits planned over the next 10 days, and then will do their best to handle the requests that come in.

This visit was quickly arranged last week by a string of connections that led to MacLean and then a phone call to the team from the Senators.

"It was a phone call out of the blue," said the Rangers' team manager, Steve Lacroix.

Then came the hard part: Keeping it a secret from the players.

In the Rangers' dressing room, MacLean told the players to get ready for a typical Ottawa Senators practice. It was going to be fast, but it was also going to fun.

"I'm feeling a bit nervous," he joked. "I haven't done this in a while."

And then it was a rush to the door to be the first on the ice.

For the next 50 minutes, MacLean, assistant coach Dave Cameron, video coach Tim Pattyson, and manager of team services Jordan Silmser ran the players through a variety of drills.

"This was a lot of fun," said MacLean.

"It's a good opportunity for us now to spend some time in the community and help some kids out.

"I thought they did the drills real good, too. They're obviously a well-coached team. They caught on real fast to what we wanted to do, and that's good."

"It's good for us, too. It gets us out and gives us something to do."

Graham said the visit is not something that anyone, coaches or players, is going to forget any time soon.

"For me, as a head coach, a big part of it in hockey is the kids having fun, developing as players, developing as people, and creating some memories, as well," he said.

"Having these guys out is going to create huge memories for these kids. There are a lot of things that happen through the year, highs and lows, winning games, losing games, developing as a team.

"Something like this just puts a big smile on the kids' faces. I think this has created a great memory for this season and probably seasons to come."

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 11.29.2012

645034 Ottawa Senators

Players on Canadian teams get dinged in NHL pension plan

By Pat Hickey

MONTREAL -- Players with Canadian National Hockey League teams face a higher tax burden than most of their U.S.-based counterparts.

But taxes aren't the only area in which players on Canadian teams get dinged financially. The NHL pension plan is funded and administered jointly by the league and the players' association. For the first 160 games of a player's career, he gets \$24,000 a season in his pension fund, regardless of where he plays. But things get more complicated after a player has logged the equivalent of two full seasons in the NHL.

The annual payments jump to about \$50,000 a year -- the actual amount varies depending on exchange rates -- but Canadian tax laws cap pension contributions at \$24,000. A Canadian player gets \$24,000 dumped into his pension account and receives a cheque for the remaining amount -- after the tax man takes his cut.

"You end up with about \$13,000, and if you're smart you invest that," the NHLPA's Mathieu Darche said.

Darche, a free-agent forward who played with the Canadiens in 2011-12, added that the union is lobbying the federal government for an exemption that would allow more money to be placed into the pension fund.

"The difference is huge," Darche said. "A player who plays 15 seasons with a U.S. team will have about \$1 million in his pension account, while a player with a Canadian team would have \$375,000."

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 11.29.2012

645035 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators captain Daniel Alfredsson weighs potential lockout options

By Don Brennan

When a lockout wiped out the 2004-05 NHL season, a 32-year-old Daniel Alfredsson went back to Europe with the purpose of playing competitive, winning hockey.

He signed with the Frolunda Indians in the Swedish Elite League, the team in his hometown of Gothenburg and one with which he played three seasons prior to joining the Senators in 1995.

Alfredsson played 15 regular-season games with Frolunda, scoring eight goals and nine assists. In the playoffs, he had a team-high 18 points in 14 games and led the Indians to the title they was unable to win when he was playing for them in his early 20s.

"That's a year I'll always remember," Alfredsson said Wednesday at Carleton University after his third practice in a row with the Ravens. "I was fortunate to be on a great team, and I played some of my best hockey I've ever played."

But that was then and this is now.

A little more than two weeks from his 40th birthday, Alfredsson is pondering his future in the event of yet another cancellation.

This time, he isn't searching for a championship in a prestigious league. This time, he'd be going back to Europe with the mindset of creating life-lasting memories for his wife and four sons — and keeping the door open for his return to the Senators in the 2013-14 season.

Alfredsson mentioned Austria as a possible destination for him and his family — along with again listing Italy and France — should the NHL fail to reach a new CBA with the players' association.

He'll probably start exploring the options in earnest around the time he turns the big four-oh Dec. 11.

"I think it's just trying to do something fun with the family, instead of just going in and kind of fall into hockey," Alfredsson said in the Ravens coaches' office Wednesday. "I've talked to my wife about it a bit. I haven't thrown any hooks out there to see what's available or anything. But that's definitely something I'll start looking into, maybe in a couple of weeks.

"(Insurance) is not an issue at all. It's not that complicated, it wouldn't be that expensive. I'm just looking for an experience.

"Even if it's not the highest level, you still play, still practise. You have games and that makes it easier to push yourself in practice.

"I think if I do go that's a good indication that I'm looking to continue my career, as well."

Alfredsson won't be travelling with a chip on his shoulder, either. He won't be cursing NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and the owners for their pigheadedness.

"It's not Plan A (for this season)," he said, clearly preferring to wear Senators sweater No. 11 again in 2012-13. "Once you get there, you can be frustrated, mad, pissed off, whatever it is, but it's not going to help. It is what it is.

"You've just got to make the best of a situation. That's the way I'm looking at it. To maybe grab a chance that I otherwise wouldn't have. It could turn out to be a great few months."

Alfredsson joked that his oldest boy Hugo might have to stay behind so as not to leave his atom team in Kanata short. The coach, Daniel's brother Henric, would probably understand.

"There are some really beautiful cities in Europe," Alfredsson said of the options. "I can't say I know that much about the other leagues, either, that one is a better fit. We would find one where we could get schooling for the kids, activities for the kids, those kind of things will be a big factor."

And they do say the skiing is fantastic in Austria.

"In Italy and France there's skiing, too," said Alfredsson. "I don't know. I like skiing. The whole family skis. I don't know."

ICE CHIPS: Senators C Zack Smith left Wednesday evening for Denmark, where he'll play in the premier league as a member of the Frederikshavn White Hawks. "It's obviously below some of the elite leagues like Sweden and the KHL, but from what I'm told it's about equivalent to the Slovakian league, not quite as good as the Finnish league," said Smith. "It'll be good." ... On the morning of the NHL/NHLPA's first session with a mediator, Senators team rep Chris Phillips still held hope the season will be saved. "Obviously we're further along, and closer to that date of (cancelling), whatever it is, but we're getting closer to it," said Phillips. "But I'm still optimistic there's going to be (a season)."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 11.29.2012

645036 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators defenceman Jared Cowen tries to stay positive after hip surgery

By Don Brennan

Experience tells Jared Cowen to remain only cautiously optimistic he'll be back to full health in time for next year's Senators training camp.

Yes, he was told Monday in New York, the operation to repair a torn labrum in his left hip was successful. And yes, he's aware of the 6-8 month timeline for recovery. But Cowen also heard similar estimations after he had unrelated reconstructive surgery on his right knee four years ago.

"I know better," the 21-year-old Senators defenceman said Wednesday at Bell Sensplex, his first interview since having his hip fixed Nov. 17. "It was only six months (as the projected recovery time) with my knee, but more like a year and a half until I felt normal again. I know what it's really like. Six months until I can play, a year until it feels close to normal.

"I know the reality."

Cowen can safely say the hip feels "fine" now. Following doctors' orders to rest it for a month, until he's off crutches, could be a challenge.

"It doesn't even hurt," said Cowen. "I wish there was a little bit of pain, to keep me from doing stuff. I can walk, but I'm supposed to keep right off of it, so (the stitches) stay tight.

"It's way better than when I did my knee, though. It's totally different. My knee was swollen. I had it in a straight brace for awhile. Now, it's not even been two weeks and I can ride the bike and everything."

That would be easy pedalling on a stationary device, for range of motion purposes — not going at it like someone training for the Tour de France.

"(In) the consultation, (the surgeon) said it's important to not do too much now," explained Cowen. "You'll feel like you're doing well now, progressing, but when you go to do more, in terms of running, or walking ... doing too much now would be inhibiting later. It's kind of hard to pull back on the reins and take it easy, but he said later 'you should be fine.'"

It might be tempting to call Cowen injury prone if he wasn't one of just three Senators to play in all 82 games as an impressive rookie last season. More accurately, the rugged 6-foot-5, 230-pounder was simply hit with a second dose of really bad luck when he encountered hip troubles early last month in Binghamton while with the AHL Senators.

"The first time I hurt it, it wasn't that bad," he said. "I was coming back ... I skated twice or three times, and it felt like I was progressing. I kind of hurt it a second time ... which actually tore it, they told me. That time I kind of figured there was something wrong, because my leg went numb a little bit, and it wasn't getting better, like before. I didn't know how bad it was until they told me I was getting an MRI. Then I was like, it's bad."

"I only got to play three games (for the B-Sens), which was brutal. If there's a time to do it, I guess it's now, if the (NHL) season doesn't go on. But there's no good time at all, really."

"It's already my second injury like this, so it kind of sucks."

Cowen will mostly spend downtime at his rented home in Kanata, where he at least has the company of Wacey Hamilton, a B-Sens forward who is out of action with a concussion.

"It's nice to have someone around, or I'd be going crazy," said Cowen. "We don't do much, because he has a concussion and can't do a lot, and I'm not supposed to do a lot anyway. We're couch potatoes."

Better to sit and watch TV now than get up and do something that further delays his return to game action.

"I'm not sure what kind of issues I'd have with the hip," said Cowen. "With my knee, I had tendinitis in the front, which is normal, but I'm not really familiar with the hip. It's kind of hard to imagine how it would feel bad, since it feels pretty good right now. (But) it's hard to say where I'll be six months from now."

"It's a long ways away, so I've got time on my side. That's the one good thing about it. And I have all summer. Lots of time to skate and feel good about it."

Jared Cowen file

January, 2009: As a 17-year-old defenceman with Spokane, suffers season-ending knee injury in a game against Chilliwack. He ends up requiring reconstructive surgery.

June, 2009: Drafted by the Senators ninth overall.

April, 2010: Makes his NHL debut, versus Tampa Bay, in a one-game callup.

November, 2011: Scores his first NHL goal, versus Boston.

April, 2012: Completes first NHL season as one of only three Senators to play all 82 games. Wound up with 5 goals, 12 assists, 56 PIMs and a minus-4 rating.

October, 2012: Suffers hip injury in third game for Senators' AHL affiliate in Binghamton.

November, 2012: Has surgery to repair a torn labrum that is expected to keep him out of action for 6-8 months.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 11.29.2012

645037 Philadelphia Flyers

Timing is key in NHL mediation, expert says

Sam Carchidi, Inquirer Staff Writer

Federal mediators swooped into a meeting between the NHL and the players' union Wednesday and tried to steer the sides to a collective bargaining agreement.

The mediators, Scot Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney, will attempt to cut through the discord and distrust that have built over the last few months as they confer with NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and union boss Donald Fehr, among others.

Think of it as a troubled couple - Bettman and Fehr - visiting with a pair of marriage counselors.

Joseph Folger, a Temple University professor who teaches courses in conflict and mediation, said the mediators can be helpful.

"It's all about the timing when mediation is involved," he said. "If both sides are at a place where they realize the alternative is much worse than compromising," then a deal will get done. "Are they looking down at the abyss and figuring, 'We can't go on like this'? If they're not there yet, than there's very little the mediators can do."

Folger said that if the labor war has turned into a personal battle - as it seems to have done, with Fehr and Bettman as the main combatants - "it makes the mediation tougher."

He also said mediation can "save face" for the side that is more reluctant to compromise.

"The mediation-made-me-do-it syndrome can work in their favor," he said. The side that makes what it perceives as the biggest concessions can "save face" by implying it was pressure from the mediator that caused it. It wasn't that they caved, but they went with something the mediator [suggested]."

Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner, said the league had "no particular level of expectation going into this process."

Fehr said on the YES Network: "If both sides want to come to an agreement, a skilled mediator can help."

The two sides agreed to meet again Thursday.

Dividing hockey-related revenue, length of player contracts, length of the CBA, and free agency are among the issues that have stalled negotiations.

No one is putting a timetable on things, but if an agreement is not in place by early January, many experts think, the entire season will be canceled. Thus far, games have been erased through Dec. 14.

One of the dynamics that may help the NHL and the players union, Folger said, is that their battle "is in the public eye." There can be pressure to close the deal because the sides don't want to hear that "they couldn't even get it done with a mediator."

But that's what happened in 2004-05, when mediation couldn't resolve the differences and the season was canceled.

Mediation differs from arbitration, which has a third party impose a binding agreement. In mediation, the neutral third party works as a facilitator.

Flyers center Claude Giroux has been getting treatment on his neck in Georgia. GM Paul Holmgren said he wasn't permitted to comment.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645038 Philadelphia Flyers

Sports in Brief: Maple Leafs most valuable NHL team

Staff

The Flyers are worth \$336 million, according to Forbes magazine, but that puts them eighth behind Toronto - the most valuable of the 30 NHL teams.

The Maple Leafs are the first NHL team worth \$1 billion, the magazine reported. The top-ranking Leafs, who have not won the Stanley Cup since

1967, are worth \$250 million more than the next most-valuable franchise, the New York Rangers. The Montreal Canadiens are third at \$575 million.

Least valuable are the St. Louis Blues at \$130 million.

Forbes says the NHL's total revenues were \$3.4 billion for the 2011-12 season. Helped by that 9 percent increase, the average NHL team is worth \$282 million, 18 percent more than a year ago.

The Leafs, Rangers (last Stanley Cup in 1994), and Canadiens (last title in 1993) account for 83 percent of the league's income.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL: Former Notre Dame coach Ara Parseghian will be honored Dec. 6 by the National College Football Awards Association for his contribution to the sport.

Parseghian, 89, coached the Irish from 1964 to 1974, leading them to national championships in 1966 and 1973. He had a 95-17-4 record in 11 seasons.

Louisiana State football coach Les Miles has a new seven-year contract that runs through 2019. A person familiar with the deal said that Miles' new annual pay will be in the range of \$4.3 million. He has an 85-20 record with one national title since arriving at LSU in 2005.

SOCCKER: Manchester United's Robin van Persie scored 32 seconds into the game as the English Premier League leaders beat visiting West Ham, 1-0.

GOLF: Worried that players will use long putters as an advantage instead of a last resort, the U.S. Golf Association and the Royal & Ancient Golf Club proposed a rule that would take effect in 2016. Players would not be allowed to anchor the bell putter, or broom-handle putter, as they do now.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645039 Philadelphia Flyers

Wellwood's wakeup call with Phantoms

FRANK SERAVALLI

GLENS FALLS, N.Y. - For Eric Wellwood, life in this picturesque, upstate New York hamlet hasn't been so pretty this fall.

Wellwood, 22, played important minutes for the Flyers in 11 Stanley Cup playoff games last spring. For three straight games last week, he was relegated to the stands as a healthy scratch - the recipient of some tough love from Phantoms coach Terry Murray.

"The fact that he played games last year, well, really, that's last year," Murray said. "You've got to come back and do it all over again this year. That's the way pro hockey works."

Refocused and re-energized, Wellwood was back in the lineup on Wednesday night at the Glens Falls Civic Center for the Phantoms' 3-2 loss to St. John's. He admitted that it was quite the wakeup call to be scratched for the fourth time in a span of 12 games this season.

With the NHL lockout forcing him and fellow Flyers Sean Couturier, Brayden Schenn, Erik Gustafsson and Marc-Andre Bourdon up to Adirondack, Wellwood said it was easy to lose focus. Like most observers, Wellwood probably had himself penciled into the Flyers lineup based on his consistent performances at the end of last season.

"I recognize that things aren't going to be handed to you," Wellwood said. "Coming into camp, I kind of expected to get minutes right away without proving anything. That didn't happen. I think we've got a lot of good players down here. Now, when I get my chance, I have to take advantage of it."

Murray said Wellwood has failed to recognize exactly the level of skill and potential he possesses. It's Murray's job to draw it out of Wellwood.

"It's not a lack of effort. His intentions are always good," Murray said. "The most important thing is to get on the balls of your feet and be aggressive with your skating. He showed it a little bit, but it wasn't there in a game-to-game, shift-to-shift basis. We need that from him. He needs to learn that as a pro."

Murray said Wednesday night was a "step in the right direction" for Wellwood. He posted one shot on goal but did not register any points. Wellwood has just one goal and four assists for five points in 14 games. Last year, he netted 21 points in 33 games with the Phantoms before being called up. In Philadelphia, he had five goals and four assists in 24 regular-season games with the Flyers. He averaged 11:42 in ice time during the Flyers' 11 playoff games, an uptick from his 10:57 mark in the regular season.

The AHL does not keep track of ice time as an official statistic, but Wellwood is clearly still the Phantoms' 12th forward. When Zac Rinaldo was ejected in the first period, winger Tyler Brown slid up and stole those extra minutes from Wellwood.

Flyers coach Peter Laviolette lauded Wellwood last year for his speed and aggressiveness on the forecheck.

"When pucks are on his stick, he can create separation," Murray explained. "He can put pressure on a defenseman. Or he can go recover pucks in the offensive zone off a dump-in and create opportunities. That just has to be more consistent for me."

Murray admitted that Wellwood isn't the only Phantom to be caught thinking about his status during the NHL lockout. The only difference is that some of those players have realized that amid a lockout now dragging into its 74th day, there is no guarantee there will even be an NHL this season.

"It's always in the back of your mind," Wellwood said. "I think a lot of guys expected to get a lot of points coming down here this year, but you look at guys like [St. John's Alex] Burmistrov or [Adam] Henrique, those guys aren't doing so well. As much as you try to focus on the hockey game, it is always your hope that you get back up there and start playing in the NHL."

For Wellwood, the message may not be pleasant. But coming from Murray - who has coached 1,012 games at the NHL level and played in 302 himself - the lesson could be career-changing.

"He knows how to win, look back to his junior career," Murray said. "It's a process to learn how to do that as a pro."

Slap shots

Sean Couturier nearly knotted the game with 1:08 remaining on a short-side slap shot from the top of the left circle . . . Zac Rinaldo was ejected in the first period because of a 5-minute elbowing major, which resulted in a game misconduct. Upon closer inspection of the replay, Rinaldo did deliver a thundering hit, but he kept his elbows down and his skates remained on the ice. Seemed like a tough call for a major penalty; the St. John's defenseman was uninjured on the play . . . Stick with the Daily News through Saturday for more Phantoms coverage, including features on Brayden Schenn and Couturier.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645040 Philadelphia Flyers

Agent offers little update on injured Giroux

FRANK SERAVALLI

On Wednesday afternoon, Brisson said Giroux is "doing real well" and was hoping to have a full report on Wednesday night. Brisson said late Wednesday night that he had not yet received any updates.

Giroux, 24, suffered a neck injury on Nov. 16 in Germany while playing for the Berlin

Polar Bears when he was checked in the head. Before that, he had collected 19 points in nine games for the Polar Bears.

When contacted by the Daily News, Giroux referred all comment to Brisson. The Flyers are not permitted to have contact with Giroux during the NHL lockout, which reached its 74th day on Thursday.

Carrick, based at Life University in Marietta, Ga., is best known for treating NHL stars Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews and Minnesota forward Guillaume Latendresse for their concussions. Crosby is also represented by Brisson and CAA Sports.

At this point, all that has been reported is that Giroux has suffered a "minor neck injury," though Brisson has never definitively ruled out a concussion when asked.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645041 Philadelphia Flyers

'Tinky Winky' had too much to drinky?

TOM MAHON

THE COP WHO pulled over Riley Sheahan probably had a pretty good idea the Detroit Red Wings prospect was hammered before he even thought of pulling out a breathalyzer.

Sitting behind the wheel, was Sheahan, wearing a purple Teletubbies costume. You remember that colorful character, don't you? Cute little fella named Tinky Winky. We can only hope that the costume was Halloween-related as the incident happened on Oct. 29.

According to a police report obtained by Mlive.com, Sheahan was arrested while driving the wrong way in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was then charged with being "super drunk" after it was discovered he had a blood-alcohol-level of .30. The legal limit in Michigan is .08.

Wait, it gets worse for the 20-year-old from St. Catharines, Ontario, who plays for the AHL's Grand Rapids Griffins. When he was stopped, he produced a driver's license that belongs to fellow Red Wings prospect Brendan Smith, who is 23. According to the police report, Sheahan said he used it to get into bars.

Sheahan faces up to 180 days in jail, and possible deportation, due to the "super drunk" charge. He may also be charged with carrying false identification.

Sadly, Sheahan has been down this road before. In 2010, he was arrested on alcohol-related charges while playing for Notre Dame.

Sheahan is scheduled to appear in court on Dec. 13.

We suggest he leave the Teletubbies suit at home.

Forbes: Flyers 8th

The Flyers are worth \$336 million, ranked eighth in the NHL according to Forbes magazine.

The Flyers' value increased 16 percent from last year, according to the magazine.

Forbes also reported the Toronto Maple Leafs are the first NHL team to be worth \$1 billion. The Leafs last won the Stanley Cup in 1967.

The rest of the top 10: 2, Rangers, \$750 million; 3, Canadiens, \$575 million; 4, Blackhawks, \$350 million; 5, Bruins, \$348 million; 6, Red Wings, \$346 million; 7, Canucks, \$342 million; 8, Flyers; 9, Penguins, \$288 million; 10, Stanley Cup champion Kings, \$276 million.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645042 Philadelphia Flyers

Agent: Giroux doing 'well'

Staff

Claude Giroux has been visiting chiropractic neurologist Dr. Ted Carrick in Georgia since Monday, according to his agent, CAA Sports' Pat Brisson.

Brisson said Giroux is "doing real well" and was hoping to have a full report later on Wednesday night.

Giroux, 24, suffered a neck injury on Nov. 16 in Germany while playing for the Berlin Polar Bears when he was checked in the head. Prior to that, his

time in Europe was well spent, collecting 19 points in 9 games for the Polar Bears.

Dr. Carrick, based at the Life University in Marietta, Ga., is best known for treating NHL stars Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews and Minnesota forward Guillaume Latendresse for their concussions.

At this point, all that has been reported is Giroux has suffered a "neck injury," though Brisson has not ruled out a concussion.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645043 Philadelphia Flyers

Forbes: Flyers worth \$336 million, 8th in NHL

Staff

The Flyers are worth \$336 million, ranked eighth in the NHL according to Forbes magazine.

The Flyers' value increased 16 percent from last year, according to the magazine.

Forbes also reported that the Toronto Maple Leafs are the first NHL team to be worth \$1 billion. The Leafs last won the Stanley Cup in 1967.

The rest of the top 10: 2, Rangers, \$750 million; 3, Canadiens, \$575 million; 4, Blackhawks, \$350 million; 5, Bruins, \$348 million; 6, Red Wings, \$346 million; 7, Canucks, \$342 million; 8, Flyers; 9, Penguins, \$288 million; 10, Stanley Cup champion Kings, \$276 million.

Forbes said the NHL's total revenues were \$3.4 billion for the 2011-12 season, an increase of 9 percent from the previous. The average worth of an NHL team is \$282 million, 18 percent more than a year ago.

NHL players are currently locked out by the owners.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 11.29.2012

645044 Philadelphia Flyers

Giroux not concussed, feeling 'really fine'

Staff

Flyers fans can exhale.

Claude Giroux is feeling "really fine," and as of now, is not considered concussed.

That comes from his agent, Pat Brisson, who talked to CSNPhilly.com late Wednesday night.

"There is nothing wrong here, Claude is doing great," Brisson said from his office in Los Angeles.

"I don't speak lightly. I'm not one of those who would speak from one side of my mouth."

Giroux has been undergoing neck treatment outside Atlanta since Monday at the Carrick Institute at Life University in Marietta, Ga.

The Flyers center is under the care of noted neurologist Ted Carrick, who worked with Sidney Crosby for about a year, following multiple concussions.

Carrick, whose specialty is chiropractic neurology, has also worked with fellow NHL players Jonathan Toews and Guillaume Latendresse.

Two weeks ago, Giroux suffered a hit to the head playing in Germany for Eisbaren Berlin against Krefeld.

"He got a little nervous and didn't want to push it," Brisson said.

Brisson spoke to Berlin general manager Peter Lee, who feared that Giroux might be concussed. Lee told the Ottawa Sun last week that Giroux didn't "feel right" after the hit.

Brisson said tonight that he called Lee immediately when hearing from Giroux.

"Claude called me the night he got hurt, I talked to Peter Lee and I asked him [for Claude] to take a break and after what happened to him [last season in Philadelphia]," Brisson said.

"I know so much about neck and head injuries now, I realized how much the neck is important. Dr. Carrick is a great doctor who sees a lot of our players."

Brisson said he wanted Giroux immediately evaluated in the U.S.

Carrick, however, is in Atlanta just one week out of every month.

"I told Peter I wanted to bring Claude here to see Carrick," Brisson said. "I trust Carrick ... I wanted him to do work with Carrick. I have had a lot of players go through Carrick.

"If it weren't for Carrick, I don't know about Sidney whether he'd be ... 100 percent. I got players going back and forth [to him].

"Not medication, just exercises and testing. I talked to Claude [on Tuesday] and he's happy and feeling great."

Brisson said he expects a complete report from Carrick either Thursday or Friday. A Flyers source said the club is aware of Carrick's treatments, but because of the lockout can't contact the player directly.

"There is nothing serious here," Brisson insisted. "This is more precaution. I like when our players go to Carrick.

"Even when they are not hurt, they learn, it's so good for them to be in this system with awareness. ... In the next day or so I hope to have a full report. I am not alarmed."

Flyers general manager Paul Holmgren told CSNPhilly.com last week all he knew was that Giroux was returning for "evaluation and precaution" for what was "diagnosed" as a minor neck injury.

Giroux's last official concussion came Dec. 10, 2011 against Tampa Bay when teammate Wayne Simmonds accidentally clipped him in the back of the head.

Giroux missed 10 days and four games as a result of that collision.

Given that prior injury, Brisson said, prompted him to make sure Giroux had a full evaluation by Carrick now.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.29.2012

645045 Philadelphia Flyers

Forbes: Flyers NHL's 8th-most valuable team

Staff

It's been all gloom and doom for NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and the league office since the lockout began on Sept. 16.

While the Commish continues to paint a bleak overall picture of the state of the game, Forbes, in its annual NHL valuations survey ranked the Toronto Maple Leafs as being worth \$1 billion.

That's right, the Maple Leafs are hockey's first billion-dollar enterprise.

The Leafs are owned by Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, which also owns the NBA Raptors and the lucrative Air Canada Centre.

Forbes listed the Flyers as the eighth-most valuable franchise, worth \$336 million. The magazine said the Flyers, owned by Comcast-Spectacor, took in \$124 million in revenues last year.

Flyers president Peter Luukko had no comment on the survey.

As bad as Bettman says the league's finances are, Forbes said the average NHL club value is \$282 million, which is 18 percent higher than a year ago.

It also says the league did \$3.4 billion in revenues last season and not \$3.3 billion.

Here are your top 10 NHL franchises:

Toronto (\$1 billion); Rangers (\$750 million); Montreal (\$575 million); Chicago (\$350 million); Boston (\$348 million); Detroit (\$346 million); Vancouver (\$342m); Flyers (\$336 million); Pittsburgh (\$288 million); and Los Angeles (\$276 million).

Forbes estimates that the three most valuable teams – Maple Leafs, Rangers and Canadiens – accounted for 84 percent of the NHL's income, while 13 of 30 clubs lost money.

Given the overall wealth of the top eight NHL franchises, you can make a pretty convincing argument for more revenue sharing by the richer club toward the lesser franchises.

That has been the crux of the NHLPA's argument for at least \$250-300 million in revenue sharing from the start. At present, the league is offering \$230 million to the pot for the next CBA.

Looking at the dregs, Forbes ranked the five least valuable franchises as: Carolina (\$162 million); Islanders (\$155 million); Columbus (\$145 million); Phoenix (\$134 million); and St. Louis (\$130 million).

With the Islanders moving to Brooklyn's Barclays Center in a few years, look for its franchise value to rise accordingly.

Vancouver and Chicago have seen their franchise value rise since 2010 as both surpassed the Flyers. The Flyers' value has grown but not as fast. Two years ago, the Flyers were worth \$301 million.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.29.2012

645046 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL Notes: Crosby talking to teams in Europe

Staff

Shane Doan didn't sign with the Flyers, but the possibility was apparently real enough where the team made a couple prototype jerseys for his potential signing (see story).

Here are some other notes from around the NHL:

Crosby talking to teams in Europe

Penguins star Sidney Crosby hasn't bailed for a job overseas yet, but he might be getting close.

Crosby's agent has been in discussions with teams in Russia and Switzerland, according to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (via ProHockeyTalk).

"It's a lot more possible right now," Crosby told the newspaper. "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 missed large chunks of the last two seasons after suffering from lasting effects of a concussion suffered in the 2011 Winter Classic.

"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."

Murray to undergo shoulder surgery

Ryan Murray, the second overall pick in the 2012 draft, will undergo surgery to repair a torn labrum in his shoulder, according to Aaron Portzline of the Columbus Dispatch (via ProHockeyTalk).

According to the report, Murray hurt his shoulder on Nov. 16 in a game for WHL Everett when he tried to brace his fall after a hit.

The recovery from the surgery will take about six months.

Murray was drafted by the Blue Jackets, who are hoping that Murray could be an anchor for their defense. The Blue Jackets allowed the third-most

goals per game (3.13) and the sixth-most shots per game (30.9) last season.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.29.2012

645047 Phoenix Coyotes

Penguins' Sidney Crosby, other NHL players itchin' for ice time

By Sarah McLellan azcentral sports Wed Nov 28, 2012 9:00 PM

For far too long, the face of the National Hockey League has been invisible.

Because of a hit to the head.

And another.

And then one more.

Now, when Pittsburgh Penguins star Sidney Crosby is finally ready to make a return from the concussion-like symptoms that have pestered him for almost two years, labor strife between the league and NHL Players' Association has wiped out the first two months of the season and is threatening to demolish what's left of it.

But instead of waiting for a resolution, Crosby is contemplating continuing his career in Europe. And a camp for locked-out NHL players at the Ice Den in Scottsdale this week could be just the primer he needs before making a decision.

"I don't think I'm in any rush," Crosby said. "But that being said, I haven't played a lot of hockey the last couple years, so I need to play games."

Since taking hits in back-to-back games two seasons ago, Crosby has been off the ice more than on. He missed 48 Penguins games in 2010-11 and the first 20 games of last season before returning in November.

Crosby played eight games before he was elbowed, then chose to sit out until March when the symptoms disappeared. In total, he's appeared in 69 games in two seasons.

Time has been the best remedy for this injury, and the lockout — which started on Sept. 15 when the previous collective-bargaining agreement expired — has offered that.

"You just try to take the positives out of it, if there are any," Crosby said. "I think that would be one, just getting more time, but I think heading into September I felt like I was ready."

So instead of rest, Crosby wants game action. He gets a simulated version by skating at the Ice Den.

Approximately 30 players have descended on Scottsdale to train together, with each practice session culminating in a scrimmage, making the Valley the current center of the hockey world after the Glendale City Council approved an arena-management agreement with potential buyer Greg Jamison on Tuesday.

"When you train in the summer, you're kind of peaking for camp and you kind of know that date, whereas now you don't really know," Crosby said. "You're kind of fighting that battle, finding some balance, but I think all guys care about is making sure they're ready to play when it starts."

"It's going to be pretty intense whenever it is. I think we're all just making sure to do our best."

Unlike a growing number of players, including headliners such as Evgeni Malkin, Alex Ovechkin and Rick Nash, Crosby has been hesitant to explore playing options elsewhere and hasn't set a deadline for a decision.

He's been present at labor meetings in New York and Toronto and a constant voice of support for the players' cause as they wrestle with NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman over revenue sharing and salary demands.

"You want to make sure you understand the process," Crosby said. "I think it's important for every guy to stay educated as best they can."

On Wednesday, both sides met with federal mediators for the first time in hopes of steering the conversation toward a common ground. But the same tactic was used without success during the previous lockout that erased the entire 2004-05 season.

"A lot of us want the same thing," Crosby said. "We want to find a way to make it work. We all love to play. Nobody likes what's happening right now. But, hopefully, mediation here can get some momentum and hopefully change negotiations."

Perhaps Crosby's narration and visibility is an act of responsibility as the league's poster boy, especially after his on-ice absence. But it's that exact layoff that could drive Crosby to venture overseas with a \$400,000 per month insurance price tag.

If one of the best players in the world decides enough is enough, optimism for at least a partial NHL season might very well leave with him.

"At some point, that's something I'll really have to consider because you can only practice so much," Crosby said. "You've got to get in games."

Arizona Republic LOADED: 11.29.2012

645048 Pittsburgh Penguins

NHL lockout: Union, league negotiators meet with 2 mediators for first time

By Shelly Anderson / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The NHL and the NHL Players' Association entered into a new phase of negotiations toward a new collective bargaining agreement and possible end to the ongoing lockout.

Scot Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service stepped in as liaisons and, if all goes well, deal facilitators when the two sides met Wednesday for the first time in eight days.

The only update, which did not include details, came from the union, which said in a statement that "a small group of NHLPA staff and players met with two experienced FMCS mediators. We expect that these discussions will resume on Thursday."

The lockout, which dates to mid-September, stems from differences on some key issues -- how the owners and players will split league revenue, along with several player contractual rights. There is a long list of lesser issues to be resolved as well.

If the sides can reach a deal or get close in the next several days, the league's board of governors meeting Wednesday in New York could become a key event.

The NHLPA had been interested in bringing in a mediator for some time, and the league agreed to that this week.

The first day of mediation coincided with Forbes' publication of its annual NHL financial estimates, and its findings could help underscore why the NHLPA has pushed for increased revenue sharing in the next CBA.

At the top of the team valuations is Toronto at \$1 billion, the first NHL franchise to reach that mark.

The publication noted that, despite good growth over the past seven years under the previous CBA -- revenues reached more than \$3 billion and arenas were at 95.6 percent capacity last season, the gap between the upper- and lower-echelon teams has grown. It said 13 teams lost money in 2011-12, and the top three money-makers accounted for 83 percent of the league's income. Those three are the Maple Leafs, New York Rangers and Montreal Canadiens.

Forbes valued the Penguins at \$288 million, which ranked ninth in the NHL, just behind the Philadelphia Flyers and just ahead of the Los Angeles Kings. The Penguins are \$6 million over the average team value.

The report said the Penguins had operating revenue (pre-tax) last season of \$9.1 million and noted that, "The Penguins have proven that it is possible for a small-market NHL franchise to consistently be a playoff team and make money given the right arena deal and smart management."

In terms of players, Forbes listed Penguins center Sidney Crosby as having the highest combined income when factoring in what it said is \$4 million a year in endorsements. If Crosby were being paid this season rather than locked out, he would be in the final year of a contract that averages \$8.7 million per season. He signed a 13-year deal set to kick in next summer with the same average salary.

NOTES -- Crosby, who practiced at Southpointe Monday and Tuesday, made a last-minute decision to join several other locked-out NHL players at a player-organized training camp in Scottsdale, Ariz. He skated there Wednesday. ... Penguins center Evgeni Malkin had no points, but was hit in overtime with a kneeing minor penalty plus 10 minutes for abuse of officials and unsportsmanlike conduct in a 4-3 loss against Vityaz in the Kontinental Hockey League. ... The Western Hockey League hit the Portland junior team and coach/general manager Mike Johnston with heavy sanctions for improper player benefits -- essentially recruiting violations. There was no immediate indication whether defenseman Derrick Pouliot, a first-round pick by the Penguins in June, was involved.

Post Gazette LOADED: 11.29.2012

645049 San Jose Sharks

Marleau to skate in Arizona

Staff

Kurz: 'I really did think they would figure something out by Thanksgiving'

Sharks Insider Kevin Kurz, Senior Insider Ray Ratto, and Sports Business Insider Andy Dolich stop by the Chronicle Live set to discuss the current state of the NHL lockout.

Sharks forward Patrick Marleau is among a group of current locked-out NHL'ers gathering in the desert this week, according to the Arizona Republic.

The list of players that will skate at the Ice Den in Scottsdale is an impressive one, and includes Penguins star Sidney Crosby, the Coyotes' Shane Doan, Dallas' Ray Whitney, and Sabres goalie Ryan Miller, to name a few. The full group will be on the ice on Thursday and Friday.

Marleau is one of the few Sharks that has remained in the Bay Area. He's been skating regularly at Sharks Ice while many of his teammates have gone overseas. Veteran defensemen Dan Boyle and Brad Stuart have also been regular participants at their practice facility since the beginning of the lockout on Sep. 16.

The Sharks have 11 players currently playing abroad: Joe Thornton and Logan Couture (Switzerland); TJ Galiardi and Thomas Greiss (Germany); Antti Niemi, Tommy Wingels, Justin Braun and Jason Demers (Finland); Joe Pavelski (Belarus); Douglas Murray (Sweden); and Michal Handzus (Slovakia). Ryane Clowe has signed with the ECHL's San Francisco Bulls, but is only practicing.

Clowe has partaken in some previous gatherings in different parts of the country, organized by Crosby. He went to Vail, Colorado and Dallas, Texas to practice and scrimmage before signing with the Bulls.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.29.2012

645050 San Jose Sharks

Forbes values Sharks at \$223 million

Staff

Kurz: 'I really did think they would figure something out by Thanksgiving'

Sharks Insider Kevin Kurz, Senior Insider Ray Ratto, and Sports Business Insider Andy Dolich stop by the Chronicle Live set to discuss the current state of the NHL lockout.

KURZg.png

When it comes to franchise values, the San Jose Sharks are right in the middle of the 30-team NHL, according to the latest numbers from Forbes.

In its annual report, Forbes lists the Sharks as worth \$223 million, up slightly from their 2011 valuation of \$211 million (16th in the league). The

team generated \$101 million in revenue, but had an operating income of -\$0.9 million.

According to the article: "The Sharks have sold out 110 consecutive games at HP Pavilion at San Jose, yet lead owner Kevin Compton said Sharks Sports & Entertainment, the team's parent company, lost \$15 million during the 2011-12 season."

Over the last four seasons, the Sharks have claimed combined losses of more than of \$60 million.

Forbes lists the Toronto Maple Leafs as its first-ever team to reach the \$1 billion mark. The New York Rangers (\$750 million); Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million); Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$348 million) round out the top five.

While the teams at the top of the food chain are alive and healthy, the publication makes note of the large disparity between the big moneymakers and those bringing up the rear. The teams in the bottom five -- Carolina, the New York Islanders, Columbus, Phoenix and St. Louis -- are valued at \$145 million on average. Forbes sites the recent relocation of the Winnipeg Jets from Atlanta as an example of how relocation of some franchises could lead to a more viable league.

The list also illustrates why the NHLPA is pushing for increased revenue sharing in the ongoing collective bargaining negotiations. In perhaps the most stunning number in the report, Forbes says that the Maple Leafs, Rangers and Canadiens accounted for a whopping 83 percent of the league's income. Thirteen of the 30 teams lost money.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.29.2012

645051 St Louis Blues

Blues players stand together during lockout

By Jeremy Rutherford

Many could stand to lose millions of dollars. Others are forfeiting the prime of their professional development. And some are potentially watching their careers come to an end.

But when several Blues in those situations were asked recently whether the players' union's stance in the NHL lockout is worth the unrecoverable benefits of being on the ice, their answers remain unified.

Before the start of the work stoppage on Sept. 15, Barret Jackman signed a three-year, \$9.5 million extension. Later this week, the Blues defenseman will miss out on the fourth of 13 paychecks this season, totaling \$923,076.92 in lost wages.

"I'm sure a lot of people think it's just stubbornness," Jackman said. "There's a lot of money at stake. It's not just our bank accounts that are being hit. There's a lot of ushers, policemen, security, local businesses (affected). We do realize that. It's not just something we turn our head at. It's something that's big. (But) it is about the long-term future.

"Obviously we want every team to be viable in the market and we don't want to have to go through this again in five to seven years. And you do have to protect the guys coming into the league."

Jackman was among those players who lost significant salaries during the last NHL lockout, which forced the cancellation of the 2004-05 season.

But while accepting a salary cap and a 24 percent rollback in individual wages, the union was awarded contract rights that dropped the age of unrestricted free agency to 27 from 31 over the length of the collective bargaining agreement.

That difference allowed the Blues' Andy McDonald, at age 28 in July 2006, to sign a three-year, \$10 million extension with Anaheim. After producing a team-high 51 assists, McDonald's leverage with unrestricted free agency -- only a year away at the time -- led to his salary jumping to \$3.3 million per season from \$627,000 in 2005-06.

Then, following his trade to the Blues, the forward climbed to \$4.7 million per season after signing a four-year, \$18.8 million extension.

"Everyone sat out a year and missed a year of hockey to get those contracting rights that enabled myself to negotiate a (solid) deal over the

last eight years," said McDonald, whose losses during this lockout have reached \$1.3 million. "That's the way I'm looking at it. It's not easy. The average career length is five years. When you take one (year) out of the equation, it makes it tough on the players to sit on the sidelines and not give in and sign a deal to get back on the ice right away. (But) I'm sure I'll look back at it and hopefully I'll feel that I made the right decision of supporting the union for the benefit of the whole."

The Blues' Alex Pietrangelo would be playing out the final year of his three-year entry-level contract this season. After receiving consideration a year ago for the Norris Trophy as the league's top defenseman, he could expect a massive payday after his current deal expires.

In discussing the solidarity of his teammates and union overall, Pietrangelo said, "You have a respect for them. Those guys are the guys that try to make it better for us during this CBA. We're a family of 700 players who believe in the same thing."

But for Pietrangelo, the losses are more than monetary.

Pietrangelo, the No. 4 pick in the 2008 NHL draft, is missing out on game experience, which depending on the length of the lockout could stunt his growth. Many believe that former Blues defenseman Erik Johnson, on the mend from a torn knee ligament suffered in a golf cart accident in 2008, was still compensating from his lost year on the ice when his struggles led to a trade to Colorado in 2011.

"I'm skating with guys, I'm keeping my fitness level up and I'm still trying to work as hard as I would during the year," said Pietrangelo, 22, who thus far hasn't joined 10 other Blues playing in Europe. "I don't think you can really compare those two situations. It definitely is going to be an adjustment for me. Usually this time of year, you're at 20-25 games in. But to have the guys here pushing each other and competing, trying to replicate what we do in the season has been pretty good so far."

Several Blues and other NHL players work out together about three times a week in Chesterfield.

Meanwhile, on the other end of the career spectrum is the Blues' Jamie Langenbrunner. At 37, the forward signed a one-year, \$1.25 million extension last summer that in all reality could be the swan song of his 17-year NHL career. He's made approximately \$27.4 million over his career, but financially secure or not, a lockout isn't the way he drew up the ending.

Still, he stands by his union brethren.

"It's frustrating for everybody depending on what situation you're in," he said. "Speaking for myself, it could be the last year and it's not a lot of fun sitting out like this. On the other hand, I don't think there's any wavering in the way I feel about it. It wasn't our choice to be locked out. We feel like we've given the opportunity for that to be taken care of. It's frustrating, but unfortunately it's what this business has turned into the last 15 years ... these fights over stuff that maybe shouldn't be that hard to figure out."

Referencing retirement, he added, "It definitely crosses your mind, but I think this time also prepares you for it. I've gotten involved in coaching the kids' teams and quite frankly, I've gotten to enjoy that aspect of it. You realize there is going to be an end to this (lockout) at some point. But it makes me feel when the end (of his career) does come, I'll be prepared for that."

They have different reasons for being disappointed. But they have the same sense about sticking together.

"It's not about any individual," Jackman said. "We're in a union for a reason to protect everybody within that union. We're going to do our best."

FORBES PUTS BLUES LAST

Forbes.com unveiled its annual NHL team valuations Wednesday, and the Blues ranked last in the league at an estimated worth of \$130 million.

The valuation was a significant drop from 2011, when Forbes valued the franchise at \$157 million, ranking 27th in the league. Last May, a group of local investors led by Tom Stillman purchased the team for approximately \$132 million.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.29.2012

645052 St Louis Blues

Forbes ranks Blues' value last in NHL

By Jeremy Rutherford jrutherford@post-dispatch.com

Forbes.com unveiled its annual NHL team valuations Wednesday, and the Blues ranked last in the league at an estimated worth of \$130 million.

The Blues' valuation was a significant drop from 2011, when Forbes valued the franchise at \$157 million, ranking 27th in the league.

In May, a local ownership group led by Tom Stillman purchased the Blues from SCP Worldwide for an estimated \$132 million. Forbes reported the sale price to be \$120 million.

The fall to No. 30 in the Forbes valuations drops the Blues below No. 27 New York Islanders (\$155 million), No. 28 Columbus Blue Jackets (\$145 million) and No. 29 Phoenix Coyotes (\$134 million). The Coyotes are owned by the NHL, but have a new owner expected to buy the team within the next 60 days.

The No. 1 team on Forbes' valuation list is once again the Toronto Maple Leafs. The estimated value of the Leafs increased significantly, climbing to \$1 billion in 2012 after being reported at \$521 million in 2011.

Toronto is followed this season by No. 2 New York Rangers (\$750 million), No. 3 Montreal Canadiens (\$525 million), No. 4 Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and No. 5 Boston Bruins (\$348 million).

to read Forbes' entire list of valuations and to read Forbes' report on the Blues.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.29.2012

645053 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning rank 23rd on Forbes list of NHL franchise values

By ERIK ERLÉNSSON | The Tampa Tribune

TAMPA --The Tampa Bay Lightning are once again in the bottom third of the 30-team National Hockey League in Forbes Magazine's annual ranking of franchise values.

The Lightning are worth an estimated \$174 million, which ranks 23rd on the magazine's list, which was released Wednesday.

The Toronto Maple Leafs topped the list, becoming the first NHL franchise valued at \$1 billion.

The report also includes the estimated top-15 players -- including salaries and endorsements -- with Tampa Bay centers Steven Stamkos and Vinny Lecavalier landing in the top 10.

The franchise value for Tampa Bay is unchanged from the same report a year ago. The magazine estimates the Lightning brought in \$88 in revenue but ended with an operating loss of \$13.1 million.

Team spokesman Bill Wickett "respectfully declined" to comment on the Forbes report.

With the league mired in a 10-week lockout because of a labor dispute, the NHL and the NHL Players' Association agreed to have federal mediators oversee the negotiations. That process began on Wednesday.

The Forbes report could impact those discussions. The top-five valued teams -- Toronto, New York Rangers, Montreal, Chicago and Boston -- have an average worth of \$605 million, while the bottom five teams -- Phoenix, St. Louis, Carolina, Columbus and New York Islanders -- are worth an average of \$145 million.

In the estimated annual player worth, Stamkos -- who led the league last year with 60 goals -- ranked fifth overall with \$8.3 million. That includes his average salary of \$7.5 million -- though he made \$8 million last season -- and \$800,000 in endorsements with Nike, Bauer and Tissot watches. It did not include his deal with hair care product Garnier-Fructis.

Lecavalier was eighth on the list at \$7.9 million, which takes into account his average salary of \$7.7 million -- though he earned \$10 million in salary last season -- and an estimated \$150,000 in endorsement deals.

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 11.29.2012

645054 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning prospect Brown opening more eyes

By ERIK ERLÉNSSON | The Tampa Tribune

These days, J.T. Brown takes a peek over his shoulder and likes seeing Syracuse coach Jon Cooper behind him instead of standing behind the opposing bench.

While Brown, a prized college free agent signed by the Lightning out of Minnesota-Duluth last season, was lighting it up for Waterloo in the United States Hockey League, Cooper was coaching the Green Bay Gamblers. During Brown's two years in Waterloo, his team lost 16 of the 18 matchups against Green Bay, which included a pair of three-game playoff sweeps.

"We were a good team, we just never could figure out how to beat him," Brown said. "But it just goes to show that he's a good coach. He was a winner at junior, he's a winner, and obviously what he did last year (winning an AHL championship), you have to be a pretty good coach do that at two different levels."

Brown figured to make the jump from college straight to the NHL this year after fitting in with the Lightning during a five-game showcase at the end of last season.

But with the NHL mired in a lockout, Brown's first professional season started this year in Syracuse. He is coming off his first hat trick as a pro after scoring goals on his first two shifts Sunday against Worcester before capping his three-goal, four-point performance with a goal late in the third in a 6-1 Crunch victory.

The Burnsville, Minn., native said he is starting to adapt to the way the game is played at the professional level.

"I felt a lot of times in college that a lot of it would be a track meet, and it is a lot more systems involved here," Brown said. "The main thing to me was just making sure you stay with the system. If you do the right things on defense it's going to go to offense."

Brown was slowed at the start of the season with a minor injury that cost him four games, but the 22-year-old winger has started to pick up his game.

"He's done a really good job so far after practice and doing little things and stuff like that just kind of guiding me and making me sure that I'm playing the game the way he needs me to play," Brown said of Cooper. "It is a little bit of a learning curve, obviously, coming to a new coach in a different style, but I definitely like our coaching staff. I think that we have one of the best, probably I'd say the best, in the league."

As Brown has started to become accustomed to life in the pro ranks, Cooper is becoming accustomed to seeing a different type of player than he saw back when the two were adversaries in the USHL. Back then, Brown was a top-line player expected to score using primarily his speed and skill, but he now has an element to his game Cooper never had the chance to see.

"I completely underestimated him, because the parts that I am really noticing now — him being fearless, being first in corners, all of those sorts of things — he did not have those elements when I coached against him," Cooper said. "To me, he was just an open-ice player, and he was a good one, but again I just didn't know he had those other intangibles to his game, and that is what really has impressed me."

During his four-game absence from the lineup, Brown sat and watched games with Syracuse video coach Brian Garlock, which helped him understand the system better and gave him a better perspective on the way Cooper wants the team to play.

"He was very ready to adapt, so that's what I really liked about what he did," Cooper said. "And then you couple in there that he's a really gutty kid, he's fearless when he goes out there, he doesn't go into corners and pull up. I think that was the part that you really say 'Wow, there's going to be some light at the end of the tunnel for this kid.'"

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 11.29.2012

645055 Tampa Bay Lightning

Forbes: Lightning 23rd on list of NHL team values

By Damian Cristodero, Times Staff Writer

The Lightning lost \$13.1 million last season despite tying a franchise record with \$88 million in operating income, according to Forbes magazine's annual report on NHL team values, released Wednesday.

The Lightning declined to comment on the report, which is based on available information and not team financial records.

The Maple Leafs, at \$1 billion, was the most valuable team and also led with an \$81.9 million profit.

The Lightning's value of \$174 million, 23rd in the 30-team league, is the same as 2011, Forbes said. See the list at tampabay.com/blogs/lightning.

Also, the Lightning had two of the NHL's 15 highest-paid players, including endorsement money, Forbes said: Steven Stamkos at No. 5 (\$8.3 million) and Vinny Lecavalier at No. 8 (\$7.9 million). No. 1 was the Penguins' Sidney Crosby at \$12.7 million.

[Last modified: Nov 28, 2012 10:16 PM]

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 11.29.2012

645056 Tampa Bay Lightning

Tampa Bay Lightning lost \$13.1 million last season but value stays constant, Forbes says

Staff

Forbes is out with its annual list of NHL team valuations and the Tampa Bay Lightning, at \$174 million (the same as 2011), was ranked 23rd in the league. But the magazine also said the team had a loss of \$13.1 million, though its operating income of \$88 million tied a team best.

The Maple Leafs, at \$1 billion, are the most valuable franchise, followed by the Rangers (\$750 million) and Canadiens (\$575 million). Toronto also had the highest operating profit at \$81.9 million. The least valuable team is the Blues at \$130 million.

Seventeen of the league's 30 teams were profitable, Forbes said.

Teams do not open their books for the Forbes report. The magazine makes its evaluations on available information.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 11.29.2012

645057 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: Maple Leafs first hockey team worth \$1 billion, according to Forbes magazine

Kevin McGran Sports Reporter

The Toronto Maple Leafs are worth \$1 billion, the first NHL team to reach that plateau, says Forbes.com.

Last year, Forbes valued the Leafs at \$521 million (all figures U.S.).

The online version of the financial magazine says it bases its valuation on the Leafs' 2011-12 revenue of \$200 million and a \$2.05 billion value of the sale of the team and other MLSE properties including the Raptors and Air Canada Centre to Bell Canada and Rogers Communication.

Next in line are the New York Rangers (\$750 million), Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million), Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$348 million).

The disparity between the top five teams — on average worth \$605 million and the bottom five on average worth \$145 million — is a big reason for the lockout, the magazine says.

The five least valuable are the Carolina Hurricanes (\$162 million), New York Islanders (\$155 million), Columbus Blue Jackets (\$145 million), Phoenix Coyotes (\$134 million) and St. Louis Blues (\$130 million).

The average NHL team is now worth \$282 million, 18 per cent more than a year ago, "fuelled by a nine per cent increase in overall revenue to \$3.4 billion during the 2011-12 season."

The rise was attributed to an average increase in ticket prices by five per cent, a 95.6 per cent capacity at arenas and new or renewed sponsorship deals with the likes of Discover, Geico, Honda, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, McDonald's, Paramount Pictures, Tim Hortons, Verizon and Visa.

With the players locked out by owners, the NHL already has cancelled 422 regular-season games.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.29.2012

645058 Toronto Maple Leafs

Maple Leafs coach Randy Carlyle has sights fixed on Marlies

By Lance Hornby, Toronto Sun

TORONTO -

The NHL lockout was bad news for the surplus deer population on Manitoulin Island.

It enabled Maple Leafs coach Randy Carlyle to join the annual November hunt for four days, a time of year he's usually holding a hockey stick at practice instead of a rifle.

"There were a few we got," Carlyle said Wednesday at Ricoh Coliseum, where he and assistant coach Dave Farrish watched the Toronto Marlies practice. "I've been hunting a few times. That's the first (deer hunt) I've done in a long time. It was very enjoyable .

"The activity was more about the camaraderie and being out with friends and neighbours I had grown up with. (Carlyle has a summer cottage on the island.) It's nice to be able to go, but nice to be able to come back here, too."

Carlyle and his assistants were eagerly scrutinizing the Marlies' games and their workouts, but the farm team's heavy road schedule this month gave the staff some down time. Now, with cautious optimism that there could yet be NHL hockey by December or January, Carlyle is going to be more of a fixture around Ricoh in coming weeks.

"We were all ready to go," Carlyle lamented of the lockout derailing plans for his first training camp as Leafs coach. "Now we try to have a presence here. If I'm not here, than Dave Farrish or Scott Gordon and Greg Cronin are going to be. Now that (the team is back) you'll see a lot more of us. I might go on the road to Rochester for Friday's game or watch a junior game."

Farrish joined Carlyle in the stands on Wednesday, while new Leafs goaltending instructor Rick St. Croix was on the ice. The Marlies have three netminders — Ben Scrivens, the injured Jussi Rynnäs, and current back-up Mark Owuya. New skating coach Barb Underhill was also at centre ice in the lower bowl, watching the players while comparing computer video of the individuals' footwork.

Among the potential Leafs Carlyle is keeping tabs on is Scrivens, who could either back up James Reimer or challenge him as starter, if general manager Brian Burke does not land a veteran. Scrivens was the AHL's best statistical goalie last year and while his numbers haven't dipped too much, he certainly hasn't stolen many games thus far.

The Marlies' record is 9-8-0-1 heading into three weekend games.

"Scrivens hasn't returned to the form he had last year," Carlyle said. "But he's a quality goaltender and you can see it in his work ethic and his approach. We have to continue to work with him to get him back to the way he's capable of playing."

Carlyle intends to make the Leafs tougher than predecessor Ron Wilson without sacrificing offence. To that end, he and Burke have to be ecstatic that winger Matt Frattin has come back from shoulder surgery with five goals in his first five games.

"He has worked very hard in his recovery and has a history of being an offensive player," Carlyle said. "It's good to see he's scoring here, but it's been short term. The NHL is a different grind. The one thing he has to be up there is as consistent as he has been down here. That's what our expectations are up top.

"He played that way in the AHL playoffs (10 goals, 13 points in 13 games) before he was hurt. He was a physical force on the ice and you noticed him out there in those key areas on the ice."

Carlyle has also found few faults with defenceman Jake Gardiner's game in the minors, pleased that he has been able to keep busy after a strong first year with the Leafs.

"He hasn't changed anything," Carlyle said. "Certainly he's bigger and stronger. He has fit right in here. He hasn't sat around just waiting for the NHL to start. I'm sure there's a lot of players in that mode who can't wait for the NHL to start. But he's not fazed by that (delay). He's played very well here. It's a good sign."

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.29.2012

645059 Toronto Maple Leafs

Maple Leafs extend reign as NHL's most valuable team -- Forbes

REUTERS

The Toronto Maple Leafs are the first hockey team to be worth \$1 billion, more than triple the average value of National Hockey League franchises, according to an annual survey released by Forbes on Wednesday.

The Maple Leafs, who were acquired by Rogers Communications and telecom provider BCE a year ago, topped the list for the seventh consecutive year despite their failure to make the NHL playoffs since 2004.

The NHL's 30 teams are worth an average \$282 million, a 17.5% rise over last year, due largely to what Forbes said was the league's ability to raise ticket prices, increase attendance and renew or secure lucrative sponsorships.

But the spread between rich and poor teams proved dramatic as the NHL's top five teams are worth an average \$605 million versus the \$145 million average value of the bottom five teams.

The New York Rangers (\$750 million) and Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million) were the second and third top valued teams on the list and together with the Maple Leafs accounted for 83% of the NHL's income.

The Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$348 million), Stanley Cup champions in 2010 and 2011 respectively, rounded out the top five while the reigning Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings were ranked 10th with a value of \$276 million.

The Forbes report was released with the NHL in the midst of a bitter labour dispute with players that began mid September.

The dispute has already wiped out a third of the regular season with the two sides still at odds over how to split up revenues.

Forbes top NHL 10 teams:

1. Toronto Maple Leafs (\$1 billion)
2. New York Rangers (\$750 million)
3. Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million)
4. Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million)
5. Boston Bruins (\$348 million)

6. Detroit Red Wings (\$346 million)
7. Vancouver Canucks (\$342 million)
8. Philadelphia Flyers (\$336 million)
9. Pittsburgh Penguins (\$288 million)
10. Los Angeles Kings (\$276 million)

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.29.2012

645060 Toronto Maple Leafs

Leafs become first NHL team worth \$1-billion: Forbes

NEW YORK — The Toronto Maple Leafs are the first NHL team worth US\$1-billion, according to Forbes magazine.

The Leafs, who have not won a Stanley Cup since 1967, are worth \$250-million more than the next most valuable franchise, the New York Rangers. The Montreal Canadiens are worth \$575-million.

The Chicago Blackhawks (\$350-million), Boston Bruins (\$348-million) and Detroit Red Wings (\$346-million) round up the top six, meaning the league's six original franchises are also its most valuable.

The Vancouver Canucks are the next Canadian team on the list, in seventh at \$342-million. The Calgary Flames are in 12th at \$245-million, the Edmonton Oilers are ranked 14th at \$225-million, the Ottawa Senators 16th at \$220-million and the Winnipeg Jets 20th at \$200-million.

The Jets saw their value jump after their first full season in Winnipeg. Forbes valued the franchise at \$164-million last year and at \$135-million in 2010, before the team moved north.

Least valuable of the 30 teams are the St. Louis Blues at \$130-million and the Phoenix Coyotes at \$134-million.

The Stanley Cup champion Los Angeles Kings are worth \$276-million, 10th overall.

Forbes says the NHL's total revenues were \$3.4-billion for the 2011-12 season. Fuelled by that nine per cent increase, the average NHL team is worth \$282-million, 18% more than a year ago.

With the players locked out by owners, the NHL already has cancelled 422 regular-season games. Forbes reports that 13 teams lost money last season.

The Leafs, Rangers (last Stanley Cup in 1994) and Canadiens (last title in 1993) account for 83% of the league's income, with Toronto the most profitable franchise at \$81.9-million, followed by the Rangers at \$74-million and Montreal at \$51.6-million.

National Post LOADED: 11.29.2012

645061 Vancouver Canucks

Vancouver Canuck Cory Schneider's new team not a Swiss League powerhouse

Notebook: 'At some point, I really want to play hockey, whether it's here or abroad'

By Brad Ziemer

VANCOUVER — If Cory Schneider was looking for a challenge after going seven months without a game, he seems to have found it with his new Swiss League team.

The Vancouver Canucks' goalie has signed a deal with HC Ambri-Piotta, which is not exactly a powerhouse. The team has won only seven of 25 games so far this season and is currently 11th in the 12-team league.

Ambri-Piotta, known locally as the "Bianco-Blu" (white and blues), has scored 61 goals this season and surrendered 92. In other words, the team's defence has been like, well, Swiss cheese.

Schneider will be asked to fill some of those holes. He left Wednesday for Switzerland, is scheduled to practise with his new team Thursday and could play as early as Saturday against sixth-place Kloten.

Schneider holds dual U.S.-Swiss citizenship so the team did not have to burn an import spot to sign him.

The Ambri-Piotta website said Schneider's deal with the team runs through Dec. 31 with an option to renew should the NHL lockout continue into the new year.

His signing is not a good omen for those thinking a NHL labour deal is imminent. Schneider has been actively involved in the labour talks and likely would not have headed overseas had he felt a deal was close.

Schneider hinted on Monday that he was anxious to play somewhere soon.

"I play hockey for a living," Schneider said. "At some point, I really want to play hockey, whether it's here or abroad. I think it's more important for my career going forward to stay sharp and stay prepared and get games in because 18 months without game action is not a good thing for a goalie, or for anybody for that matter."

Ambri-Piotta has been a perennial cellar-dweller in recent years, but the club has not been relegated to the Swiss B League since being promoted in 1985.

Ambri and Piotta are two tiny villages in the municipality of Quinto, located in southern Switzerland and not far from the Italian border.

The team plays in a rink with only 2,000 seats, with standing room space for 5,000.

The team's website said sponsors stepped forward to help cover the costs of Schneider's contract. Schneider could not be reached for comment Wednesday and his agent, Mike Liut, did not return messages.

Schneider will likely take over from Nolan Schaefer, who has started most of Ambri-Piotta's games this season. Schaefer is the younger brother of former Canuck Peter Schaefer.

Schneider is just the third Canuck regular to sign in Europe. Winger Jannik Hansen is playing with Tappara Tampere of the Finnish League, while fellow forward Dale Weise is playing with the Tilburg Trappers in the Dutch League.

SCOUTING IN SWEDEN: With no current salary cap concerns to deal with, Canucks assistant general manager Laurence Gilman has just returned from a scouting trip to Sweden.

Gilman met with three players the Canucks selected in the 2011 draft.

Nicklas Jensen, Vancouver's first-round pick in 2011, is playing for AIK in the Swedish Elite League. Jensen has cooled off after a hot start and has nine goals and 12 points in 24 games.

"His team is not playing that great, but he is playing on their second line," Gilman said. "He is getting some power-play time, he is playing in all kinds of situations whether they are up a goal or down a goal. He's averaging 16 and a half to 17 minutes a game and he is playing in a league with men. So that's pretty good."

Gilman liked what he saw and heard about the play of seventh-round pick Henrik Tommernes, a defenceman playing with Frolunda of the Elite League.

"He is averaging about 23 minutes a game," Gilman said of the 22-year-old. "He is leading his team in ice time. When I saw him the coaches used him both on right side and the left side. He plays on the power play and also kills penalties. By all accounts he's a pretty good selection by our scouts."

Gilman also visited with Ludwig Blomstrand, a 19-year-old winger who was Vancouver's fourth-round pick in 2011 and recently joined Almtuna in the Swedish second division.

"I saw him play his first game and he scored," Gilman said. "He's big and he's strong and skates very well."

THEY'RE NO. 7: Forbes magazine says the Canucks are worth \$342 million, making them the seventh most valuable franchise in the NHL. The Toronto Maple Leafs top the list, with a value Forbes pegged at \$1 billion.

The New York Rangers were next at \$750 million followed by the Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million), Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$348 million).

Vancouver Sun: LOADED: 11.29.2012

645062 Vancouver Canucks

Ex-Canuck assistant Mike Johnston in hot water with WHL

Elliott Pap

Portland Winterhawks general manager-head coach Mike Johnston, a former Vancouver Canuck assistant, has been suspended by the Western Hockey League for the remainder of the season plus playoffs for what the league calls "multiple player benefit violations."

In addition to Johnston's suspension, the league also fined the Winterhawks \$200,000 and stripped them of nine bantam draft picks, including five first-round selections from 2013-2017. The other picks forfeited were rounds 2-5 in the 2013 draft.

"Our independent investigation in this case revealed there were multiple violations over an extended period for player benefits that are not permitted under WHL regulations and were not disclosed to the WHL," commissioner Ron Robison said Wednesday in a statement. "All WHL clubs understand they are required to fully comply and respect our league regulations or they will face significant consequences."

The Winterhawks quickly issued a statement of their own indicating the violations involved flights for families to see their sons' play, paying for one-week summer training programs and providing a cell phone to the team captain.

"After fully cooperating with the league's investigation, we were extremely surprised at the excessive nature of the sanctions and we don't feel they are in line with the scope of the violations we were found to have committed," said Johnston, who will be replaced by former NHL player Travis Green on an interim basis.

"We believe that apart from recruiting trips and parents' weekend, there is no prohibition in the rules governing flights for players' parents, which were the majority of the infractions. We are currently exploring our options on how we will proceed. Despite our objections, the league has made its decision and our players will continue to pursue the goal of winning a WHL championship."

Johnston took over the Winterhawks early in the 2008-09 season, turning them into a league powerhouse within two years. They reached the WHL final in each of the last two seasons and are currently 20-4-1-0.

Vancouver Sun: LOADED: 11.29.2012

645063 Vancouver Canucks

Forbes says Canucks worth \$342 million

Elliott Pap

Despite not playing these days, the Vancouver Canucks are worth \$342 million, according to Forbes Magazine, ranking them as the most seventh most valuable franchise in the NHL. But the Canucks aren't anywhere close to the Toronto Maple Leafs, who are worth a cool \$1 billion even though they haven't made a playoff appearance since the 2003-04 season. The New York Rangers rank second behind the Leafs at \$750 million. The Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million), Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$348 million) round out the top five.

Among Canadian teams, the Canucks are third, well ahead of the Calgary Flames (\$245 million, 12th overall), Edmonton Oilers (\$225 million, 14th), Ottawa Senators (\$220 million, 16th) and Winnipeg Jets (\$200 million, 20th). The least valuable franchise, according to Forbes, is the St. Louis Blues at \$130 million. The still-orphaned Phoenix Coyotes are second from the bottom at \$134 million.

Forbes also said the Canucks produced \$143 million in revenue last season. The Leafs again topped out at \$200 million.

Vancouver Sun: LOADED: 11.29.2012

645064 Vancouver Canucks

Cory Schneider heading to Europe

Posted by: Jason Botchford

After hedging and waiting, and hedging and waiting, Cory Schneider is over any issues he may have had with the bigger ice.

He needs games and will get them, according to the Swiss village club team Ambri-Piotta, which announced Wednesday it had signed him.

With a Swiss passport, Schneider will not count as an import.

It's unclear when he will play his first game, but it's expected to be in the next week.

He was still in Vancouver skating with Canucks teammates Tuesday and is a member of the NHLPA's bargaining committee.

He felt conflicted about going to Europe for several reasons. One, he wasn't sure how playing on the big ice would impact his game. Two, he was the only NHL goalie skating in Vancouver with the group of Canucks who have decided to ride out the lockout.

He is the third Canuck to sign on in Europe, Jannik Hansen and Dale Weise being the other two.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 11.29.2012

645065 Vancouver Canucks

Despite a costly lost summer, Manny Malhotra's not giving up

Canucks centre was always playing catch-up last year because of a missed training season

By Jason Botchford, The Province

To have hope in Manny Malhotra is to talk to him.

It's to hear his passion for a game he wants to play until the "wheels fall off."

It's to have him remind you he's 32, not 37.

It's in his belief that last year's disappointing season with the diminished role had more to do with what happened in the summer of 2011 than what happened on March 16 of that year.

That, of course, was the night a chilling eye injury coldly changed the course of Malhotra's career.

At best, it has given him the latest obstacle he will need to overcome in a career filled with them. At worst, it was the beginning of the end.

He'd rather not think about the latter, and neither would the Canucks, who remain jarringly thin at the centre position, especially if Malhotra can't improve on the limited, fourth-line faceoff ace we saw him become for most of last year.

On that, he believes there shouldn't be a debate. He will be better. There is no other way.

The summer before last, following his emotionally charged return to Game 2 of the Stanley Cup final, was a lost offseason. Because of several eye procedures, he couldn't do a thing.

"Nothing," Malhotra recalled.

No skating. No running. No gym. Nothing.

"I felt like I could never catch up with my fitness," Malhotra said. "When I was finally at a level where I'd be ready to start the season, everyone else was in mid-season form."

"When I was in mid-season form, everyone else was in that playoff mode."

As the season dragged on, Malhotra remained a crucial player only during defensive-zone faceoffs.

His minutes were whittled down, not only in favour of Cody Hodgson and Max Lapierre but also Samme Pahlsson, the band-aid the Canucks picked up for a couple of fourth rounders who retired from the NHL just a couple of months later.

The trade spoke to an uneasiness in the Canucks front office about their situation at centre.

And it's not one that has gone away. The team reportedly attempted to sign Olli Jokinen, a centre who was being considered if he was willing to take a one-year deal, in July.

By the playoffs, Dale Weise was the only regular who played less than Malhotra, who continued to own the dot. Just two players in the NHL, Jonathan Toews and Zenon Konopka, finished the post-season with a better faceoff percentage than Malhotra's 64.6.

Pahlsson and Hodgson are long gone. Jokinen signed in Winnipeg. But that may not open any breathing room for Malhotra in the lineup to try to reclaim his old role.

Vancouver has already flirted with the idea of acquiring a centre in a possible Roberto Luongo trade. One of them is Tyler Bozak, who Vancouver believes has been miscast in Toronto and, if acquired, could slot into the Canucks third-line centre hole, and do it nicely.

But that hasn't deterred Malhotra.

"I feel like I've been proving myself my entire career," he said. "I've had to earn my ice time, earn the trust from coaches, and earn faith from my teammates."

And proving that last year was an aberration, and not the new norm, is why he was so amped about the start of this locked out season.

"I was really looking forward to it," Malhotra said. "I had a full offseason of training under my belt. I was feeling good. I was feeling normal. I was feeling more like myself again."

"I was ready to get out there and start strong."

"It's been a roller coaster [because of the lockout]. You're frustrated. You're angry. You're pissed off. You're tired of being in the gym. All of those things run through your head."

When the Canucks were at their best, in the 2010-11 season, they were getting tremendous performances from their third-line centre.

At the three-quarters mark of that season, Malhotra was a viable Selke Trophy candidate. In the playoffs, Lapierre filled in and was probably the Canucks biggest, most consistent surprise during the run.

But neither player has been the same since. At least, they haven't been used in the same way again.

Malhotra is telling himself he can be that guy again.

"I think I am better, especially in the way I think the game," he said.

It will be some time yet before we know if that can also be true in the way he plays it.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 11.29.2012

645066 Vancouver Canucks

Profitable NHL clubs look to higher profits down the road

By Jason Botchford, The Province

If you're still trying to figure out how profitable NHL teams like the Vancouver Canucks can support their commissioner Gary Bettman and the lockout, a Forbes' annual look at the league provides a stark reality check.

Or should that be "cheque," as in big ones?

In the backdrop of the lockout, this year's Forbes valuations do a wonderful job of underscoring the financial canyon growing between the NHL's high society and the league's barrio.

The Canucks are not near the penthouse, where the Toronto Maple Leafs are perched as the first team worth \$1 billion. But they have done remarkably well since the last lockout changed the economic landscape, and, despite a salary cap, dramatically widened the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Vancouver sits seventh on this list. It's a franchise valued at \$342 million, and that's a 284-per-cent increase from the \$142 million Forbes had the Canucks pegged at in 2004.

Not a bad increase in equity after missing an entire season.

These, of course, are estimates, and if you match them with what teams have actually sold for over the years, sometimes Forbes is off, sometimes the magazine is spot on.

But the general consensus during this lockout has been that the profitable teams have the most to lose if another season is lost. Yet, these are the teams who have gained the most since the last one.

"In terms of present dollars, the profitable teams like Montreal, Toronto, New York, Chicago and Vancouver are losing money now because every game that's not played, their profits go down," said Mike Ozanian, of the SportsMoney blog with Forbes.

"But I think what the big market teams are hoping and why some of those owners are behind the lockout is that down the road, they're going to make up for the lost revenues by higher profits because their margins will be higher."

"They are looking at this long term, and the profits they may be losing right now aren't something they are overly concerned about. They're all betting they're going to make up for this with a lower salary cap."

Ozanian is among those who put some of the blame on the fans. They came back in droves after the last lockout. Twenty-five of the 30 teams increased in attendance. Since 2004 ticket prices have increased by 30 per cent. This, far more than the improved Canadian dollar, is why the NHL has continued to increase overall revenue, the chunk of change the league and its players are fighting over now.

"It didn't hurt and the league rebounded fully from it. They got a better TV deal with NBC. Very few teams last time felt significant pain, and those that did, it was for a short time," Ozanian said.

"The Canadian teams like Vancouver and Calgary did very well because they command high ticket prices and do very, very well at the gate."

"Hockey is a unique sport where so much of revenue is local and based on gate receipts. The big gamble is, if they miss the whole season again, are the fans going to come back in droves and if they don't, how long will it take?"

"Will we see a one-year blip, or is it something more permanent?"

"It's really in the fans' hands."

The increased ticket prices are the main reason the NHL's 30 teams are now valued at an average of \$282 million, for a 17.5-per-cent increase from last year.

The top five teams were estimated to be worth \$605 million, and the bottom five average out at a \$145-million value, indicating the gulf that could only be remedied by enhancing revenue sharing, a point the NHLPA has been making since the bitter dispute with the league began.

While a lowered salary cap could provide another equity bonanza for teams like the Canucks, Forbes points out there is no easy fix for teams in many of the non-traditional hockey markets, where the future remains bleak.

The magazine estimates teams like the Carolina Hurricanes, Phoenix Coyotes, Tampa Bay Lightning, Anaheim Ducks and Columbus Blue Jackets would need to make it to the second round of the playoffs to make money, even with increased revenue sharing and a 50/50 split with the players.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 11.29.2012

645067 Vancouver Canucks

Canucks goaltender Cory Schneider heading to Europe

By Ben Kuzma, The Province

Cory Schneider balanced optimism and pessimism during the NHL lockout, but his body language and demeanour changed this week. The Vancouver Canucks goaltender wasn't as gregarious, and the effects of the often excruciating collective bargaining agreement impasse were clearly etched on his face. He looked mad and called the lockout process "maddening."

"Two months in," he shrugged in disgust after a UBC skate. "I play for a living. At some point I really want to play — here or abroad — and stay sharp, and 18 months is not good for a goalie or anybody. I simply can't afford it."

The 18 months are what his hiatus would be after an early playoff exit last spring and if this entire season were lost to the lockout. And even though the challenges for a goaltender on the larger European ice surface are considerable — different shooting angles requiring a different attention span and positioning — Schneider will play in Switzerland for last place Ambri Piotta of the National League A on a monthly contract.

It expires at the end of December amid some buzz that a 48-game schedule could commence Jan. 1 if a new CBA is struck. His deal could be extended for the entire season if the lockout hype is just wishful thinking, but playing became imperative after agreeing to a three-year, \$12 million US contract extension in the offseason.

"It's ice time, it's getting up in the morning and going to the rink and getting back to a schedule," Schneider's agent Mike Liut said Wednesday. "You can only do so much trying to stay involved in the game. And there will be lots of opportunity for Cory. It's not a great team and he's going to get lots of work. I don't know how it's going to go for him, but it won't alter his game and he's suited for it."

"You know he's going to get better every outing and he won't get rattled one way or the other."

Schneider has dual citizenship in the U.S. and Switzerland and won't be considered an import when he makes his first start as early as Saturday. Nolan Schaefer has a 3.56 goals-against average for Ambri Piotta but will yield to Schneider, who simply wants and needs to play. And that says something because Schneider has always placed faith in the CBA bargaining process as a member of the 31-player negotiating committee.

While teammates Jannik Hansen and Dale Weise played in Europe, he played the patience card while skating with a half dozen teammates and the UBC Thunderbirds. His only action came in the free-wheeling Biek'sa's Buddies charity game in which he allowed two goals on two shots and five on his first 14 as his side rallied for an 8-7 victory over the T-Birds on Oct. 17. Even though the \$200,000 raised to support The Canucks Autism Network, Canucks Family Education Centre and Canuck Place hospice was a big story, the lockout still stole the headlines.

"I know they [owners] are unified in their regard and we are in ours," said Schneider. "They understand the players want to play and a majority of the owners would love to be playing. They didn't purchase hockey teams to not have a business and sell entertainment. I'm sure some are more demanding on what they want, but I'm sure they want to win more than anything."

Liut played 664 games for three NHL teams, but also played with the touring WHA Cincinnati Stingers in Europe prior to his rookie 1977-78 season. The Stingers faced the Czech national team in Prague before a one-week tour of Finland and there wasn't a major adjustment for Liut. He doesn't believe Schneider will have a problem adjusting because of the structure in his game and how the game is played in Europe.

"The larger ice surface is clearly the difference, and it spreads things out and there's not as much of a cluster in front of the net," said Liut. "It's hard to get the puck to the corner and to the point and then have everybody from the corner crash the net to create the screen or pick up a tip. It's a little bit more wide open, but players will still come in for the rebound."

"It's a little bit more of a one-on-one environment and lots of quality scoring chances. You can't get pulled out of net, and the tendency is to move closer to the puck and it's a lot of dot-to-dot play horizontally. Your angles don't change because a player standing at the top of the slot isn't going to change and either faceoff dot doesn't change because it's wider from there

to the boards. You sense the angle and you adapt pretty easily. Your eyes adjust and focus."

Liut also believes Schneider's demeanour makes him perfectly suited for the European experience. He's amiable, approachable and articulate and is expected to easily acclimate to the new hockey climate.

"He's a personality," said Liut. "He's dedicated and a good influence in and around the dressing room with that banter and his dry sense of humour."

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 11.29.2012

645068 Vancouver Canucks

WHL hammers Portland Winterhawks for league violations

DAVID EBNER

VANCOUVER — The Globe and Mail

The WHL hit the Portland Winterhawks with major sanctions Wednesday, after the team was found to have violated player-benefits rules — the second such punishment of a major-junior hockey program in the past four months.

The sanctions could spark a battle which would compound the existing unrest in major-junior hockey.

Representatives for the Winterhawks, the top team in the WHL this season, said the franchise is considering "options on how we will proceed."

The Winterhawks say the issues mostly focused on paying for flights for families of players to come to Portland to watch games.

The team also paid for its captain's cellphone for three seasons.

Compensation to players is severely restricted in major junior, as the teenagers receive only nominal pay, starting at about \$35 a week. They do, however, build up scholarship credits for postsecondary education.

For its sins, Portland was fined \$200,000, will lose nine WHL bantam draft picks (including its first-rounders for the next five years), and general manager/head coach Mike Johnston was suspended for the rest of the year.

Johnston led the Winterhawks to a 20-4-1-0 record, tops in the U.S. Division. The team has been buoyed by the play of potential No. 1 NHL draft pick Seth Jones, a defenceman who is the son of former NBA player Ronald (Popeye) Jones.

Wednesday's disciplinary action could result in the powerful Portland franchise taking on the WHL establishment.

"We were extremely surprised at the excessive nature of the sanctions, and we don't feel they are in line with the scope of the violations we were found to have committed," Johnston said in a statement.

Turmoil has roiled major-junior hockey of late.

Four months ago, the Windsor Spitfires were blasted with the harshest punishment to be dropped on an OHL team: A \$400,000 fine, and five lost draft picks for player-recruitment violations. The fine was later reduced to \$250,000 when Windsor dropped its appeal.

More broadly, there was a recent failed effort to start a union for the young players across the WHL, OHL and QMJHL, but many people believe it will be revived with stronger leadership.

The tension that underpins much of the conflict is the competition between major-junior teams and the U.S. NCAA, both of which hotly recruit promising teenagers at the bantam level. If a player chooses major junior, he is not allowed play college hockey in the United States.

Indicative of the sensitive nature of the issues at play, several senior officials on different WHL teams reached by telephone Wednesday declined comment.

The WHL issued a statement — in which it noted it found no evidence of payments to players — and said it would not speak of the matter again.

"All WHL clubs understand that they are required to fully comply and respect our league regulations or they will face significant consequences," commissioner Ron Robison said in the statement.

Portland has been revived under the leadership of its owner, Calgary oilman Bill Gallacher, who took over in the fall of 2008. Gallacher, an engineer by training, made his fortune in the oil sands and is chairman of Athabasca Oil Corp.

The Winterhawks missed the playoffs in Gallacher's first season, but he poured money into the team, going on a hiring spree, starting with Johnston, who was brought in after being an associate coach in the NHL for nine seasons with the Vancouver Canucks and Los Angeles Kings.

The team has been revived – and made the WHL final the past two seasons, powered by talent such as winger Sven Baertschi, a Calgary Flames prospect who briefly sparkled in the NHL last year as an injury call-up and is currently in the AHL during the lockout.

Gallacher, according to the team website, "is providing the organization with all the necessary resources to return the Winterhawks to the elite status Portland fans remember."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 11.29.2012

645069 Washington Capitals

Caps season ticket holders vent about the lockout

Posted by Katie Carrera on November 28, 2012 at 1:54 pm

Thanks to everyone who shared their sentiments Tuesday about being season ticket holders during the lockout. (Check out the story that ran in Wednesday's paper here.) With so many responses, it was impossible to fit it all in print, so here's more of what Caps fans had to say.

Julian Brunner from Petworth, a four-year season ticket holder in Section 410:

"In the past [Capitals owner Ted] Leonsis has spoken about how owning a team you should act like a steward for the city in caring for it, and he's also spoken previously about how rewarding your key players is an important element for getting their buy in and building a winning franchise. Those words seem like a joke now that he's willing to cost us fans a season of hockey (and a season the primes of our best 2-3 players) [to] put the screws to the players union and try to get them to not honor full deals that he himself signed. I'm strongly considering giving up my tickets because it makes sick to think that my money is supporting his behavior."

Angie Secrest from Highland, Md., a five-year season ticket holder in Section 113:

"Sadly 'this' lockout has left me feeling incredible negative about the NHL and how it is run. To me someone should have been looking out for the best interest of the sport, a third party that wasn't siding with players or owners but that honestly was looking out for hockey and it's growth. This is not something that I see Gary Bettman being capable of, he is just another greedy businessman looking to line his pockets. I love hockey, but I just can't stomach the idea that any of my money would go to any of these owners or the NHL ever again.

"I have already had all but 10% refunded, the 10% just keeps our account open and my seats until I decide firmly that I'm not going anymore and I see that as just days away. I think had they resolved this sooner rather than later, I would have felt differently, but hockey has been 'gone' for so long now that my life has moved on without it!"

Mike Easby from Ballston, Va., a five-year season ticket holder in Section 405:

"I am definitely on the fence. But whether or not I renew my season tickets hinges upon their pricing. If they keep prices the same, or have a ridiculous 25% increase for a third straight time, then I will definitely give up my season tickets after having them 5 years."

Hina Ansari from Woodbridge, Va., a three-year season ticket holder in the Acela Club:

"The lockout is ridiculous and the time it is taking to hash things out is preposterous. The owners and players are being infantile and the negotiators are not helping. Mediation aside, I don't have high hopes for the NHL season, nor the executives, such as Gary Bettman or Donald Fehr. How can I consider supporting a sport that doesn't care about me, or my money, as a fan? When I think about the money I've spent attending NHL events and buying gear, it just makes me sick. Ted Leonsis has yet to say anything I want to hear about this lockout, nor has any other owner or rep from the NHL. I'm an avid football fan, an STH for the Nats and Wiz (regrettably) and I question my own motives for supporting teams and sports that don't care about the fans."

Brian Drake from Germantown, Md., a 14-year season ticket holder in Section 411:

"It gets frustrating. I understand that this is their business and their livelihoods but their livelihoods are coming from our money. The words from both sides have become hollow at this point. It's tough but I don't want to lose out on the chance to see the Caps play for the Stanley Cup, if it happens. They've gotten to the point where they're decent and close and I don't want to miss out on that. I've talked to my seat partner, my son, he's 10 and he's told me 'No, you can't give them up yet.'...Fortunately I can get my hockey fix other ways. My son plays travel hockey and so I don't miss the NHL games as much — I saw six hockey games this weekend."

Nicci Uiterwijk from Rockville, Md., a first-year season ticket holder in Section 407:

"If there's a season this year, I'll keep the tickets for the rest of it. If there's no season I'll probably stick it out, go for the first season back just to see what the experience would be like but then I probably wouldn't buy again. It's accessible on TV and it's been extremely frustrating to see the two sides seem so close in talks only to keep losing more months [off the schedule]."

Andrew Pang from Arlington, Va., a four-year season ticket holder in Section 101:

"I will most likely give up my seats, for a number of reasons: 1) While hockey is still my #1 sport by a long-shot, I have soured on much of the system with this lockout.

2) While ticket prices might be relatively low compared to other teams, they are still darn expensive when multiplied out over the whole season. Add babysitters, parking & concessions, and it tops \$11k for 2 seats.

3) Because of work, kids in school, etc, I can only attend about a third of the games anyway.

4) It is quite difficult to sell tickets to unused games during the first half of the season – football and the seeming unimportance of early-season games reduces the demand dramatically and ensures I either eat my seats for certain games or sell them at a loss. Averaged out over the season, these losses tend to neutralize the discount I get for the games I actually attend.

5) I have found I like being at home with my entire family rather than fighting traffic, parking, watching the game and driving back home with only one of my family members. The cost precludes me from buying 4 seats so my whole family can enjoy the games.

Kevin Broun from Rockville, Md., a three-year season ticket holder in Section 404:

"If they don't play at all this year, I'm sure I'll give up my seats. It's not like tickets will be difficult to find, or very expensive, on the secondary market after this debacle. Ted Leonsis should realize that he's endangering customer goodwill in a relatively fragile economic situation, especially by acting as one of the "hard line" owners, if that's true."

Lyndsey Arnold from Arlington, who just got off the season-ticket waiting list and now has seats in Section 402:

"We are die hard Caps fans. In fact, we planned our wedding around the season for the summer. Ridiculous. All this lockout has done now is make me numb. I honestly think they are all a bunch of [jerks] but I place most of the blame on the owners.

"At this point, I don't even care if there's a season. In fact, I've grown used to having my winters to myself and I am saving a lot of money. I do miss having something to watch every night, because there were always hockey games on but I catch up on my shows. In other words, I have officially moved on. I don't care anymore. But then again, I responded to your tweet, so I guess I do still care. We will have to think long and hard about

renewing next year. After a year off, going back to going to games 3/4 nights a week sounds horrific. Also seeing everyone play in Europe isn't helping. I've stopped clicking on Russian Machines links on Twitter, they just annoy me. People ask us all the time how we are doing without hockey at first I was mad. Now I am just apathetic. But I promise you this, I will have to think long and hard before spending \$1700 next year. I would like to know what's going to happen with my \$1700 that Ted already has for the 2012-2013 season, though."

Jay Carini, a 12-year season ticket holder from Section 400 held on to his seats despite moving to Ohio two years ago. Here's a portion of a letter he sent to the team this month:

"For the first time in my 10+ years as a season ticket holder I'm questioning whether or not I will renew. Prices continue to escalate, the players and owners don't appear to care about the fans or the damage this is doing to the league, and it seems like we are being taken for granted.

"I've always been a strong supporter of the Caps and Mr. Leonsis' ownership team, but I am just not happy or comfortable with the direction the league is heading. Hockey has always been an avenue for entertainment and a way to get away from everything else, I just hope it regains my trust or I will find new avenues for my family's time and money."

Ted Ferragut, a 20-year season ticket holder from Delaware, shared a letter that he sent to the Capitals' Jim Van Stone, senior vice president of sales and service:

"It does not appear that the lockout is going to end any time soon. Hence, my wife and I have decided to take a long vacation to Australia and New Zealand, starting in late January. We made this decision as we can't wait for the NHL-PA to straighten out their business matters. We don't believe that a shortened season is what we originally contracted with the Caps and the NHL. We also don't want to be in the position of having to sell game after game while out of the country. We are tired of waiting and can use the 'budget' set aside for Caps hockey to travel. I am asking for you to release me from any 2012-2013 obligations, roll this money into a full season starting in 2013-2014, and allow me to maintain my current seat. We thought hard and long about just dropping out, but we feel rolling over this money is best for all concerned. After 20 years as a season ticket holder and 35 years as a fan, it is really hard to be a Caps fan these days. Really hard."

Jill Colby from Roanoke, Va., canceled her season tickets in September after seven years. She was a Capitals ticket sales representative for a little over a year from 2001-02.

"I am frankly beyond disgusted with the Caps and the NHL. Although I blame the owners and league for the current situation, all parties have conducted themselves poorly, and I don't believe the game will bounce back this time. There are no Ovechkins or Crosbys waiting to re-ignite the fans' passion and capture new fans. As for me, I enjoy the game enough that if and when it returns, I will still watch on TV. But I will be hard-pressed ever to hand over another dime to Ted Leonsis. During his tenure, Bettman has made a mockery of the game of hockey — a game that no other sport can touch in terms of sheer excitement and finesse. The cancellation of the whole season is a mere formality at this point. I believe NHL hockey as we knew it is dead. I'm just glad I was able to witness a few fun seasons in person...even if the Caps never could manage to get past the second round."

Justin Valentine, a five-year season ticket holder in Section 405 from Severn, Md., suggested during a phone interview that whenever the lockout ends Capitals Owner Ted Leonsis should do more fan-outreach:

"He needs to show the fans he cares. It's going to have to go back to the way it was when the team wasn't very good, with Ted out at the F Street entrance thanking everyone who walks through that door personally. They say we're the best fans in the world all the time, show us.

"A client of mine had an interesting idea I support too, that for the first season after the lockout Ted should give his suite to fans at every home game. He could sit in the season ticket holder's seat instead — not just the club or 100 sections but up in the 400s too — so he could experience what we do, what we pay money for....Hopefully he can remember what it's like to be a regular guy, struggling to take care of our families and realize that tickets are a luxury."

Travis Rechenbach, a seven-year season ticket holder in Section 400 from Washington:

"The last time it was because the owners wanted the game to change and they wanted to roll back some of these salaries but this time it's pretty much the same thing. Casual hockey fans just want hockey back. I [want] hockey back and frankly I think the fans in this area honestly won't divert away from showing up at Verizon Center once hockey comes back. But it's awfully hard to defend a sport and bring in new fans and season ticket holders if another lockout is on the horizon."

Vince Piperni, a 14-year season ticket holder in Section 408 from Alexandria, who shares tickets with his sister:

"We sat through the last lockout and actually moved to the front row of 408 (into Row A from Row D) as a "reward" for staying through the fire sale, the last lockout, and the painful Caps rebuilding process that followed. But enough is enough. I don't want to write a novel here but in short, neither one of us is happy with either side of this dispute. The players offering only a five year deal is especially unappealing because this means that we would be right back at this again in just five years, at least we got seven years this time around."

Washington Post LOADED: 11.29.2012

645070 Washington Capitals

NHL, union get back to bargaining with mediators

By IRA PODELL

With the help of federal mediators, the NHL and the players' association got back to bargaining Wednesday after a week apart.

The location was secret, and so was what was discussed. The talks went well enough that the sides will be back at the negotiating table Thursday.

"No comments," was all NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly would say Wednesday night in an email to The Associated Press.

This marked the first meeting between the sides since a get-together that lasted just over two hours last week in New York after the locked-out players' association made a new comprehensive proposal that was quickly rejected by the NHL. The sides agreed on Monday to use the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

The lockout, which reached its 74th day Wednesday, has already forced the cancellation of all games through Dec. 14, the New Year's Day Winter Classic, and All-Star Weekend that was slated for Columbus, Ohio, in January.

Washington Times LOADED: 11.29.2012

645071 Winnipeg Jets

Reprimand 'fabrication' denied by Jets, NHL

By: Ed Tait

THE Winnipeg Jets and National Hockey League vehemently denied a report out of Boston Wednesday that suggested Bruins' owner Jeremy Jacobs reprimanded a Jets' representative at a recent NHL Board of Governors meeting.

Comcast Sportsnet Northeast columnist Joe Haggerty, who writes the blog Bruins Talk for the website, reported that at a recent governors' meeting a Jet alternate governor suggested a long lockout would hurt the franchise's momentum and hurt the game.

The story said Jacobs then "answered by reprimanding the Winnipeg representative as one of the 'new kids on the block' and informed him that he would know when he was allowed to speak in the NHL boardroom."

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly, in an email to the Free Press, said the story was a "100 per cent complete and total fabrication."

And Jets' chairman and governor Chipman issued the following statement Wednesday night:

"I was disappointed to learn today of a report which claimed an exchange took place between an Alternate Governor of the Winnipeg Jets and Jeremy Jacobs of the Boston Bruins at a recent NHL Board of Governors meeting. I was present throughout all BOG proceedings and can categorically state that no such exchange between Mr. Jacobs and either one of our Alternate Governors -- Patrick Phillips or Kevin Cheveldayoff -- ever took place. Any suggestion otherwise is completely false."

Haggerty told the Free Press Wednesday he stands by his reporting and the story. This is the second denial by the league and an owner over a published report that indicated possible dissension in the NHL ranks. Earlier this month Philadelphia Flyers chairman Ed Snider issued a statement denying a Philadelphia Daily News story that said he had 'soured' on collective bargaining negotiations and was no longer a supporter of commissioner Gary Bettman.

--- --

True North Sports and Entertainment won't be playing Grinch to its employees this holiday season.

As the NHL lockout drags on some clubs are looking more at laying off staff or reducing hours because of the labour impasse. The Minnesota Wild, for example, confirmed Tuesday its staff will be put on a four-day work week that equates to a 20 per cent pay cut beginning Dec. 28 if a new deal is not in place. And when the lockout began, Wild executives and staff making more than \$70,000 annually took cuts of between 30 and 35 per cent.

A Winnipeg Jets' spokesman indicated Wednesday there has been no change to TNSE's approach to the lockout -- there have been no layoffs or pay reductions.

A number of teams have not asked staff to take cuts or implemented layoffs, including the Jets, Bruins, Chicago Blackhawks, Detroit Red Wings, Pittsburgh Penguins, Toronto Maple Leafs and Washington Capitals

Staff at the NHL offices were asked to work four-day weeks beginning on Oct. 1, while five other clubs that have also cut salaries or laid off staff.

-- With files from Gary Lawless

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 11.29.2012

645072 Winnipeg Jets

Last gasp at labour peace?

Mediation could be final chance to save 2012-13 campaign

By: Ed Tait

JOE BRYKSA / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS archives Jets captain Andrew Ladd has been sweating out the lockout at the MTS Iceplex. He's hopeful federal mediators can help break the logjam.

Enlarge Image

JOE BRYKSA / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS archives Jets captain Andrew Ladd has been sweating out the lockout at the MTS Iceplex. He's hopeful federal mediators can help break the logjam.

Just around noon on Wednesday, two federal mediators began their first sit-down session with the NHL and NHL Players' Association in an attempt to end a lockout now into its 75th day, to stop the financial bloodbath both sides are suffering and save a portion of the 2012-13 season.

And given all the doubt and negativity that surrounds this latest attempt to bridge the gap between the two sides, if Scot L. Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney of the U.S. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service can somehow help facilitate a deal, then their likenesses should be bronzed and displayed in front of every NHL arena from Anaheim to Boston and Edmonton to Sunrise, Fla.

The general consensus as the discussions began Wednesday and were expected to last into Thursday-Friday is this: mediation is a last-minute, pull-the-goalie long shot. And if nothing materializes, the next announcement from NHL headquarters might be to nuke the entire 2012-13 season.

"We all hope it can help out," said Winnipeg Jet captain Andrew Ladd after an off-ice workout at the MTS Iceplex on Wednesday. "But at the end of the day it's one of those things where it's still not going to work unless you have two parties that are willing to negotiate and try and get a deal done, which we haven't had so far.

"You hope it can lead to something, but we'll have to wait and see."

The NHL has already cancelled games through to Dec. 14, 422 in total, including the Winter Classic on New Year's Day as well as the NHL All-Star weekend in Columbus on Jan. 26-27 and the lockout, now into its third month, is costing both the league and players millions of dollars daily. At the same time, the NHL brand is not only losing fans and sponsors, the apathy surrounding this ongoing dispute is spreading.

"You learn to suppress you optimism a little bit," said Ladd. "You learn the process and, unfortunately, it's taken a lot more time than everyone would have liked.

"We just want to play hockey, that's the main thing. The frustrating thing is we don't have a willing negotiating partner trying to get the deal done. They're trying to hit the home run, which is unfortunate because the game was doing so well and heading in the right direction in so many ways. It would have been nice to find a fair deal for both parties and we could move forward and grow the game together even more."

In the meantime -- and seemingly barring a negotiating miracle -- the gulf between the two sides will only further grow. So, too, will the angst among the game's fans and icons. An example: on Wednesday Hockey Hall of Famer Ted Lindsay spoke out in an interview with ESPN Boston, agreeing with Washington Capitals defenceman Roman Hamrlik, who last week questioned the leadership of NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr and suggested the players vote on the latest NHL proposal.

"He was absolutely right," Lindsay said. "Every one of these players needs to realize the money they've lost, they will never get back in their lifetime. The front two lines of every team are the big money-earners and they're going to be fine no matter what, but the third- and fourth-liners or the guys like (Hamrlik) at the end of their career, they're going to feel it and I'm sure they are feeling it, so they should speak up.

"We love our game. We're all basically small-townners across Canada, across the United States and, now, across Europe as well. We want the best for our game, for the players and for the owners but most of all for the game, and we want that game back on the ice. You know what, really at this point it doesn't matter whether it's players or owners or who knows who is right and wrong. The damage they're both doing to hockey right now bothers me so much."

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 11.29.2012

645073 Winnipeg Jets

Jets' value skyrockets after first season

By: Geoff Kirbyson

What a difference a relocation makes.

The Winnipeg Jets were one of the fastest-growing franchises in terms of value in the NHL over the past year, according to Forbes magazine.

In its annual report on the state of the league's 30 teams, the business bible listed the Jets as the 20th most valuable franchise at \$200 million, a 22 per cent increase from a year ago when its worth was estimated at \$164 million and 24th in the league. (All figures are in US dollars.)

After selling out every home game last year, Forbes estimated the Jets brought in \$105 million in revenue and turned a \$13.3 million profit.

Two years ago, the Atlanta Thrashers, which became the reborn Winnipeg Jets in the summer of 2011, were valued at \$135 million.

Mike Ozanian, executive editor at Forbes, said True North Sports & Entertainment's ownership of both the team and its home, the 15,003-seat MTS Centre, paid significant dividends.

"It gave them a lot of incentive to keep costs in line and they marketed the team very well. They've gone out and secured sponsorship and suite sales for a number of years that has the team very well grounded there," he said.

Operating in the league's smallest market and in the smallest building did not have a negative impact on the team, he said. In fact, it probably forced True North to take a realistic view of its situation and that likely helped. True North knew it wasn't going to secure a gigantic television deal and it didn't base any decisions on making a profit on any "real estate schemes" or having to make the third round of the playoffs, Ozanian said.

"They built a team that fits their community and their market and they're focused on hockey and their fans," he said.

The Jets' business plan reminded Ozanian of how the Green Bay Packers - the team in the smallest market in the NFL -- operates.

"They don't get one huge sponsor but they get a lot of (smaller) sponsors. They have a modest economic game plan that they make work," he said.

It's also unusual, Ozanian noted, for an NHL team to turn a profit without making the playoffs and operating in an arena without an NBA basketball team as a co-tenant.

"It's just good management," he said.

The Toronto Maple Leafs were the first franchise in the NHL to hit the \$1-billion mark -- that's up 92 per cent from a year ago -- according to Forbes, while the St. Louis Blues were deemed to be at the bottom of the heap at \$130 million, just \$4 million less the Phoenix Coyotes, or former Winnipeg Jets, at No. 29.

Winnipeg's success should boost the spirits of hockey fans in Quebec City because it shows strong hockey markets in Canada can thrive, Ozanian said.

On the labour front, he said if the league increased subsidies of rich teams to poor ones from \$150 million to \$200 million and the players and owners split hockey-related revenue 50-50, the league's overall profitability would increase.

But that still wouldn't mean teams such as the Coyotes, Carolina Hurricanes, Tampa Bay Lightning, Anaheim Ducks and Columbus Blue Jackets wouldn't have trouble making money unless they went at least two rounds in the playoffs.

A spokesperson for the Winnipeg Jets was not available to comment on the Forbes report.

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 11.29.2012

645074 Winnipeg Jets

Jets, NHL deny Jacobs reprimanded Jets rep over lockout criticism

By: Ed Tait

The Winnipeg Jets and the National Hockey League are denying a report out of Boston that suggests Bruins' owner Jeremy Jacobs reprimanded a Jets' representative at a recent NHL Board of Governors meeting.

Comcast Sportsnet Northeast columnist Joe Haggerty, who writes the blog 'Bruins Talk' for the website, reported that a recent governors' meeting a Jets' representative -- not Mark Chipman, it is pointed out -- suggested a long lockout would hurt the franchise's momentum and hurt the game.

The story said Jacobs 'answered by reprimanding the Winnipeg representative as one of the "new kids on the block" and informed him that he would know when he was allowed to speak in the NHL board room.'

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly, in an e-mail to The Free Press, said the story was a "100% complete and total fabrication."

Chipman issued the following statement Wednesday night:

"I was disappointed to learn today of a report which claimed an exchange took place between an Alternate Governor of the Winnipeg Jets and Jeremy Jacobs of the Boston Bruins at a recent NHL Board of Governors meeting. I was present throughout all BOG proceedings and can categorically state that no such exchange between Mr. Jacobs and either one of our Alternate

Governors - Patrick Phillips or Kevin Cheveldayoff - ever took place. Any suggestion otherwise is completely false."

Haggerty told the Free Press Wednesday he stands by his reporting and the story.

This is the second denial by the league and an owner over a published report that indicated possible dissent in the NHL ranks. Earlier this month Philadelphia Flyers chairman Ed Snider issued a statement denying a Philadelphia Daily News story that said he had 'soured' on collective bargaining negotiations and was no longer a supporter of commissioner Gary Bettman.

--With files from Gary Lawless

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 11.29.2012

645075 Winnipeg Jets

Ladd welcomes addition of mediators to bargaining

By: Ed Tait

Andrew Ladd doesn't have his fingers and toes crossed a pair of mediators will be able to bridge the gap between the National Hockey League and the NHL Players' Association.

But, like a lot of fans of the game, the Winnipeg Jets' captain believes getting some new eyes and ears involved in the process falls under the 'might not help, but sure as heck can't hurt' category.

"We all hope it can help out," said Ladd today after an off-ice workout at MTS Iceplex. "But at the end of the day it's one of those things where it's still not going to work unless you have two parties that are willing to negotiate and try and get a deal done, which we haven't had so far.

"You hope it can lead to something, but we'll have to wait and see."

With the lockout now into its 74th day, the two sides are to meet with mediators this afternoon. It will be the first get together since last Wednesday, when the NHLPA's newest proposal was given the thumbs down by the league.

Last Friday the league cancelled games up until Dec. 14th as well as the NHL All-Star weekend in Columbus on Jan. 26-27.

"(Mediation) is something we've been open to right from the get-go," said Ladd. "Hopefully it leads to something and I guess it's good both parties have decided to take another step to try and get it done."

Asked if his frustration level is mounting, Ladd added:

"I'm still in the same spot -- it's been frustrating for awhile. It's all part of negotiations. Obviously they (the NHL) have some sort of idea as to how they want to negotiate and don't seem too eager to get something done right away.

"As players there's not much you can do about that and you learn that pretty quickly. It's the process and it's something that takes time."

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 11.29.2012

645076 Winnipeg Jets

NHL must learn from Jets 22% increase in value

By Paul Friesen ,Winnipeg Sun

Every year Forbes Magazine publishes a valuation of NHL franchises, resulting in a series of protestations from those owning the teams.

It always strikes me they protest a little too much.

While you never know the true value of anything until you put it on the open market, Forbes does its homework.

And it's latest research into the business of hockey provides a fascinating look at how a small-market owner in Winnipeg has turned the game on its ear — and how similar franchise relocations could only benefit the business.

Of course, the NHL would rather stay in several lousy markets and make the players — or in the case of Phoenix, the local taxpayers — shed their blood to pay for its stubbornness.

According to Forbes, the Winnipeg Jets franchise is worth \$200 million, a 22 percent jump from a year ago when the team was based in Atlanta.

The Jets rank 20th in the NHL, a significant increase from the \$170 million Mark Chipman and David Thomson paid for the team and the right to move it.

The more astonishing figure: the Jets turned a \$13.3 million profit in Year 1, ranking 10th of 30 teams in the net revenue take.

Thanks to a sold-out building, one of the higher ticket prices in the league and a relatively low payroll, the Jets were more profitable than one Canadian team, the Calgary Flames, and 19 others, including those in Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

At \$105 million in total revenue, the Jets ranked 16th, according to Forbes.

Nobody from True North Sports and Entertainment would comment on the Forbes numbers — no surprise there.

The report pegged Toronto as the league's most valuable franchise, worth an estimated \$1 billion — the first time an NHL franchise has hit that threshold.

But here's the rub: feeding at the bottom are the St. Louis Blues, valued at \$130 million, and the Coyotes, at \$134 million, a price tag that seems rather generous, given how the new owner there needs \$16 million in subsidies per year to make a go of it.

As Forbes points out, the gap between the haves and have-nots has become a canyon.

The top five teams — Toronto, New York Rangers, Montreal, Chicago and Boston — average \$605 million in value.

The bottom five — Carolina, New York Islanders, Columbus, Phoenix and St. Louis — average \$145 million.

And if you want to see why we're experiencing yet another lockout that threatens the season, here it is: the top three teams, the Leafs, Rangers and Habs, made 83% of the NHL's total profit.

Meanwhile, Florida, Tampa Bay, Carolina, Columbus and Phoenix combined to lose an astounding \$73.8 million.

In all, 14 of 30 teams lost money last season, says Forbes.

Makes you look at the NHL's overall record revenue of \$3-plus billion a little differently, doesn't it?

Also makes you wonder how far the league is prepared to go to boost at least a handful of money losers to the black side of the ledger.

Short of serious revenue sharing, and I'm not even sure that would be enough, the NHL needs to get down to a 50-50 player/owner split, and then some.

It's either that or lop off half a dozen teams and 150 or so player jobs.

At the very least, the league eventually has to come to grips with another relocation or two.

"The success of the Winnipeg Jets buttresses (the) case for moving a team to Quebec," is one of the conclusions of the Forbes report.

Of course, the NHL will keep whistling its way through its southern graveyard, continue to tell us all is well — then attempt to gut the players every time the CBA comes up.

Talk about a dysfunctional business.

Winnipeg Sun LOADED 11.29.2012

645077 Winnipeg Jets

Told to shut up or not, Jets have little say in NHL lockout

By Ted Wyman

Maybe the governors of the Winnipeg Jets were told to go sit at the kids' table while the big boys talk.

Maybe it never happened.

Regardless of whether anyone reprimanded a Jets governor for allegedly voicing moderate opposition to the lockout, it's obvious the NHL's newest team has little say in the current labour negotiations.

A report out of Boston Wednesday, by Bruins insider Joe Haggerty of Comcast Sportsnet New England, said Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs admonished a Jets governor, not principal owner Mark Chipman, in a recent meeting for saying the franchise "was opposed to engaging in a long, bloody lockout sure to stymie their franchise's momentum and hurt the game of hockey."

At that point Jacobs, considered one of the owners' driving forces behind the lockout, "answered by reprimanding the Winnipeg representative as one of the 'new kids on the block' and informed him that he would know when he was allowed to speak in the NHL boardroom."

The reaction was fast and furious from an NHL ownership group that is quick to crush any suggestion of dissent in the ranks.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly, said this: "Total fantasy. Didn't happen."

Another independent source who was in the meeting concurred.

Then the most unusual thing happened: Chipman, who hasn't said a word under a league-wide gag order on owners during the lockout, put out a statement.

"I was disappointed to learn today of a report which claimed an exchange took place between an alternate governor of the Winnipeg Jets and Jeremy Jacobs of the Boston Bruins at a recent NHL Board of Governors meeting. I was present throughout all BOG proceedings and can categorically state that no such exchange between Mr. Jacobs and either one of our alternate governors — Patrick Phillips or Kevin Cheveldayoff — ever took place. Any suggestion otherwise is completely false."

Like I said, maybe it didn't happen, but the NHL's urgency to nip it in the bud is certainly curious.

You get the feeling the Jets are having their strings pulled on this one, just as they have been told in not so many words to stay in the background of lockout talks.

Those who follow the situation closely know the NHL governors are ruled by commissioner Gary Bettman and a couple of heavyweights, most notably Jacobs, and they are the ones who are pushing the lockout agenda.

The moderate voices and even the moderately dissenting ones might as well be lepers.

Heaven forbid anyone express a concern that this asinine lockout might be affecting some franchises adversely.

If the Winnipeg Jets governors, just a year removed from spending \$170 million (including a \$60 million relocation fee that went to the other owners), have reservations about a lockout killing their momentum and potentially setting them on a path to ruin, they better damn well keep it to themselves.

At least that's how the old boys on the NHL Board of Bullies would have it.

By most accounts, the Jets governors have been nothing but good partners, quietly going along with a lockout that must have them seething on the inside (note Wednesday's "all-is-rosy" press statement). The long-term ramifications of a favourable Collective Bargaining Agreement would be to their benefit, no doubt, but the timing is atrocious.

They would have every right to speak out about the pitfalls of a labour war coming just a year after they finally got a chance to purchase a team and move it to Winnipeg.

This is a new NHL member that spent years playing by Bettman's rules in order to pony up millions to rescue a doomed franchise and move it to a market with a chance of success.

True North deserves to have a say.

The Jets were extremely successful in their return to Winnipeg, selling out every game and becoming a top revenue generator in terms of merchandise.

When Forbes released its NHL franchise values report Wednesday, it pegged the Jets at about \$200 million, which is 22% more than what the team was worth in Atlanta.

Despite that, Jets ownership has been forced to go along with the rest of the league in a lockout that is hurting their momentum and putting a sour taste back into the mouths of fans who went 15 years without a team before the Jets finally returned last season.

This is a market that has endured too much suffering because of the NHL. Now, just when the tide has turned and pain is being replaced by euphoria, something else comes along to beat the hockey fans back down again.

No doubt the Jets and their fans are not bigger than the game and that's why you can be sure Chipman continues to play by the rules.

But if anyone has a right to be upset, it's him.

Winnipeg Sun LOADED 11.29.2012

645078 Websites

ESPN / Why would Crosby risk playing in Europe?

By Pierre LeBrun

Sidney Crosby's European odyssey is becoming more and more of a realistic possibility with each passing day of this dreadful lockout.

There is interest from all over Europe, most notably from Russia and Switzerland and -- if I had to bet -- I'd give Swiss league teams a leg up on landing the world's top hockey player.

For those who wonder why on earth he'd be willing to risk playing overseas without his massive new contract fully insured (only part of it will be insurable), it's a calculated risk from a player who feels he must play.

Too much time has been spent not playing games over the past two-plus years. Whether it's in a lockout-shortened NHL season or wearing a uniform overseas, bet on Crosby playing real games this season.

And I don't blame him one bit.

But there's certainly no set date on any decision in that regard.

"There's no real timeline, I think it's just trying to get a pulse on what's going on (on the labor front), and that's been hard to do," the Pittsburgh Penguins superstar told ESPN.com over the phone late Tuesday night after arriving in Phoenix where he's joining other NHLers for scrimmages this week.

"At the end of the day, I'm a hockey player and I love to play. Don't get me wrong, I don't mind practicing, but I've been practicing a lot for the last couple of years. I just want to play. If there's nothing really happening as far as getting a deal done, then it becomes much more important to play games and finding out where that makes sense."

Crosby spoke about it with agent Pat Brisson on Monday night.

"Sidney is seriously looking at his options in Europe," Brisson told ESPN.com Tuesday. "He needs and wants to play hockey. It will be difficult to go all year without playing after what he's gone through the last two years. Over the next few days, I'm going to make more calls and continue to explore Sidney's options."

ESPN LOADED: 11.29.2012

645079 Websites

ESPN / Claude Giroux getting treatment

By Pierre LeBrun

Star center Claude Giroux of the Philadelphia Flyers has been in Atlanta for the past few days receiving treatment for a neck injury.

Giroux told ESPN.com on Wednesday that his treatments were going well. He suffered the injury Nov. 16 while playing for Berlin in the German league. He also underwent concussion tests.

Giroux has been getting treatment in Atlanta from Dr. Ted Carrick, who has worked with Sidney Crosby and Jonathan Toews.

ESPN LOADED: 11.29.2012

645080 Websites

ESPN / Sidney Crosby monitors options

By Pierre LeBrun

The possibility of Sidney Crosby embarking on a European hockey odyssey is becoming more realistic with each passing day of the NHL lockout.

But while he is monitoring the situation, he says there's certainly no set date on any decision in that regard.

More From ESPN.com

Why would Sidney Crosby risk playing in Europe? ESPN.com's Pierre LeBrun looks at the reasoning -- and where Crosby could end up. Blog

"There's no real timeline, I think it's just trying to get a pulse on what's going on (on the labor front), and that's been hard to do," the Pittsburgh Penguins superstar told ESPN.com over the phone late Tuesday night after arriving in Phoenix, where he's joining other NHLers for scrimmages this week.

"At the end of the day, I'm a hockey player and I love to play," Crosby said. "Don't get me wrong, I don't mind practicing, but I've been practicing a lot for the last couple of years. I just want to play. If there's nothing really happening as far as getting a deal done, then it becomes much more important to play games and finding out where that makes sense."

Crosby spoke about his options, including Europe, with agent Pat Brisson on Monday night.

"Sidney is seriously looking at his options in Europe," Brisson told ESPN.com on Tuesday. "He needs and wants to play hockey. It will be difficult to go all year without playing after what he's gone through the last two years. Over the next few days I'm going to make more calls and continue to explore Sidney's options."

The NHL and NHL Players' Association are set to meet with mediators Wednesday and perhaps Thursday.

Crosby At the end of the day, I'm a hockey player and I love to play. ... I just want to play.

" -- Sidney Crosby

"I'm trying to still be optimistic, and hopefully that's something that will maybe be a turning point," Crosby said. "It's something that at least forces both sides to be in a room together and at least talk. That in itself hasn't been easy to do lately. I'm hoping (mediation) makes a difference."

Crosby has been outspoken during this lockout and involved at times in the process, flying into New York and Toronto over the past two months for a couple of bargaining meetings and jumping on players' calls.

He said the whole ordeal has been tough to take.

"As a player you just want to understand what's going on," Crosby said. "The process has been the most frustrating part. You want to believe that every day there's communication and everybody is trying to get it done, but the way it's gone with the periods of not talking, that's not very encouraging. Especially when we know with every day we miss, it's hurting everyone. We need to figure it out. I know having mediators involved is something Don (Fehr) brought up a month ago, from the players' side that's something we were hoping would happen if things didn't go well. I'm glad both sides agreed to it."

ESPN LOADED: 11.29.2012

645081 Websites

selfless disposition many times over to those he shares the locker room with.

"The guys, they'll give me some material on the ice if guys want to fight me," Clifford explained. "[Colton] Yellow Horn filled me in with some chirps to give guys if anybody wants to fight me or anything like that. I just work hard and come in. I'm usually a pretty quiet guy around the room."

With Devin Setoguchi – who was held out of the lineup on Wednesday – Ontario has commanded an interesting stockpile of NHL-based forwards during the lockout; 734-game NHL defenseman Paul Mara is also attempting a comeback with the Reign. Only the Alaska Aces, who are led in scoring by Washington Capitals forward Joey Crabb, have more than one NHL-based player on their roster. Columbus' Brandon Dubinsky, Montreal's Scott Gomez and Tampa Bay's Nate Thompson are also playing for the Anchorage-based club.

Clifford is seeing time in all situations for Ontario. ECHL teams only rotate three lines, so there is ample ice time in the attacking and defensive zones as well as in special teams play. A left wing in Los Angeles, he has seen the majority of his time on the left side alongside Stretch, a center, and right wing Derek Couture.

As one of the team's NHL liaisons, he's also tasked with imparting his experience as someone who earned a regular roster spot as a 19-year old onto his teammates, all of whom are hoping to continue to rise throughout hockey's hierarchy.

"It's more about stories and just around the league – coaches, the Stanley Cup – those kinds of things," Clifford said about the questions he has been asked.

"They want to know what [Kings head coach Daryl] Sutter's like."

FOXSports.com LOADED: 11.29.2012

645082 Websites

NBCSports.com /Mediation talks wrap for the day, expected to resume tomorrow

Joe Yerdon

After meeting for most of the afternoon and into the evening, the NHL and NHLPA along with Federal mediators are calling it a night.

NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr released a statement following today's gathering.

"A small group of NHLPA staff and players met today with two experienced FMCS mediators. We expect that these discussions will resume on Thursday," Fehr said.

ESPN.com's Pierre LeBrun shares that the owners and players spent most of the day in separate groups with the mediators. It was expected that today's gathering would proceed like that.

With the two sides scheduled to do this again tomorrow, we may find out whether or not mediation was able to make any ground in resolving this situation.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645083 Websites

NBCSports.com /Daly and Jets deny columnist's claim Jacobs bullied them in meeting

Joe Yerdon

Joe Haggerty of CSNNE.com managed to turn a few heads today with his column pointing the finger at Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs for his role in the lockout.

FOXSports.com / Kings' Clifford getting work in ECHL

Jon Rosen

For the members of the locked out NHL workforce that have decided to join new teams during the labor disagreement, many have immersed themselves in unfamiliar, engrossing surroundings.

Winnipeg's Tobias Enstrom and New Jersey's David Clarkson fled to Salzburg, Austria and now drive near Mozart statues and past gardens depicted in The Sound of Music while on the way to the rink. Vancouver's Cory Schneider, recently signed by Ambri-Piotta of Switzerland's National League A, will now travel to work by navigating through narrow valleys dominated by towering peaks and glacial waterfalls in the middle of the Alps.

Kyle Clifford, who won a Stanley Cup as a member of the 2011-12 Los Angeles Kings, is in Ontario.

Not his native province of Ontario – where he grew up in the quaint village of Ayr, a 90-minute drive west of Toronto – but the suburban community of Ontario, Calif., where he has joined the ECHL's Ontario Reign for an indefinite stay as the league's owners and NHLPA work on constructing a new collective bargaining agreement that will allow him to return to his Los Angeles teammates.

"Obviously I wanted to stay back with the boys, but [I'm a] young guy," Clifford said. "I thought it was time to go in and get some games, and try and become a better player."

He's also becoming a valued member of the Reign's locker room and was instantly accepted by a close-knit group, which came as no surprise to head coach Jason Christie.

"His personality alone fits in well with our group, you know what I mean? He's a hard-working guy, a blue collar type of guy," Christie said.

"He's still got jump in him, and we're excited that he can come out. Just work alone – his work ethic, it's been phenomenal."

In a 6-2 victory over the Orlando Solar Bears on Wednesday night at Citizens Bank Business Arena, Clifford opened the scoring when he allegedly deflected a Chris Huxley point shot past Hanno Toivonen for his second goal as a member of the Reign.

Replays – and Clifford's own admission – indicated that the puck may have been blasted clear through traffic by Huxley, though credit Clifford for providing a presence in front of the net while clearing up additional space for his teammates.

"I don't know if I got a stick on it or not. We'll let the league decide," Clifford said. "Huxy made a good play there. C.J. [Stretch] won the draw. So, just simple, hard hockey."

The performance came one game after he amassed 1-2=3 and a plus-four rating in a 7-3 win at Bakersfield in which his linemate Stretch, an Irvine native and Kings training camp invitee a year ago, scored four times as part of a five-point night.

"He's a straight ahead kind of guy, so I kind of just followed his lead," Stretch said of playing with Clifford.

His acceptance into the Ontario locker room was illustrated early in the third period Wednesday when he took a questionable hit from an Orlando skater near the teams' benches. In an instant, defenseman Matthew Clune made a beeline straight to the offender before demonstrating in very clear terms that such liberties against any member of the Reign would be dealt with punitively.

"It just shows the character in the room and the good guys and how welcoming they are, and how we all stand up for each other," Clifford said. "It's been like that the last three games. Anytime there's been a bad hit or something like that, guys have stepped in and stood up for each other."

Not that Clifford needs any assistance in such matters, having accumulated 141 and 123 penalty minutes in his two NHL seasons. If there's anyone qualified at providing a sandpaper lesson of how to be a good teammate, it's the net-crashing and boards-effective forward who has proven his

In it he shared a story detailing how Jacobs bullied members of the Winnipeg Jets organization during a Board of Governors meeting for being the new guys in town. That story is now being denied by both the league and the Jets.

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly tells Gary Lawless of the Winnipeg Free Press that the incident never occurred. That same sentiment was shared with Winnipeg Sun sports editor Ted Wyman.

Haggerty, meanwhile, holds his ground saying, via Twitter: "Duly noted. I stand by my reporting."

This is the second time in the past month the league has come out and vehemently denied a story involving an NHL owner.

A couple of weeks ago, it was Flyers owner Ed Snider who was reported to disagree with how the lockout was proceeding and wanted to see it ended soon. That was quickly denied by Snider himself saying he supports Commissioner Gary Bettman and was followed up by Bettman himself calling the report a "fabrication."

UPDATE (7:35 p.m. ET): Jets owner Mark Chipman released a statement, shared here at CSNNE.com:

"I was disappointed to learn today of a report which claimed an exchange took place between an Alternate Governor of the Winnipeg Jets and Jeremy Jacobs of the Boston Bruins at a recent NHL Board of Governors meeting. I was present throughout all BOG proceedings and can categorically state that no such exchange between Mr. Jacobs and either one of our Alternate Governors – Patrick Phillips or Kevin Cheveldayoff – ever took place. Any suggestion otherwise is completely false."

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645084 Websites

NBCSports.com /Henrique to have surgery on left thumb, out 4-6 weeks

Joe Yerdon

Adam Henrique's time back in the AHL thanks to the lockout has turned into a bit of a pain.

The Devils announced Henrique will undergo surgery for an injured ulnar collateral ligament in his left hand and miss the next 4-6 weeks of action. Henrique was injured in a game with the Albany Devils and should the NHL lockout come to an end in the near future, the start of his season in New Jersey will be delayed.

This season in Albany, Henrique has gotten off to a slow start with five goals and three assists in 16 games, putting him fourth on the team in points. Fellow lockout exiles Jacob Josephson and Adam Larsson are just ahead of him in points. Henrique was a finalist for the Calder Trophy last season as rookie of the year and was a clutch playoff performer for New Jersey.

Safe to say the longer the lockout goes, the more likely we are to see injuries happen to NHL guys playing elsewhere. Henrique isn't the first nor the last we'll hear from.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645085 Websites

NBCSports.com /PHT Morning Skate: Donald Fehr speaks on Marvin Miller's passing

Joe Yerdon

PHT's Morning Skate takes a look around the world of hockey to see what's happening and what we'll be talking about around the NHL world and beyond.

Marvin Miller was a giant in sports labor, changing it to what we know it as today. His passing at the age of 95 has NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr thinking back on how important he was. (NHLPA)

If the NHL season is wiped out by the lockout, Senators captain Daniel Alfredsson wants to play in Europe. (Ottawa Sun)

ESPN's John Buccigross had a player tell him the league has a 48-game schedule worked out and ready to go in January. Bet they copied the one they had in 1995. (@Buccigross)

Lightning prospect J.T. Brown is doing really well in the AHL this year. (Tampa Tribune)

The Sharks sent out their first round of season ticket refund checks. (Working The Corners)

News of the always: Tyler Seguin owns in Switzerland. (Edmonton Journal)

Speaking of Alfie, he says "every player is pissed off" about the lockout. Well, no kidding. (Ottawa Sun)

Today marks Day 74 of the NHL lockout and Captain America John Carlson just cannot be pleased.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645086 Websites

NBCSports.com /Raising Arizona: Glendale City Council votes to approve Coyotes lease agreement

Joe Yerdon

Is this long saga in the desert at an end? Perhaps it is after the Glendale City Council voted 4-2 in favor of the city's 20-year, \$320 million lease agreement for prospective Phoenix Coyotes buyer Greg Jamison.

The agreement will help the team stay in Jobing.com Arena and hand over duties of managing the facility to Jamison. The one catch here is he'll have until January 31, 2013 to close on the sale of the team or else the process, with a newly voted in city council, will begin all over again.

Outgoing mayor Elaine Scruggs, who was against the deal, was not pleased at the outcome of the vote saying, "The public will find they were misled." She then added, "I choose to support people in other types of uniforms. Police uniforms, fire uniforms...not Coyotes uniforms."

Yikes.

Is this the end of the story for now? Let's hope so, but the track record over the last three years says there's always a twist waiting to be unleashed.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645087 Websites

NBCSports.com /Jason Chimera leaves his Czech Republic team

Joe Yerdon

Players landing lockout deals can sometimes come with consequences. For players out of North America, that means they likely have to leave their families behind. For Washington's Jason Chimera, doing that proved to be difficult.

Stephen Whyno of The Washington Times reports Chimera left Chomutov in the Czech Extraliga to return home after playing five games there. From Whyno's report:

Chomutov manager Leo Gudas told TV NOVA Sport: "He wasn't able to live here separated from family, especially his children."

Finding a new job abroad while locked out is made a bit more difficult when it means leaving the wife and kids at home. You may not often think of

players in that sort of light, but the lockout is hitting them hard in other ways.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645088 Websites

NBCSports.com /Steve Ott is organizing a charity game as well

Joe Yerdon

After the success of charity games across Quebec as well as Operation Hat Trick in Atlantic City this past weekend, fans in Windsor, Ontario can get excited because they're going to have a game of their own.

Sabres forward Steve Ott is rallying fellow players together for a game, as John Vogl of the Buffalo News reports, on December 8 at the WFCU Center in Windsor and his list of players participating is pretty strong.

Among his future Sabres teammates playing are Thomas Vanek, Jordan Leopold, Drew Stafford, and Matt Ellis. He's also recruited a few former Stars teammates in Adam Burish, James Neal, and Brenden Morrow.

There'll also be numerous Detroit Red Wings making the trek across the border to Windsor with Johan Franzen, Todd Bertuzzi, Danny Cleary, Niklas Kronwall, and noted Gary Bettman insult-tosser Ian White. Don't suppose the Commish will drop in on this one, will he?

All in all it's a healthy roster of players, but when you consider Martin Brodeur and Henrik Lundqvist combined to give up 16 goals in the Atlantic City game, what kind of damage will be done on Jonas Gustavsson, Michael Leighton, and Jimmy Howard? Keep the red light warm, gang.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645089 Websites

NBCSports.com /Don Cherry to coach CHL/NHL Top Prospects game

Mike Halford

On Wednesday, the Canadian Hockey League announced the captains, alternates, rosters and coaches for its annual NHL Top Prospects Game — and judging by the names involved, it promises to be a stellar affair.

CBC Hockey Night in Canada's Don Cherry will coach Team Cherry while longtime NHLer and Stanley Cup champion Mike McPhee will coach Team Orr, with both inheriting one of the top two prospects for the 2013 NHL Draft.

Cherry will get Nathan MacKinnon, the Halifax Mooseheads center that's tearing up the Quebec League this season with 43 points in 25 games.

McPhee will get Seth Jones, the Portland Winterhawks defenseman who has 17 points in 24 WHL games this year.

MacKinnon and Jones will captain their respective squads in what's traditionally been an important showcase for draft-eligible players.

Since the Top Prospects Game was introduced in 1996, 10 participants have been chosen first overall in the NHL Draft: Chris Phillips, Joe Thornton, Vincent Lecavalier, Rick Nash, Marc-Andre Fleury, Patrick Kane, Steven Stamkos, John Tavares, Taylor Hall and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins.

It's widely believed that either Jones or MacKinnon will go first overall in 2013.

That said, this game is not all about those two. A number of players that featured prominently in the Central Scouting draft rankings have also been selected to play — Darnell Nurse and Jonathan Drouin, two of the top-ranked skaters in the OHL and QMJHL, will serve as alternate captains for Team Cherry.

Sean Monahan and Hunter Shinkaruk — The No. 1 and No. 2 ranked skaters in the WHL and OHL respectively — will be the alternates for Team Orr.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645090 Websites

NBCSports.com /Donovan McNabb's nephew rockets up 2013 Draft Board — the NHL Draft Board, that is

Mike Halford

You might want to file away the name Darnell Nurse for future reference.

The Sault Ste. Marie defenseman featured prominently in NHL Central Scouting's 2013 preliminary draft rankings — Nurse came in as the OHL's top-ranked blueliner and the second best skater in the league, behind Ottawa forward Sean Monahan.

The 6-foot-4, 190-pound Nurse credits his parents for teaching the importance of training and staying fit, and cites his uncle as a major influence in his life.

That uncle would be Donovan McNabb, the six-time Pro Bowl QB.

"My uncle has always been there for me," Nurse told NHL.com. "No matter if I had a question being away from home for the first time, or working out over the summer.

"He's been someone I've always been able to reach out to ... he's a big person in my life."

Speaking of big, it's Nurse's size that has scouts excited about his potential — and has many drawing comparisons to Philadelphia Flyers blueliner Chris Pronger.

NHL Central Scouting's Chris Edwards made the Pronger comparison and said Nurse's ability to skate well and play physical are big reasons why.

"Anytime you get a guy his size, who skates as well as [Nurse] does and plays a physical game, it's fun to watch," Edwards said. "In the one game at Guelph, I saw him fight twice and he did very well in both. The fights happened while both players were going for the puck and they just got into it. He handles himself very well.

"I like everything about this guy, and defensemen like him are hard to find."

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645091 Websites

NBCSports.com /Columnist: Blame Jacobs for NHL lockout

Jason Brough

For your afternoon reading pleasure, CSNNE.com's Joe Haggerty has a few thoughts on the man whose name has become synonymous with the description "hardline NHL owner."

That man, of course, is Boston Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs. And suffice to say, Haggerty isn't a huge fan.

The biggest question of the lockout is, why would a frugal, shrewd businessman like Jacobs seemingly do his own team a disservice by prolonging the lockout? The Bruins have the most money committed in player salaries over the next two seasons, and would be severely affected by a sudden drop in the salary cap. Even if NHL teams are given a one-year transition period to adjust to a plummeting salary cap, the Bruins will be bumping the cap ceiling in 2013-14 without a single proven NHL goaltender signed on for duty.

That's a horrendous position for Jacobs to leave his franchise when the Bruins have relied so prominently on defense and goaltending for success. But it doesn't seem to matter a whit to the Bruins owner as he bangs the

drum for a lowered salary cap, draconian contract restrictions, and a stodgy desire to turn the NHL clock back at least 30 years.

Because Jacobs is a multi-billionaire used to winning and hearing exactly what he wants to hear at all times.

We encourage you to read Haggerty's entire piece. (Particularly the part about Jacobs telling an alternate governor from the Winnipeg Jets to speak only when spoken to.)

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645092 Websites

NBCSports.com /Maple Leafs worth \$1 billion, says Forbes

Jason Brough

They haven't made the playoffs since before the last lockout, but the Toronto Maple Leafs are still worth a cool \$1 billion, according to the newest Forbes valuations.

The Leafs' valuation is by far the highest of all 30 NHL franchises, and it dwarfs the dollar figure assigned to the least valuable clubs.

After the Leafs, it's the New York Rangers (\$750 million), Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million), Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million), and Boston Bruins (\$348 million).

At the bottom end, the St. Louis Blues are the least valuable franchise at \$130 million, slightly lower than the Phoenix Coyotes (\$134 million) and Columbus Blue Jackets (\$145 million).

It should be noted that in cases like the Blues, Forbes was able to use actual recent sale prices to determine value. For teams like the Bruins (Jeremy Jacobs has owned the B's since 1975), valuations are estimates.

A few notes:

— The Leafs are worth almost eight times more than the Blues. That's a massive discrepancy compared to the NFL, where Forbes values the most valuable Dallas Cowboys (\$2.1 billion) at just 2.7 times more than No. 32 Jacksonville (\$770 million).*

— Forbes estimates that 17 NHL teams are profitable, led by the Leafs with annual operating income of \$81.9 million. League-wide earnings were pegged at \$250 million, a number the league would likely dispute as too high.

— The average franchise value is around \$282 million. The average Canadian franchise value is around \$400 million.

— Winnipeg is the least valuable Canadian franchise at \$200 million (No. 20).

— Of the 10 least valuable franchises, six of them are in markets where it very rarely snows. (And we're not talking about Vancouver.)

— The brand value Forbes assigns to the Coyotes is \$13 million. For the Leafs, it's \$154 million.

The great equalizer in the NFL is national TV money, which is in the neighborhood of \$3 billion per year and divided evenly among all franchises. The NHL is far more dependent on ticket sales and local broadcasting revenue. Thus, the NHLPA's push for more revenue-sharing between franchises.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645093 Websites

NBCSports.com /NHL and NHLPA to meet with mediators today

Jason Brough

The NHL and NHLPA are set to resume collective bargaining this afternoon, this time with federal mediators joining them the table.

Only time will tell if third-party intervention has any positive effect on negotiations. There hasn't been a whole lot of optimism that mediators will be able to bridge the gap between owners and players.

Two issues remain at the forefront of the dispute. The first is money. The NHLPA claims the two sides are just \$182 million apart over the life of the players' five-year offer.

The second is contract rights. The league wants to end back-diving deals, cap contract lengths at five years and for players to become eligible for unrestricted free agency a year later than under the last CBA. The union, meanwhile, wants things to stay more or less the same, though it did propose a way to punish teams that front-load deals in order to subvert the spirit of the salary cap.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 11.29.2012

645094 Websites

YAHOO SPORTS / Hey, NHL & NHLPA: Here's how to follow mediator to middle ground and make a deal

Staff

Good day, gentlemen. I am your mediator.

Don Fehr and Gary Bettman have a chance to find a CBA compromise and save the 2012-13 NHL season. (Getty)First things first. If you accepted this invitation only hoping I'll take your side, this won't work. You can leave at any time. This isn't binding, and we all know it. All I can do is facilitate discussions, try to identify your true priorities and make suggestions.

But my first suggestion is this: Don't leave. Don't let pessimism become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Don't keep a closed mind and waste an opportunity. Because if you walk out of here without at least finding some sort of compromise, without making some sort of progress, you won't be right back where you started. You'll be in even worse shape.

You could drift farther apart, when you're close enough to come together and end this lockout. You could increase your risks – via decertification of the union, cancellation of the season, further alienation of your customers – when you could start rebuilding what you've damaged already.

I am not here to rehash history, though I will keep it in mind and keep this in context. I am not here to suggest what should have been done in the first place, because, frankly, it's too late for that. I am here to analyze where we are today, right now, this minute, and try to get this done.

This is not about the ideal. This is about making a deal.

Yes, this is oversimplified and doesn't examine every detail. It doesn't even get into revenue sharing, with the NHL at \$200 million and the NHLPA at \$260 million. But let's look at the main sticking points:

– Money: You have agreed to split hockey-related revenue 50-50. The dispute is now over how to handle current contracts, because the players used to receive 57 percent of HRR, the owners 43 percent.

Some players who inked new deals in the summer negotiated signing bonuses. (Getty)Players, you say you just want your contracts honored. Well, you signed them in an escrow system, knowing you weren't guaranteed every dollar. Especially if you signed them this summer, you signed them knowing the owners were going to try to cut your percentage of HRR – and knowing they were willing to lock you out to do it. That's why some of you negotiated guaranteed signing bonuses.

Owners, that doesn't let you off the hook. When you sign a contract, there is a legal obligation and a moral obligation. You have the legal right to do what you're doing, but it's just not right to sign someone to a contract under certain conditions to secure his services with the intention of changing those conditions drastically. Fifty-seven percent to 50 percent is quite a drop, and that creates quite a pay cut via escrow.

You have recognized that with your so-called "make-whole" proposal. You're at \$211 million, and you want that number to go down, not up, because you proposed it to save a full 82-game season, or close to it.

Players, you're at \$393 million, touting a difference of only \$182 million – or \$1.2 million per team per year of a five-year agreement. I took that as an invitation to negotiate, setting about \$300 million as the middle ground, but the owners did not counter.

So how about \$275 million?

Owners, it's higher than you want. But would you rather pay that and play hockey, or would you rather cancel another season, drive away fans and sponsors, and pay hefty legal bills and risk triple damages, if the union decertifies and players file antitrust suits?

Players, it's less than you want. But would you rather take that and play hockey, or would you rather cancel another season, drive away fans and sponsors, and risk losing your court battles if you decertify? We're looking at two-thirds of a schedule this season, at best. I know you blame the owners for that. But maybe you can live with \$275 million in "transition payments" if you consider it a prorated amount.

I know you want some protection on the downside, too, because you have made enormous concessions with little in return. But you can't expect your share never to go backward in terms of dollars, when any drop in HRR for any reason – a bad year, a good year following a great year, some unforeseen circumstance – could put your percentage above 50 again. Either we're 50-50 going forward, after the blow to current contracts is cushioned, or we're not.

– Rights: OK, owners. You have your cost certainty where you wanted it. After accounting for make-whole/transition payments, the players will never make more than 50 percent of HRR. No matter what tricks the general managers and agents pull, you are protected from spending too much

Owners aren't enamored with paying for potential in second contracts, but there's risk for players, too. (AP)Players, you are taking a smaller slice of the pie. If you don't want to mess with how your slice is sliced among you, fine.

Let's leave entry-level contracts, arbitration rights and free agency eligibility alone. Let's forget term limits on contracts. Let's adopt the NHLPA's ideas addressing cap circumvention – counting above \$1 million against the cap if a player is sent to the minors, using a formula to recapture the cap advantage if a player retires before he finishes a long-term contract. (Let's make that apply only to future contracts; this is a CBA, not a time machine. It's unfair to penalize teams that worked within old rules.)

Owners, I know you want to crack down on second contracts. I know you want to allocate your cap dollars differently. I know you want to close loopholes you left open in the last agreement. But this is the least you can do. The players are reasonable when they say their individual rights matter more when their total share is less. The less pie, the harder the fight.

You can argue a player should earn his dollars and not be paid for potential, that he should negotiate a big deal at, say, age 28 instead of 23. I understand. But the more years, the more risk to the player – of injury, of declining performance. A player wants more options for more of his career.

You can argue salaries should not vary more than a certain percentage each year, that they should not go on too long. I understand. But that takes away flexibility from both players and teams – which isn't necessarily good for either – and that limits options, and that limits the market.

Individual players have to cash in when they can, where they can. They want as much personal choice as possible. If they can't make more than 50 percent of HRR as a group, are these issues worth sacrificing 100 percent of HRR?

– Term: Players, you want a five-year collective bargaining agreement. Owners, you want a longer-term deal – six or seven years, officially, but even as much as 10.

A 10-year CBA deal with player opt-outs could help prevent future lockouts. (Getty)Players, you say you want to stop this perpetual cycle of lockouts. Owners, you say you want stability.

Players, you say five years is a long time, because players turn over and it's hard to predict the future. You don't buy the stability argument. You think the owners only want stability because this agreement is so advantageous to them and they want to keep these terms as long as possible.

Well, if it's hard to predict the future, why blame the owners for their failure to predict the future when they devised the last agreement? Why not take advantage of the same dynamic?

Players, you were supposedly crushed after the 2004-05 lockout when you accepted a salary cap and a 24-percent rollback, getting some looser contract rights in exchange. Then the league emerged from the gloom, recorded seven straight years of record revenues and salaries rose. You extended the agreement. You wanted to keep playing under it during these negotiations, right?

So let's do a five-year deal with two one-year player options – or better yet, a 10-year deal with player opt-outs at five years and seven years. Owners, if 50-50 is the answer, that should be fine for you. Players, you keep asking what you're getting in return for your concessions. In this scenario, you get some control.

If the deal turns out bad – or just isn't good enough – from the players' perspective, you can end it. You pick the next fight. If the deal actually turns out well for you, as the last one did, you can keep the owners from coming back for more again. You can prevent the next lockout.

What do you think?