

# SPORT-SCAN DAILY BRIEF

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645585 Buffalo Sabres

Sabres' Pominville 'just wants to play,' says timing is right to head to Germany

John Vogl

One of the highlights of the Buffalo Sabres' season last year was their exhibition in Mannheim, Germany. The Sabres were awed by the rollicking crowd, which sang, chanted and stood for hours to turn the game into an unforgettable party.

Jason Pominville will get to experience it again.

The Sabres' captain has signed with Adler Mannheim of the German elite league and will join the team next week. He and his family will leave Buffalo on Monday.

"When we played there it was really fun," Pominville said by phone Friday. "The crowd was great. I think it's one of the best places to play in Germany. They treat their players really nice."

Pominville and his agent, Normand Dupont, have been talking with Mannheim since the NHL lockout began in September. Pominville balked earlier because of insurance issues, but he's fully covered now.

"The timing is right for me and for them," Pominville said. "I just want to play. We've been fortunate our skates at Northtown Center have been good. We've got a pretty good group of guys, but there's nothing like playing games and having organized, structured practices. That's basically why I decided to go now."

"If we do end up playing, we're probably not going to play for another two weeks to a month, so it gives me basically a mini training camp where I can get into shape and do what I need to get ready when it starts and if it starts."

Pominville will be one of eight Sabres skating overseas, joining Christian Ehrhoff and Alexander Sulzer (Germany), Tyler Myers and Tyler Ennis (Switzerland), Andrej Sekera (Slovakia), Jhonas Enroth (Sweden) and Mike Weber (Norway).

Pominville has watched as negotiations between the NHL and the union regressed recently. The league's most recent offer was to have owners and players meet directly, with Commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr not in the room. The union is analyzing the proposal.

"I don't know if I agree with it," Pominville said. "Hopefully, something good can come of it. At the same time, we've worked so hard to get Don, I don't see why we wouldn't want him in the room. He's the smart guy. It's still our decision, but he's the guy we wanted."

Buffalo News LOADED: 12.01.2012

645586 Chicago Blackhawks

More of the same for NHL, NHLPA; what's next?

TRACEY MYERS

Another week has gone by. And it was another week of no progress between the NHL and NHLPA. Talking to each other, talking with a mediator, it doesn't matter: the lockout drags on, reaching Day 76 on Friday.

So where do the league and players association go from here?

Commissioner Gary Bettman suggested that the league and PA brass stay out of the next negotiation session, allowing owners and players to meet without them. The NHLPA did have an internal conference call planned today; as of this writing, there's been no report of whether or not it'll go with Bettman's suggestion.

The two sides are running out of ideas to get something done. The only thing they seem to agree on is that they're far apart.

So what about decertification? The NHLPA has discussed it internally; and considering how things have gone, it may be the next step. Players have their own thoughts on the possibility.

"It makes sense when this lockout has gone this long and there's been no movement from the NHL and massive concessions from the players," Blackhawks defenseman and player representative Steve Montador said recently. "It's unfortunate that we have to consider such measures, but it's a serious one."

Jonathan Toews said decertification is "an option. I'm not sure if it's the most imminent choice right now. But at some point the players have certain negotiating tactics that we need to use. Up until now it's been a waiting game. Waiting to see if the NHL means business, if they have the nerve to take it as far as they have. Here we are almost in December, and they look like they couldn't care less.

"A lot of people on the outside think the players are standing up for something that doesn't really mean anything, that in the end and in the future it's not a lot of money. But it goes beyond that," Toews said. "If we agree upon a six-year deal right now, who's to say the league won't try this again in six years? As players, we need to be strong and show them that, it doesn't matter what the terms are. We work hard for our contracts and work hard to get to where we are and to put on a show for the fans every single night. There's a massive price to pay to get to this level. And (being) pushed around by our employer isn't going to happen."

The National Basketball Players' Association went that route last year. On Nov. 10, 2011, the NBA issued a proposal to the NPBA, which the latter group rejected. A few days later, the NPBA voted to go forward with decertification. On Nov. 26, 2011, the two sides reached a tentative deal; 12 days later the NBA's board of governors ratified the deal and, on Christmas Day, the NBA was back.

Players are hoping that, if they take the decertification route, a quick resolution would come in the NHL, too.

"Right now, it's a viable option for us," Troy Brouwer said earlier this week. "If nothing is going to push the owners to even want to negotiate, maybe this will force their hand. We're discussing it internally. I don't know if it'll be our next move, but it's definitely in the dialogue. If it's our most viable option, we'll move toward it and get the process started."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.01.2012

645587 Detroit Red Wings

Two-minute drill: Midday update on Tigers, Lions, Wings, Pistons, U-M and MSU

Posted by James Jahnke

Welcome to our two-minute drill, which will give you a snapshot of what's going on with the Lions, Tigers, Red Wings, Pistons, Spartans and Wolverines each day.

- Lions: Great story from Jeff Seidel about a climber who carried a Lions flag to the top of Mt. Everest. A national columnist calls for an apology from Ndamukong Suh. Meanwhile, Suh himself stayed mum on possible appeals of his traffic ticket and NFL fine and his jersey exchange with Houston's Arian Foster. Scott Linehan said his sideline spat with Shawn Jefferson is in the past. On the field, Brandon Pettigrew is working to fix his fumbling issue. Calvin Johnson has a realistic shot at breaking Jerry Rice's record for receiving yards in a season. And beat writer Dave Birkett will answer your questions about the team in a live chat at 3 p.m. The Lions host the Colts at 1 p.m. Sunday at Ford Field (CBS).

- Pistons: Corey Maggette is looking for the team to build on Wednesday's big win over Phoenix, starting with tonight's game at the Memphis Grizzlies (8 p.m., FSD). And PistonPowered marvels at how successful Kyle Singler has been.

- Spartans: Tom Izzo is scheduled to speak with the media at 5 p.m. today. MSU plays Nicholls State at noon Saturday (Big Ten Network). The December schedule will allow Izzo to better figure out his playing rotation -- which now includes Gary Harris and Travis Trice. Kevin Walrod has led the hockey team's Movember movement. And alum Kevin Vickerson is anchoring the Broncos' defense.

- Wolverines: Basketball coach John Beilein is scheduled to speak with the media at 2 p.m. U-M visits Bradley at 4 p.m. Saturday (ESPNU). Mitch McGary is impressing everyone (even Gov. Rick Snyder) with his hustle. In football, U-M is back in on Cass Tech recruit David Dawson. Larry Foote won \$1.2 million in a valet-scam lawsuit. Trey Burke's draft stock is rising. And get this: Ohio State linebacker Zach Boren writes "Bo" -- as in Schembechler -- on his wrist tape before every game.

- Tigers: Is it the Tigers vs. Dodgers for the services of Anibal Sanchez? If anything happens, you'll know in our MLB live updates story. There reportedly are six teams interested in Ryan Raburn (honest!). And remember back, if you can, to what it was like when the Tigers signed Pudge Rodriguez in 2004.

- Red Wings: Helene St. James notes two worrisome events, as it pertains to the possibility of an NHL season. Ted Lindsay stuck up for Gary Bettman. And here's the video of Riley Sheahan's now-infamous arrest.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 12.01.2012

645588 Detroit Red Wings

Wings prospects Brendan Smith, Gustav Nyquist grooving in Grand Rapids

By Ted Kulfan

Grand Rapids — Brendan Smith and Gustav Nyquist should be skating around Joe Louis Arena right now, beginning what they hope could be long, successful careers.

But they aren't.

They're in Grand Rapids, thanks to the NHL lockout, which enters Day 77 today.

"It stinks any way you look at it," Smith said. "It's the fans who get the worst of it.

"There are no games."

But there have been games for Smith and Nyquist.

Having minor league options available, the Red Wings assigned the duo to the Grand Rapids Griffins once the work stoppage began.

And the top prospects have been critical to the Griffins' early success.

Nyquist has 19 points (eight goals) in 17 games (sixth in the American League), while Smith has 12 points (three goals).

Grand Rapids entered this weekend's games — home against Texas on Friday and tonight — leading the Midwest Division (10-5-1-1, 22 points).

"Our focus at the beginning of the season was we wanted to make sure that when the season in the NHL resumed, they were ready to be impact players," said Griffins coach Jeff Blashill, a Red Wings assistant last season. "Not to make the team, but to be ready to be impact players.

"To do that you still have to get better at a lot of things. So let's focus on getting better at things. They've both showed up on a daily basis to get better. They've been outstanding."

When the NHL locked out players in 2004-05, Niklas Kronwall faced a similar situation.

Kronwall, however, benefited from his time in Grand Rapids, and was named the AHL's defenseman of the year.

The same could be happening with Nyquist and Smith.

"They get to play and progress," Red Wings general manager Ken Holland said. "They get to develop."

Said Nyquist: "I just wanted to play hockey. It was such a weird start to the season, a little different than usual. I'm just happy to be here and playing rather than having to go somewhere else or practice on my own."

Nyquist's scoring binge has been aided by playing on a line with Joakim Andersson and Tomas Tatar.

"They play off each other, all have good poise with the puck, they just like to make plays," Blashill said. "Gus is somebody who can make a lot of plays in small areas. He can spin and throw a little saucer pass in a small area. All three just feed off each other and most nights they've been three of the best forwards on the ice."

Said Nyquist: "I've just been able to play with great players and we've had pretty good chemistry. We've played almost the full season together and it's been clicking."

Which is what Nyquist and Smith have been doing since day one of the AHL season — while the NHL sits.

Smith mum on ID

Smith found himself in a ticklish situation this week when his identification was found with teammate Riley Sheahan, who was arrested on drunken driving charges Oct. 29 in downtown Grand Rapids.

Smith has talked with Griffins and Red Wings officials about the incident (he'll meet with Holland this weekend) but isn't discussing it with the media.

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645589 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings hope Damien Brunner, Henrik Zetterberg maintain chemistry when NHL eventually returns

Ansar Khan

But, they can't complain about how things have unfolded in Switzerland.

Red Wings star Henrik Zetterberg signed with Brunner's club, EV Zug, on Oct. 8. Coach Doug Shedden put the skilled forwards on the same line, and they've been dominant. Brunner, who led the Swiss league in scoring last season, leads again this year with 41 points (18 goals, 23 assists) in 24 games. Zetterberg has 22 points (11 goals, 11 assists) in just 14 league games.

"That's been a home run," Red Wings coach Mike Babcock said. "Maybe they can come back and play together. That would be really good for us. Brunner is scoring like crazy and so is Z.

"I think that confidence that Brunner will have gained by playing with Z and the relationship he'll build will really help him."

Their linemate, Linus Omark of the Edmonton Oilers, is second in the league in scoring with 39 points.

The Red Wings signed the undrafted 26-year-old free agent Brunner to a one-year contract on July 1. A week earlier, Babcock said he would use Brunner as a top-six forward. Not surprisingly, Babcock is inclined to keep Brunner and Zetterberg together.

They just need the lockout to end.

Red Wings general manager Ken Holland is anxious to see how Brunner will fare in the NHL.

"He's quick, he's got a nose for the net and knows how to release the puck," Holland said. "He seems to have found real good chemistry with Zetterberg. We're hoping that eventually they can bring that chemistry back to North America."

Brunner chose the Red Wings over four other clubs.

"You never know how good a player's going to be until they get into the NHL," Holland said. "It's a smaller rink (by 15 feet, width-wise), and it's a little bit of a different game."

But ...

"When you can lead these pro leagues in scoring and you back up a great year with another good year, the odds are that the player is going to have an opportunity to make the adjustment," Holland said.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.01.2012

645590 Edmonton Oilers

Uncertainty over NHL lockout impacts Canadian junior hockey team's camp roster

By Donna Spencer,

The Canadian junior hockey team's selection camp roster to be announced Monday was constructed with the NHL lockout in mind.

Hockey Canada would have limited the number of players invited to 28 if the NHL lockout was certain to continue into January. Having all of the country's top 18- and 19-year-old players at camp makes decisions simpler.

But the uncertainty over when the lockout will end, and how a sudden conclusion would impact the Canadian team, means between 35 and 40 players will be summoned to selection camp Dec. 10-15 in Calgary.

The Canadian team will be named Dec. 13 and departs for pre-competition camp in Finland two days later. The 2013 world junior hockey championship opens Dec. 26 and closes Jan. 5 in Ufa, Russia.

The extra players at camp will be insurance, should the NHL lockout end later this month and clubs quickly call their top teenagers to their training camps.

"We're bringing extra bodies right now," Hockey Canada head scout Kevin Prendergast says. "We just don't want to be scrambling on the 15th of December saying we've got to get 10 players in here right now."

The NHL has cancelled its games until Dec. 14. The league and the players' entered into mediation this week, but no progress was made towards ending the labour impasse.

All countries submit their world junior tournament rosters to the International Ice Hockey Federation on Dec. 25, which allows for the addition of players should some be lost to the NHL in the days prior to the tournament.

That's a nightmare scenario, however, for a Canadian team trying to develop chemistry and cohesion in the few days it has to prepare, while ferrying players back and forth across the Atlantic.

"Anything that's going to change is out of our control," Hockey Canada's senior director of operations Scott Salmond says. "As camp goes on, I think we'll have a pretty good feeling hopefully by the 13th that we'll be able to name the 23 players who will go to our camp in Finland and those will be the guys we stick with."

"Is there a Plan B? Sure we've talked about it and thought about it. Things would really have to change for that to kick in."

Salmond says 23 players will be named to the team instead of the usual 22 because Canada will take a third goaltender — an alternate — to the tournament.

That's not about the NHL lockout, but because of the travel required to get a goaltender to central Russia in the event of an injury to one of the two goalies named to the squad.

"If something happens to one of our goaltenders, we'd never get a goalie in there in time," Prendergast explained. "He's going to be told going over, 'You're the third goaltender. The only way you're going to get to play is if one of the other two get hurt.'"

IIHF rules allow a goaltender to be added to a country's roster during the tournament if one gets injured, but the same isn't permitted at forward or defence.

At this point, the lockout means Canadian head coach Steve Spott and his assistants will have almost all of Canada's best players born in 1993 and 1994 at selection camp.

That's rare as a handful are often lost to the NHL. Canada dominated the 2005 world junior hockey championships en route to gold in Grand Forks, N.D., during the last NHL lockout. Canada also won gold in 1995 in Red Deer, Alta., during a lockout-shortened season.

Injured defenceman Ryan Murray will not be at this year's camp and the status of centre Ryan Nugent-Hopkins is unclear. An Edmonton Oilers spokesman has said general manager Steve Tambellini will discuss the prospect of playing for Canada with Nugent-Hopkins this weekend in Houston.

Nugent-Hopkins, 19, was assigned to the American Hockey League's Oklahoma City Barons prior to the lockout and the Barons are in Houston this weekend.

Hockey Canada's policy is that a player must participate in selection camp to play for Canada at the world junior hockey championships. Prendergast would like an answer from the Oilers by Monday so that Spott can plan selection camp with Nugent-Hopkins in it or out of it.

"We'd want to know," Prendergast said. "We have to give Steve Spott every opportunity to put the best team together. Let's be realistic. If Nugent-Hopkins comes, he'll be our best player."

Salmond, however, would be content if the NHL's first overall draft pick in 2011 commits to the team the day camp starts.

"If the Edmonton Oilers call me the morning of the 10th and said Ryan is coming, obviously we'd want him," Salmond said.

Each NHL club has submitted names to the Canadian Hockey League of players that would be called up in the event the lockout ended and training camps were hastily assembled, according to Prendergast. He could see six players come off Canada's roster immediately in that event.

The players who helped Canada win bronze at the 2012 tournament in Alberta and are eligible to play in the championship again are prime candidates to be plucked from the junior ranks by the NHL.

The second-year players include centres Jonathan Huberdeau (Florida), Mark Scheifele (Winnipeg), Ryan Strome (New York Islanders), winger Boone Jenner (Columbus) and defencemen Scott Harrington (Pittsburgh) and Doug Hamilton (Boston).

Murray (Columbus) was another veteran, but he suffered a season-ending torn labrum in his left shoulder earlier this month.

"That's a hole for certain because he was going to be one of our top two defencemen for sure and could possibly have been our captain (or) assistant captain," Prendergast said. "He's a big-minute guy. But at this point in time in Canada, we have a lot of real, real good defencemen."

Instead of a traditional summer development and evaluation camp in August, Canada invited 28 players to play a four-game exhibition series against the Russians.

Most of those players will be on the selection camp roster announced Monday minus Murray and Oshawa Generals forward Lucas Lessio, who suffered nerve damage in his hand in October.

The goaltending situation this year is interesting with no incumbent from the previous squad. Prendergast says four netminders will be invited.

Malcolm Subban of the Belleville Bulls — who is the younger brother of Montreal Canadiens defenceman P.K. Subban — Etienne Marcoux of the Blainville-Boisbriand Armada, Jordan Binnington of the Owen Sound Attack and Laurent Brossoit of the Edmonton Oil Kings are possible invitees.

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645591 Edmonton Oilers

Justin Schultz's great goal: Why Oilers fans are the luckiest in North America.

David Staples

It's Showtime! in Oklahoma City

It's a down and depressing time for most NHL fans right now, but not nearly so much for fans of the Edmonton Oilers, at least for those subscribing to the Oklahoma City Barons feed on AHLlive.com.

For one thing, the broadcast quality has been improving, so much so that the games are relatively watchable now.

Most of all, though, while stars on other NHL teams are either sitting or playing in Europe, the future core of a strong, perhaps championship-calibre Oilers team is now creating "Showtime" in the AHL.

Taylor Hall, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Jordan Eberle and Justin Schultz, all of them sublime talents, are scoring goal after beautiful goal in OKC, the most recent one coming on Thursday night against the Houston Aeros, an amazing marker by Schultz.

It wasn't an unusual play from him, but showed off his strengths: opportunistic mindset, confidence in making plays, quickness on his skates, elusiveness with the puck, superior stickhandling and a deadly wrist shot.

He dekes a Houston forward out of his hockey pants at the blueline, throws three or four more feints at another Aeros defender, then picks the bottom corner.

The goal isn't amazing in an Omark-in-a-shootout kind of way. But how many Oilers defencemen have you seen score such a goal in the last 20 years? How many NHL d-men would and could pull off such a move? Drew Doughty, for sure. Erik Karlsson. Not many others and not very often.

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645592 Edmonton Oilers

Edmonton Oilers prospect Lander in tough in battle for the bottom

David Staples

Young Swede Lander needs to make more plays with the puck and hit harder to take the next step

When you look at the individual plus-minus of Oklahoma City Barons players on scoring chances, you notice a few distinct groups: sure fire pros, promising prospects, and guys with a chance, but not a great one, of maybe winning a bottom end spot in the National Hockey League.

Anton Lander, who made the Edmonton Oilers last season and for months played a regular role on the fourth line and a penalty kill unit, is now in that last group. His play in Oklahoma City this year has been mediocre-to-OK-to-average-to-marginal.

Uninspiring is the best adjective, at least when it comes to assessing Lander's impact on NHL evaluators. rsz 16lander19paajarvi Edmonton Oilers prospect Lander in tough in battle for the bottom

Lander has been better as of late as centre of the Nordic Line, with promising prospects Teemu Hartikainen and Magnus Paajarvi on his wings.

He is playing with a wee bit more aggression and making a few more plays with the puck. But the 21 year old Swedish prospect, a second round pick in the 2009 draft, has failed to advance his career prospects. He's got just one goal in 15 games, which makes it four goals in 85 professional games since he came over from Sweden last September. That's not good enough for him to make it back to the Oilers, even in a checking role. He's got to be dominant at the AHL level in a checking role.

But, as you can see from the above chart, Lander is grouped in the middle of the plus-minus rankings with a bunch of other centres who aren't exactly tearing up the pea patch, even at the AHL level. While a top centre like Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, 19, is contributing to 3.8 scoring chances per game at even strength, Lander is down at 2.1, Mark Arcobello, age 24, at 1.9, Chris VandeVelde, 25, at 1.8 and Tanner House, 26, at 1.3.

Of course, RNH gets more minutes and has better scoring linemates, but he's also facing the toughest competition the AHL has to offer this year, which is NHL-quality competition, given how many NHLers are in the league this season. On defence, RNH has made mistakes on 1.4 chances per game, Lander 1.3, Arcobello 1.1, VandeVelde 0.8 and House 0.2.

If a coach is looking for a pure defensive specialist to centre a fourth line, House is showing the best defensive skills, though his offensive punch is most lacking. VandeVelde has shown a bit more on defence than all but House, and he also brings toughness. At this point, he should be an iota or two or three ahead of the others in the pecking order for a big league job.

Of course, both VandeVelde and House are a few years older than the other OKC centres, and that added experience means they should indeed be doing a better job defensively. Centre is a complex position and it usually takes years to master the nuances, to know who to cover, when to go for the puck, when to back off. It also takes years to build the strength or guile needed to win one-on-one battles in the corners and the kill zone. In that regard, RNH and Lander's relative defensive struggles are understandable.

But for Lander, a defensive specialist, it's not good enough to be just OK on defence at the AHL level at this point, given his weak offence.

The time for him to step it up is now, and that might come in two ways, first, from increasing experience on the attack, which might lead to a more confident approach with the puck, and, second, from increased physical play at both ends. He's not small, 6-feet and almost 200-pounds. He's never going to be Big Bobby Clobber out there, but he's got to be more fanatical when it comes to using his body to win puck battles.

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645593 Edmonton Oilers

Edmonton Oilers prospect Nail Yakupov held scoreless since returning to KHL

By Derek Van Diest

EDMONTON - Nail Yakupov is still looking for his first goal since returning to Russia following the Subway Super Series.

The Edmonton Oilers prospect had 10 goals for Neftekhimik Nizhnekamsk prior to leaving for Canada to take part in the six-game series.

Having helped Russia claim the event against all-star teams from the three major junior leagues in the country, Yakupov returned to Neftekhimik.

While he has yet to score a goal upon his return, last summer's first overall selection is still collecting points, picking up four assists in two games this past week.

Yakupov had two assists in a 2-1 win over Spartak Moscow last Sunday, then had two helpers in a 4-3 win over Torpedo Nizhny Wednesday.

Yakupov failed to get on the scoresheet in Neftekhimik's 3-1 loss to Atlant Moscow Region on Friday.

In 19 games this season, Yakupov has 10 goals and eight assists.

Neftekhimik face Lokomotiv Yaroslavl on Sunday.

Elsewhere, Ales Hemsky continues to lead his hometown club, CSOB Pojistovna Pardubice, in scoring with 13 goals and 13 assists in 21 games this season.

Hemsky scored a goal and added an assist in a 5-3 win over PSG Zlin Friday. He had an assist in a 4-2 loss to Sparta Prague last Sunday.

Ladislav Smid is also home in the Czech Republic waiting out the lockout, playing with Bili Tygri Liberec.

In 20 games this season, Smid has two goals and 11 assists for Liberec, who are trying to keep from sliding back into the league basement.

Liberec is on a modest two-game winning streak, having beaten HC Vitkovic Steel 5-3 Friday and HC Ocelari Trinec 2-1 on Tuesday. Smid did not pick up a point in either victory, but did collect an assist in a 7-3 loss to HC Kometa Group last Sunday.

In Finland, Lennart Petrell is currently in a scoring slump with HIFK Helsinki, which has seen him go eight games without a point.

Petrell has eight goals and no assists in 18 games this season, however, the Oilers winger has not scored for his hometown club since Oct. 30.

On Friday, Helsinki lost 4-2 to JYP Jyvaskyla. Tuesday they fell 3-2 in overtime to Porin Assat.

Sam Gagner, meanwhile, is having little trouble finding the net for Klagenfurter AC in Austria.

He has six goals and six assists in 13 games this season for the club. Gagner has also been reunited with Andrew Cogliano, who was also signed by the team.

On Friday Klagenfurter lost 4-1 to Dornbirner EC. They beat Orli Znojmo 4-3 in overtime last Sunday with Cogliano scoring the winner.

Oilers defenceman Corey Potter is also in Austria playing with the first-place UPC Vienna Capitals.

In 16 games with the Capitals, Potter has one goal and three assists. On Friday, the Capitals lost 4-3 to HDD Telemach Olimpija Ljubljana.

Nail Yakupov

Neftekhimik Nizhnekamsk, KHL, Russia

Ten goals and eight assists in 19 games so far this season.

Ales Hemsky

CSOB Pojistovna Pardubice, Czech Republic Extraliga

Has 13 goals and 13 assists in 21 games so far this season.

Ladislav Smid

Bili Tygri Liberec, Czech Republic Extraliga

Two goals and 11 assists in 20 games this season.

Lennart Petrell

HIFK Helsinki, Finnish Elite League

Eight goals and no assists in 18 games this season.

Corey Potter

UPC Vienna Capitals, Erste Bank Ice Hockey League, Austria

Has one goal and three assists in 16 games.

Sam Gagner

Klagenfurter AC, Erste Bank Ice Hockey League, Austria

Six goals and six assists in 13 games this season.

Oilers in Oklahoma City

(Prior to Friday's game against Houston)

Jordan Eberle

Has 11 goals and 15 assists in 19 games.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins

Eight goals and 12 assists in 18 games.

Magnus Paajarvi

Two goals and 10 assists in 19 games.

Justin Schultz

Leads the team in scoring with 11 goals and 18 assists in 19 games.

Teemu Hartikainen

Six goals and 10 assists in 19 games.

Taylor Hall

Four goals and 10 assists in 11 games.

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 12.01.2012

645594 Minnesota Wild

St. Paul restaurant owner 'bleeding' over NHL lockout

By Katie Askew

Joe Kasel, owner of St. Paul's Eagle Street Grille, is feeling the hurt of the NHL lockout.

His restaurant-bar is across the street from the Xcel Energy Center, and he said he has laid off two-thirds of his employees since the beginning of October. He attributes the NHL lockout for a significant revenue loss and the resulting employee cuts.

"When you build a business model around the Xcel Energy Center, home of the Minnesota Wild, and then suddenly that business isn't there, that model doesn't work anymore," Kasel said.

In a letter to NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and Donald Fehr, the executive director of the NHL Players' Association, Kasel urged an immediate solution to the lockout.

The letter, dated Nov. 28, was publicized Thursday.

In it, Kasel notes the cultural impact hockey has in Minnesota and wonders whether fans and sponsors will return.

He also acknowledges that he is not alone: "I know this is happening in other cities around the nation. Together, potentially thousands of families and businesses are being affected."

But that's not necessarily the case in Kasel's own neighborhood.

Cossetta's Italian Market and Pizzeria, just blocks from the Xcel Energy Center, is going through a major expansion, and profits don't appear to be affected by the lockout.

"A lot of people want to come down just to see what's going on with us," manager Raymond Vanyo said Thursday.

"Our regular customers are actually coming down here more often, knowing they don't have to fight the usual Wild hockey crowd."

During the 2004-05 NHL lockout, Cossetta's revenue rose 10 percent. Vanyo said business is up overall this year.

"We're hiring staff, but we could have hired more people if the Wild were playing," Vanyo acknowledged.

The American Burger Bar on Wabasha Street also recently hired two new workers and isn't feeling the same financial strain as Kasel.

Kasel, meanwhile, said he employed 48 people in the beginning of September. After two rounds of layoffs and cutting 32 employees, Kasel is down to 16 people. He has cut part-time workers.

"The reason I wrote that letter is because I feel passionate about the sport and wanted to vent my frustration in a somewhat elegant manner," Kasel explained.

"I wasn't bashing anybody. I'm not blaming anybody. I just want to get this done and employ my staff again."

His full-time kitchen staff also has reduced hours.

The NHL lockout has been responsible for the cancellation of more than one-third of the season's games; the sides in the impasse were joined by federal mediators Wednesday and Thursday but to no avail.

The Wild also have cut staff hours during the lockout, but not jobs.

After the 2004-05 NHL lockout, Visit St. Paul, the city's official convention and visitors bureau, found that St. Paul businesses reported revenue drops of 5 percent to 50 percent, depending on their proximity to the Xcel Energy Center, said Karolyn Kirchgessler, the organization's CEO and president.

Eagle Street Grille is across the street from the Xcel Energy Center, and Kasel said that 50 percent of his restaurant's revenue is directly tied to hockey games.

"I'm bleeding," Kasel said. "Let's just put it that way."

Follow Katie Askew at [twitter.com/Katie\\_Askew](https://twitter.com/Katie_Askew).

Star Tribune LOADED: 12.01.2012

645595 Montreal Canadiens

Uncertainty over lockout impacts Canadian junior team's camp roster'

DONNA SPENCER

The Canadian junior hockey team's selection camp roster to be announced Monday was constructed with the NHL lockout in mind.

Hockey Canada would have limited the number of players invited to 28 if the NHL lockout was certain to continue into January. Having all of the country's top 18- and 19-year-old players at camp makes decisions simpler.

But the uncertainty over when the lockout will end, and how a sudden conclusion would impact the Canadian team, means between 35 and 40 players will be summoned to selection camp Dec. 10-15 in Calgary.

The Canadian team will be named Dec. 13 and departs for pre-competition camp in Finland two days later. The 2013 world junior hockey championship opens Dec. 26 and closes Jan. 5 in Ufa, Russia.

The extra players at camp will be insurance, should the NHL lockout end later this month and clubs quickly call their top teenagers to their training camps.

"We're bringing extra bodies right now," Hockey Canada head scout Kevin Prendergast says. "We just don't want to be scrambling on the 15th of December saying we've got to get 10 players in here right now."

The NHL has cancelled its games until Dec. 14. The league and the players' entered into mediation this week, but no progress was made towards ending the labour impasse.

All countries submit their world junior tournament rosters to the International Ice Hockey Federation on Dec. 25, which allows for the addition of players should some be lost to the NHL in the days prior to the tournament.

That's a nightmare scenario, however, for a Canadian team trying to develop chemistry and cohesion in the few days it has to prepare, while ferrying players back and forth across the Atlantic.

"Anything that's going to change is out of our control," Hockey Canada's senior director of operations Scott Salmond says. "As camp goes on, I think we'll have a pretty good feeling hopefully by the 13th that we'll be able to name the 23 players who will go to our camp in Finland and those will be the guys we stick with."

"Is there a Plan B? Sure we've talked about it and thought about it. Things would really have to change for that to kick in."

Salmond says 23 players will be named to the team instead of the usual 22 because Canada will take a third goaltender — an alternate — to the tournament.

That's not about the NHL lockout, but because of the travel required to get a goaltender to central Russia in the event of an injury to one of the two goalies named to the squad.

"If something happens to one of our goaltenders, we'd never get a goalie in there in time," Prendergast explained. "He's going to be told going over,

"You're the third goaltender. The only way you're going to get to play is if one of the other two get hurt."

IIHF rules allows a goaltender to be added to a country's roster during the tournament if one gets injured, but the same isn't permitted at forward or defence.

At this point, the lockout means Canadian head coach Steve Spott and his assistants will have almost all of Canada's best players born in 1993 and 1994 at selection camp.

That's rare as a handful are often lost to the NHL. Canada dominated the 2005 world junior hockey championships en route to gold in Grand Forks, N.D., during the last NHL lockout. Canada also won gold in 1995 in Red Deer, Alta., during a lockout-shortened season.

Injured defenceman Ryan Murray will not be at this year's camp and the status of centre Ryan Nugent-Hopkins is unclear. An Edmonton Oilers spokesman has said general manager Steve Tambellini will discuss the prospect of playing for Canada with Nugent-Hopkins this weekend in Houston.

Nugent-Hopkins, 19, was assigned to the American Hockey League's Oklahoma City Barons prior to the lockout and the Barons are in Houston this weekend.

Hockey Canada's policy is that a player must participate in selection camp to play for Canada at the world junior hockey championships. Prendergast would like an answer from the Oilers by Monday so that Spott can plan selection camp with Nugent-Hopkins in it or out of it.

"We'd want to know," Prendergast said. "We have to give Steve Spott every opportunity to put the best team together. Let's be realistic. If Nugent-Hopkins comes, he'll be our best player."

Salmond, however, would be content if the NHL's first overall draft pick in 2011 commits to the team the day camp starts.

"If the Edmonton Oilers call me the morning of the 10th and said Ryan is coming, obviously we'd want him," Salmond said.

Each NHL club has submitted names to the Canadian Hockey League of players that would be called up in the event the lockout ended and training camps were hastily assembled, according to Prendergast. He could see six players come off Canada's roster immediately in that event.

The players who helped Canada win bronze at the 2012 tournament in Alberta and are eligible to play in the championship again are prime candidates to be plucked from the junior ranks by the NHL.

The second-year players include centres Jonathan Huberdeau (Florida), Mark Scheifele (Winnipeg), Ryan Strome (New York Islanders), winger Boone Jenner (Columbus) and defencemen Scott Harrington (Pittsburgh) and Doug Hamilton (Boston).

Murray (Columbus) was another veteran, but he suffered a season-ending torn labrum in his left shoulder earlier this month.

"That's a hole for certain because he was going to be one of our top two defencemen for sure and could possibly have been our captain (or) assistant captain," Prendergast said. "He's a big-minute guy. But at this point in time in Canada, we have a lot of real, real good defencemen."

Instead of a traditional summer development and evaluation camp in August, Canada invited 28 players to play a four-game exhibition series against the Russians.

Most of those players will be on the selection camp roster announced Monday minus Murray and Oshawa Generals forward Lucas Lessio, who suffered nerve damage in his hand in October.

The goaltending situation this year is interesting with no incumbent from the previous squad. Prendergast says four netminders will be invited.

Malcom Subban of the Belleville Bulls — who is the younger brother of Montreal Canadiens defenceman P.K. Subban — Etienne Marcoux of the Blainville-Boisbriand Armada, Jordan Binnington of the Owen Sound Attack and Laurent Brissoit of the Edmonton Oil Kings are possible invitees.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.01.2012

645596 Nashville Predators

Nashville Predators inspired by Minnesota goalie's courage

Josh Cooper

Predators goaltender Chris Mason understands the resiliency Minnesota Wild netminder Josh Harding has needed to show through his career.

Harding missed the entire 2010-11 season with a knee injury. He's had hip injuries and various other ailments.

It's through Harding's past experiences that Mason knows his roommate from the 2009 Team Canada world-championship squad can at least contain his latest issue — multiple sclerosis.

Harding was diagnosed two months ago, according to a Wednesday report in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. The story said he would continue playing and has resumed on-ice workouts without issue.

There is no known cure for multiple sclerosis, which affects the body's immune and central nervous systems. Symptoms can include problems with balance, fatigue and vision.

"He has been through a lot in his career with injuries and almost career-ending ones, and he came back and had an unbelievable season last year," Mason said. "People like Josh are going to try to not let it get in the way and try to overcome it."

"I admire that 100 times over. It speaks volumes about his character, and he's in a position where he will be a great role model for other people in that situation."

Several other Predators have connections with Harding, 28, through the 2009 world-championship squad.

"That's tough to see anyone that young be diagnosed with something like that," defenceman Shea Weber said. "I've known him a while, played him in junior. He's a good guy and fun to be around. But I think he has a really good attitude and he definitely won't let it beat him."

Last offseason, Harding signed a three-year, \$5.7 million contract extension with the Wild. In 2011-12, he played a career-high 34 games and notched a 2.62 goals against average and .917 save percentage.

No Crosby domino: Multiple reports have said Pittsburgh Penguins superstar forward Sidney Crosby is seriously looking at opportunities to play overseas for the duration of the NHL lockout.

Weber, who roomed with Crosby at the 2010 Olympics, still sees too many hurdles for himself to play in Europe.

"I definitely want to play, too, but it's harder than you think," Weber said. "There's probably not a lot of teams over there that have a lot of spots for imports, but with insurance and a number of other aspects it may not be so easy."

Coaches at practice: Predators coaches were at A-Game Sportsplex on Thursday to look at the building's hockey skills center.

The Predators are in the process of building a center of their own at Bridgestone Arena.

The coaches also watched the player-run practice of locked-out NHLers but left before it ended. NHL rules during the lockout prohibit coaches from talking to players in a working capacity.

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645597 New Jersey Devils

NHL may try new tack in talks

By MARK EVERSON

Brooks on The NHL Players Association is expected to offer several conditions which would lead to brass-free direct talks between the league's owners and players in a bid to break Lockout III.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman's latest idea for this lockout's end-run around the Players' Association's officials — direct talks between an

unspecified number of owners, who are professional businessmen, and a number of players, who are professional athletes — could mean an absence of union advice in the talks.

The talks would be conducted without Bettman, deputy commissioner Bill Daly and union heads Donald and Steve Fehr.

The union is said to be taking a 'Why not?' attitude rather than giving an enthusiastic endorsement of the concept.

Because of the vulnerable position such talks would put the union in, the Players Association will require the talks not be a negotiation, but rather a conversation in which participants can express themselves, The Post's Larry Brooks has learned.

In addition, the union will insist the owners involved not include the four on the negotiating committee, led by Boston's Jeremy Jacobs.

The union is expected to also insist the league have no say in designating which players attend the talks, a point the league is said to want.

The idea of direct talks was floated by Bettman after the breakup of federal mediation sessions Wednesday.

The idea of direct owners/players talks comes at a busy time, with a Board of Governors meeting scheduled in Manhattan this coming Wednesday.

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645598 New York Rangers

NY Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist wants NHL commissioner Gary Bettman to invite Madison Square Garden chairman James Dolan to negotiating table

By Pat Leonard

Henrik Lundqvist wants Garden chairman James Dolan invited to the NHL negotiating table.

The increasingly impatient Rangers goaltender sounded off on Friday as the NHL players' association deliberated whether to accept commissioner Gary Bettman's invitation to a players-owners-only negotiation session. The union is only expected to accept the offer if new owners with different perspectives are allowed in a room that would be void of both league and union leadership.

"If the plan is to have meetings between players and owners to solve this mess, maybe it's time to allow teams that actually are carrying the league financially to get involved," the Rangers goaltender wrote on his Twitter account, @HLundqvist30. "So far I have not seen any invitations to the meeting room.. Without the big market teams (the) NHL is in BIG trouble so explain to me why they are not invited? in these meetings?"

Lundqvist and the union would prefer to talk to owners other than the four on the NHL's negotiating committee during this lockout: Jeremy Jacobs (Boston Bruins), Craig Leipold (Minnesota Wild), Ted Leonsis (Washington Capitals) and N. Murray Edwards (Calgary Flames).

A Forbes report Wednesday listed the Toronto Maple Leafs (\$1 billion), Rangers (\$750 million), Montreal Canadiens (\$575 million), Chicago Blackhawks (\$350 million) and Boston Bruins (\$248 million) as the top five NHL franchises in average value. But only the Bruins' Jacobs and Maple Leafs GM Brian Burke, both hardliners for the league's cause, have been involved prominently and consistently in these negotiations.

On the other hand, Dolan— who signs Lundqvist's checks when there isn't a lockout — has a refurbished arena, a Stanley Cup-contending club and a financial incentive to play hockey yesterday. He also has a history of challenging Bettman, like when the Rangers unsuccessfully sued the NHL in 2008 to protect the club's right to run its own website.

Precious time is ticking away. If financially influential or moderate owners do not broach new ideas in a players-owners-only meeting, their last chance could be the Board of Governors meeting in New York City on Dec. 5. The players, meanwhile, held a conference call on Friday to discuss their options, taking more than 24 hours to make a decision on how to proceed while the month of November slipped away.

The Winter Classic, All-Star Game and all regular-season games through Dec. 14 already have been cancelled due to a lockout that hit day 76 on Friday. Tempers are growing short. Options are diminishing. On Sept. 13, three days before the lockout began, Lundqvist told the Daily News: "I'm a guy, I want action, so for me to sit in (on negotiations) early on, it was hard to be patient."

Now he's hoping the boss will have an opportunity to advocate for the league's and franchise's best interests, before it's too late.

New York Daily News LOADED: 12.01.2012

645599 NHL

Study Shows Possible Brain Damage Caused by Subconcussive Blows

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

A hockey concussion study published Friday in the journal Neurosurgical Focus includes in its findings an intriguing element — possible radiological evidence of brain trauma caused by subconcussive blows.

The effect of subconcussive blows on the brain is in many ways the Planet X of concussion science. Researchers say that small blows have a cumulative effect and can lead to damage in the brain similar to that caused by diagnosed concussions. They say that if small blows, like the ones in hockey that result from checks into the boards or routine collisions and falls to the ice, are repeated often enough, they can even lead to chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or C.T.E., a degenerative brain disease.

The problem is that the effect of subconcussive blows had not been measured comprehensively until now — if researchers from Harvard, the University of Montreal and elsewhere are correct about what they are seeing in the new hockey study and in a recently published study of soccer players in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The researchers caution that the results in this area of the study are preliminary and inconclusive, but they use words like "striking" and "surprising" when talking about them.

The new hockey concussion study followed two unnamed Canadian university teams — one men's, one women's — through the 2011-12 season. Researchers scanned every player's brain before and after the season, using advanced magnetic resonance imaging like diffusion tensor imaging and MR spectroscopy.

When the scans were analyzed, researchers found substantive metabolic changes among the majority of players, including those who were not diagnosed with concussions.

"It was pretty compelling," said Dr. Martha E. Shenton, a researcher who analyzed pre- and postseason diffusion tensor imaging of white matter in the brains of 17 players on the men's team.

Only 3 of the 17 players had sustained diagnosed concussions during the season, and two of those three showed the most pronounced white-matter changes in the study. But most of the 14 non-concussed players displayed a lesser degree of the same kind of changes — and that was what surprised Shenton.

"To see changes in such a short period of time, I was surprised," she said. "I was betting, quite frankly, that we wouldn't see any changes between pre- and postseason."

Shenton, who works at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and the Neuroscience Division of the V.A. Hospital in Brockton, Mass, added: "When you see brain chemistry changes like this, it's clear something's going on. Are some of these people are going to end up with more serious kind of brain injury damage? How sensitive is the brain? How resilient? These are all things we don't know the answer to these questions."

Dr. Inga K. Koerte, a researcher who worked alongside Shenton in this part of the study, noted that the changes observed might have been affected by concussions the hockey players sustained earlier in their careers, or evidence of something else altogether. But she, too, suspected that the scans were showing the effects of subconcussive blows sustained during the 2011-12 season.

"You may not need to have a diagnosed concussion to actually have changes in your white matter," said Koerte, of Brigham and Women's

Hospital, Harvard and the University of Munich. "It may be that subconcussive blows to your head accumulate over time, so that you develop changes that are similar to those that you get when you have one clinical concussion."

Koerte and Shenton published research earlier this month in JAMA, in which they and other researchers also found evidence of white matter changes in German soccer players who had no history of diagnosed concussion. They noted that after advanced scanning of the soccer players' brains, changes were found consistent with findings observed in patients with concussion damage."

They said that study showed the first radiological evidence of damage to the brains of athletes caused by subconcussive blows.

In hockey study published Friday, researchers analyzed MR spectroscopy imaging of the brains of the male and female players involved, again using scans taken before and after the season. Those scans showed evidence of neural damage in the brains of the female players not diagnosed with concussions over the course of the season.

"It is very interesting that the damage was found primarily in the women rather than the men," said Dr. Hugo Théoret of the University of Montreal, who analyzed the MR spectroscopy scans.

Théoret stressed that these findings, too, are preliminary. But he said the evidence of greater damage in the brains of the female players might point to greater susceptibility to concussion among women. (The study published Friday, and other hockey studies, showed higher concussion rates for female players, believed to be a product of women's smaller necks and lesser ability to withstand whiplash in collisions when compared with men.)

The MR spectroscopy may also show evidence of damage caused by subconcussive blows, Théoret said. He looked at the scans of the 14 female players who had not sustained a diagnosed concussion, and found that most showed a marker for damage in the tissue connecting the two brain hemispheres and is particularly vulnerable to blows to the head.

"Most of those players had a concussion previously in their careers," Théoret said. "What we could be seeing is damage caused by hits to the head that are subconcussive, but on a concussed brain that is not normal to begin with. If so, it's very alarming."

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645600 NHL

Want a Real Rivalry? Try Bowdoin-Colby

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

Oakley Melendy of Bowdoin turning up ice against Colby in 1939. Bowdoin College Athletic Department Oakley Melendy of Bowdoin turning up ice against Colby in 1939.

The N.H.L. lockout may have you down, but don't make the mistake of thinking there's no hockey. There's always lots of hockey – as in Maine this weekend.

The most frequently played small-college hockey rivalry in the world will be renewed Friday in Brunswick and Saturday in Waterville, when the Bowdoin Polar Bears and the Colby Mules clash for the 199th and 200th times.

It's a rivalry that stretches back to 1922, when the Mules beat the Polar Bears by 2-1 in the inaugural game. It goes back so far that the first 37 years' worth of games was played at outdoor rinks, and it gets so heated that the Bowdoin dining halls have had to restrict what they serve on Colby-Bowdoin days so that it doesn't end up on the ice. Fish, for instance.

"This is like a little Beanpot," said Terry Meagher, in his 29th year as head coach for Bowdoin, which holds a 103-87-8 edge going into Friday's contest at the Polar Bears' Watson Arena.

"It's got tradition, passion, fine play and intelligent students looking to howl a bit at the end of the semester," Meagher said, citing the creatively profane chants that emanate from both school's cheering sections. "There's an intense love of hockey in the state of Maine, and this is part of it."

Both colleges, with 1,800 students each, are academically selective and venerable; Colby is celebrating its bicentennial this year. They stand just 51 miles apart, and both Watson Arena and Colby's Alford Rink will be full this weekend, the highlight of the season for the venerable men's hockey programs at Bowdoin and Colby.

This weekend Blaise MacDonald, the first-year head coach of Colby, joins Meagher and a string of legendary coaches in the Bowdoin-Colby rivalry. The list includes Jack Kelley (seven years at Colby before coaching B.U.; coaching and managing the New England and Hartford Whalers; and serving as president of the Pittsburgh Penguins in a Hall of Fame career), Sid Watson (24 years at Bowdoin) and Jim Tortorella (16 years at Colby and, yes, brother of the inimitable Rangers Coach John Tortorella).

So far this season Bowdoin is 4-0-1 over all and 1-0-1 in the New England Small College Athletic Conference. The Polar Bears are led by Ollie Koo, a junior forward with 5 goals and 5 assists.

Colby is 1-4 over all and 0-2 in conference play. The Mules' top scorer is the junior forward Nick Lanza, with 5 goals.

The Polar Bears and White Mules playing at Bowdoin's Bowdoin College Athletic Department The Polar Bears and White Mules playing at Bowdoin's "Delta" outdoor rink in 1948.

On to the more vexing questions: why Polar Bears, and why was Colby once known as the White Mules?

One of Bowdoin's most prominent alumni is the explorer Robert Peary (Class of 1877), credited in 1909 as the first man to reach the North Pole. Four years later, in honor of Peary's achievement, the college adopted the polar bear as its mascot, and the nickname of its sports teams.

As for Colby, that college's football team was having a surprisingly strong season in 1923, leading the college newspaper's editor to suggest that the team was no longer a "dark horse." He suggested the antithesis as a mascot – a white mule. The nickname stuck when Colby beat Bates the next week, 9-6, thanks to its kicking game.

Friday's game at Bowdoin, starting at 7 p.m., will be streamed live via video Webcast. Saturday's game at Colby, also at 7 p.m., will be streamed live as well.

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645601 NHL

Gophers' Stars Were Born With Ice in Their Veins

By PAT BORZI

MINNEAPOLIS — The names Ramsey and Kessel evoke hockey memories at the University of Minnesota. Mike Ramsey won an N.C.A.A. championship with the Gophers in 1979 and an Olympic gold medal in 1980, both under Coach Herb Brooks, before embarking on a lengthy career as an N.H.L. defenseman and assistant coach. Phil Kessel, the Toronto Maple Leafs star, used one season at Minnesota in 2005-6 as the jumping-off point for his N.H.L. career.

Amanda Kessel, the sister of the Maple Leafs' Phil Kessel, leads the nation with 20 goals. The Golden Gophers are 16-0-0.

Now, Ramsey's daughter and Kessel's sister are making names for themselves with a Minnesota hockey team on a remarkable run.

Besides royal hockey bloodlines, the sophomore defenseman Rachel Ramsey and the junior forward Amanda Kessel bring on-ice smarts and complementary skills to the defending national champion Gophers. By sweeping a two-game series at New Hampshire last weekend, top-ranked Minnesota (16-0-0) extended its N.C.A.A.-record winning streak to 24 games over two seasons and tied another mark with 15 straight road victories.

Kessel, though not back at full speed after right hip surgery in June that kept her off skates for two months, leads the nation with 20 goals and 45 points in 15 games. She could challenge the former Gopher and three-time Olympian Natalie Darwitz's N.C.A.A. scoring record of 114 points, set in 2004-5 — that is, if her freshman linemate Hannah Brandt does not beat

her to it. Brandt, a center, ranks second nationally behind Kessel with 18 goals and 43 points.

"I feel like, in a couple of years or the next year, she's going to be one of the best players in the world," Noora Rätty, the two-time Olympic goalie for Finland and the Frozen Four most valuable player last season, said of Kessel. "She's definitely special. Her speed, I've never seen anything like that in women's hockey."

Then there is Ramsey, a 6-footer with a long reach like her father, Mike, a four-time N.H.L. All-Star defenseman who logged 1,070 games over 18 seasons with the Buffalo Sabres and two other teams. Rachel Ramsey played all 41 games as a freshman in only her second full season on defense. This season she runs part of a power-play unit that leads the N.C.A.A. with 29 goals and 38.2 percent efficiency.

"She's a complete hockey player, big and strong and mobile, and shoots the puck well," Minnesota Coach Brad Frost said.

Mike Ramsey described his daughter's skills this way: "She can stickhandle in a phone booth, and she knows how to make the right play."

The Gophers dominated a soft early schedule, outscoring opponents by 98-10. Minnesota faces its biggest test this weekend in a home series against border rival Wisconsin (10-4-2), the four-time national champion that Minnesota defeated in last season's N.C.A.A. final, 4-2.

"Things have certainly come together significantly faster than we originally thought," Frost said. "But we still haven't arrived, and we still have a long way to go."

Kessel is from Madison, Wis., but has long favored Minnesota. When she was on a state champion boys' bantam team in Madison, she loved going to her brother's games with the Gophers. That feeling remained strong during high school at Shattuck-St. Mary's, the boarding school in Faribault, Minn., that produced Sidney Crosby and Zach Parise.

As a senior at Shattuck, Kessel scored a remarkable 122 points in 46 games, 61 points more than anyone else on the team. Landing her was a coup for Frost. Wisconsin Coach Mark Johnson, the 2010 United States Olympic coach and another member of the 1980 Miracle on Ice team, rarely loses an elite in-state recruit.

"It kind of came down to Minnesota and Wisconsin," said Kessel, whose other brother, Blake, is a defenseman with the East Coast Hockey League's Trenton Titans. "I've known the Johnsons since we were little. We're good family friends with them. It was tough not going there, but ultimately, my heart just wanted to go here. It's something I battled back and forth between schools for a while."

Ramsey never seriously considered another college, just like her father. Mike Ramsey grew up in Minneapolis and committed to the Gophers without visiting another university; he famously rebuffed the legendary Wisconsin coach Bob Johnson, the father of Mark Johnson. Ramsey, at 19, was the youngest player on the team when the United States won gold in Lake Placid.

"I just wanted to start playing because of my dad," said Rachel Ramsey, the oldest of three children. "My sister was a dancer growing up all the way, and I was sort of interested in gymnastics and dance classes when I was little, but it did not stick with me."

As a 5-year-old, Rachel Ramsey was the only girl in a mite league in Buffalo, where her father was a Sabres assistant.

"My mom actually told me the first time she saw me in hockey gear, she started crying," Ramsey said.

The next year the family moved back to Minnesota. Mike Ramsey spent 10 seasons as an assistant for the Wild before resigning in 2010, and helped coach Rachel's under-12 team during the 2004-5 N.H.L. lockout.

"I see a lot of kids who are very good players at 11 or 12, and sometimes that would be their peak," Mike Ramsey said. "Rachel was very fortunate in that she kept growing and her game kept getting better."

Frost hesitated when asked how good his team could be. Minnesota has faced only two ranked teams, North Dakota and Ohio State. It trailed once, and briefly, 1-0, to North Dakota in a game Kessel sat out with hip soreness; Minnesota went on to win, 5-1.

"Because we've been able to score early and kind of play with the lead, that has enabled us to play pretty relaxed," Frost said. "We know that there will be a time when we're down a goal or down two goals with 10 minutes left.

How is our team going to respond? Until you're faced with that, you don't know how the team is going to handle it."

New York Times LOADED: 12.01.2012

645602 Ottawa Senators

NHL nears point of no return

By Wayne Scanlan,

Torture alert. The Ottawa Senators should be in St. Louis today, playing game No. 23 of the 2012-13 NHL regular season.

Tick, tock ...

In happier times, we'd be knee deep in hot stove speculation by now. Are Ottawa's forward prospects (Silfverberg, Stone, Zibanejad) ready for the big time? Can captain Daniel Alfredsson crank up one more productive season? Is Robin Lehner or Ben Bishop the goalie of the future? What does Norris Trophy winner Erik Karlsson do for an encore?

Instead, players from both teams scheduled to play in St. Louis Saturday are scattered around the globe, some competing in Europe and the AHL, others skating casually on local rinks while they await resolution to the CBA talks. Alfredsson has gone back to school, in a manner of speaking, skating with the CIS Carleton University Ravens while he awaits the final verdict on the NHL lockout.

If the season is cancelled, Alfredsson will go to Europe to play.

So, when WILL that call be made? Most hockey insiders believe the league won't wait as long as it did in 2004-2005, when NHL commissioner Gary Bettman declared on Feb. 16, 2005, that the plug was being pulled. More likely, the season would be canned this time in January, an arbitrary deadline that is fast approaching, after the latest effort, mediation, got nowhere this week.

Some inside the game have to question whether it's worth trying to stage a makeshift, shortened season. It would be predicated on selling tickets and attracting viewers, when hard core fans are roiling mad and casual fans have already tuned out the season. If you were an NHL sponsor, would you invest in a slightly salvaged season?

Norm O'Reilly, an associate professor who teaches sports business, management and marketing at the University of Ottawa, believes the NHL is fast approaching the point of no return, if it isn't there already.

"The longer this goes, the NHL is dealing with a much smaller pot of money to deal out," O'Reilly said via Skype from Australia, where he is attending a sports conference.

"Are the players all going to want to come back for such a short season, are the owners willing to start it all up for that small a return? It gets much less attractive as the season gets smaller," O'Reilly says.

Owners, players, sponsors and broadcasters all have a vested interest in restarting things properly. In 2005-2006 following an entire season missed, the NHL came back with a change in rules and their application, attracting fans with an expectation of a better, faster game. For the most part, the NHL delivered.

This time around, following the third work stoppage in 18 years, the NHL will need time to develop a creative marketing plan and mea culpas to appease fans who cannot fathom this inability to sort out revenue splits and contract arrangements during prosperous times.

That prosperity is bound to take a hit, whether the NHL plays an abbreviated season or none at all. O'Reilly, who has a PhD in management from Carleton's Sprott School of Business, believes playoff-bound teams would have the ability to recoup some of their lost revenues while non-playoff teams in a shortened season would face a "pretty ugly financial situation.

"The other thing to think about is the peripheral fan," O'Reilly says. "This is television rating territory. If they come back, to a half-assed season and not much going on, and the ratings are half what they were last year in Canada and the U.S., all of a sudden advertising revenues go down, ability to negotiate ad rates for the next TV contract goes down.

"There's a lot of risk if you start a season that's not going to be well received by fans."

It is O'Reilly's view that the hardcore fan, the one who is furious with this lingering interruption because of his or her passionate commitment to a particular team, will come back for the most part. Hockey means too much to that type of fan to just walk away for good.

Those serious fans are most apt to attend games, and even if they "punish" the NHL with some sort of personal stay-away plan, they're bound to return eventually (although we should not underestimate the scarring potential of this lockout). More casual fans of hockey are more likely looking on from living rooms, and these are the ones who may turn the channel even if a partial season gets rescued.

"It's as much about the non ticket buyer, as it is about the ticket buyer," O'Reilly says. "If Hockey Night In Canada goes from 1.5 million viewers to 800,000 viewers, and the regional Detroit network goes from 500,000 to 200,000 that has a much larger impact (on hockey) than having 2,000 fewer seats sold in the arena."

If the NHL is going to have a season at all, it better put a CBA on its holiday gift list. By Dec. 14, five more Senators games will have been missed, totalling 28 to that date, with the clock running.

O'Reilly is among those who believe the "risk to the brand gets higher as the season gets shorter and interest gets lower."

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 12.01.2012

645603 Ottawa Senators

H.E.L.P.

By Aedan Helmer

67's captain Cody Ceci won't be losing much sleep this weekend as Hockey Canada's world junior decision day looms with camp invites announced Monday.

The Senators' first-round pick was one of the final cuts from selection camp last December, and faces a whole new set of challenges this time around as the NHL lockout has created a seismic shift in the supply-demand dynamic.

Even with an injury to top defensive prospect Ryan Murray, Hockey Canada scouts can still choose from a deep group led by the likes of Dougie Hamilton, Morgan Rielly, Scott Harrington and Ryan Murphy.

In TSN analyst Bob McKenzie's WJC preview published last week, Ceci's was the 14th name mentioned among blueliners, with camp invites expected to be extended to about a dozen defencemen competing for seven available spots.

Asked if the imminent announcement weighs on him, Ceci, 18, acknowledged "a little bit.

"I'd like to get invited, but I'm not going to let it take away from my focus this weekend (with his team continuing a tough road swing in Saginaw and Windsor). "If it happens it happens, if it doesn't then I'll work hard and look forward to whatever happens next year," said Ceci, who will also be eligible for next year's tournament.

Ceci brushed off TSN's analysis, saying, "I haven't been paying much attention to that."

After all, with 28 points in 27 games heading into Friday night, Ceci ranks second among all WJC-eligible blueliners, and third among CHL defencemen, behind only Hamilton (36 points) and overager Brenden Kichton of the Spokane Chiefs (29).

"If I get invited I want to make sure I have a strong camp and control what I can control and not let any (external factors) bother me," he said. "They're looking for me to play an offensive role, but they also need a strong two-way game, and that's what I've been working on."

Ceci has given Hockey Canada plenty of looks at his developing game. He competed in the August Canada-Russia Challenge on international-size ice in Ufa, Russia, where this year's tournament will be held, and skated for Team OHL in the recent Subway Super Series.

"It was a good experience with a lot of great players, and it just showed me what I was up against and the defencemen I'm fighting with for a spot," Ceci said. "It gives me a little bit of an advantage that I've already been over there."

Despite the turmoil Ceci's 67's have faced this season, the Senators believe their top 2012 pick (15th overall) will emerge from it a better person, and a stronger player.

"It's good to be challenged," said director of player development Randy Lee, who has kept close tabs on Ceci at practices and games.

"He has to be the leader in that room, he has to be an extension of the coach, and he has to be part of the solution. He has to set the example by being the hardest worker in practice, stay positive in the room, and in the long term, it's going to be beneficial. It really challenges your character, and it's how you respond to that challenge (that matters)."

As for Monday's decision day?

"I don't lose much sleep over it," said Ceci. "I've done everything I can and now it's up to them."

Junior watch

The Senators are also excited about a pair of prospects who could find themselves squaring off against each other at the WJC with Canada's Matt Puempel of the Kitchener Rangers and Texas-born Stefan Noesen of the Plymouth Whalers.

But health remains a major question mark as both suffered injuries last week, with Puempel suffering a grade one shoulder sprain this week and Noesen missing a chance to strut his stuff in Plymouth's only visit to Scotiabank Place last Sunday after suffering a high ankle sprain the night before.

Noesen did return to the lineup Friday night against the visiting 67's after missing four games.

"(Noesen) really wanted to play in front of Paul (MacLean) and our management team, but it would have set him back," said Randy Lee, who arranged a sit-down session between prospect and prospective coach during Sunday's game.

"Stefan is a really confident guy, but he was listening to everything (MacLean) had to say, and it just reinforced everything that I and (Plymouth coach) Mike Vellucci have been telling him," said Lee. "It was nice to just sit back and watch that. His eyes were wide open."

As for Puempel, there is no timetable for his return, though if he's ready, he could have an inside track with Kitchener coach Steve Spott manning the Team Canada bench.

"Steve has been overjoyed with the way (Puempel) has progressed and matured," said Lee.

"He had an awkward year (in Peterborough last season) with (a concussion) and a suspension, but when he went down to Binghamton at the end of the season, it showed him how big a jump he has to make and it just pushed him to do the things required to take his game to the next level. (Spott) knew he was a goal-scorer, but he's been more impressed with his all-around game."

Bingo report

With the only two goals in a 2-1 win over Syracuse, D Tyler Eckford took over the B-Sens scoring lead with 10 points (5 goals, 5 assists). His 10 points is tied with Brendan Gallagher of the Hamilton Bulldogs for the lowest point total among AHL team scoring leaders ... LW Cole Schneider scored his first two professional goals in a 6-1 win over Bridgeport Saturday ... D Eric Gryba returned to the lineup after missing seven games with a hand injury. He put those hands to use with a pair of goals and an assist against Bridgeport. His three points is a single-game season-high for B-Sens individual scorers.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 12.01.2012

645604 Philadelphia Flyers

Glens Falls' Phantoms fans bracing for heartache

Sam Carchidi,

"That's our end goal," he said.

Keep it going

Kathryn Dingman, who is a Phantoms season-ticket holder along with her husband, said it's not difficult to get attached to the team even though it will be leaving after next season.

"I just enjoy having hockey, and it boosts the economy and brings people out on a Friday and Saturday night. It brings people into downtown," said Dingman, a Glens Falls resident who is a special-education teacher.

"We knew coming in that they were going to be leaving, and it'll be sad to see them go. But hopefully, we can get another one and keep it going," said Ryan Steininger, a graduate student who recently served in the Navy.

Even with the addition of numerous Flyers, the Phantoms are drawing almost the same number of fans as last year. They entered Friday averaging 3,573 spectators per home game, 51 more per contest than last season, excluding the 45,653 crowd for their "home" game at Citizens Bank Park.

Adirondack has about 1,700 season-ticket holders, the same number Allentown has already enticed.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.01.2012

645605 Phoenix Coyotes

Coyotes react to Glendale City Council vote

By SARAH MCLELLAN

While Tuesday's 4-2 vote by the Glendale City Council to agree to a 20-year, \$320 million arena management deal with potential Coyotes buyer Greg Jamison didn't completely resolve the team's three-year ownership saga, it was a major step forward for Jamison's bid.

And that's encouraging to Coyotes players that have been all too familiar with the instability that's rocked the franchise.

"Hopefully that's another hurdle passed and we can get this thing settled and done and kind of going in the right direction," captain Shane Doan said. "For the organization, I think it's huge and I really do think it's good for the City of Glendale. Obviously there's certain people that disagree but being on my side, I think it's a good opportunity for the city to grow and hopefully be a positive thing going forward -- not so much something that everyone's talking the negative side of it."

Doan, perhaps more than any other current Coyotes, knows Jamison the best. The two were in regular communication over the summer during Doan's term as a free agent, and it was Jamison's resume and character that helped give Doan and his family the reassurance they needed to re-sign with the Coyotes even though they were still without an owner.

"I was pretty confident in the fact that he's a guy that I think would do an excellent job as kind of the head of the organization, the ownership spot," Doan said. "I'm excited and hopefully -- everyone says -- now it's in his court and we want him to get it done and get it done as quickly as possible as does he I'm sure."

Defenseman Keith Yandle, who has been spending the majority of the lockout back home in Boston, picked a good time to return to the Valley. He's been skating this week at the Ice Den and was in town for the news.

"It's huge," Yandle said. "It's big news for us, especially for the guys who've been here."

It's safe to say many of the fans that packed the Ice Den on Thursday were hoping to get a glimpse of Penguins phenom Sidney Crosby, who is participating in the camp hosted in Scottsdale this week for locked-out NHLers.

Crosby missed out on Thursday's skate because he wasn't feeling well, but he is expected to be there on Friday. That session will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

"I'm sure they were out here to see him, but it's just good to see the support," Yandle said. "People are ready for the game to come back. It's fun

GLENS FALLS, N.Y. - It's all about timing.

If Allentown's new arena had been ready, there's a good chance Flyers fans would be streaming there during the NHL lockout, trying to get their hockey fix by watching the AHL Phantoms.

"There's a huge difference between traveling to Allentown" or to Glens Falls, N.Y., from the Philadelphia area, Rob Brooks, one of the Phantoms owners, said in an interview recently.

Brooks wasn't complaining. He loves Glens Falls, which is where the Adirondack Phantoms are playing for a fourth season. The fans continue to support the Phantoms even though the team is a lame duck.

The fans are in the middle of an odd situation.

On one hand, the Phantoms, thanks to the NHL work stoppage, are a better attraction because their roster has nine players who spent time with the Flyers last season.

From the Sports Desk

On the other hand, one would think it's difficult to show much allegiance when your team is headed to Allentown - which had a ceremonial groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday - in less than two years and will have its name changed to the Lehigh Valley Phantoms.

Yet the folks in this quaint Upstate New York town near the majestic Adirondacks are still "all in."

They are just happy to have pro hockey in their community and hope to draw another team when the Phantoms leave.

Tim Denware, a Fort Edward, N.Y., resident who wore an Ilya Bryzgalov jersey to a game against Albany at the Glens Falls Civic Center, said it's "more about local hockey that gets me in here. Hopefully, we can get a big enough fan base that shows another franchise that we're a viable place."

Changing downtown

In 2009, Brooks and his brother, Jim, purchased the Phantoms with the idea of having a rink built in Allentown. It was originally supposed to open next season, but delays have pushed the \$272 million project back, and the Phantoms will move there for the 2014-15 campaign. The arena, a 1-hour, 10-minute drive from Philadelphia, will seat 8,700 fans for hockey and 10,000 for concerts.

Rob Brooks said the project will cover 100-plus acres and will include the arena, a 180-room hotel, a huge office building and restaurants and retail shops that will "change the face of downtown."

When Peter Luukko, president of the Flyers' parent company, Comcast-Spectacor, asked Jim Brooks whether he was interested in buying the Phantoms, his response was decisive.

"My brother said yes before he even asked the price," Rob Brooks said.

The Brooks brothers, who reportedly paid more than \$3 million for the team, had a choice: They could "go dark" until the new arena was built, or they could relocate for a few years.

"We had calls from almost every city that had an arena but no team," Rob Brooks said. "We even got a call from St. John's, Newfoundland. I had to look at a map because I didn't know where it was."

But Brooks, whose family owns a piece of the Texas Rangers and single-A teams in the Rangers and Pittsburgh Pirates systems, was impressed by the pitch made by Glens Falls' mayor.

"They used to have the Red Wings for about 20 years before they left, and they wanted to show the rest of the world they could support an AHL team" - and attract another one when the Phantoms head to Allentown, Brooks said. "So we didn't feel empty-handed about leaving one day. We let everyone know from Day 1 that the Phantoms were here to build a model and help lure another team."

If Glens Falls happens to draw interest from another franchise for next season - so far, that hasn't happened - it's not out of the question that the Phantoms could relocate, with Atlantic City one of the possibilities.

But Brooks said the goal is to honor the lease and stay in Glens Falls until the end of next season and help the city attract another team. The best-case scenario, he said, would be for the Allentown-based Phantoms to face a team from Glens Falls down the road.

getting out here and skating with guys you haven't skated with in a while. It's just a fun day."

Yandle has been part of the caravan of players that have traveled around the country doing camps like this one. Their first stop was in Vail, Colo. Then they were in Dallas. Yandle said he will return to Boston after the Phoenix camp and then rejoin the group wherever they go next.

"It's great," Yandle said. "It's something we've done every three weeks we go to a different city and skate. This is the third one. It seems like the turnouts we've had have been better and better. A lot of guys being here in town, in the Valley, we're able to get even more guys and have even better skates."

Arizona Republic LOADED: 12.01.2012

645606 Pittsburgh Penguins

NHL players: New owners needed at negotiations

By Josh Yohe

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman has offered to remove himself from labor negotiations.

Some players wish a specific group of owners would do the same.

Numerous Penguins who worked out Friday at Southpointe were indifferent to Bettman's request that he and NHLPA executive director Don Fehr remove themselves from the next round of negotiations in an attempt to spur progress. They were not, however, indifferent regarding Boston Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs and a few other owners they believe are calling the shots in the NHL's ongoing lockout of players.

The Penguins at Southpointe unanimously agreed that new blood at negotiations — namely moderate owners — is needed.

"That's a no-brainer," Penguins left wing Matt Cooke said. "Put 30 guys in a room, and see how they act."

Penguins player representative Craig Adams said that, as of Friday afternoon, Fehr had not discussed Bettman's offer with players. After a two-day attempt at federal mediation proved fruitless, Bettman suggested that negotiations without him and Fehr might be productive.

The union held an executive board and negotiation committee meeting Friday. No decision was made regarding the NHL's offer for a meeting involving only players and owners, union officials said.

Some Penguins don't necessarily disagree with Bettman's suggestion, but only on the condition more moderate owners join the discussions.

"It would be interesting to get more owners involved," defenseman Matt Niskanen said. "If they can speak their actual opinions, that could sway things."

Owners risk a \$1 million fine from Bettman if they choose to speak publicly about the lockout.

Only a few — namely the outspoken Jacobs and Washington owner Ted Leonsis — have been regular attendees at negotiations since the lockout was triggered Sept. 15.

"Get some new owners there, and maybe something different happens," right wing Pascal Dupuis said. "I won't say any names. People want to get Bettman out of there, and that's fine. But let's get some new blood in their on their side, and some new players in there. Maybe then something would happen."

Adams has been involved in many face-to-face negotiations this fall and is willing to make alterations to the current landscape if it produces progress.

"If we aren't going to get any new opinions involved, then I'm not sure what the point would be," Adams said. "It might be helpful to get some new owners in the room. If it's going to be the same guys it's been, what's the difference?"

Players still have trust issues pertaining to the league and owners.

"He thinks it will benefit him," Niskanen said of Bettman's plan. "I'm not sure what angle he's trying to work. Personally, I don't think it will go very far. The owners have him in their back pocket anyhow. They're controlling this thing."

And no one knows which direction this thing will go next.

No talks are scheduled as the sides remain apart on the division of league revenue and how signed contracts will be honored.

"I don't know what happens next," Adams said.

Staff writer Rob Rossi contributed. Josh Yohe is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at [jyohe@tribweb.com](mailto:jyohe@tribweb.com).

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.01.2012

645607 Pittsburgh Penguins

Crosby ponders overseas options

By Dave Molinari /

With the NHL's labor negotiations stalemated again, there's more reason than ever to think Sidney Crosby is closing in on a decision about whether - or, more likely, where -- to play in Europe while the league is shut down.

That doesn't necessarily mean his decision is imminent.

In a brief email exchange Friday, Crosby, who has spent the past few days training near Phoenix, said he is "not quite ready to make that decision."

Earlier this week, he and agent Pat Brisson confirmed that a determination is near. Crosby also said Brisson has spoken with teams in Switzerland and Russia, but added that he had not ruled out playing in any particular country.

Brisson said he had spoken with European clubs that are willing to pay for insurance to cover Crosby, who missed much of the past two seasons because of a concussion and neck injury, but that insuring all 13 seasons remaining on his contracts with the Penguins is not possible.

Negotiations between the NHL and the NHL Players' Association for a collective bargaining agreement to replace the one that expired Sept. 15 broke off again Thursday, after two days of federal mediation failed to generate traction.

Shortly after it was announced that mediation had ended, the NHL floated the idea of having players and owners get together without involvement of any of the main participants in the talks.

That group includes commissioner Gary Bettman and deputy commissioner Bill Daly of the NHL and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr and union special counsel Steve Fehr.

Precisely how many -- and which -- owners and players have been invited to take part in such a meeting hasn't been made public, and the union's response to the league's offer wasn't known as of Friday evening.

The Penguins who participated in a player-organized workout at Southpointe Friday had a variety of reactions to that proposed meeting.

Player representative Craig Adams noted that the same owners -- primarily hard-liners such as Jeremy Jacobs of Boston -- have taken part in the negotiations to this point and suggested that getting others involved could be good.

"It might be helpful if we can get some other owners in the room," he said. "If we're not going to hear new opinions and things like that, I'm not sure what the point would be."

Defenseman Ben Lovejoy seemed a bit less skeptical, but feels it would be a mistake for the players to get together with the owners unless they have legal support on hand.

"I'll try anything," Lovejoy said. "I don't see the message changing all that much just because the top two guys from each side won't be there."

"I know if that meeting were to take place, the Fehr brothers wouldn't be there, but we would have lawyers in the room on both sides because that's

how things are done. The owners are incredibly smart businessmen who have made decisions like this and have been in meetings like this before.

"We are hockey players. Some of us are reasonably bright. But I can't see it being a smart move for a bunch of NHL players to go head-to-head without our legal representation. "

\*NOTES -- Evgeni Malkin failed to record a point, was stopped in the shootout and won just 11 of 27 faceoffs in Metallurg Magnitogorsk's 4-3 loss against Dinamo Minsk in a Kontinental Hockey League game Friday. ... Florida Panthers forward Jack Skille, who played with Adams in Chicago, participated in the workout at Southpointe.

Post Gazette LOADED: 12.01.2012

645608 San Jose Sharks

San Jose Sharks get high praise from Forbes

By David Pollak

SAN JOSE -- The Sharks find themselves in the slightly awkward spot of earning high praise in Forbes magazine's annual NHL financial report that usually gets dismissed by the league as a whole.

Forbes magazine's annual assessment of each team's value for 2012 also includes a "bang for the buck" ranking that puts the Sharks at the top of the NHL when it comes to points earned for dollar spent on payroll since the 2004-05 lockout that preceded the current one.

"While we and the league don't provide data to Forbes to substantiate their reports," said Malcolm Bordelon, executive vice-president for business operations, "we certainly take it as a compliment."

Bordelon credited general manager Doug Wilson and assistant Joe Will for their efforts and added "it's nice to get that recognition from Forbes on their behalf."

The magazine uses public information of standings and player payroll in coming up with its "bang for the buck" ranking that had the Sharks finishing ahead of the Detroit Red Wings at the top of the list while the Toronto Maple Leafs finished at the bottom.

At the same time, Toronto once again topped Forbes' team value list, reaching \$1 billion for the first time. The Sharks were ranked 15th at \$223 million, but the figures used to compile this list are the ones challenged by the NHL.

For example, Forbes set San Jose's operating losses for 2011-12 at \$900,000 while the team's ownership group put the figure at \$15 million.

The magazine's report is also available online at forbes.com.

San Jose Mercury News: LOADED: 12.01.2012

645609 St Louis Blues

Tipsheet: Time is up for Bettman, Fehr

By Jeff Gordon

Mediation proved useless in the NHL labor dispute. Neutral third-party assistance moved the owners and players no closer toward settlement.

With the owners sticking to their onerous demands, the NHL Players Association is pondering the nuclear option.

The union could force the season's cancellation by voting to decertify. This drastic act would shift the battle to the courtroom and force the two sides to rebuild their "relationship" from scratch.

Commissioner Gary Bettman is trying to make NHLPA czar Donald Fehr the bad guy. He is now proposing direct meetings between owners and players with no representatives involved.

Bettman is willing to step out of the room if Fehr will do the same. Some owners believe Fehr has been filtering their message. They believe the players will suddenly see the light if he moves aside.

That seems unlikely, but this proposal does give us something to think about. Both sides have proven their resolve and solidarity. The leaders on both sides have proven their toughness. That's great.

But now it's time for them to either lead their side toward a settlement or to move on down the trail.

Tipsheet endorses a proposal Globe and Mail columnist Erik Duhatschek made last week:

Right now, with the NHL season on ice, the only game in town is the pitched boardroom battle being fought by two aging veterans of the labour wars – NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr, who thus far have been unable to divide the spoils of a \$3.3-billion business.

Here are two executives, who – when they're not busy blaming each other for the stalemate - would have you believe they are as interested in the sport of hockey as they are in the business of hockey.

Well, okay, prove it . . . If the two leaders are ultimately unable to come to terms on a new CBA in time to save the 2012-13 season, then both should immediately resign from their respective positions when the cancellation becomes official.

And more importantly, they should pledge their willingness to do so, publicly.

We're on board with that. What do you think?

#### POINTED OBSERVATIONS

Some thoughts on the wonderful world of sports:

izzou had to turn the Michael Dixon page after the Post-Dispatch disclosed a second rape allegation against the senior Tigers guard. That revelation made it politically impossible – and morally indefensible – for Chancellor Brady Deaton to reinstate him. In fact, campus leaders are doubtlessly wondering how Dixon stayed in school after the first incident occurred on former coach Mike Anderson's watch.

Dixon proclaimed his innocence via Twitter, but he couldn't remain at the school under that cloud. Published details of the two incidents made him a marked man. He will finish his basketball career elsewhere while trying to rebuild his image. These allegations will follow him for a long, long time.

His departure was a major hit for the basketball team, but coach Frank Haith built uncommon depth for this season. Freshman guard Negus Webster-Chan has played 30 minutes per game in Dixon's absence. He can run the point when quarterback Phil Pressey needs a break. So can transfer Keion Bell, a senior. And transfer Jabari Brown could replace Dixon's perimeter shooting when he becomes eligible at the semester break.

The Saints have lost more games than the Rams this season, at least for the time being. Drew Brees threw five interceptions Thursday night, or two more than Tom Brady has thrown all season. New Orleans has little chance of making the playoffs this season. The NFL's "Not For Long" slogan resonates.

If it's not one thing with David Freese, it's another. Matt Carpenter is a reassuring presence for general manager John Mozeliak. It is always nice to have a viable Plan B.

#### MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE

Questions to ponder why bracing for the start of the minor college bowl season:

What should a Baseball Hall of Fame ballot look like, given all the steroid cheats now eligible for induction?

With the NHL season headed toward the dumpster, is it time to get into a little KHL fun?

Did Atlanta airport workers egg the Saints on their way out of town, too?

Can anything ever be more stupid than a horse mask prank?

#### QUIPS 'R US

Here is what some of America's leading sports pundits have been writing:

Rick Reilly, ESPN.com: "Into the teeth of the worst college football scandal in American history, into a sex-scandal mess the National Guard couldn't have cleaned up, Bill O'Brien pulled off a football miracle: He made you forget Penn State was radioactive. O'Brien went 8-4 in the middle of nuclear winter. He kept popping open umbrellas while it rained bowling balls. He made a numb town feel again. That's why he's either the coach of the year in college football this season or you melt down the trophy."

Tommy Tomlinson, Sports on Earth: "People are still so invested in Alabama being the best team in the country that they're already talking about how Bama will crush Notre Dame – it's as if the Georgia game is not even worth the breath. I understand that, given how the Tide has played these last four years. All I'll say (and feel free to take my bias into account) is this: Alabama has two clear advantages over Georgia -- offensive line, and coach. I think Georgia is more talented everywhere else on the field. As we Georgia fans know from deep, painful experience, talent does not equal championships. But if the Dawgs manage to hit the high notes . . ."

Andy Staples, SI.com: "The fact is there are no truly dominant teams this season. There is no 2001 Miami or 1995 Nebraska. There isn't a twosome like USC and Texas in 2005. Every team in my top 12, given the correct set of circumstances, could beat every other team in the top 12. That's where we're at. There is quite a bit of parity at the top this year. So when a Kansas State fan says the Wildcats could beat Alabama or Georgia, he's correct. On the right day, the Wildcats could. And on the wrong day, the SEC would roll. When a Florida fan says the Gators got stiffed after putting together the nation's best résumé, he might be correct. When a Stanford fan says his team is playing better than anyone in the country right now, that's tough to deny. So are the rankings correct? Will the BCS match the two best teams for the national title? I don't know, and neither do you. It's not a satisfying answer, because it's not a satisfying system."

Pete Fiutak, College Football News: "Arkansas State is 8-3 with a shot at a ten-win season with a win over Middle Tennessee and in a bowl. Gus Malzahn, your one-year apprenticeship is up. You're going to get a call from the big leagues."

Gregg Doyel, CBSSports.com: "The A-10 has added VCU and Butler to the likes of Xavier, Richmond and Saint Joseph's. The A-10 knows what it is, and is trying to get stronger. The Big East knows what it wants to be, but doesn't realize it'll never get there. And so it becomes weaker. Every few days, it seems, another relevant school leaves or another irrelevant school joins. The Big East is a haphazard collection of useless junk. It started out as a designer boutique of basketball; now it's Kmart."

## MEGAPHONE

"I pride myself on being a great decision-maker and guy that's going to help us win the game, not be a detriment by turning the ball over like that. It doesn't really matter how they happened, the responsibility is mine. And that's the first time that's ever happened to me. It's extremely disappointing. A couple of critical mistakes that end up costing us the game and I'm OK saying that because I have to hold myself accountable."

— Brees, after dooming his team with a mistake-prone fiasco.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 12.01.2012

645610 Tampa Bay Lightning

Tampa Bay Lightning's Marty St. Louis says he would want in on any players-owners meeting

Posted by Damian Cristodero

The suggestion by the NHL that players and owners get together for a meeting without league or Players' Association negotiators has been lampooned by many as a publicity stunt. But the union brass and its locked-out players apparently will discuss whether it is a good idea, and Tampa Bay Lightning star Marty St. Louis said he would want to be part of any face-to-face with owners.

"I would," St. Louis said after Friday's skate with teammates at the Ice Sports Forum in Brandon. "But you would have to be cautious, too. These guys (the owners) are successful because they're doing deals their whole life. We're hockey players, so we have to be careful."

Even so, before committing, St. Louis would want to see what owners take part. If it's just the hard-liners, he said, it might not be worth the effort as players have offered to give up hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue in a new five-year collective bargaining agreement only to be rebuffed by owners who have balked at honoring all current contracts and seem committed to changing player contract rules.

"Gary can be out of the room," St. Louis said of NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, "but the owners who have been in there are hard-liners. We tried to get some traction going, especially in our last proposition and the only thing they say is, 'That's great, thanks, keep coming.'"

"But it's something to think about," St. Louis added of a meeting between players and owners. "I'm sure we'll discuss the ins and outs of it."

Left wing Ryan Malone picked up on St. Louis' notion of having different owners in the room such as Tampa Bay's Jeff Vinik, who is believed to be more moderate and wants a season played.

"Then I think we finally know exactly what all the owners want," Malone said. "That's the biggest thing. They keep having the same owners in there and it's the same song and dance. Jeff Vinik has done such a great job here in Tampa, I would love to hear what he has to say. You don't buy a professional sports team as a business opportunity or an investment, it's because you enjoy the game, so from that standpoint you'd love to hear what the other owners have to say."

Malone said he would also like to see the players accompanied by a legal counsel.

"You would want somebody in there because you want to make sure they're telling the facts and it's justified what they're saying," he said. "But there's no harm in it. If it's a better route to take then let's do it."

Even so, defenseman Eric Brewer said of the owners, "I don't think anybody really knows what they're thinking. Clearly we don't. I'm just as confused about the whole thing as anybody else. To pretend like players are going to go in there and negotiate with those guys and make sure it's done prudently is wrong. But maybe some guys can throw some feelings out there. Maybe that will help. Maybe they would do the same."

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 12.01.2012

645611 Toronto Maple Leafs

Toronto's Maple Leafs show losing can pay off big

STEVE RUSSELL

What are we going to tell the kids? Until now, we could sincerely say that failure was something to be taken in stride and surmounted, ideally serving as a building block to success. "Lessons learned . . . try, try again . . . yadda, yadda."

But Toronto's Maple Leafs have blown those maxims to smithereens. The National Hockey League's consummate losers are the first hockey team in history to be valued at \$1 billion. That's right: One. Billion. Dollars.

It turns out failure can be more rewarding than success — a lot more.

According to listings published in Forbes magazine, traditional Leafs rivals, the Montreal Canadiens, are worth a mere \$575 million. And they, at least, brought home the Stanley Cup as recently as 1993. Even the bottom-of-the-basement St. Louis Blues, valued at a piddling \$130 million, made the playoffs last season. And their price includes a piece of an opera house.

The woebegone Leafs haven't won the Stanley Cup since 1967 (back when the Beatles released Sgt. Pepper; Canada celebrated its centennial year, and future Oscar-winner Sally Field was playing a flying nun on TV.) They're the only team that hasn't made the playoffs in any of the past seven seasons.

The Leafs went so far as to publish a full-page letter in the Star and other papers earlier this year apologizing to fans for an "unacceptable" season. Yet they're worth a cool billion.

The lesson is clear. Forget all that guff about overcoming failure. Kids, follow the gold-plated example set by the Leafs — go out there and lose one for the team!

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.01.2012

645612 Toronto Maple Leafs

Leafs prospect Morgan Rielly has his eye on Canada's world junior team

Monte Stewart

VANCOUVER — Mike Stothers is counting the days until he has to say goodbye to Morgan Rielly.

Stothers, the coach of the WHL's Moose Jaw Warriors, expects his star defenceman to depart relatively soon.

Rielly has two departure options: The first, and most likely, one includes an invitation to Canada's training camp in December and a spot on the Canadian roster for the world junior championships in Ufa, Russia, during the Christmas holidays.

"When he goes to the world junior, we're going to miss him — that's for sure," said Stothers, convinced the rearguard will make the Canadian squad.

Rielly's second option is an invitation to the Toronto Maple Leafs training camp, pending the end of the NHL lockout. The Leafs chose the 18-year-old West Vancouver, B.C., native fifth overall in last June's draft, even though he missed 54 games in the 2011-12 season with a knee injury.

Stothers is also convinced Toronto will give Rielly "a good, long, hard look" if the NHL gets around to playing this season.

"I'm actually anxious to see what he could do, being as good a player as he is, playing at a higher level with higher-level players," Stothers said.

The coach had just watched Rielly score the winning goal, with 4:51 remaining in the game, in Moose Jaw's 2-1 victory over the Vancouver Giants on Wednesday night. Rielly launched the play and then finished it as he intercepted a pass just inside his club's blue line, he raced with the puck towards the other end on a two-on-one that Vancouver neutralized and then put in his own rebound.

Rielly also helped the Warriors limit the Giants to seven shots in the first two periods as the visitors outshot the hosts 34-16 on the night. According to Stothers, it was a typical showing from Rielly.

"We maybe get a little spoiled from what we see out of Morgs on a daily basis, on a game-to-game basis," Stothers said. "But I think he just showed why he's a difference-maker and a game-breaker, and a guy that is worthy of being picked fifth overall."

Rielly's winning goal came in the second of back-to-back games in Victoria and Vancouver. The Warriors (10-11-3-4) won both contests.

Against the Giants, Rielly played in all situations, on both the left and right sides of the blue line. He hit the post on a shorthanded breakaway in the first minute of the third period, created dangerous offensive situations with adept stickhandling and simple flips of the puck toward the net, and calmly skated the puck out of harm's way in his own end on a number of occasions.

He now has five goals and 25 assists in 28 games. With his 30 points, he has figured in almost half of Moose Jaw's 72 goals on the season. Accordingly, Stothers, who compares Rielly to former New York Rangers star Brian Leetch, places few restrictions on the offensive defenceman.

"We don't generate a lot of offence," Stothers said. "Scoring doesn't come easy to us as a collective group. When you break it all down, Morgs is in a great percentage of [the scoring plays], whether it's regular shift or power play. He's a big piece of our puzzle."

If I have the honour to go to camp, that'd be great. Any time you're in that conversation with some big-name prospects, it's always nice

But Rielly is taking nothing for granted with his chances of suiting up in Russia, even though the loss of Everett Silvertips defenceman Ryan Murray to a season-ending shoulder injury has opened up a roster spot.

"There's a whole lot of good blue-liners going in," said Rielly. "So that's a pretty tough team to make. Obviously, it hurts the team with him going down with an injury, but I don't think it changes anything for me."

Rielly — who played for the WHL's squad in the Subway Super Series against a Russian select team and also played for a Canadian squad in a summer series against Russia that replaced Canada's evaluation camp — said he wants to focus on playing well for Moose Jaw. But he admitted it's hard not to concentrate on the possibility of playing in the world junior tourney.

"I just try to play my game and, hopefully, get some of the bounces," he said. "If I have the honour to go to camp, that'd be great. Any time you're in that conversation with some big-name prospects, it's always nice."

In the meantime, he is trying to focus on being a leader for the Warriors. Contending the knee injury and high draft selection have not changed him, he does not want to think too much about the chance of playing for the Maple Leafs, either, although he had hoped to attend their training camp.

"Obviously, that didn't happen, but I wasn't too worried about trying to play on that team as an 18-year-old," he said. "It's pretty hard to make the jump from junior to pro. I was hoping to get a chance to go to camp. It didn't happen but, hopefully, I get that chance in the future."

Coach Stothers has little doubt that he will.

National Post LOADED: 12.01.2012

645613 Winnipeg Jets

Players, owners shooting breeze the answer?

By: Ed Tait

JUST as quickly as hockey types -- players, fans and media alike -- got to know the names of the two mediators who tried to help salvage the NHL season this week, they vanished from the negotiating table.

So long Scot L. Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney. We hardly knew ye.

And so you'll have to excuse many members of the NHL Players' Association and the game's observers if they have their doubts about the next concept being tossed around by the NHL to get a deal done:

Having owners and players sit down together without the heavy hitters, like commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr, in the room.

"It could be a good idea," said Winnipeg Jets captain Andrew Ladd Friday. "There always seems to be a catch with every idea the owners have. If it's something where we could get all 30 owners in the same room with representatives from each team and talk, just so they know where we're sitting and where everybody stands then, yeah, it could be positive.

"But if they want to pick the owners and players that get to go into that meeting, it's just another idea that has a catch and sounds really good to the media and fans at first. And once you look into it more and more, it's kind of a hoax. It's got to be done the right way.

"If it's still the same guys from their end talking... if it's (Boston Bruins' owner) Jeremy Jacobs in there spewing his stuff, I don't think it's going to move this process forward."

And so as another week has gone by with no resolution, the NHL is apparently waiting to hear back from the players' association as to how to set up this next meeting.

The optimists point to how New England Patriots' owner Robert Kraft was able to help broker a deal for the NFL.

The cynics call this latest move a gimmick and a PR ploy.

And as former NHLer-turned-agent Brian Lawton said via his Twitter account Friday: "If the parties can't come to agreement on who is going to meet then yes hockey is in more jeopardy than any of us even imagine."

"It would be nice to sit down and talk and see where they're at and see what they understand and know and see where each side is coming from and try to sort it out like the mature men we all are," said Jim Slater. "That'd be the best thing... talking to these owners that really care about hockey and getting it back on the ice. I think there's a lot of them out there that are like that."

Asked what it would be like to sit across the table from Jets' owner Mark Chipman -- a popular owner the players refer as "Chipper" -- Slater said:

"Everybody gets along with Chipper very well, he's very easy to talk to. I'm sure there's a lot of owners like that who are out there and it would be nice to see where they're at.

"That's the best thing... talking to these owners that really care about hockey and getting it back on the ice."

The lockout is now into its 77th day and on Friday the players missed their fourth paycheck of the fall. The NHL has cancelled games through Dec. 14 as well as the Winter Classic and NHL All-Star weekend scheduled for Columbus in late January.

And if this latest attempt doesn't work, decertification may be the next move by the NHLPA. That would see the players revoke the NHLPA's authority to bargain for them and then allow them to sue the league for antitrust violations.

That's when things could really get ugly.

"We're exploring all options," said Ladd. "They've kind of backed us into a corner where we don't have much leverage. They're just trying to wait us out and miss paycheques and see if we're going to fold. But that's not a very good strategy on their part because I don't think we're going to fold."

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 12.01.2012

645614 Winnipeg Jets

Jet couldn't find the net, fathom 'nyet'

By: Staff Writer

ONE day, maybe when he sits down to pen his autobiography, Evander Kane will go into great detail about his short-lived stint in the Kontinental Hockey League.

"Short-lived" being the key phrase here.

But for now the Winnipeg Jet winger seems to be taking the politically correct approach to life in the KHL.

Kane played in just 12 games for Dinamo Minsk this fall -- netting one goal, zero assists while finishing a minus-8 -- was suspended one game for a hit to the head and called out by his coach for being out of shape. Upon his exit a team official said he could not "adapt to hockey in the KHL."

Other than that, how was your trip, Evander?

"To be honest, I never planned to stay over there for a whole year," said Kane. "It was a month-to-month contract.

"It's a different league. It's quite opposite of how things work in North America and that's a big reason why a lot of European and Russian players come over to the NHL: It's the best league in the world and nobody disputes that.

"It was a good experience to see what happens over there and how it works. It didn't work out. You play six minutes a night and they want you to score three goals a game.

"But one of the positives were the fans there were great, probably the best in the entire league."

Asked how his Russian is, Kane was blunt:

"Terrible."

That said, he did hang out with former Jets teammate Tim Stapleton and two other locked-out NHLers who have hung their hat there: Nashville Predators goaltender Pekka Rinne and Joe Pavelski of the San Jose Sharks.

As for the rest of his free time there...

"There were some long days in the hotel room," Kane said. "You can't watch TV. I don't think I even turned on my TV the entire time I was over there. I watched movies and downloaded shows for the laptop.

"It was good to have a couple other NHL guys on the team to relate to and have conversations with about what was going on back home.

"You know," Kane added, "it wasn't the most positive experience, but it was an experience for me. I'm glad I went and got to see how the league works. I don't have many complaints.

"But I am glad I'm back."

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 12.01.2012

645615 Winnipeg Jets

Career interrupted

By: Ed Tait

Evander Kane is trying to think big picture these days. And that's mostly because the little picture -- the one that currently features a nasty cloud hovering over the National Hockey League -- absolutely, positively sucks.

So Kane's big picture revolves around this: He's just 21 and coming off a season in which he potted 30 goals and 57 points, both career highs.

Those numbers, and the enormous upside the Winnipeg Jets' organization sees in the speedy winger, earned him a new six-year deal on the eve of the lockout that will pay him an average of \$5.25 million through to the end of the 2017-18 season.

So, unlike so many of his NHL compadres who are currently without a deal or on one-year contracts, he has both financial security and a huge commitment from his employer.

Yet, there's also this: He's just 21, is coming off a season in which he posted career highs and has a fat new contract in his back pocket.

And his last NHL game was on April 7, almost eight months ago.

"It's tough," began Kane in a telephone interview with the Free Press from Vancouver. "I was looking forward to coming back and following up a pretty good year and try to better that season. I was looking forward to maybe playing in the playoffs. So, I've crossed my fingers and I hope it can still happen with a shortened season.

"It sucks to come off that year and then having to wait a lot longer than normal."

Kane, as the Jets' assistant player rep for the NHLPA, has been keeping up with all the lockout news through teammate Ron Hainsey and the info passed along by the union.

And -- just like so many others involved in the game -- he hit his boiling point a long time ago.

"It's just old news now," he said. "It seems like every time there's a meeting or everybody gets excited you come to expect the same end. It's frustrating and it's unfortunate. It's not good for anybody.

"I'm a pretty simple guy in terms of making decisions. I know what I want and from a negotiation standpoint, for both the players and the owners, they know what they want. It should be simple to have a little give and take, but when one side is giving the other side keeps taking, it's tough to come to an agreement.

"To me, respect is one of the biggest things. If one side is trying to knock you down and bully you, the other side is not going to respond too well. We're not going to fold up our tents and stick our tails between our legs. We're going to fight back. Our willingness and battle level to stick to what we believe in is pretty high."

Kane was asked if there was any kind of disconnect with his family because of the lockout -- the same way so many fans have grown angry watching billionaires argue with millionaires over what was a \$3.3-billion pot.

Remember, his father Perry grew up on the streets of East Preston, N.S. -- he was one of five kids, Kane's grandfather one of 18 -- and scratched and clawed his way to a university hockey career before moving to Vancouver.

But Kane said his father has been one of his biggest influences both for hockey and the business of the game. And so any fight the son takes on, the family is right there with him.

"My family totally understands," Kane said. "We grew up with not a lot, but now that I've been in the NHL for three years we're pretty comfortable. I obviously wanted to give back as much as I could to my family and do as much as I could for them. I've been able to do that and will continue to do that.

"My dad grew up a hockey player. He's the one that taught me the business at a young age, before I was even drafted. He knows how things work."

Kane said when he isn't diving into the lockout mess, he continues to skate and work out in Vancouver while finding some other avenues to amuse himself. An example: He's heading to Washington, D.C. for Monday night's Redskins-New York Giants tilt to watch his new favourite player, Skins quarterback Robert Griffin III.

"I have all this free time right now," said Kane with a laugh. "Hopefully, for the next 20 years I'll never have all this free time again."

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 12.01.2012

645616 Winnipeg Jets

Jets players take latest idea pitched by NHL in stride

By: Ed Tait

They had their doubts about mediation and have resisted the urge to get too excited about any part of the negotiations during the National Hockey League lockout.

So, you'll have to excuse some of the Winnipeg Jets still in town if they take a cynical look at the latest idea being pitched by the league: a sit down between owners and players that doesn't involve those previously at the table, particularly commissioner Gary Bettman and NHL Players' Association executive director Don Fehr.

Related Items

Polls

Andrew Ladd has been outspoken and honest with his comments regarding the NHL's labour impasse. How will you greet the Jets captain when the team finally gets back on the ice?

"It could be a good idea," said Andrew Ladd today. "There always seems to be a catch with every idea the owners have. But if it's something where we could get all 30 owners in the same room with representatives from each team and talk, just so they know where we're sitting and where everybody stands then, yeah, it could be positive.

"But only if it's done in the right way. If it's still the same guys from their end talking... if it's (Boston Bruins' owner) Jeremy Jacobs in there spewing his stuff, I don't think it's going to move this process forward."

Another week has gone by with no resolution to the lockout, now into its third month, in sight. Today the players missed their fourth paycheque of what was supposed to have been the 2012-13 season. U.S. federal mediators were involved in discussions on Wednesday and Thursday, but the two sides pushed away from the table saying no progress had been made. That prompted the league to suggest the owners-players meeting as a next possible step.

"It would be nice to sit down and talk and see where they're at and see what they understand and know and see where each side is coming from and try to sort it out like the mature men we all are," said Jim Slater. "That's the best thing... talking to these owners that really care about hockey and getting it back on the ice. I think there's a lot of them out there that are like that."

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 12.01.2012

645617 Websites

ESPN / Debate: Benefits of players-owners meeting

By Scott Burnside and Craig Custance

Scott Burnside and Craig Custance discuss the merits of a players-owners only meeting.

BURNSIDE: Well, my friend, interesting times in Lockout Land, no? After spending, oh, about 10 minutes with federal mediators before those mediators ran screaming from the room, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman offered to go off the negotiating grid by allowing the players to sit down mano-a-mano with the owners. Sources told ESPN.com that there were no restrictions on the offer and, as of Friday, the players were mulling over just how to respond to the curious offer.

A lot of folks are skeptical about the offer as though this is some sort of John LeCarre novel and is all some sort of cleverly constructed trap from which the players will never escape (actually, that's called the Columbus Blue Jackets, but that's a story for another day). First, kudos to Bettman for understanding the depth of dislike the players have for him. And while it would also take his counterpart Donald Fehr out of the proceedings at least for the time being, I don't see how the players can't take advantage. If I am a player (and I rarely pretend to be one), I'd ask that as many owners as possible attend. But I'd be especially interested in hearing from the owners that are believed to be more moderate, owners like Geoff Molson of the Montreal Canadiens and Ron Burkle, one of the owners of the Pittsburgh Penguins.

No one is suggesting the players will have to sign a deal before they're let out of the room, so why not have an open dialogue about the issues confronting the two sides with a group that has been under a punitive gag order from the commissioner? In short, what's the harm?

CUSTANCE: We're supposed to be critical thinkers, so I've spent a lot of time since the news emerged trying to think of the downside here for the players. It's been suggested that this is a PR stunt or misdirection by the league to divert attention from the fact that mediation was a complete failure (and if so, great plan, because it worked).

But even if that's the case, what's the harm in opening up the lines of communication between ownership and players? One of the criticisms of the NHL's approach has been that a small number of owners, like Boston's Jeremy Jacobs, have had the most influence and face time with the players. When contrasted with the NHLPA's strategy that has allowed for any interested players to attend negotiating meetings, the strategy looked restrictive. It invited questions as to whether or not moderate owners truly had a voice in these negotiations.

Now, if there's no restrictions on which owners can attend, then I don't see the downside. Players with the Flyers truly can get an idea of where Ed Snider stands, which has been a source of debate. Players with the Red Wings can ask Mike Ilitch, who in non-lockout years they are quick to praise for his generosity, why that organization hasn't been more involved. At the very least, it would appear to provide accountability rather than just pointing fingers at the commissioner.

But ultimately, can you move any closer to a deal without the two biggest players in the room in Bettman and Fehr?

BURNSIDE: That's a great question. I spoke Friday with a longtime observer of these events, and he suggested that to take Donald and Steve Fehr and the NHLPA staff out of the mix is to put the players at a disadvantage because they're not lawyers, that's why the players hire agents, etc. But I think the point is that this is about taking advantage of a dialogue that wasn't available before. I don't think the idea is that the players and the owners bring their notebooks and write up a new CBA. Nice idea, but I think instead this will be about detoxifying the air. There is such a level of mistrust between the two sides -- specifically as it relates to how the players view the owners and the owners' motivation -- that this has the potential to be a real defining moment in the negotiations. For instance, don't you think the players are curious about why the owners didn't respond to their last proposal with a counter? Might be interesting to ask Molson or Snider or Ilitch that one, and maybe the answer will lead to something on which to build an actual deal.

CUSTANCE: You raise an interesting point, Scotty. These players are among the best athletes in the world, highly trained to excel at hockey. When it comes to other things, like negotiating and debate, they're smart enough to hire somebody trained to do so. So if I were making the decision, I would sincerely thank the league for being open to a new avenue of

dealmaking, but I would request permission to expand the meeting. At the very least, I would ask to include a lawyer or an experienced agent or two who represents a large number of players -- maybe Don Meehan, Don Baizley or Pat Brisson. These guys cut deals with NHL owners for a living; it seems like a waste of a resource to keep their abilities and ideas sidelined for a meeting like this.

But you're right -- at the very least, this a chance for the owners to articulate why the system needs more money and restrictions from the players than has already been conceded. I believe that if there's a compelling case to be made for the health and future of the sport, players might be receptive to it. Maybe I'm naive. I'm sure they'll provide us all with a transcript of this meeting, right?

BURNSIDE: I'd pay to attend that meeting, Craig. Heck, get the NHL Network to televise it, and I guarantee hockey fans everywhere would tune in.

I wonder how this will all play out leading into Wednesday's board of governors' meeting in New York. I know the league was hopeful that the players would want to meet as quickly as possible given this new twist to the proceedings. I wonder, assuming they do get together, whether that changes the dynamics at the BOG next week. Does Bettman's offer to step away really suggest a shift in the power base within the ownership group, an acknowledgment that the league's process has been flawed? Or is it more that it's imperative to all concerned that at least some hockey be played this season in order to salvage not just all-important revenues that the players and owners will divide, but perhaps more importantly to give the fans and sponsors something to think about other than the mess that this lockout has been?

Or will this idea, like the stab at mediation, be just another log on the fire that is the 2012-13 season?

CUSTANCE: At the very least, with this offer and the mediation, the league can say it has attempted to exhaust all avenues of negotiation to get a deal done. I've had it suggested to me that this might simply be an attempt to remove Donald Fehr from the equation and speak directly with players without his presence or filter. But players I've spoken with say he's carrying out their wishes and consistently appear more than satisfied with Fehr's transparency and ability to communicate.

"He talks to a you on a level you understand," one player said. "We've been very trusting in what he says."

So if removing Fehr is their only goal, I'm not sure this accomplishes anything. We'll see.

Let's hope instead this is the olive branch that gives us some good news, because hockey fans definitely deserve it at this point.

ESPN LOADED: 12.01.2012

645618 Websites

ESPN / Playing hockey with MS diagnosis

By Scott Burnside

Jordan Sigalet didn't tell anyone about his multiple sclerosis diagnosis for six months.

When Jordan Sigalet first heard the doctor say multiple sclerosis, his initial reaction was, No way.

Nope. Not him.

Must be wrong.

"For me, I didn't really accept that it was MS," Sigalet, a former Boston Bruins prospect, told ESPN.com on Thursday.

"I just thought it must be something else. I kept getting opinion after opinion."

But every opinion came back to the same jarring answer: He was suffering from the incurable disease that attacks and scars the protective covering of nerves in the brain and spinal cord.

All of those memories were made new again Thursday with the news out of Minnesota that Minnesota Wild netminder Josh Harding has multiple sclerosis.

In a fine story in the Star Tribune by veteran hockey writer Mike Russo on Thursday, Harding told how he had been diagnosed with the disease a month before sharing the information with more than just immediate family.

Harding decided he would share his story in an effort to move on with his life and begin spreading awareness of the disease. He has pledged to continue his hockey career.

Jordan Sigalet said the support he received after sharing his diagnosis was extraordinary.

Almost immediately Sigalet and Harding began trading text messages, and Sigalet said they were hoping to chat Friday.

"It's pretty courageous what he did; it sounds like Josh has the right attitude," Sigalet said.

Sigalet was a junior at Bowling Green University when he woke up one morning with numbness in his right foot.

The numbness remained for the rest of the day. By the next day, the numbness had spread to his chest, then to other parts of his body.

An MRI, spinal tap and a battery of other tests followed, leading to the diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. For six months Sigalet, now 31, did not share the news of his diagnosis.

He had been drafted 209th overall in the 2001 draft by the Bruins and was afraid that news of his medical condition would mean an end to his NHL dream.

"I thought if I went public they'd just want to sweep me under a rug," Sigalet said of the Bruins.

If he was dizzy or fatigued, Sigalet made up stories about what had caused him to feel unwell.

"I was hiding behind lies," he said.

But when Sigalet finally opened up about his medical condition, the Bruins responded by signing him to a deal after his senior year at Bowling Green. He ended up playing for three years with the Bruins' top farm team in Providence, getting into one NHL game.

"They said as long as I could play, it didn't mean anything to them," Sigalet said.

The support he received from teammates, coaches, doctors, fans was extraordinary.

"I wish I hadn't waited six months," he said.

It's the same kind of support Sigalet imagines Harding will experience.

After finishing out his playing career in Vienna in 2008-09, Sigalet said he had had enough of bouncing around as a player and decided to explore coaching options. He is now the goaltending coach for the AHL-leading Abbotsford Heat, the top farm team of the Calgary Flames.

Sigalet has settled into a rhythm of treatment for MS that includes injections three times a week. Now there are also pills that help treat the disease.

The options for treatment are a personal choice, Sigalet said.

A native of New Westminster, British Columbia, Sigalet has also remained involved in the tightly knit MS community. He has hosted three fundraising dinners and auctions that have raised more than \$210,000, much of which has gone to MS research.

As a player, he also raised money through a number of different programs.

Now he is looking forward to sharing his experiences with Harding and, while it is bound to be a comfort to the Minnesota netminder, Sigalet expects he will gain as much from the contact himself.

ESPN LOADED: 12.01.2012