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645785 ESPN / Penguins' power play brings deal closer
645786 FOXSports.com / Ducks' Ryan gels with Kings' Kopitar at Mora IK
645787 NBCSports.com /NHLPA confirms Crosby, Toews among 18 players meeting with owners
645788 NBCSports.com /Four reasons why owners have been willing to sign players to long contracts
645789 Wall Street Journal / The Money Train That Is Sports TV

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Glimmer of hope seen in NHL negotiations

By Helene Elliott

NEW YORK — Finally, there's reason to believe the NHL and the players' association are listening to each other and might be inching toward a labor agreement that would salvage some semblance of a season.

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly, who has often accused the NHLPA of being unwilling to negotiate, was cordial toward the union after marathon meetings between selected owners and players at a New York hotel Tuesday. That was significant because Daly has been a loud and constant critic of the union's supposed reluctance to compromise.

"I think everybody wants to get a deal done, so I think that's encouraging," Daly said. "We look forward to making more progress" Wednesday.

Steve Fehr, special counsel to the NHLPA, expressed cautious optimism. He and Daly participated in two sessions Tuesday that included six owners and 18 players but not Commissioner Gary Bettman or NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr.

"It may have been the best day we've had so far," Steve Fehr said. "I don't want to paint too rosy of a picture, however. A lot of work remains to be done and we'll be back at it" Wednesday.

Neither would say how or where their positions had changed.

The same groups are expected to talk Wednesday before the NHL's Board of Governors gather and might continue discussions after the governors meet.

The presence Tuesday of Pittsburgh Penguins owner Ron Burkle, a California supermarket magnate, was said by many sources to be crucial in bringing the sides together. He has credibility among owners and players and business acumen that both sides respect.

The six owners and players met for 5 1/2 hours in their first session. They took a dinner break, reconvened about 9:30 Eastern time and spent nearly three more hours together.

Bettman suggested last week that the sides should meet without their respective leaders, hoping for a more open exchange than was possible with the head negotiators present. Apparently that occurred, thanks at least in part to Burkle.

The NHL has canceled games through Dec. 14, as well as the Winter Classic and the All-Star game. Another round of cancellations is certain if the sides don't reach an accord soon.

In addition to Burkle, the owners' delegation was composed of hard-liner Jeremy Jacobs of Boston, Mark Chipman of Winnipeg, Murray Edwards of Calgary, Larry Tanenbaum of Toronto and Jeff Vinik of Tampa Bay.

The players' roster was Craig Adams and Sidney Crosby of Pittsburgh; David Backes and Andy McDonald of St. Louis; Michael Cammalleri of Calgary; Mathieu Darche of Montreal; Shane Doan of Phoenix; Ron Hainsey of Winnipeg; Shawn Horcoff of Edmonton; Jonathan Toews and Jamal Mayers of Chicago; Manny Malhotra of Vancouver; Ryan Miller of Buffalo; former Duck and King George Parros of Florida; Brad Richards of the New York Rangers; Martin St. Louis and B.J. Crombeen of Tampa Bay; and Kings enforcer Kevin Westgarth.

LA Times: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645721 Anaheim Ducks

Selanne opening Laguna Beach restaurant

By NANCY LUNA

The Anaheim Ducks hockey player is opening a restaurant in Laguna Beach, according to the owners of French 75. The operators of the last remaining French 75 said they accepted a buyout from an investment firm with ties to Selanne. Come April, Teemu Tavern & Grill, an upscale steak house, is scheduled to open in Laguna Beach, the French 75 website states.

"After 15 fantastic years, these partners have decided to accept an offer and sell their restaurant to a well-known investment group," the website states. "The unique and wonderful property on Pacific Coast Highway that French 75 has called home will soon be home to newcomer in the Orange County restaurant scene, Teemu Tavern & Grill."

Besides Selanne, the restaurant's key investors include Kevin Pratt and veteran restaurant operator Jim Shumate of the Chart House in Dana Point.

Peter French, the property owner, said French 75 closed Sunday night. The Teemu restaurant has been in the works for awhile, he added.

"It's been tough keeping our mouths shut for so long," he told The Register on Tuesday afternoon.

French had few details to reveal about the new restaurant, only stating that Selanne will be heavily involved.

"It's all about Teemu," he said. "Nothing is happening without his stamp of approval."

Selanne, who lives in Coto de Caza, told the Register it will be "tavern-style, great American food."

The Laguna property has been in French's family since the 1930s. Through the years, several restaurants have operated on the site. French 75 had been there for 15 years.

The closure of French 75 marks the end of the chain, launched by Newport Beach-based Culinary Adventures. John Martin and celebrity chef David Wilhelm founded Culinary Adventures in 1997. French 75 was once the flagship chain for the company, which filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in 2008.

"They are the greatest guys," French said of the French 75 operators.

Address: 1464 S. Coast Hwy., Laguna Beach

Orange County Register: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645722 Boston Bruins

NHL talks resume with owners, players meeting

By **Associated Press**

NEW YORK — The only early details that emerged from the latest round of negotiations aimed at ending the NHL lockout were the names of those in attendance and that the sides took a break for dinner nearly six hours after they started talking Tuesday.

A group of six owners and 18 NHL players — many more than were originally expected — gathered at a Manhattan hotel and tried to find some common ground as the search for a deal that would save the hockey season continued. NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and union executive director Donald Fehr were at the hotel but stayed outside the meeting room.

Not much has worked up until Tuesday, the 80th day of the lockout, so the sides agreed to a different format to see if that would shake things up.

ads not by this site

"I'm hoping we get to where we need to be," Bettman said before talks got under way Tuesday afternoon.

The dialogue continued, sometimes in smaller groups, throughout the day until the sides separated for a dinner break. The owners left while the players stayed to have a meal inside the hotel. The owners were expected to return to the hotel later Tuesday night, but it wasn't determined before they left whether they would reconvene with the union again.

Also, there was no assurance from either side that any of the participants would make any public statements Tuesday night.

As more and more days pass by, the possibility that the entire hockey season will be lost grows. A lockout forced the cancellation of the 2004-05 season in February, and the belief is that the NHL won't wait that long this time to call off this already-delayed and shortened campaign.

All games through Dec. 14, along with the New Year's Dat Winter Classic and the All-Star game have been wiped off the schedule.

The NHL board of governors will meet in New York on Wednesday, likely to discuss Tuesday's developments and perhaps where to go from here if a deal isn't reached soon. More game cancellations could be announced then, and an internal deadline for eliminating the season could also be established.

Originally the thought was no one other than owners and players would be in attendance for Tuesday's meeting, but each side had staff present, as well. The six selected owners were Ron Burkle (Pittsburgh Penguins), Mark Chipman (Winnipeg Jets), Murray Edwards (Calgary Flames), Jeremy Jacobs (Boston Bruins), Larry Tanenbaum (Toronto Maple Leafs) and Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay Lightning).

Jacobs, considered one of the hard-line owners, and Edwards are the only members of the group of six to have taken part in previous negotiations.

The NHL had no objection for more than six players to take part, so Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews, Shane Doan, Brad Richards, Martin St. Louis, Ryan Miller, Craig Adams, David Backes, Michael Cammalleri, B.J. Crombeen, Mathieu Darche, Ron Hainsey, Shawn Horcoff, Jamal Mayers, Manny Malhotra, Andy McDonald, George Parros and Kevin Westgarth took part in negotiations.

Boston Herald LOADED: 12.05.2012

645723 Buffalo Sabres

Players, owners make progress in NHL talks, but sides caution there's still a lot of work to be done

It appears the NHL and its players' association may have found a negotiating tactic that actually works.

With union counsel Steve Fehr calling it the best day they've had so far, six owners and 18 players, including Buffalo Sabres goaltender Ryan Miller, met twice Tuesday in New York. The sides made progress toward a long-awaited collective bargaining agreement, but they cautioned there's a lot of work to be done before the lockout can end.

The negotiators, who wrapped up at midnight, will gather again this morning prior to an NHL board of governors meeting.

"I think everybody wants to get a deal done, so I think that's encouraging," NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly told reporters during a joint news conference with Fehr.

Tuesday's meetings were different in that the leaders of the parties, Commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr, were on the sidelines while new faces participated.

Four owners — Pittsburgh's Ronald Burkle, Winnipeg's Mark Chipman, Toronto's Larry Tanenbaum and Tampa Bay's Jeffery Vinik — sat down for the first time, joining regular league negotiators Jeremy Jacobs of Boston and Murray Edwards of Calgary.

The union elected to use all 18 players who traveled to New York after initially being expected to counter with six. Among those sitting alongside Miller were Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby, Phoenix's Shane Doan, Chicago's Jonathan Toews, Tampa Bay's Martin St. Louis and the New York Rangers' Brad Richards.

The sides gathered at 2 p.m. and met for 5½ hours before breaking for dinner. They reconvened shortly after 10 p.m. for a two-hour session.

Though details were kept quiet, multiple reports said the Penguins' Burkle played an integral role during the meetings, which featured full-party discussions and smaller gatherings.

Burkle, whose team is a Stanley Cup contender with Crosby as its captain, would likely push for a season to be played. It would seem Vinik, who oversees an aging Tampa squad featuring St. Louis, and Chipman, whose team has played just one season in Winnipeg, also would prefer seeing the puck drop.

Jacobs, the Buffalo native who owns Delaware North Cos., has repeatedly been portrayed as a hard-liner who has pushed for a knockout of the players' association.

Jacobs is also the chairman of the board of governors, which will meet at 11 this morning. The Sabres are expected to take three spots at the table. Owner Terry Pegula, President Ted Black and General Manager Darcy Regier will take attend the summit.

Bettman is scheduled to hold a 1 p.m. news conference following the board meeting.

The lockout has been in effect since Sept. 16 and has wiped out all games through Dec. 14. More cancellations are expected this week if the sides fail to complete a CBA.

Buffalo News LOADED: 12.05.2012

645724 Calgary Flames

Flames prospect Sieloff a terror on the Spitfires blueline

By Scott Cruickshank, Calgary Herald December 4, 2012

Patrick Sieloff is at that funny age. You know, one foot in childhood, one foot in adulthood.

At 18, he's enough of a boy to admit that the thing he misses most about being away from home is his dog, Spot.

But he's enough of a grown-up to have cast a vote — via absentee ballot — in the recent U.S. presidential election.

"It's another step in your life in the adult world," says the Windsor Spitfires blue-liner. "You're not a little kid anymore."

On the ice, however, there is very little grey area for the lad. It's all black and blue.

He knows exactly where he stands. And it would be prudent for opponents to take note of Sieloff's whereabouts, too.

An old-school defender, he relishes the opportunity to flatten day-dreaming encroachers. This appetite for contact is what made the Ann Arbor, Mich., native a second-round pick of the Calgary Flames this past June.

And now it's what makes Sieloff part of the Americans' preliminary roster leading up to the world junior tourney in Russia.

Other Flames prospects invited to the Dec. 16-18 camp in Tarrytown, N.Y., include Providence freshman netminder Jon Gillies (twice named Hockey East's defensive player of the week) and Boston College sophomore

pepper pot Johnny Gaudreau (who, with seven goals and seven assists in seven games, took Hockey East's player-of-the-month honours for November).

"If you come watch Patty play three or four games in a row, his compete level is through the roof," says Bob Boughner, president and coach of the Spitfires. "I've never seen a guy compete this hard. (The U.S. team) needs that kind of an edge. The team can't be all finesse. I hope he makes the team, and I think he will make the team.

"It's got to be great for his confidence. He very much deserves it."

The Spitfires, who had acquired Sieloff's rights in October 2011, have no quibbles about their early returns. After pinning an 'A' on the kid's chest and turning him loose for his first winter in the Ontario Hockey League, they've been rewarded.

"He's got leadership qualities and he's a nasty guy," says Boughner, former roughouser of the Flames. "A real nice addition for us. Penalty killing. Shutting down top lines. And he gets people out of their seats at least once a game with a huge hit. It's a huge skill of his, timing that hit perfectly. It's fun to watch. He can influence a game physically."

While Sieloff is no offensive dynamo, with nine points in 29 games, he has been a rock on Windsor's back-end. And when he isn't crumpling teammates in practice — "I've had to tell him on a few occasions to slow down a bit," says Boughner, "and put a smile on his face" — he's mowing down forwards at a clip that impresses even him.

"To be honest, I'm getting a few more than I usually do," says the six-foot-one, 197-pounder, adding that he's not forcing the issue. "I can't go around headhunting guys. Sometimes when we're down by a goal, it can be a momentum-changer . . . and fighting on top of that might help (the team)."

Yes, because scrapping and Sieloff's open-ice belts seem to go hand in hand — whether he likes it or not.

"Obviously," says Boughner, "he gets his door knocked on after a big hit."

He has dropped his gloves on five occasions. Four of those times, the enemy has taken an instigating minor after seeing a teammate battered by Sieloff.

"It's not something to be scared of," says Sieloff, who owns a team-high 59 penalty minutes. "That's something everyone has been asking me — 'Do you get sick of it?' It's something that, going into the hit, I'm expecting. If (the fight) doesn't happen, I'm OK. If it does, I'm there. After a big hit, adrenaline is kicking in . . . so I think I do pretty well with those (fights), I manage myself pretty well."

No angel, Sieloff has been twice chucked from games for charging. No suspensions, though. He is hoping that some time soon, respect will kick in. After all, he's continued to bodycheck, knowing full well what awaits him. So maybe one day the need to test him will vanish.

Sieloff is wishful, but not exactly optimistic.

"We haven't played all the teams yet."

Read more:

<http://www.calgaryherald.com/sports/Flames+prospect+Sieloff+terror+Spitfires+blueline/7652016/story.html#ixzz2EAJGKd2>

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645725 Calgary Flames

Johnson: Why did it take so long for meaningful NHL lockout talks?

By George Johnson, Calgary Herald December 4, 2012

This was the scenario hockey fans had long been waiting for:

Order in some Chinese or a few extra-large pepperoni pizza pies (and, please, don't fight about who's on the hook for the delivery kid's tip). Lock the door.

Affix the Do Not Disturb sign to the doorknob. And stay put. Get serious, get steamed, get emotional. But get together and at least try and get something

accomplished, to find even the smallest piece of common ground to build from.

On the 80th Day of the latest NHL lockout, six owners and 18 players, chaperoned by the second lieutenants of the warring parties, huddled in a posh New York hotel, late into the night, with the 2012-2013 National Hockey League season fast fading into a vapour trail.

New faces, new blood, new voices.

And, from the tone drifting out of midtown after midnight EST, there is now at least tangible reason for optimism.

"It was a long day but a constructive day," said NHLPA second-in-command Steve Fehr, emerging from marathon meetings. "We had a good dialogue. A lot of work still needs to be done."

He called it maybe the best day of negotiating yet. Which, it must be said, ain't sayin' a whole lot.

Still, that Fehr was standing side-by-side with his league counterpart, Bill Daly, when he said it, had to lift the hearts of those who had given up hope.

"I appreciate the efforts of the players," said Daly.

The question now being: Why, oh why, did this take so long? Where was this degree of urgency in October? November?

Honestly, it leaves you shaking your head.

If one night of serious discussion with the right people involved is what was needed to trigger meaningful dialogue, both sides should be ashamed — or at least, more ashamed — at the lost prestige, the lost revenue, the lost loyalty.

By barring commissioner Gary Bettman and the Donald, the main protagonists in this nasty business, from the room on Tuesday, unencumbered by their grating, condescending George and Martha/Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? routine, the initial bargaining session lasted for over five hours.

And if there is — fingers remain crossed here — headway made that ultimately leads to a resolution in this unseemly impasse and gets the league back on the ice by New Year's at the latest, what earthly use are either of them going forward?

The two sides met, deliberated among themselves, broke for chow, convened again. Exhausted media, long bereft of fresh angles with which to fill space or airtime, hung out hobo-like in the hotel lobby, trying to avoid eye-contact with increasingly suspicious hotel staff (The sight of Donald Fehr furtively working his cellphone being enough to induce spasms of activity and conjecture).

Tuesday's owner-player tete-a-tete was generally seen as the last-ditch effort in saving the season. Games had already been cancelled through Dec. 14th. Another round axed would've pushed the past Jan. 1st and made any 'meaningful' season nothing more than an illusion.

And, to be blunt, the whole tawdry affair had really gotten to be too much. You've got billionaire owners who signed contracts in good faith who now want to amend those deals. You've got players being paid millions of dollars a year lamenting about financial robbery as much of the world's economy hangs grimly in the balance, sounding silly and just slightly petty and in the process.

And with no one to cheer for in this game, the general populace has tuned hockey out; adopted a tell-me-when-it's-over approach.

Apathy, they should both understand, being the most dangerous of all adversaries.

To read Done Deal into this would be ill-advised. No one in possession of all their faculties should be conned into reading pending solution from one night of talks. We've been led lemming-like down that particular garden path before.

Heading in, the chasm of dispensation of revenue, guaranteed contracts, free agency and maximum contract term limits seemed too wide, too impassable, to be navigated. But Tuesday is proof that under the right conditions, inroads can be made. Hallelujah!

Among the players involved were a group of heavy hitters led by Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews, Ryan Miller, Brad Richards and Shane Doan. On

the ownership side, a couple of the familiar well-known hawks, Boston Bruins' Jeremy Jacobs and Calgary's Murray Edwards, were offset by more moderate owners, like Larry Tanenbaum of the Leafs and Pittsburgh's Ron Burkle, eager to get a deal done.

The very fact that there was face-to-face meeting between employers and employees — Burkle with Sidney Crosby (who, by the way, flew to New York on the same flight) and Edwards with Michael Cammalleri, for instance — without the top hired guns around to colour opinion couldn't help but be beneficial.

It's premature to believe, read too much into, or even to invest emotion in a resolution just yet. The two Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots, Bettman and Fehr, must still have their say.

But as of late Tuesday night, there had been progress. If not peace, then at least a truce in pursuit of a common good.

What's better is that they're meeting again today.

Read more:

<http://www.calgaryherald.com/sports/Johnson+take+long+meaningful+lockout+talks/7651920/story.html#ixzz2EAtnMbgg>

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645726 Calgary Flames

Flames trio gets invite to U.S. world junior camp

By RANDY SPORTAK [REDACTED], Calgary Sun

Scoring an invite to the U.S. national junior team's camp is nothing new to Johnny Gaudreau.

It's the next step that the Calgary Flames prospect is looking to make.

Gaudreau, one of three Flames hopefuls chosen to attend this year's camp, was a late cut from last year's squad. So it's hard to believe he won't be part of the American team to go to world juniors later this month in Ufa, Russia.

"I thought it was a little bit of farce he didn't make last year's team, particularly when I saw the team," said Flames assistant GM of player personnel Jonn Weisbrod. "I couldn't believe they kept him off it."

Gaudreau, the Boston College dynamo sophomore drafted 104th overall by the Flames in 2011, admits he has extra motivation this time around, but he won't go as far as to say he intends to prove to Hockey USA officials they made a mistake a year ago.

"It's all about this year, and we'll see how this tournament goes. Hopefully, we play well," said the 19-year-old from New Jersey.

Gaudreau has staked an early claim to being a Hobey Baker Award candidate, as the NCAA's top hockey player, with 10 goals and 21 points in 13 outings this season. It's a big jump from the point-per-game pace he had last season.

"Coming in as a second-year player, I'm a lot more confident and feel I can do more things with the puck," Gaudreau said from Boston on Tuesday. "It's a lot of things coming together."

For him — and for the Flames

Not only is the Flames organization excited to see Gaudreau receiving attention, the club's brass are over the moon a couple of other players were invited.

Defenceman Patrick Sieloff (42nd overall, '12) and goaltender Jon Gillies (75th overall, '12) were also chosen by Hockey USA.

Sieloff, who is a physical force for the OHL's Windsor Spitfires, spent two years with the U.S. national development team, so his inclusion is no shock.

Gillies is a pleasant surprise.

"The kid deserves a lot of credit," Weisbrod said. "He had a hard summer of work and preparation, was thrown right into the deep end as a freshman starting goaltender in one of the best conferences in the country and (has) done really well. I'm happy for him and proud of him."

Gillies has a sparkling 1.88 goals-against average and .930 save percentage to go with a 7-6-1 record at Providence College.

The Flames have six players in total who could potentially play in the upcoming event.

On Monday, defenceman Tyler Wotherspoon (57th, '11) and goalie Laurent Brossoit (164th, '11) were named to Canada's training camp roster, while Markus Granlund (45th, '11) was named to Finland's preliminary roster.

Granlund, who has four goals and 12 points in 25 games this season for HIFK Helsinki of Finland's top league, played for his country last year.

Calgary Sun: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645727 Calgary Flames

Flames future — Ramage lets his play do the talking as Flames prospect

By WES GILBERTSON [REDACTED], Calgary Sun

With hat-trick of reliable puck-stoppers on Heat roster, Irving's action limited

Over a phone line from the University of Wisconsin, you get the sense John Ramage is not your prototypical captain.

He's soft-spoken.

Shy, even.

As a teammate, he doesn't sound like the kind of guy who will fill your ear.

As a reporter, he certainly won't fill your notepad.

"I don't think you would put him in the category of being a classic orator — let's put it that way," confirmed Wisconsin Badgers head coach Mike Eaves, whose resumé includes 117 regular-season outings with the NHL's Calgary Flames (1983-85) and a quarter-century behind the bench at the collegiate, junior or pro level.

"He's very well thought out. He is soft-spoken. I think most of his leadership is done by example — the way he carries himself and the way he plays on the ice.

"(His teammates) know that he's the kind of guy you want in your bunker. He's the kind of guy you want to go to battle with."

He's also the kind of guy a coach can count on.

Ramage, 21, is in his second season as captain of the Badgers, one of the most prestigious programs in NCAA hockey history.

He also wore the 'C' for Team USA at the 2011 IIHF World Junior Hockey Championship in Buffalo, where the Americans claimed bronze.

"I don't do anything extraordinary. I just try to be myself and lead that way," Ramage said.

"You can't really control 20-some guys. You can only control one person, and that's yourself. Usually, if you're playing well, that will lead to team success.

"That's kind of the motto

I have."

Selected by the Flames in the fourth round of the 2010 NHL Entry Draft, Ramage is now in his senior season at Wisconsin. He can't sign a pro contract until he finishes his collegiate puck career, but the brass at the Saddledome will have to make a decision on the 6-foot-1, 184-lb. rearguard over the next few months.

The Badgers have stumbled to a 2-7-3 start in WCHA action, but Ramage has earned high marks from the coaching staff as a stabilizing influence on the blueline.

"If he's going to play at the minor-pro or NHL level, he's going to be a shutdown guy," Eaves said.

"He needs to be a defenceman that can make the right reads early and get the puck out of the zone with the right passes. He needs to cover well in

front of the net. He can be a good penalty-killer because he's a good shot-blocker.

"And his puck skills? He can snap the puck around pretty good. He's got a nice shot from the point, but he's not going to be a guy that goes end to end with the puck or makes guys miss."

His leadership abilities will certainly be missed at Wisconsin when he graduates in the spring.

While he's hesitant to peer too far into his future, Ramage wants the Saddledome to be his next stop.

His father, Rob, won a Stanley Cup with the Flames in 1989, and the current Badgers captain wants to try to deliver another one.

"I've been to two prospects camps in Calgary, and the culture is unbelievable," Ramage said.

"I know how much winning means to them. They've done lots of little things to try to turn the page a bit and get back to the playoffs.

"It's a great organization — there's a lot of history there, and it's definitely something I would like to be a part of."

Calgary Sun: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645728 Carolina Hurricanes

NHL players, owners meet without Bettman; no resolution yet

By Chip Alexander - calexander@newsobserver.com

They first talked for more than five hours, in groups large and small.

They took a break for dinner, then met again, looking for a way to resolve their differences and save the National Hockey League season.

Late Tuesday night, the six NHL owners and 18 players were still engaged in a collective bargaining meeting in a Manhattan hotel. As time passed, optimism began to build that a breakthrough in the stalled labor talks might have been achieved.

It was NHL commissioner Gary Bettman's request that the two groups get together — after federal mediators failed to make a difference. He would sit out the meeting, as would NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr — just players and owners in the room, in a dialogue. It was unusual, and no one was sure how long it might last or how productive it might be.

"I'm hoping we get to where we need to be," Bettman told reporters before the meeting.

The NHL's board of governors meets Wednesday at 11 a.m. in New York. It was not known late Tuesday night if another collective bargaining session will be held before the governors meeting.

The owners in the room Tuesday were: Ron Burkle (Pittsburgh Penguins), Murray Edwards (Calgary Flames), Jeremy Jacobs (Boston Bruins), Mark Chipman (Winnipeg Jets), Larry Tanenbaum (Toronto Maple Leafs) and Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay Lightning). Among the players representing the NHLPA were Penguins star Sidney Crosby, Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews, and Buffalo Sabres goalie Ryan Miller. Another was Los Angeles Kings forward Kevin Westgarth, who lives in Raleigh in the offseason and is the son-in-law of former Pittsburgh Steelers coach Bill Cowher.

Jacobs and Edwards had been active in previous collective bargaining negotiations, but the other four owners were making their first appearance. Crosby has participated in other CBA sessions, but Miller, an outspoken type, wanted to take part in Tuesday's meeting.

Tuesday marked the 80th day of the lockout, which began Sept. 16. Many NHL players have flooded overseas, including the Carolina Hurricanes' Jiri Tlustý, Jussi Jokinen and Jamie McBain. The league has canceled all regular-season games through Dec. 14 and could soon chop off another block of games. The 2013 Winter Classic has been canceled. So has the 2013 All-Star Game.

The league is seeking a 50-50 split of annual hockey-related revenue (HRR) — the players were getting 57 percent in the previous CBA — while

the players want all existing contracts honored and have taken issue with other concessions proposed by the league. Adding a bit of irony to Tuesday was that the meetings were held at the Westin Hotel near Times Square. It was in the Westin in February 2005 that Bettman announced that the 2004-05 season had been canceled when the league and union could not agree on a CBA.

There's still hope if an agreement can be reached, there could be a reconfigured 2012-13 season of about 60 games.

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Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/2012/12/05/2525488/nhl-players-owners-meet-sans-bettman.html#storylink=cpy>

News Observer LOADED: 12.05.2012

645729 Chicago Blackhawks

Cautious optimism after latest NHL talks

By Chris Kuc Tribune reporter

The idea was for NHL players and owners to sit across the table from one another in an effort to break the stalemate in negotiations on a new collective bargaining agreement.

It remains to be seen whether the plan will result in an end to the lockout that reached its 80th day Tuesday, but an air of cautious optimism emanated from New York after 18 players -- including the Blackhawks' Jonathan Toews and Jamal Mayers -- met with six owners throughout the day and into the night. The meeting, which at times broke into smaller groups, was held without the lead negotiators for each side -- NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and players' association head Donald Fehr in the room.

The talks ended around 11 p.m. Central and afterward union negotiator Steve Fehr told reporters: "It may have been the best day we've had so far. I don't want to paint too rosy of a picture, however. A lot of work remains to be done."

Said NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly: "I want to thank the players and owners for being there and we're going to work hard and try to get a deal."

The sides plan to talk again Wednesday morning before a scheduled meeting of the NHL's Board of Governors, which includes Hawks Chairman Rocky Wirtz and Team President John McDonough.

Tuesday's session at a Times Square hotel included players Toews, Mayers, Craig Adams, David Backes, Michael Cammalleri, Sidney Crosby, B.J. Crombeen, Mathieu Darche, Shane Doan, Ron Hainsey, Shawn Horcoff, Manny Malhotra, Andy McDonald, Ryan Miller, George Parros, Brad Richards, Martin St. Louis and Kevin Westgarth.

Representing the owners were Jeremy Jacobs (Bruins), Murray Edwards (Flames), Ron Burkle (Penguins), Mark Chipman (Jets), Jeff Vinik (Lightning) and Larry Tanenbaum (Maple Leafs).

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 12.05.2012

645730 Chicago Blackhawks

Optimism ensues as NHL talks ongoing

TRACEY MYERS

As the evening grew later, the talks continued. And while it's hard to say how much is getting accomplished, the fact that discussions are ongoing is at least some reason to be optimistic.

Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews and forward Jamal Mayers were two of 18 players taking part in Tuesday's player-owner meeting in New York. The two sides started talking at 1 p.m. central time; after a dinner break early in the evening, the two parties reconvened and were still talking past 10 p.m. central time.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr stayed out of both meetings, although they reportedly met with their respective parties during the dinner break.

Reports from New York have used the words "cautiously optimistic" to describe the ongoing discussions. Rob Rossi of the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review writes that the Penguins are making a big push to help end the lockout. Sidney Crosby is part of today's talks, as is team co-owner Ron Burkle.

The lockout reached Day 80 on Tuesday. Games through Dec. 14 have already been canceled.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.05.2012

645731 Chicago Blackhawks

Toews, Mayers attend meeting with NHL owners to discuss lockout

TRACEY MYERS

The Blackhawks' Jonathan Toews and Jamal Mayers are two of 18 players in New York today for the owners-players meeting there this afternoon.

The two sides will be meeting at approximately 1 p.m. CT at the Westin in New York. Other players attending include Sidney Crosby, Shane Doan, Brad Richards, Craig Adams, David Backes, Michael Cammalleri, B.J. Crombeen, Mathieu Darche, Ron Hainsey, Shawn Horcoff, Manny Malhotra, Andy McDonald, Ryan Miller, George Parros, Martin St. Louis and Kevin Westgarth.

Today's owners-players meeting will not include NHL commissioner Gary Bettman or NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr. This meeting, which Bettman suggested to the PA last week, is the latest attempt the two sides have taken to reach a new collective bargaining agreement.

Everything up to this point has stalled quickly. Today is Day 80 of the lockout; the league has already canceled games through Dec. 14. The 2012-13 NHL All-Star Game has also been canceled.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.05.2012

645732 Colorado Avalanche

New Stars center Derek Roy rehabbing, should train with Texas Stars next week

MIKE HEIKA

While the 29-year-old center still hasn't played a game for Dallas, he said Tuesday he's happy with the trade that brought him to the Stars in July, and that he's happy with the decision the team made to make him have shoulder surgery just a couple of weeks after the trade.

Roy has been working out in Frisco and also skating occasionally with the Stars alumni — guys like Joe Nieuwendyk, Bob Bassen and Craig Ludwig. He is nearly 100 percent recovered from the surgery and is expected to go down to Cedar Park at the end of the week to work out with the Texas Stars. He will not play in games, because of the lockout, but he will get in some intense practices.

"I'm looking forward to it," Roy said. "I think it's a great opportunity for me on a lot of levels. First, I get to test the shoulder and get to push my workouts. Second, I get to see some of the guys who I might be playing with up here and get to know them a little better."

Roy was acquired from Buffalo on July 2 in a trade that sent Steve Ott and Adam Pardy to the Sabres. He can fill a hole in the middle of the Stars lineup and brings skill and speed that Ott didn't have. However, Ott also added grit, leadership and star power that have to be replaced. The trade could be one of the most controversial of the Nieuwendyk era, as Roy can become an unrestricted agent at the end of the season, and the Stars elected to have the shoulder surgery knowing he wouldn't be back until late November or late December.

Roy played all last season with a loose shoulder socket and said the arm would pop out all of the time, and he would just pop it back in. While he didn't want to use any injuries as excuses (he also had hamstring soreness early in the season), it seems clear that the shoulder had a major effect on his performance — His 44 points (17G, 27A) in 80 games were among the lowest totals in his career.

"I played on it last year and was ready to play on it again, so I knew I could fight through it," he said. "But I do understand the thinking that I should be better with it healthy. There are a lot of things you do on the ice that involve your shoulder, and you probably shouldn't be thinking about how it's feeling during the game. If you're 100 percent healthy and confident, then you can just worry about the game."

As a smallish (5-9, 184) center, Roy is not going to engage in much physical play. However, he still has to go to the boards to win battles and he still has to fight off defenders while carry the puck. In addition, he has to have full range of motion for shots and full shoulder strength for faceoffs — something he didn't have last season.

As odd as it sounds, the faceoff issue might be the most important. The Stars lost their No. 2 and No. 3 volume guys in Ott (55.5 percent in 1,011 faceoffs) and Mike Ribeiro (42.2 percent in 808 faceoffs) and also lost their top two percentage guys in Ott (55.5 percent) and Adam Burish (55.8 percent in 389 faceoffs). As such, Roy and fellow newcomer Cody Eakin are going to have to take a lot of faceoffs.

That hasn't been a problem for Roy, as he typically exceeds 1,200 in a season and last year won 50.6 percent of 1,329 draws. And that was with the bad shoulder.

"It's an important part of my game, and I do think being healthy can help you there," he said. "I also think being a veteran helps, and maybe I can share a few tricks with the younger guys."

Roy is in the final year of a six-year contract and can become an unrestricted free agent in the summer. He is scheduled to make \$5.5 million this season, and has been getting paid during the lockout because of the surgery. He will stop getting paid when he is 100 percent healthy. That's a pretty big chunk of change for the Stars to swallow for something that didn't "have" to be done. However, Nieuwendyk said he felt it was a smart decision.

"We are interested in making him a long-term part of this team, and that was our mindset from the moment we made the trade," Nieuwendyk said. "We knew the contract situation, and we knew that we wanted the best Derek Roy we could get, so we felt it was a good decision."

Because of the lockout, the Stars can't have contract extension discussions with Roy or his agent, Larry Kelly. There's a good chance they might wait until after the season to negotiate, because they have yet to see Roy play in a Stars uniform. If the season is cancelled, that could make the negotiations very interesting.

Roy says he's happy with the treatment he's received and would like to stay.

"Everything that has happened here has been first-class, and I can't say enough about the team and the city," he said. "I'm excited about getting out there and playing, and I can see myself staying here a long time."

That said, there's no telling what rules the new CBA will have in it. There are also the questions of length of deal and amount of yearly salary. As we've seen in several previous negotiations, it's tough for two sides to get together when unrestricted free agency is a possibility.

But, for now, the Stars and Roy are both ecstatic. If the lockout ends, the Stars have a high-performing center (scoring 81, 70 and 69 points from 2007-10) at full strength, as well as a strong relationship for potential future contract negotiations.

Denver Post: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645733 Colorado Avalanche

Startdate: Dec. 4, 2002 - Stars' Jason Arnott scores first AAC hat trick

SportsDayDFW.com

A series of Stars games and moments that happened on a specific date. The following appeared in the Dec. 5, 2002 editions of The Dallas Morning News.

What they couldn't do individually is being accomplished collectively.

Jason Arnott, Pierre Turgeon and Scott Young were battling slumps and injuries early in the season. Together, they've managed to lift their games and the Stars.

Arnott notched his fourth career hat trick and the line combined for six points as the Stars downed the Montreal Canadiens, 5-1, Wednesday.

It was the first hat trick at American Airlines Center and the first by a Stars player since Brett Hull scored four goals against Anaheim on March 21, 2001.

"They've fought through a lot, those three guys," teammate Bill Guerin said. "Hey, sometimes you need other guys to help you out when things aren't going great. And right now, they're helping each other out."

Goaltender Marty Turco won for the seventh time in his last nine starts, stopping 25 shots.

The Stars (16-6-5-1) remained unbeaten in regulation at home and broke a two-game winless streak, taking advantage of three days between games.

The effort wasn't perfect. The Stars had several breakdowns in defensive coverage and took five penalties in the second period, lapses they can't make Friday against Stanley Cup champion Detroit.

Against Montreal and beleaguered goaltender Jose Theodore, the offensive punch was more than enough.

Arnott said the line chemistry has developed since the three were put together last month against, coincidentally, against Montreal. Then Arnott was struggling following a high-ankle sprain, Turgeon had just ended an eight-game points drought and Young was still

looking for his first goal as a Star.

"We come off the bench, and we're talking and knowing where each other is," Arnott said. "It takes a little while to get used to it. I think we push each other. If one guy is sloughing off a little bit, the other two guys are right there."

The unit has combined for 16 goals and 36 points in the 12 games it has been together. In the last five games, they have nine goals and 21 points. The numbers could be better, except they have hit more than their share of posts and crossbars.

"We don't even look at it," Arnott said of the numbers. "We just look at playing pretty well together. We're saying, 'Let's not let a good thing die. Just keep it going.'"

The idea of combining the three players was a gamble. Turgeon, a natural center, had to move to left wing to accommodate Arnott.

Coach Dave Tippett saw parts of their game that could complement each other. Despite Turgeon's 474 career goals, Tippett viewed him as an even better playmaker than scorer who could adjust to wing. And the 6-4, 225-pound Arnott thrived in New Jersey playing with skilled passers Patrik Elias and Petr Sykora. Young had a history with Turgeon and was a streaky scorer.

Turgeon twice set up Arnott from the behind the net, including the game-winner that broke a 1-1 tie at 12:10 of the second period. Turgeon extended his points streak to five games.

"It's not just behind the net," Tippett said. "It's on the wall and going up the ice. He's got the whole picture in front of him. And he's a pretty good painter when you give him the whole canvas."

Arnott has scored five goals in his last six games playing with a broken finger on his right hand. Because he has trouble gripping the stick on his slap shot, he's adjusted.

"I'm just going to the net and trying to hit and create room for these two guys to do their things," Arnott said. "I have limitations and I have to stick with it until the finger gets

better.

-Chuck Carlton / DMN

Denver Post: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645734 Detroit Red Wings

Meeting of NHL owners, players runs late

By Helene St. James

A meeting between six NHL owners and 18 players Tuesday in New York lasted well into the evening, as the sides discussed how to end the nearly 3-month-old lockout.

Discussions between owners from Boston, Calgary, Pittsburgh, Tampa Bay, Toronto and Winnipeg and a group of players led by Sidney Crosby began around 2 p.m. and went until both sides took a dinner break about 7:30. The talks resumed about 10:30 p.m., according to USA Today's Kevin Allen, and had not concluded at press time.

It was the first time since the lockout began on Sept. 16 that so many players, none of whom were Wings, and owners met face to face. The sides, which so far have been guided by NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA executive director Don Fehr, are at odds over how to divide what last season was a \$3.3 billion business. The league already has cancelled games through mid-December, as well as New Year's Day's Winter Classic between Detroit and Toronto at Michigan Stadium. The last time the NHL was embroiled in a labor dispute, it cost the entire 2004-05 season.

Speaking earlier in the week, several Wings players said they hoped Tuesday's gathering could spur movement toward getting the 2012-13 season under way. They expressed confidence that there'd be a positive groundswell going into today's Board of Governors meeting, which will also be in New York. That meeting will include Wings general manager Ken Holland and executive vice president Jimmy Devellano.

CHARITY GAME: Several Wings, including Niklas Kronwall and Danny Cleary, will be part of the group skating in Saturday's NHLPA charity game in Windsor at 6:30 p.m. Proceeds will go to Sparkles from Above, which assists children with cancer. Tickets are available at the WFCU Centre (8787 McHugh Street, Windsor) by calling 1-866-969-9328, or online at www.wfcu-centre.com.

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Detroit Free Press LOADED: 12.05.2012

645735 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings owner Mike Ilitch can't wait for arena

John Niyo

Mike Ilitch wants to build a new arena in downtown Detroit to house his Red Wings.

Mike Ilitch has been talking about this for months. He has been planning it for years. He has been envisioning it a lot longer than that.

But Tuesday's news out of Lansing, where officials from Ilitch's Olympia Development were pitching their plans for a new arena anchoring a \$650 million development in downtown Detroit, only confirms what we already knew.

The 83-year-old pizza magnate, who also happens to be the owner of the Tigers and Red Wings, is in a hurry to get things done. Whether it's winning a World Series or building a new arena for his hockey team or, presumably, ending this ridiculous NHL lockout, there is no more pretense about patience anymore.

"This city needs activity," Ilitch said last February, as he proudly announced Detroit would host the since-delayed-but-still-promised NHL Winter Classic. "And there's gotta be some bold moves now, not just talk."

Talk is cheap. Arenas aren't.

And while there are all sorts of devilish details absent from what the taxpaying public in a nearly-bankrupt city knows about this grand plan, there's no doubt about the first part of that statement.

This city desperately needs more bustle, and less hustle. And Ilitch, along with the likes of Peter Karmanos and Dan Gilbert, not to mention plenty of young entrepreneurs you've never heard of, seems determined to make it happen — sooner rather than later.

"It's always been my dream to once again see a vibrant downtown Detroit," Ilitch said in a statement Tuesday. "From the time we bought the Fox Theatre, I could envision a downtown where the streets were bustling and people were energized. It's been a slow process at times, but we're getting there now, and a lot of great people are coming together to make it happen. It's going to happen, and I want to keep us moving toward that vision."

Coming into focus

How soon will it happen? And at what cost? Well, that remains to be seen.

But the vision for a new arena has been slowly coming into focus the last few years. There was the conspicuous binge buying of real estate in lower Midtown. There was the hiring of Tom Wilson, who left The Palace in Auburn Hills and headed downtown tasked with building another one. There was the Ilitches' very public bid to buy the Pistons two years ago, undoubtedly in an attempt to help leverage this deal.

"We're gonna have a new arena," he told The Detroit News last fall, finally letting slip the worst-kept secret in town.

And then, after taking a closer look at other new venues in recent years, including a tour of the Penguins' just-opened Consol Energy Center, the Ilitches dropped another major hint this long-planned project was finally getting ready to see the light of day. Chris Ilitch, the president and CEO of Ilitch Holdings, Inc, hired an architect in May to design an entertainment district built around a new home for the Red Wings, with Nationwide Arena in Columbus one likely template.

Tuesday, they actually started talking publicly about money — and the public's money — which is always the tricky part.

"Obviously, there's going to be public contributions associated with this, which is always troublesome given these times," Brian Holdwick, executive vice president of the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, told WJR on Tuesday. "But we're in desperate need of a new arena for the Red Wings. And this is more than just that. This is a sports and entertainment district. We have commercial and retail and housing."

What about Pistons?

Now then, will it house one tenant or two? That's a question everyone was asking, especially in light of new Pistons owner Tom Gores' most recent comments about the possibility of moving back to the city.

"I don't think you want to leave it and just say, 'Nice to see you,' to The Palace," Gores said before his team's Oct. 31 home opener at The Palace, where the crowds remain sparse at best this season.

"I don't want to do that. In the meantime, if the future is downtown, and that's what we have to do to grow, I'm not against that."

If you're not against something, that doesn't necessarily mean you're for it. That's as true for wary folks in Detroit as it is for Gores, the private-equity billionaire.

Again, there are lots of unanswered questions here, from the timetable to the exact location to what will become of that old, windowless building on the riverfront the Red Wings currently call home.

And let me just add I hope the timing of Tuesday's announcement wasn't merely a coincidence.

There'd better be some good news that follows this week with NHL owners and players meeting in New York on Tuesday in what amounts to a last-ditch attempt to salvage the 2012-13 season. Because to come asking for public money while at the same time helping to put people out of work with this labor stoppage undoubtedly strikes many in Ilitch's self-proclaimed Hockeytown as a bit tone deaf.

Still, there's not much sense in arguing with him these days. As Tigers president Dave Dombrowski said with a laugh in January, the day the team announced they'd signed Prince Fielder to an Ilitch-driven \$214 million free-agent deal, "If he wants to do something, and he feels he can do it, you can't tell him that he can't do that."

Clearly, he feels he can do this, and I don't think there's anyone in the city with any real power that's going to tell him he can't.

So I just hope, whenever they get it done, they have the sense to put in a few windows this time.

If they're going to finally realize Ilitch's vision for a new arena and bustling downtown streets in Detroit, it'd be nice if they added a view so you could actually see it.

From The Detroit News:

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20121205/OPINION03/212050313#ixzz2EAnU2OIJ>

Detroit News LOADED: 12.05.2012

645736 Detroit Red Wings

Ilitch proposes \$650M arena district project

By Michael Martinez and Chad Livengood

Detroit Red Wings owner Mike Ilitch wants to build a downtown Detroit hockey and multipurpose events center within a new retail, residential and commercial district, and he's asking the state for nearly \$13 million in tax money to help finance it.

The Ilitch family, through its Olympia Development arm, presented the \$650 million redevelopment plan Tuesday to a state Senate panel.

The committee, on a 5-0 vote, approved allowing Olympia Development to apply for up to \$12.8 million in Detroit Downtown Development Authority funds to use toward the project, said Rep. John Walsh, R-Livonia, the legislative sponsor.

"From the time we bought the Fox Theatre, I could envision a downtown where the streets were bustling and people were energized," Ilitch said in a statement.

"It's been a slow process at times, but we're getting there now and a lot of great people are coming together to make it happen. It's going to happen and I want to keep us moving toward that vision."

Walsh said the project area would be near the Fox and Comerica Park, home of Ilitch's Detroit Tigers.

A hockey arena to replace the aging Joe Louis Arena has long been on Ilitch's wish list. Olympia Development offered no details on a timetable or additional financing for the 35-acre project.

It said the plan for a "multipurpose events center" and other development would create thousands of jobs and generate \$1.8 billion in economic impact. Olympia Development said approval of the revised legislation would take "a step forward with the public sector to explore the viability of a partnership" on the project.

Detroit Mayor Dave Bing said, "a development of this magnitude, anchored by a world-class, multipurpose events center, would be a vital contribution to a more vibrant downtown and the strengthening of our city's economy," and some sports management and real estate analysts agreed.

It was unclear Tuesday how much legislative support the project would receive from Gov. Rick Snyder and the Republican-dominated Legislature. House Speaker Jase Bolger, R-Marshall, supports the concept but will look at the final legislation before taking a firm position, spokesman Ari Adler said in an email.

Walsh said he adapted his original legislation for the Ilitch plan with encouragement from Snyder's office.

Even if the money is approved, Olympia Development hasn't indicated how much of the \$637 million it would finance for the project. Ilitch, who paid for more than 60 percent of the construction of Comerica Park, has said getting financing has been a key snag in constructing an arena.

In a presentation to the Senate Government Operations Committee, Olympia executives said a new downtown arena or events center would bring 1,100 jobs and \$210 million in annual economic impact — a boost from the current 660 jobs and \$125 million generated by Joe Louis Arena.

The Detroit Pistons organization, while applauding the economic development effort, said it has no plans to bring the region's fourth major sports team back to the city.

"The Palace of Auburn Hills is one of the premier sports and concert venues in America," said spokesman Mark Barnhill. "We are making substantial improvements in upgrading and modernizing the facility, and we expect to be playing basketball and hosting concerts there for the foreseeable future."

'It needs to get done'

The Ilitch project would create an estimated 5,500 construction jobs for the arena and another 2,750 jobs for construction of the mixed-use commercial district, Olympia Development said.

The project depends on approval of \$12.8 million that Detroit's Downtown Development Authority has collected and is available because the authority has paid off debts for other projects in downtown, Walsh said. The DDA taxes businesses within its boundaries for bond and development projects.

"It's not a tax increase," Walsh said. "It's a repurposing of existing revenue."

House Bill 5463 began as a proposal to exempt downtown development authorities from paying property taxes, giving them the same tax break afforded to economic development corporations.

Walsh said he was approached during the summer by the Ilitch organization, Detroit officials and Snyder's office about expanding the legislation to include the proposed arena and mixed-use development.

The Michigan Economic Development Corp. and Detroit DDA would have to approve the use of DDA funds under a "catalyst development plan," he said.

Even if the money is approved, completing financing for the worthwhile plan is still a "long way" off, speculated Fred Liesveld, managing director of the Southfield office of commercial real estate firm Newmark Grubb Knight Frank.

"This proposal has bad timing because of the hockey lockout and city being in financial disarray," he said. "But Ilitch has been working on this for a few years, and it needs to get done for the benefit of Detroit."

Redeveloping downtown

The plan marks the second leg of redeveloping downtown Detroit, along with Quicken Loans Inc. Chairman Dan Gilbert's recent purchase of 10 office buildings, which has sparked a need for retail and residential housing in downtown, Liesveld said.

The community could greatly benefit from the district, said Mark Rosentraub, co-director for the Michigan Center for Sports Management at the University of Michigan.

"This project and its long-term scale has the potential to increase the desirability of living in downtown Detroit," he said. "The key is to leverage the popularity of a sports facility through the creation of an educational, entertainment district that excites people and increases their commitment to live in the core areas."

Michael LaFaive, a fiscal policy director for the free-market Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Midland, disagreed.

"The bottom line is that if this is a viable project, no taxpayer money should be involved at all," LaFaive said. "If Mr. Ilitch thought investing in Detroit would make it more vibrant, then that's great news, but the fact he believes subsidies are necessary belies that assertion."

Such projects rarely generate net new economic growth and development, he said.

Speculation surrounds site

The location for a new Red Wings hockey arena has been a source of speculation for years.

Olympia Development said the exact location of the events center and district hasn't been decided, but said "it will be strategically located to serve some of the most underutilized areas in Detroit's downtown core."

There has been a lot of real estate activity in lower Midtown around Temple and Woodward, where a proposed light rail stop would be located. Since 2008, at least 22 properties have been purchased or optioned by various entities. None has been linked to the Ilitch organization.

A multipurpose arena could be more helpful for downtown development than a football or baseball stadium, said Andrew Zimbalist, a professor of economics at Smith College in Northampton, Mass.

"Someone thinking of opening a restaurant or clothing store or other retail downtown realize it's pretty hard to support a business on eight or 81 days of business a year," he said. "If you're talking about revitalizing downtown, it could be constructive."

From The Detroit News:

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20121205/BIZ/212050366#ixzz2EAnfsO h5>

Detroit News LOADED: 12.05.2012

645737 Detroit Red Wings

NHL players, owners talk into the night

By Ira Podell

New York — The best news on the 80th day of the NHL lockout was that hockey owners and players did most of their talking in front of each other instead of making public statements.

The dueling sides in hockey's labor fight met for nearly eight hours — over two long sessions — on Tuesday, and those conversations lasted until midnight. NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly stood side-by-side with union special counsel Steve Fehr at the end of the long and seemingly positive day, but didn't take questions from a large group of reporters who staked out the meetings at a Manhattan hotel.

The sides already have plans to meet Wednesday morning with the same group before the league's planned board of governors gathering, and could get back together after that is completed.

"We had a long day," Fehr said. "We thought it was a constructive day. We had a good dialogue. In some ways I'd say it might be the best day we've had, which isn't too overly optimistic of a picture. There is still a lot of work to do and a lot to be done. We will be back at it tomorrow morning."

Daly echoed Fehr's comments, and spoke well of the talks that included 18 players and six team owners.

"I appreciate the efforts of the players," Daly said. "Everybody is working hard. I think everybody wants to get a deal done, so that's encouraging. We look forward to hopefully making more progress tomorrow."

"Hopefully, we'll have more to update you on tomorrow. We are going forward with our board meeting. Hopefully be back at it after that, as well."

That was the extent of the details revealed by the two sides, which could be another good sign that neither group wanted to say anything that could throw the discussions off the rails.

A group of six owners and 18 players — many more than were originally expected — gathered to try to find some common ground as the search for a deal that would save the hockey season continued. NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and union executive director Donald Fehr were at the hotel but stayed outside the meeting room.

Not much had worked up until Tuesday so the sides agreed to a different format to see if that would shake things up.

"I'm hoping we get to where we need to be," Bettman said before talks got under way Tuesday afternoon.

The dialogue continued, sometimes in smaller groups, throughout the day until the sides separated for a dinner break. The owners left while the players stayed to have a meal inside the hotel. The owners then returned to the hotel later Tuesday night for another round of talks with the union.

As more and more days pass by, the possibility that the entire hockey season will be lost grows. A lockout forced the cancellation of the 2004-05 season in February, and the belief is that the NHL won't wait that long this time to call off this already-delayed and shortened campaign.

All games through Dec. 14, along with the New Year's Day Winter Classic and the All-Star game have been wiped off the schedule.

The NHL board of governors will meet in New York on Wednesday, likely to discuss Tuesday's developments and perhaps where to go from here if a deal isn't reached soon. More game cancellations could be announced then, and an internal deadline for eliminating the season could also be established.

Originally the thought was no one other than owners and players would be in attendance for Tuesday's meeting, but each side had staff present, as well. The six selected owners were Ron Burkle (Pittsburgh Penguins), Mark Chipman (Winnipeg Jets), Murray Edwards (Calgary Flames), Jeremy Jacobs (Boston Bruins), Larry Tanenbaum (Toronto Maple Leafs) and Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay Lightning).

Jacobs, considered one of the hard-line owners, and Edwards are the only members of the group of six to have taken part in previous negotiations.

The NHL had no objection for more than six players to take part, so Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews, Shane Doan, Brad Richards, Martin St. Louis, Ryan Miller, Craig Adams, David Backes, Michael Cammalleri, B.J. Crombeen, Mathieu Darche, Ron Hainsey, Shawn Horcoff, Jamal Mayers, Manny Malhotra, Andy McDonald, George Parros and Kevin Westgarth took part in negotiations.

From The Detroit News:

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20121205/SPORTS0103/212050347#ixz2ZEAnjTgGX>

Detroit News LOADED: 12.05.2012

645738 Detroit Red Wings

Sides 'cautiously optimistic' as NHL labor talks might have taken big step after 'best day'

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

Both sides agreed progress was made. Was it the breakthrough that could save the hockey season? That remains to be seen.

"Might be the best day we've had, still a lot of work to be done," NHL Players Association special counsel Steve Fehr said during his media briefing.

He added that he didn't want to "paint too rosy of a picture."

Steve Fehr and NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly took the podium together – the first time the sides have done that and a positive sign -- following a marathon session of talks between 18 players and six owners. The meeting started at 2 p.m. and ended around midnight, with a two-hour dinner break.

They will talk again Wednesday morning.

"I think everyone wants to get a deal done, so that's encouraging," Daly told reporters. "We will work towards making progress tomorrow."

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman is expected to shed more light on the situation during a news conference Wednesday in New York, tentatively scheduled for 1 p.m., following the board of governors meeting.

"Might be the best day we've had, still a lot of work to be done." -- Steve Fehr.

The different concept of this latest meeting was suggested by Bettman, who thought it might be a good idea if he and NHLPA executive director Don Fehr stayed out of the room and let the principals talk. Daly and Steve Fehr were in the room, however.

Four owners who hadn't previously been part of the negotiations joined in, and Pittsburgh Penguins co-owner Ron Burkle may have bridged the gap in talks with his team's superstar, Sidney Crosby, according to the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review.

Mark Chipman (Winnipeg), Larry Tanenbaum (Toronto) and Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay) were the other owners involved who hadn't previously attended the talks. They were joined by Jeremy Jacobs (Boston) and Murray Edwards (Calgary), a pair of hard-liners who had attended previous talks.

The Detroit Red Wings were not represented at the meeting, on either side.

The players group, in addition to Crosby, included Craig Adams, David Backes, Michael Cammalleri, B.J. Crombeen, Mathieu Darche, Shane Doan, Ron Hainsey, Shawn Horcoff, Jamal Mayers, Manny Malhotra, Andy McDonald, Ryan Miller, George Parros, Brad Richards, Martin St. Louis, Jonathan Toews and Kevin Westgarth.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.05.2012

645739 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings VP Jimmy Devellano: New arena would be 'win-win' for fans, team, city

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

Club senior vice president Jimmy Devellano is excited about what a proposed new arena could do for the team, its fans and the City of Detroit.

"For the fans, it will give them the ultimate in convenience and comfort," Devellano told MLive.com. "We were able to learn from other buildings what fans appreciate. The amenities would be far superior than what we've been able to offer at the Joe."

Joe Louis Arena, which seats 20,066 for hockey, opened on Dec. 12, 1979 and is the fourth-oldest arena in the NHL. It lacks many of the amenities found in newer buildings, including lucrative mid-level suites.

Red Wings owners Mike and Marian Ilitch, who purchased the team in 1982, have been seeking a new arena for several years. On Tuesday, Olympia Development announced in a press release its plans to explore the viability of a new state-of-the-art "multi-purpose events center" to anchor an "innovative district" in Detroit's downtown core comprised of residential, retail and office facilities.

The release said the \$650 million project hinges on passage of state legislation that allows for use of Downtown Development Authority funds. It incorporates a significant private investment supplemented by existing DDA dollars and requires no new taxes, according to Olympia Development.

Sports Business Journal reported in May that the Red Wings had hired an international architectural firm to design a new 18,000-seat arena.

"For the hockey team, to sustain the Red Wings, for the ability to attract free agents, a vibrant building in downtown Detroit would be a plus," Devellano said.

"To sustain the Red Wings, for the ability to attract free agents, a vibrant building in downtown Detroit would be a plus." -- Jimmy Devellano.

Beyond hockey, Devellano said if the project is approved, it would be a "win-win" situation.

"What a wonderful thing this would be for the City of Detroit," Devellano said. "When you think of Comerica Park, Ford Field, the Fox Theatre and now the possibility of a new state-of-the-art arena and new people moving downtown, new residences, it really would be a fantastic thing for the City of Detroit.

"On top of that, I'd like to think of the jobs it will create over the next few years. Anything to make a world-class downtown would be fantastic."

The Red Wings, despite their antiquated building, are the NHL's sixth-most valuable franchise, worth \$346 million, according to Forbes.

The Red Wings sold out 396 consecutive games at Joe Louis Arena from December 1996 to October 2007. The club said its current sell-out streak stands at 71 games.

Madison Square Garden (New York Rangers), the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum (New York Islanders) and Rexall Place (Edmonton) are the only NHL facilities older than Joe Louis Arena. The Islanders announced on Oct. 24 that they are moving to the new Barclays Center in Brooklyn in 2015-16.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.05.2012

645740 Detroit Red Wings

\$650 million new Red Wings arena and entertainment complex proposed for Downtown Detroit

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

DETROIT, MI - The Ilitch family is looking to make a major investment in Downtown Detroit.

The family's organization announced Tuesday plans for a "multi-purpose events center" with residential and commercial district somewhere Downtown. The exact location was not released.

The Detroit Free-Press reports the \$650 million project would house the Detroit Red Wings. The Detroit News adds there have been rumors of an arena and mall in Downtown Detroit since February.

Ilitch's Olympia Entertainment said in a release that the development hinges on passage of state legislation that allows for use of Downtown Development Authority funds.

The proposed mixed-use development would be funded by a mix of private investment and existing money collected by the city's DDA. No new taxes would be needed to build the development, but the state would need to pass House Bill 5463 to allow the DDA to continue to get money for these kinds of developments.

A Senate committee unanimously approved a bill supporting the arena on Tuesday. It's likely to come up for a vote before the full Senate on Wednesday.

"It's always been my dream to once again see a vibrant downtown Detroit," Ilitch Holdings Chairman Mike Ilitch said in a release. "From the time we bought the Fox Theatre, I could envision a downtown where the streets were bustling and people were energized. It's been a slow process at times, but we're getting there now and a lot of great people are coming together to make it happen. It's going to happen and I want to keep us moving toward that vision."

The new district would create an estimated 5,500 jobs for the events center and about 8,300 new positions for the residential and commercial mixed-use district, the release says. It would have an economic impact of \$1.8 billion.

"This plan makes good business sense for two reasons," George W. Jackson, Jr., president and CEO of Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, said in the release. "First, it's not a plan for an isolated, single-use structure. Instead, it builds on the clear successes we've already had downtown integrating districts that feature entertainment, and support commercial, retail and residential development around them. Second, it doesn't impose any new tax burdens; it simply continues a program for retiring debt related to economic development. It's hard to argue with that."

The exact location of the district has not been determined, but will be centrally located in the downtown area.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.05.2012

645741 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings, other NHL players, look forward to taking the ice Saturday for a good cause

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

Darren Helm Red Wings Red Wings center Darren Helm is excited about playing in Saturday's charity game in Windsor. AP file TROY – After three months of mundane, player-run practices, several Detroit Red Wings will experience a 60-minute game with officials on the ice and fans in the stands.

It's just an exhibition, but it's for a good cause and it's something fresh.

Approximately 40 locked-out NHL players, including 10 Red Wings, will participate in a charity game Saturday at Windsor's WFCU Centre.

One of the charities that will benefit is SPARKLES From Above, which supports childhood cancer patients and their journey through treatment.

"It's for a good cause," Red Wings forward Cleary said. "Fans get to see some sort of hockey – three periods, referees' whistles, the whole deal. Everybody is pretty excited."

Cleary, Buffalo's Steve Ott and Edmonton's Shawn Horcoff helped organize the event.

"It should be good," Detroit's Darren Helm said. "This (informal skates) is getting kind of old. Maybe get a little more competitive game, for a good cause."

Said Niklas Kronwall: "It'll be fun to get the adrenaline going and get playing again."

In addition to Cleary, Helm and Kronwall, other Red Wings committed to play are Todd Bertuzzi, Cory Emmerton, Johan Franzen, Jonathan Ericsson, Ian White, Jimmy Howard and Jonas Gustavsson.

Players will sign autographs on the concourse for 10-15 minutes before the game and give away their autographed jerseys and sticks, by random seat draw. The NHL Players Association will give away 25 sets of equipment to local minor hockey associations.

"Obviously, we love to play against each other and bring that atmosphere of a real game that we haven't had in such a long time," Ott said. "So we thought, 'Let's throw a charity hockey game together, bring the fans out and let them enjoy the game again and have that kind of atmosphere we haven't had for a long time, and all for a good cause.'"

The lockout is more than 11 weeks old, and time is running short on salvaging the season. Cleary knows what he'll be asked by fans before the game.

"Not a day goes by you don't run into a fan who asks, 'What's going on? We miss you guys. When are you going to get back to playing?'" Cleary said.

Nobody can answer that question. While a group of players and owners prepared to meet Tuesday afternoon in New York in an attempt to find some common ground, others can only be prepared in the event of a quick settlement.

"We have to be hopeful, ready," Cleary said. "It's going to take a lot on everybody's part to get the game back to where it was and beyond."

"This has gone on enough. Enough people's livelihoods have been affected."

Ott said he's still "very optimistic" the season can start before Christmas.

"It's extremely disappointing that it's gone this far," Ott said. "From the get-go, we were wanting to play and get the season going while the bosses put the new CBA together, but the NHL wanted no part of that."

Cleary said they are hoping to add some more players to the list, possibly Chicago's Jonathan Toews and/or Toronto's Phil Kessel.

They hoped to get Sidney Crosby to play, but the cost of insuring his contract is a huge hurdle.

Ott said they haven't decided how they'll split up the teams, perhaps they'll have a draft.

"This is going to be a real game," Ott said. "There probably will be some bumps. There could be a lot of bad blood with some of the guys we've got out there."

"It's a packed house. Guys are getting mad at me because they thought maybe there's too many guys and they weren't going to get enough ice time."

Charity game facts

When: Saturday at 6:30 p.m.

Where: Windsor Family Credit Union (WFCU) Centre.

Tickets: \$41.75 or four-pack for \$137. Can be purchased through the WFCU Box Office, by calling (866) 969-9328 or online at WFCU-centre.com.

Charities benefited: SPARKLES From Above. (519) 791-9642.

Here is a list of players who have committed to play in the game. More could be added:

Forwards: Justin Abdelkader, Red Wings; Todd Bertuzzi, Red Wings; Adam Burish, Sharks; Danny Cleary, Red Wings; Matt Ellis, Sabres; Cory Emmerton, Red Wings; Vernon Fiddler, Stars; Johan Franzen, Red Wings; Darren Helm, Red Wings; Shawn Horcoff, Oilers; Jiri Hudler, Flames; Matthew Lombardi, Maple Leafs; Matt Martin, Islanders; Jamal Mayers, Blackhawks; Brenden Morrow, Stars; James Neal, Penguins; Steve Ott, Sabres; Sergei Samsonov, free agent; Drew Stafford, Sabres; Tomas Vanek, Sabres; Kevin Westgarth, Kings; Kyle Wellwood, Jets.

Defensemen: Trevor Daley, Stars; Jonathan Ericsson, Red Wings; Tom Gilbert, Wild; Mike Komisarek, Maple Leafs; Niklas Kronwall, Red Wings; Jordan Leopold, Sabres; John-Michael Liles, Maple Leafs, Nick Schultz, Oilers; Ian White, Red Wings; Ryan Whitney, Oilers; Ryan Wilson, Avalanche; James Wisniewski, Blue Jackets; Keith Yandle, Coyotes.

Goaltenders: Jonas Gustavsson, Red Wings; Jimmy Howard, Red Wings; Michael Leighton, Flyers.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.05.2012

645742 Edmonton Oilers

Nugent-Hopkins to stay in Edmonton this week to strengthen shoulder

By Edmonton Journal, Edmonton Journal December 4, 2012

EDMONTON - Ryan Nugent-Hopkins's status for Canada's junior team is turning into a soap opera.

The Edmonton Oilers centre was on Canada's training camp invite list Monday, but after apparently going through some medical tests on the shoulder he separated last NHL season in Chicago, agent Rick Valette says his client is going to stay here for the rest of this week to strengthen the left shoulder, presumably with an exercise program.

Is he hurt? Do the Oilers want him playing in the worlds? Will he be at the Canadian camp next Monday in Calgary?

Hockey Canada would love to know, but the Oilers haven't given them an answer yet. In fact, the Oilers can't even speak publicly about the 2011-12 Calder Trophy finalist because there's a gag order against talking about locked-out players, even though Nugent-Hopkins was assigned to their AHL farm team in Oklahoma City and has been there for almost three months, playing 19 of 20 games.

"From what we understand, there's nothing structurally wrong with his shoulder. It's just been bothering him a bit from last year," Hockey Canada's chief scout Kevin Prendergast said Tuesday. "They said they were giving him an MRI to make sure. We'll see when they get the results back."

"We'd rather know sooner than later (about where we stand)."

Nugent-Hopkins isn't talking — for now, anyway.

The 19-year-old centre has 20 points in those 19 games in OKCity, only sitting out one because the farm team played three games in three nights and Barons coach Todd Nelson gave him a night off. He took a stick in the mouth and needed some dental work when Houston Aeros forward Mikael Granlund clipped him, but his shoulder hasn't appeared to be an issue.

There are more questions than answers here.

Are the Oilers looking for a way out of having Nugent-Hopkins playing against kids in the worlds, citing a shoulder that's not quite right?

Are they not willing to have RNH at Hockey Canada's camp and then yard him out of there if the labour war miraculously ends?

Do they not want him at Hockey Canada's camp under the intense, physical pressure of making that team, where there will be lots of pounding, although he's been playing against men in the AHL and surviving just fine?

If he's ruled out of the world junior, does that mean he can't play any AHL games?

He stands to miss 14 Barons games if he takes part in Canada's training camp. The world junior team flies to Finland Dec. 15 for two exhibition

games there, then a charter flight to Ufa, Russia, with the U.S. junior team for the annual tournament that starts Boxing Day and ends Jan. 5.

It wouldn't look right if the Oilers said he couldn't go to the world camp for medical reasons yet he played for their farm team later in the month, would it? Hockey Canada requires all players be at their evaluation camp if they're going to play in the worlds. No exceptions.

Nugent-Hopkins is going to be their first-line centre with Jonathan Huberdeau (Florida Panthers first-rounder) and Mark Scheifele (Winnipeg Jets first-round pick).

"We could put Scheifele in the No. 1 centre spot, and he's a heckuva player, and he's been a centre, but to have Nugent-Hopkins there with Scheifele and Huberdeau? They're a natural. Huberdeau will think he's died and gone to heaven if he can play with Nugent-Hopkins," Prendergast said.

The Oilers have been quiet on Nugent-Hopkins' availability because of the NHL's gag order. It's a hard-and-fast requirement from the NHL home office — no contact or statements about locked-out guys — although it seems way off base with RNH because he was assigned to their affiliate.

The Oilers website has done interviews with Nugent-Hopkins, Jordan Eberle and Taylor Hall down in OKCity, but the Oilers are forbidden to talk. So Nelson was talking Tuesday.

While Nugent-Hopkins is the No. 1 issue for Hockey Canada, the other large question is whether the youngest player Nathan MacKinnon will make the team. The Halifax centre, only 17, could be the No. 1 pick in next June's draft, but Canada is loaded with older top six forwards.

MacKinnon could be a 13th swingman forward, used for power plays, certainly to start the tournament, if they deem they need more offence.

"Looking at our ghost chart, he could fit in somewhere else (outside the top two lines)," Prendergast said. "He could start at 13 with his speed and what he can give us. (John) Tavares was a 13th guy."

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645743 Edmonton Oilers

Horcoff in player-owner meeting in New York

Ryan Murray and Oscar Klefbom shouldering painPosted on Nov 27, 2012

Oilers captain Shawn Horcoff will be part of the 18-player roster at Tuesday's meeting with six owners in New York to try and break the NHL labour dispute which is in its third month with games cancelled through Dec. 14.

So, it's three to one, players to owners, which either shows the interest of the players or they couldn't decide on which six would square off with the six NHL owners—Ron Burkle (Pittsburgh), Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay), Mark Chipman (Winnipeg), Larry Tannenbaum (Toronto), Murray Edwards (Calgary) and the NHL's chairman of the Board of Governors Jeremy Jacobs (Boston). Burkle has a rep as a deal-maker, getting a new rink in Pittsburgh after it had stalled. Jacobs is one of owner hawks. Chipman is certainly a moderate, representing the mid-range NHL clubs.

The players lineup is a cross-section. You've got heavy-hitters like Sidney Crosby, Marty St. Louis, Jonathan Toews and Brad Richards, role players like Craig Adams and Jamal Mayers, sluggers George Parros and Kevin Westgarth, two guys who went to Princeton, and one guy Mathieu Darche, who doesn't have a contract right now.

Crosby will be lining up against his Penguins' owner. Same with St. Louis and Vinik. Mike Cammalleri is also on the player list, and he'll see his Flames' boss Murray Edwards.

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645744 Florida Panthers

Handful of Panthers prospects take step toward World Junior Championships

December 4, 2012|By Harvey Fialkov, Sun Sentinel

They may not be skating for the Panthers yet, but several of their top prospects — including forwards Jonathan Huberdeau, Francis Beauvillier, Rocco Grimaldi and Vince Trocheck — have impressed national team coaches enough to try out for the 2013 IIHF World Junior Championships in Russia, slated to begin on Dec. 26.

Huberdeau, who is expected to play for the Panthers this year if and when the lockout ends, and Beauvillier will try to make Canada's junior team next week in Calgary. Grimaldi, a speedy 5-foot-6 scorer coming off knee surgery, and Trocheck will head to Madison Square Garden from Dec. 16-18 to vie for spots on the U.S. team.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 12.05.2012

645745 Los Angeles Kings

Glimmer of hope seen in NHL negotiations

By Helene Elliott

NEW YORK — Finally, there's reason to believe the NHL and the players' association are listening to each other and might be inching toward a labor agreement that would salvage some semblance of a season.

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly, who has often accused the NHLPA of being unwilling to negotiate, was cordial toward the union after marathon meetings between selected owners and players at a New York hotel Tuesday. That was significant because Daly has been a loud and constant critic of the union's supposed reluctance to compromise.

"I think everybody wants to get a deal done, so I think that's encouraging," Daly said. "We look forward to making more progress" Wednesday.

Steve Fehr, special counsel to the NHLPA, expressed cautious optimism. He and Daly participated in two sessions Tuesday that included six owners and 18 players but not Commissioner Gary Bettman or NHLPA Executive Director Donald Fehr.

"It may have been the best day we've had so far," Steve Fehr said. "I don't want to paint too rosy of a picture, however. A lot of work remains to be done and we'll be back at it" Wednesday.

Neither would say how or where their positions had changed.

The same groups are expected to talk Wednesday before the NHL's Board of Governors gather and might continue discussions after the governors meet.

The presence Tuesday of Pittsburgh Penguins owner Ron Burkle, a California supermarket magnate, was said by many sources to be crucial in bringing the sides together. He has credibility among owners and players and business acumen that both sides respect.

The six owners and players met for 5 1/2 hours in their first session. They took a dinner break, reconvened about 9:30 Eastern time and spent nearly three more hours together.

Bettman suggested last week that the sides should meet without their respective leaders, hoping for a more open exchange than was possible with the head negotiators present. Apparently that occurred, thanks at least in part to Burkle.

The NHL has canceled games through Dec. 14, as well as the Winter Classic and the All-Star game. Another round of cancellations is certain if the sides don't reach an accord soon.

In addition to Burkle, the owners' delegation was composed of hard-liner Jeremy Jacobs of Boston, Mark Chipman of Winnipeg, Murray Edwards of Calgary, Larry Tanenbaum of Toronto and Jeff Vinik of Tampa Bay.

The players' roster was Craig Adams and Sidney Crosby of Pittsburgh; David Backes and Andy McDonald of St. Louis; Michael Cammalleri of Calgary; Mathieu Darche of Montreal; Shane Doan of Phoenix; Ron Hainsey of Winnipeg; Shawn Horcoff of Edmonton; Jonathan Toews and Jamal Mayers of Chicago; Manny Malhotra of Vancouver; Ryan Miller of

Buffalo; former Duck and King George Parros of Florida; Brad Richards of the New York Rangers; Martin St. Louis and B.J. Crombeen of Tampa Bay; and Kings enforcer Kevin Westgarth.

LA Times: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645746 Minnesota Wild

NHL players, owners gain traction, will meet Wednesday

Posted by: Michael Russo under Wild off-season news Updated: December 5, 2012 - 12:00 AM

The group of six owners and 18 players met for several hours Tuesday and ended just before midnight eastern. The groups will meet again early Wednesday morning, but afterward, in a lockout first that speaks to just how much true traction was made today, NHL and NHLPA No. 2's Bill Daly and Steve Fehr held a brief, joint press scrum with reporters on the scene.

According to Twitter reports, the two stood side by side at a podium and called the day constructive. Fehr went as far as to say it was the "best day we've had so far."

Said Daly, "We will work hard to make a deal." Fehr said there was still a lot of work to be done and didn't want to paint a rosy picture yet. But Daly said the good thing is he's encouraged both sides want to get a deal done. Remember, less than 2 weeks ago, he said publicly on the Fan in Toronto that he had his doubts union leadership wanted to get a deal done. The NHLPA has said similar things.

Neither took questions, and honestly, there is still work to be done here. Trust me, this is still a delicate process, but it's very clear there was traction, progress. Positivity for the first time in a long time.

I've texted back and forth with a handful of players tonight. None of the players were in the meetings, but some were on a conference call that was very positive. These players are anxiously paying attention.

Of course, until the two men who weren't in the room -- Gary Bettman and Donald Fehr -- agree there is traction, progress and reason to be optimistic, it all could be for naught.

But the good news is there are some fresh faces in there, including Pittsburgh owner Ron Burkle, who reportedly had been a constant voice of reason in the meetings. Penguins players Sidney Crosby and Craig Adams are two of the players representing the NHLPA, and those on the scene say Penguins part-owner Mario Lemieux has also been seen around the hotel. It really appears that Burkle and Crosby have taken hold of this process.

Could you imagine if the Penguins play a major role in ending the lockout? It'd only be fair considering the last lockout, which resulted in Pittsburgh winning the Sidney Crosby sweepstakes, saved the Penguins.

Sooooooo, let's hope. As Matt Cullen and Zach Parise said in Tuesday's Star Tribune, it's hard to wrap one's head around a second lost full season in eight years.

In the meantime, at 10 a.m. CT Wednesday, the NHL Board of Governors meet in New York. Craig Leipold and Chuck Fletcher are representing the Wild.

Gary Bettman has his normal noon presser scheduled to provide update on the board meeting.

Keep your fingers crossed.

Star Tribune LOADED: 12.05.2012

645747 Montreal Canadiens

Young Americans in the world junior hockey spotlight

ERIC DUHATASCHEK

The Thrill is back.

Phil Housley, who played chunks of his 21-year NHL career with the Winnipeg Jets and Calgary Flames, will be behind the bench for Team USA at the 2013 world junior hockey championship – part of an extreme makeover of the roster following last year's disappointing seventh-place finish.

Housley, the head coach at Stillwater (Minn.) Area High School, takes over a team with just three returnees – goaltender John Gibson, defenceman Jacob Trouba and forward J.T. Miller, the only U.S. player currently playing professionally (for the New York Rangers' AHL affiliate, the Connecticut Whale).

"Obviously, we did not have the success we wanted last year, and you hope, in all three of their cases, they learn and grow from it," Team USA general manager Jim Johansson said on a conference call Tuesday. "You do need leadership in the room and you do hope their participation leads to that.

"The second part of it is, you get the excitement of guys who've never played in this championship. That emotion is huge as well. [Portland Winterhawks star defenceman] Seth Jones has not played in the tournament. I can guarantee you he's going to be excited and ready to go.

"They do understand that it's a unique opportunity and in many cases, the one opportunity you get."

The Americans have invited 27 players to a tryout camp in New York and thus will only need to drop four before heading overseas for the tournament in Ufa, Russia, which begins Boxing Day.

Two – Jones and Plymouth Whalers forward Ryan Hartman – are eligible for the 2013 NHL entry draft. Jones is considered a prospect for No.1 overall spot, along with Canadian forward Nathan MacKinnon.

Eight of the 25 American players already drafted belong to Canadian-based NHL teams, including Alex Galchenyuk, who was selected third overall by the Montreal Canadiens last year and currently plays for the Sarnia Sting. Trouba, who went ninth overall to the Jets, is a freshman at the University of Michigan – and having a excellent year, according to Johansson.

The Flames have three prospects on the U.S. team, including goaltender Jon Gillies, an 18-year-old from Providence College (third round, 75th overall last year). But their most interesting, eclectic prospect might be John Gaudreau, a 5-foot-9, 150-pounder who plays at Boston College and was a fourth-rounder two years ago. Gaudreau is tied for third in goals (10) and fourth in points (21) nationally, and is the top scorer among NHL-drafted players in the NCAA.

Gaudreau and Florida Panthers prospect Rocco Grimaldi (5 foot 6, 165 pounds) are two smaller men on what is otherwise a big team.

"There's speed and skating, but there's also size and grit," Johansson said. "You have to combine those two. In the end, this tournament is about playing six or seven games and for us this year, in 10 nights.

"You have to build a team that can, No.1, survive that type of schedule; and secondly, drive at the end to get where we want to get to. And you better be big and strong ... because at the end, that's what you're going to play against."

Increasingly, the world junior tournament is starting more closely to resemble the men's senior championship, with four different winners in the past four years.

The United States won the tournament in 2010, and is capable of doing so again, even with such a young team (10 players born in 1994 on the preliminary roster, all of whom would be eligible to play again in 2014).

"I don't know how much we looked at the birth year as opposed to: where do guys fit and what do they bring to the table for the team?" Johansson said. "When it's all said and done, it's not driven by, 'Is this an older guy or a younger guy?' "International experience, that's just one part of the equation. The bottom line is, they've got to get on the ice and perform. They're all capable. It's just a matter now of getting them all together, working with the coaches and seeing where they all fit into the team."

Housley, meanwhile, is a long way removed from the slight, freckle-faced kid who broke into the NHL as an 18-year-old with the Buffalo Sabres in 1982.

Among the coaches who have influenced his career, Housley listed Scott Bowman (who drafted him for the Sabres), Brian Sutter (who coached him in Calgary from 1998-2000), along with Americans Lou Vairo and Herb Brooks.

"There's a lot of coaches, who you take different pieces from and help shape you as a coach," Housley said.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.05.2012

645748 Montreal Canadiens

A ray of hope in NHL labour talks?

JOANNA SLATER DAVID EBNER

Direct talks between NHL players and owners extended late into Tuesday night, negotiations described as substantive and positive, which serves as a first sign of progress in weeks and comes just ahead of a key meeting of the league's board of governors on Wednesday.

The players-owners meeting – with 18 players and six owners – was convened at a New York hotel to add new voices to the debate, to revive stalled negotiations following failed mediation last week. NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA head Donald Fehr were not in the room, and the meeting began shortly after 2 p.m. ET, stretching 5 1/2 hours before an hour-long dinner break, the players ordering food in, the owners departing.

The biggest name in the room was Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins, who was flanked by the likes of Chicago's Jonathan Toews, Phoenix's Shane Doan and Buffalo's Ryan Miller, as well as Calgary's Michael Cammalleri. Lesser-known names, such as Winnipeg defenceman Ron Hainsey and Anaheim enforcer George Parros, were also there. The 18 faced a half-dozen owners, led by mainstays Jeremy Jacobs of Boston and Murray Edwards of Calgary, plus new faces, Larry Tanenbaum from Toronto, Ron Burkle from Pittsburgh, Jeff Vinik from Tampa Bay, and Mark Chipman from Winnipeg.

No official statements were issued but reports suggested the talks were productive. One report tagged a new addition to the owners' roster, Burkle, as an important moderate voice, as had been forecast given he was known as a friend of labour in his business career. A Sports Business Journal reporter cited an unidentified player as saying, "Good meeting. I'm optimistic."

Should Tuesday serve as a lasting platform to underpin a resolution, regular-season hockey could emerge fairly quickly, in 10 days or so after a deal is made. Bill Daly, NHL deputy commissioner, said "at least seven days for training camp" and "at least a couple days" to finalize a new collective agreement would be needed.

It was unclear late Tuesday whether the players and owners would continue to meet on Wednesday. The NHL governors will meet Wednesday morning in New York, and Bettman is expected to brief reporters in the early afternoon. The board meeting will be dominated by the labour talks but there isn't a set framework for the gathering, according to Vancouver Canucks president and general manager Mike Gillis.

"We don't have an agenda at this point," Gillis told Vancouver radio station Team 1040 on Tuesday morning. Gillis was in New York with Canucks owner Francesco Aquilini and chief operating officer Victor de Bonis. Gillis expressed optimism for Tuesday's meeting.

"The next couple days are important days but we've thought other days were important in the past," Gillis said.

"You know, I'm hopeful, I think there's going to be a new form of communication today."

It was Day 80 of the lockout Tuesday and the scene played out in midtown Manhattan. The unorthodox meeting took place at the Westin hotel, around the corner from Times Square and 10 blocks directly north of Madison Square Garden, home of the New York Rangers. Bettman, while not in the room, was seen at the hotel, the spectre of the commissioner ever-present.

A little after 2 p.m. on the balmy December afternoon, the players entered a conference room on the third floor of the hotel, whose staff restricted access to the area. Outside the meeting room, a table full of refreshments – coffee, juices, water – stood untouched.

Hours passed. One floor up, in a room reserved for a possible press briefing, 40 or so journalists waited for someone to emerge, a phalanx of upward of a dozen television cameras at the ready. No one came.

Reporters sat on the floor, traded theories about the talks, dashed across the street to retrieve coffee or snacks. Day turned to night.

The biggest news in 51/2 hours: that the owners had departed the hotel for their dinner.

If the seeming positive tone on Tuesday does not hold, and acrimony returns, the next major strategic play will probably be the players moving to decertify their union. The tactic in the past was considered unlikely to be used by players' unions, but last year unions in both the NFL and NBA used the move to some success. In the NBA, after more than four months of go-nowhere talks, the players dissolved their union and less than two weeks later they had a deal, with owners making concessions.

Decertification allows players to sue owners under antitrust law and the tactic is likely to become a standard weapon in battles such as the NHL against its workers, according to labour expert Nathaniel Grow.

"Players will likely continue to dissolve their unions during future lockouts in order to gain negotiating leverage over ownership through the assertion of antitrust claims," wrote Grow of the University of Georgia in a forthcoming paper on the NBA/NFL labour scraps in the Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment and Technology Law.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.05.2012

645749 Montreal Canadiens

Gordie Howe hat trick for Andrei Markov

By Dave Stubbs, The Gazette December 4, 2012

MONTREAL — In Kazakhstan on Monday, the day before the 103rd birthday of the Montreal Canadiens, a Habs defenceman was making a little two-part history of his own:

Andrei Markov, in his third game back in the Kontinental Hockey League after having suffered two broken ribs in late October, scored the first goal of his KHL career in a 5-3 road victory over Barys Astana.

But of even more note, Markov recorded the first so-called Gordie Howe hat trick of his hockey life.

The Howe hat, named for the rugged Detroit Red Wings legend, recognizes a goal, an assist and a fight for a player in a single game. And somehow, typing "Andrei Markov" and "Gordie Howe hat trick" in the same sentence just looks... wrong.

Markov's goal, coming in his 12th game for Vityaz Chekhov, was scored on a shallow point shot that beat Barys goalkeeper Teemu Lassila 2:51 into the first period.

"Nothing special," Markov said Tuesday, reached on his way to Vityaz's Tuesday road game against Yugra Khanty-Mansiysk. "I tried to hit the net. It went in. That's it."

So that torpedoed any romantic recall of his maiden KHL goal, Markov having scored seven times during the 2004-05 NHL lockout for Moscow Dynamo, then of Russia's Superleague.

"But I kept the puck," he added cheerfully. "I don't know what I'll do with it. It's in my hockey bag."

Markov's assist followed at 16:48 of the first period, setting up teammate Artemy Panarin's power-play goal for a 3-2 lead.

And then, 25 seconds from the end of the game, Markov returned Maxim Spirodonov's ankle slash and high stick in the Vityaz corner of the rink before both shed their mitts and engaged in a decent 25-second bout.

It was, however, hardly the first-period slugfest starring Barys cult favourite Jon (Nasty) Mirasty and former NHLer Trevor Gillies, basically Rock 'Em Sock 'Em robots on skates.

Markov, who as a fighter is a fine defenceman, spent most of the scrap unsuccessfully trying to remove his helmet before Spirodonov finally tugged the jersey over his dance partner's head, prompting linesmen to jump in.

Neither man landed a punch of substance, each dinged four minutes for what referees considered not technically a fight.

And thankfully, Markov didn't take anything in the ribs while earning the Howe hat in what seems to be just his second fight in professional hockey, his first coming in Ottawa on April 1, 2008 against then-Senator Jason Spezza during a 3-0 Canadiens win.

Markov missed seven games for Vityaz after crushing his ribs in a game against Yugra on Oct. 26. He had an opponent lined up for a check, but his target ducked out of the way and Markov slammed midsection-first into the boards. He left the game escorted by a team doctor.

"I thought I was just winded," Markov said Tuesday. "I'd never had a problem with my ribs before. They took X-rays, which were negative, but I was still uncomfortable a couple days later so they took another set, and they showed two broken ribs."

There's little to do with fractured ribs but let them heal on their own. So that's what Markov did in Russia, trying to do at least a little cardio to maintain the aerobic conditioning he'd built through the offseason.

"Recovery takes some time," he said, an expert at that with two major knee reconstructions not far behind him. "You can get some physio but pretty much it's just taking some time off. Trying to do any (intense) cardio means a lot of pain when you're breathing deeply."

Of course, all the way in Russia, Markov felt the tremors from North America, the fears of another knee injury rolling to him across the sea.

At this point in his life, he knows that he could take a puck in the head and people would ask whether there was knee damage.

"I'm just trying to concentrate on my work," he said, and you could practically see his shrug over the phone.

"Everybody has to understand we play a physical sport. Something like this can happen at the next moment. It's part of life, injuries are part of our job. You just have to be ready to get through it, don't give up and move forward."

In his three games back from injury, Markov has played 24:35 (overtime), 18:22 and 17:16, averaging 22 shifts per game.

"I feel better," he said. "I'm ready to play. The quality of hockey is pretty good here. A little different compared to North America, but a bunch of NHL players have come over (37 as of Tuesday) and the game is bigger for Russian hockey and its fans."

"I'm not talking to anyone over there," he added, speaking of keeping an eye on the lockout. "I'm staying in touch with email and newspapers."

A 10 day-break in the KHL season at week's end will see Markov return to Montreal for a brief visit, two more games for Vityaz before then.

He laughs when you ask him where he is to take this call, his cell line crackling in and out.

"I don't know, actually," he replied, somewhere on the 2,000-kilometre journey from Astana, Kazakhstan north to Yugra Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia. "Let's just say I'm on the road."

Perhaps even explaining to teammates the great prestige of a Gordie Howe hat trick.

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645750 Montreal Canadiens

"All-Star Classic" and Kovy coming to Bell Centre

By Brenda Branswell

Kovy is coming back to Montreal and he'll be wearing a Habs jersey.

Alex Kovalev is scheduled to play in the "2013 All-Star Classic" at the Bell Centre on March 24. The popular former Habs forward will suit up for the Canadiens Alumni team when it faces off against NHL stars from the 1980s and '90s.

Dubbed the "Greatest Hockey Stars" team, their roster will include Luc Robitaille, Raymond Bourque, Valeri Bure, Eric Lindros, Dino Ciccarelli and Marcel Dionne with Curtis Joseph in goal.

The Canadiens alumni team will include Chris Chelios, Guy Carbonneau, Vincent Damphousse and Denis Savard. They'll be coached by Habs Hall of famer Guy Lafleur, promoter Evenko announced on Tuesday.

Former NHL coaches Michel Bergeron and Jacques Demers will be behind the bench for the Greatest Hockey Stars team.

Part of the proceeds will go to the Montreal Canadiens Children's Foundation and the Canadiens Alumni Association, Evenko said. Tickets go on sale Dec. 8 at 10 a.m.

The NHL All-Star Game scheduled for Jan. 27 in Columbus, Ohio, was cancelled because of the ongoing labour dispute.

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645751 Montreal Canadiens

Former GM MacLean still optimistic there will be an NHL season

By Stu Cowan

Former Columbus Blue Jackets GM Doug MacLean, now a co-host of Hockey Central at Noon on Sportsnet 590 The Fan, still thinks there will be an NHL season.

"I'm still optimistic that they're not going to flush \$3.3 billion down the toilet," MacLean told The Gazette's Brenda Branswell. "I still think they're sensible enough that they're going to try to get a deal done.

"I'm shocked that they haven't been able to work this out. I really am."

MacLean also sent a message to the NHLPA and hockey fans.

"I know the business side of the business and whether people want to believe it or not, there are 10 or 15 teams that can't pay their bill," he said.

MacLean added: "I know the league desperately still wants to get the 58-plus season in ... That means a deal has got to be done pretty quick here. I don't like the thought of a 48-game season. I think it takes away from the integrity of the game. But we may have no choice."

You can read Branswell's entire article by clicking here.

Meanwhile, The Gazette's Pat Hickey writes that no one should expect a settlement to come out of Tuesday's meeting between six NHL owners and a group of players, but adds that the session in New York should provide a clearer picture of how the battle lines are drawn in the ongoing labour dispute.

You can read Hickey's column by clicking here.

The Canadian Press reported that the NHLPA said 18 players would attend Tuesday's session, slated to begin at 2 p.m., including Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews, Ryan Miller, Shane Doan and Mike Cammalleri.

The players will sit across from six league owners: Mark Chipman (Winnipeg), Murray Edwards (Calgary), Larry Tanenbaum (Toronto), Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay), Ron Burkle (Pittsburgh) and Jeremy Jacobs (Boston).

Neither commissioner Gary Bettman nor NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr will take part.

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645752 New Jersey Devils

A Small Group Approach in the N.H.L. Talks

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

It took a new cast of characters and more than seven hours of meetings at a Midtown hotel Tuesday, but for perhaps the first time since the N.H.L. lockout began on Sept. 15, participants said they were encouraged by a negotiating session.

"It was a long day, but a constructive day — we had a good dialogue," said Steve Fehr, the general counsel of the N.H.L. Players' Association, after the meeting ended at midnight.

"I'd say it might be the best day we've had, which isn't to paint too overly optimistic a picture," Fehr said.

Bill Daly, the N.H.L. deputy commissioner, stood next to Fehr, the first time the two sides presented a statement standing side by side.

"I appreciate the effort of the players in particular," Daly said. "Everybody wants to get a deal done, and that's encouraging."

Daly said the two sides would meet again before the 11 a.m. N.H.L. Board of Governors meeting on Wednesday, and "hopefully after it as well."

Those expressions of positivity followed similar ones that leaked out of the meeting earlier via text messages from players. Many of them credited Ronald Burkle, the co-owner of the Pittsburgh Penguins, for much of the progress, and his relationship with the Penguins superstar Sidney Crosby, who was on the other side of the table.

According to reports from Pittsburgh, Burkle and Crosby and other key Penguins figures, like Burkle's co-owner, Mario Lemieux, worked for several days to find ways to bring the owners and players closer after weeks of stalemate and rising rancor.

Commissioner Gary Bettman and Donald Fehr, the executive director of the players' association, were excluded from the negotiating room, although both were at the hotel. The mutually agreed idea in excluding the two negotiators was to see if new personalities could bring management and the union closer.

"I'm hoping we get to where we need to be," Bettman said before the meeting.

The league, which canceled the schedule through Dec. 14, is expected to wipe out more games by the end of the week. But Tuesday's long session left cautious hope that the season could be salvaged.

The owners' side at the Tuesday meetings was more moderate than the owners' regular four-man negotiating committee. The four newcomers, who were mostly moderates, included Burkle, Mark Chipman of the Winnipeg Jets, Larry Tanenbaum of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Jeff Vinik of the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Two hard-liners — Jeremy Jacobs of the Boston Bruins, who is the chairman of the N.H.L. Board of Governors, and N. Murray Edwards of the Calgary Flames — remained.

The four newcomers, who were mostly moderates, included Burkle, Mark Chipman of the Winnipeg Jets, Larry Tanenbaum of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Jeff Vinik of the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The owners Ted Leonsis of the Washington Capitals and Craig Leipold of the Minnesota Wild, both on the regular negotiating committee, were absent Tuesday.

Eighteen players attended the meeting. With Crosby and his Pittsburgh teammate, Craig Adams, the group included the Chicago star Jonathan Toews; Buffalo goalie Ryan Miller, one of the most outspoken pro-union voices of the lockout; and the Tampa Bay veteran Martin St. Louis.

Also in attendance were Ron Hainsey, Kevin Westgarth, Manny Malhotra, Mathieu Darche, David Backes, Michael Cammalleri, B. J. Crombeen, Shane Doan, Shawn Horcoff, Jamal Mayers, Andy McDonald, George Parros and the Rangers star Brad Richards, the highest paid player in the N.H.L. last season.

The selection of Burkle and Tanenbaum to the six-owner negotiating team was seen as a nod to the owners' moderate wing.

Burkle, who made his fortune in grocery stores, has a union-friendly background, having won awards from the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. Earlier this year he invested \$50 million in Amalgamated Bank, the only union-owned bank in the United States, after it ran into trouble because of commercial loans that had gone sour.

Burkle, Crosby and the rest of the Penguins organization are seen as wanting a return to play. So are the Maple Leafs and Tanenbaum. The Leafs' revenue stream, the biggest in the league at \$200 million per season, has been cut off by the lockout.

At a Board of Governors meeting during the 2004-5 lockout, Tanenbaum argued in favor of settling with the players but failed to sway hard-line owners, who voted with Bettman to cancel the season.

Bettman was scheduled to address reporters after Wednesday's Board of Governors meeting. Lemieux and David Morehouse, the Penguins chief executive officer, were expected to attend.

New York Times LOADED: 12.05.2012

645753 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout update: Players and owners take break from talks, could meet again later tonight or tomorrow; 'Positive feedback' reported

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

UPDATE: The players and owners have continued meetings tonight.

The players and owners have taken a break for dinner from a meeting that took over five hours. While there's not a lot of news leaking from the face-to-face, there have been a few reports: the word "progress" was used.

"Hearing that progress was made in the meeting," Sportsnet's John Shannon tweeted. "Hearing that [Penguins owner] Ron Burkle has been voice of reason today."

Aaron Ward of TSN said, "All indications are that they are going to meet again. If not tonight, then tomorrow. Positive feedback so far."

Of course, it doesn't mean much just yet given how lockout talks have gone over the previous months. And the news could change tomorrow when the NHL's Board of Governors meet.

Earlier in the day, ESPN's Pierre LeBrun reported the league was fine with the NHLPA sending in as many players as the union wanted. Ultimately, 18 players went in. The complete list is in a post by USA Today's Kevin Allen, but includes names that were reported yesterday to be in attendance, like Sidney Crosby, Shane Doan and Ryan Miller. Rangers forward Brad Richards is also there.

The NHLPA ended up matching some players with the owners who attended -- Crosby and Burkle, Michael Cammalleri with Flames owner Murray Edwards, two members of the Lightning with Tampa Bay's Jeff Vinik and a Ron Hainsey-Mark Chipman pairing for the Winnipeg Jets.

Though nobody wants to read too deeply into the proceedings, at least there is something to chew on. As Sports Business Journal's Chris Botta tweeted, "Text from player source ... 'Wasn't a waste. Will know more by Thursday. Good meeting. I'm optimistic.'"

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645754 New Jersey Devils

Devils Stefan Matteau, Blake Pietila on U.S. junior team roster

Rich Chere/[The Star-Ledger](#) By Rich Chere/[The Star-Ledger](#)

Devils prospects Stefan Matteau and Blake Pietila are among 27 players named today to the preliminary roster for the U.S. national junior team that will compete in the 2013 International Ice Hockey Federation world junior championships in Ufa, Russia.

The tournament will be held Dec. 26 to Jan. 5. Beforehand, Team USA will have its training camp at the Rangers' facility in Greenburgh, N.Y. Dec. 16-18 and then Dec. 19-23 in Helsinki, Finland.

Former Devils defenseman Phil Housley will coach the team, with the final 23-man roster being named on Dec. 23.

Matteau, the son of former Rangers forward Stephane Matteau, was the 29th overall selection in June's entry draft. He is a 6-2, 217-pound left winger.

Pietila was chosen by the Devils in the fifth round (129th overall) in [2011](#). He is a 6-0, 195-pound left winger.

Team USA roster:

GOALIES (3)

Name Ht (cm) Wt (kg) Birthdate S/C Hometown 2012-13 Team (League) NHL Rights

John Gibson 6-3 (191) 222 (100) 7/14/93 L Pittsburgh, Pa. Kitchener Rangers (OHL) ANA ('11, 2nd rd., 39th overall)

Jon Gillies 6-5 (196) 230 (104) 1/22/94 L Concord, N.H. Providence College (HEA) CGY ('12, 3rd rd., 75th overall)

Garret Sparks 6-2 (188) 211 (95) 6/28/93 L Elmhurst, Ill. Guelph Storm (OHL) TOR ('11, 7th rd., 190th overall)

DEFENSEMEN (9)

Shayne Gostisbehere 5-11 (180) 167 (75) 4/20/93 L Margate, Fla. Union College (ECACH) PHI ('12, 3rd rd., 78th overall)

Matt Grzelcyk 5-9 (175) 168 (76) 1/5/94 L Charlestown, Mass. Boston Univ. (HEA) BOS ('12, 3rd rd., 85th overall)

Seth Jones 6-4 (194) 205 (93) 10/3/94 R Plano, Texas Portland Winterhawks (WHL) 2013 Draft Eligible

Jake McCabe 6-1 (185) 207 (93) 10/12/93 L Eau Claire, Wis. Univ. of Wisconsin (WCHA) BUF ('12, 2nd rd., 44th overall)

Connor Murphy 6-4 (194) 205 (93) 3/26/93 R Dublin, Ohio Sarnia Sting (OHL) PHX ('11, 1st rd., 20th overall)

Mike Reilly 6-1 (185) 167 (75) 7/13/93 L Chanhassen, Minn. Univ. of Minnesota (WCHA) CBJ ('11, 4th rd., 98th overall)

Patrick Sieloff 6-1 (185) 199 (91) 5/15/94 L Ann Arbor, Mich. Windsor Spitfires (OHL) CGY ('12, 2nd rd., 42nd overall)

Brady Skjei 6-3 (191) 200 (91) 3/26/94 L Lakeville, Minn. Univ. of Minnesota (WCHA) NYR ('12, 1st rd., 28th overall)

Jacob Trouba 6-2 (188) 198 (89) 2/26/94 R Rochester, Mich. Univ. of Michigan (CCHA) WPG ('12, 1st rd., 9th overall)

FORWARDS (15)

Cole Bardreau 5-10 (178) 181 (82) 7/22/93 R Fairport, N.Y. Cornell Univ. (ECACH) Free Agent

Riley Barber 5-11 (180) 194 (87) 2/7/94 R Livonia, Mich. Miami Univ. (CCHA) WSH ('12, 6th rd., 167th overall)

Tyler Biggs 6-2 (188) 223 (101) 4/30/93 R Binghamton, N.Y. Oshawa Generals (OHL) TOR ('11, 1st rd., 22nd overall)

Alex Galchenyuk 6-1 (185) 197 (90) 2/12/94 L Milwaukee, Wis. Sarnia Sting (OHL) MTL ('12, 1st rd., 3rd overall)

John Gaudreau 5-9 (175) 150 (68) 8/13/93 L Carneys Point, N.J. Boston College (HEA) CGY ('11, 4th rd., 104th overall)

Rocco Grimaldi 5-6 (170) 165 (75) 2/8/93 R Rossmoor, Calif. Univ. of North Dakota (WCHA) FLA ('12, 2nd rd., 33rd overall)

Ryan Hartman 6-0 (183) 187 (84) 9/20/94 R West Dundee, Ill. Plymouth Whalers (OHL) 2013 Draft Eligible

Sean Kuraly 6-2 (188) 199 (91) 1/20/93 L Dublin, Ohio Miami Univ. (CCHA) SJS ('11, 5th rd., 133rd overall)

Mario Lucia 6-2 (188) 193 (87) 8/25/93 L Plymouth, Minn. Univ. of Notre Dame (CCHA) MIN ('11, 2nd rd., 60th overall)

Stefan Matteau 6-2 (188) 217 (98) 2/23/94 L Chicago, Ill. Blainville-Boisbriand Armada (QMJHL) NJD ('12, 1st rd., 29th overall)

J.T. Miller 6-2 (188) 212 (96) 3/14/93 L East Palestine, Ohio Connecticut Whale (AHL) NYR ('11, 1st rd., 15th overall)

Stefan Noesen 6-1 (185) 206 (93) 2/12/93 R Plano, Texas Plymouth Whalers (OHL) OTT ('11, 1st rd., 21st overall)

Blake Pietila 6-0 (183) 195 (88) 2/20/93 L Brighton, Mich. Michigan Tech Univ. (WCHA) NJD ('11, 5th rd., 129th overall)

Vince Trocheck 5-10 (178) 186 (84) 7/11/93 R Pittsburgh, Pa. Saginaw Spirit (OHL) FLA ('11, 3rd rd., 64th overall)

Jim Vesey 6-2 (188) 200 (91) 5/26/93 L North Reading, Mass. Harvard Univ. (ECACH) NSH ('12, 3rd rd., 66th overall)

2012 U.S. national junior team member

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.05.2012

645755 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout talks take a positive turn after seven-and-a-half hour bargaining session

By Pat Leonard / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

The tone of the NHL lockout has shifted from hopeless to cautious optimism.

Tuesday's bargaining session at the Westin Times Square generated so much discussion that it went into Wednesday morning with 18 NHL players and six owners talking for more than seven hours on Day 80 of the lockout and wrapping up after midnight.

"In some ways I'd say it might be the best day we've had, which isn't to paint too over-optimistic of a picture," NHL players' association special counsel Steve Fehr said in a brief joint press conference with NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly. "There's still a lot of work to do."

"We appreciate the efforts of the players," Daly said. "I think everybody is working hard. I think everybody wants to get a deal done, so I think that's encouraging. We look forward to making more progress tomorrow."

The league and union plan to pick up their discussion on Wednesday before the NHL's 11 a.m. Board of Governors meeting.

In addition to Fehr's and Daly's optimism, the lack of public comments and leaks of information were noteworthy, considering the league and union have released information to the public at previous points during the lockout to gain leverage or catch the other side off guard.

The Pens' Sidney Crosby, the Blackhawks' Jonathan Toews and the Rangers' Brad Richards headlined a player contingent that met with the owners from 2 p.m.-7:30 p.m., had dinner, then reconvened from 10 p.m. until after midnight.

Commissioner Gary Bettman had suggested last Thursday, after federal mediation concluded unsuccessfully, that the parties' next meeting should occur without him or NHLPA executive director Don Fehr in the room. Bettman and Fehr were on hand for internal caucuses Tuesday but did not join the group negotiations.

Only four NHL owners previously had attended most negotiations. This new format — in the first bargaining session without mediators since Nov. 21 — provided a different dynamic.

Winnipeg's Ron Hainsey, the most consistently involved player throughout the lockout, had his owner, Mark Chipman, across the table. Tampa Bay forward Martin St. Louis sat opposite the man — Jeff Vinik — who signs the Lightning's checks. Craig Adams and Crosby of the Pens also had an opportunity to sit in the same room with their owner, Ron Burkle, and the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review actually reported that Crosby and Burkle flew to New York together on Monday.

Tuesday's meeting may not turn out to resolve the lockout, but it at least demonstrated the players' and owners' sense of urgency about saving the season, and their realization that they are running out of time.

New York Daily News LOADED: 12.05.2012

645756 New York Islanders

NHL talks between players, owners held in New York

By STEVE ZIPAY steve.zipay@newsday.com

Before Tuesday's meetings between a sextet of NHL owners and 18 locked-out players to explore ways of breaking the 80-day labor impasse, commissioner Gary Bettman said: "I'm hoping we get to where we need to be."

It's possible that they are finally getting there.

In the longest day of talks since the lockout began Sept. 16, the participants, which included Penguins owner Rob Burkle, a former labor negotiator, and star Sidney Crosby, met for 5 1/2 hours, broke for dinner, reconvened about 10 p.m. and continued until midnight.

The length of the talks led to some guarded optimism among observers that good dialogue was exchanged and some progress.

Both Bettman and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr, the key negotiators, were at the hotel but not in the sessions.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly said: "We'll be talking again [this] morning. We're going to have our board meeting at 11. Hopefully, be back at it after that, as well."

"It was a long day, but a constructive day in some ways, we had a good dialogue," NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr (Donald's brother) said. "In some ways, it might be the best day we've had. I don't want to paint too rose of a picture. There's still a lot of work to do."

The lockout has resulted in the scrapping of 422 regular-season games, plus the Winter Classic and All-Star weekend.

The Board of Governors meets in Manhattan Wednesday, and several options are possible: vote to continue the talks, authorize the canceling of more December games, and / or set a drop-dead date for canceling the season.

Tuesday's meetings, which began at 2 p.m. at the Westin Times Square Hotel, were suggested by Bettman last week after two days of discussions with federal mediators were not productive.

Discussions took place with the large group; other talks were conducted in smaller groups.

Before Tuesday, the sides were \$182 million apart on honoring existing contracts while splitting hockey revenue 50-50.

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645757 New York Rangers

NHL's Tuesday 'might be the best day we've had,' Steve Fehr says; Bill Daly encouraged; cautious optimism surrounds lockout

By Pat Leonard

The NHL lockout's tone has shifted from hopelessness to cautious optimism.

Tuesday's bargaining session at a Manhattan hotel generated so much discussion that it bled into Wednesday morning, with eighteen NHL players and six owners talking for seven-and-a-half hours on Day 80 of the lockout and wrapping up just after midnight.

"In some ways I'd say it might be the best day we've had, which isn't to paint too over-optimistic of a picture," NHL players' association special counsel Steve Fehr said in a brief, joint press conference with NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly. "There's still a lot of work to do."

"We appreciate the efforts of the players," Daly said. "I think everybody is working hard. I think everybody wants to get a deal done, so I think that's encouraging. We look forward to making more progress tomorrow."

Fehr and Daly did not take questions from the media. None of the players or owners in attendance spoke to reporters, either. The league and union planned to pick up their discussion on Wednesday morning, prior to the NHL's 11 a.m. Board of Governors meeting.

In addition to Fehr's and Daly's optimism - and the fact that they spoke together, not separately - the lack of public comments and leaks of

information were noteworthy, considering both the league and union have released information to the public at previous points during the lockout to gain leverage or catch the other off-guard, sometimes mid-meeting.

The Penguins' Sidney Crosby, Blackhawks' Jonathan Toews and Rangers' Brad Richards headlined a player contingent that met with the owners from 2 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., took a dinner break, then reconvened from 10 p.m. until just after midnight.

Commissioner Gary Bettman had suggested last Thursday, after federal mediation concluded unsuccessfully, that the parties' next meeting should occur without him or NHLPA executive director Don Fehr in the room. Bettman and Fehr were on hand for internal caucuses Tuesday but did not join the group negotiations.

Only four NHL owners previously had attended most negotiations. This new format – in the first bargaining session without mediators since Nov. 21 – provided a different dynamic.

The Winnipeg Jets' Ron Hainsey, the most consistently involved player throughout the lockout, had his owner, Mark Chipman, across the table. Tampa Bay forward Martin St. Louis sat opposite the man who signs the Lightning's checks, Jeff Vinik. Penguins players Craig Adams and Crosby also had an opportunity to sit in the same room with their owner, Ron Burkle, and the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review actually reported that Crosby and Burkle flew to New York together on Monday.

The Winter Classic, All-Star Game and regular-season games through Dec. 14 already are cancelled, and the threat of more cancellations could be only days away. Tuesday's meeting may not turn out to resolve the lockout, but it at least demonstrated the players' and owners' sense of urgency about saving the season, and their realization that they are running out of time.

New York Daily News LOADED: 12.05.2012

645758 New York Rangers

Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews, Brad Richards among 18 players to represent NHLPA in Tuesday meeting with owners

By Pat Leonard

Eighteen NHL players, led by the Penguins' Sidney Crosby, Blackhawks' Jonathan Toews and Rangers' Brad Richards, will represent the players' association Tuesday at 2 p.m. in Manhattan in a collective bargaining meeting with six owners.

Commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA executive director Don Fehr will not be in the meeting, though NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr will attend.

The players to attend are: Craig Adams, David Backes, Michael Cammalleri, Sidney Crosby, B.J. Crombeen, Mathieu Darche, Shane Doan, Ron Hainsey, Shawn Horcoff, Jamal Mayers, Manny Malhotra, Andy McDonald, Ryan Miller, George Parros, Brad Richards, Martin St. Louis, Jonathan Toews and Kevin Westgarth.

There six owners to attend include: Ron Burkle (Pittsburgh Penguins), Mark Chipman (Winnipeg Jets), Murray Edwards (Calgary Flames), Jeremy Jacobs (Boston Bruins), Larry Tanenbaum (Toronto Maple Leafs) and Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay Lightning).

Adams and Crosby, therefore, will be in the room with their Penguins owner, Burkle, as will the Jets' Hainsey and Chipman, and the Lightning's St. Louis and Vinik.

New York Daily News LOADED: 12.05.2012

645759 NHL

Mike Commodore playing in minors in bid to keep NHL career alive

Monte Stewart

The NHL lockout showed little sign of progress, so Mike Commodore decided to take action.

But his decision to sign a 25-game professional tryout offer with the AHL's Hamilton Bulldogs was not just an effort to salvage a season.

"I need to be playing, in my opinion, if I want to have a good chance of continuing my career," he said while the Bulldogs visited the Abbotsford Heat for a pair of games last weekend. "So here I am."

The 33-year-old Sherwood Park, Alta., native was among a long list of unrestricted NHL free agents who were left in limbo when the previous NHL collective bargaining agreement expired Sept. 15. Teams raced to sign younger, core assets before the old CBA expired, but took a pass on older UFAs until new financial parameters, notably the salary cap maximum and contracting rules, are established.

"Obviously, they were looking to lock up guys long-term with the expiry coming up," he said. "But for guys like me, there wasn't a real rush, and then the lockout started."

Commodore split last season with the Detroit Red Wings and Tampa Bay Lightning. He is now in his 13th pro season, and has played for almost as many teams in that span.

Since being drafted by New Jersey in the second round (42nd overall) in 1992, he has logged 484 career NHL regular-season games with the Devils, Calgary, Carolina, Ottawa, Columbus, Detroit and Tampa. He has also suited up in 53 playoff games.

He won a Stanley Cup with the Carolina Hurricanes in 2005-06, played for the Calgary Flames squad that fell in seven games in the 2003-04 Stanley Cup finals to Tampa Bay, and was a member of Canada's world championship-winning squad in 2007.

He has 23 NHL career regular-season goals and 83 assists along with eight post-season points.

"The last two years for me, without getting too deep into it, haven't really gone in my favour," said Commodore, who is slated to receive a pro-rated salary of \$105,000 after earning \$1-million last season. "I haven't played nearly as much as I would have liked, and it all happened very quick."

Commodore, who is sought for his physical play and has racked up 683 career penalty minutes in the NHL, fell out of favour in Columbus after Scott Arniel took over as coach from Claude Noel in 2010-11. Shortly after getting rare time on the power play, the rearguard was dispatched to Springfield of the AHL for the rest of the season.

His career took a turn for the better the following summer as Columbus bought out the remainder of his five-year \$18.75-million contract and he signed as a free agent with Detroit. But he struggled to get into the Red Wings lineup and was sent to Tampa Bay at the trade deadline.

"I loved Columbus. ... I worked my (butt) off there, and how it ended, I don't think was right at all," he said. "But that's how it works sometimes. In Detroit, I had a great time. Great guys. Really good organization, obviously. There just wasn't an opportunity there for me."

"I signed there on July 1, an hour into free agency, on a time limit, and I was supposed to get an opportunity to play, and that didn't happen. I was scratched til Christmas. I'm not sitting and complaining. It happens every year to somebody else."

Now, he finds himself back in the league where he spent the last lockout, after spending 2004-05 with Calgary's former Lowell Loch Monsters farm club. The 6-foot-4 and 225-pound blue-liner considered playing in Europe this season, but opted for a loop that he knew.

"I'm playing in front of people that I would like to see me play — NHL scouts, GMs and stuff like that," he said. "I'm just trying to put myself in the best situation."

Commodore finished even in the plus-minus department as Hamilton split a pair of games with the Heat. Playing his first game since last spring, he went minus-1 in a 5-1 loss, while racking up eight penalty minutes, all on minors. In the second game, he was on the ice as rookie Brendan Gallagher scored the only goal the Bulldogs needed in a 3-0 upset of the league-leading hosts.

In the process of trying to earn another NHL job, Commodore is showing Montreal Canadiens prospects like Gallagher and Jared Tinordi, both 20-year-old rookies, what it takes to have a long pro career.

"It's different," Commodore said. "It's fun. I was 20 once, too, playing in the American Hockey League (with the Albany River Rats) my first year, and I remember older guys that were on my team and how they treated me. By no means do I think I'm old. But for hockey, I've been around for a little while."

"It's just funny to listen to the guys talk. It's nice to be around some young blood and some fresh players. I'm enjoying it so far."

Abbotsford coach Sylvain Lefebvre said Commodore and former Edmonton Oiler Zack Stortini, who has been with the Bulldogs all season, serve as role models for younger players inside and outside the boards.

"They have NHL experience," Lefebvre said. "They've gone through the rigours of schedules and travelling and all that. On the ice, not only do they bring their experience, but also they have poise. They don't panic, and that's important when you have a young team."

How long Commodore's minor-league stint will last remains to be seen. There is no guarantee he will stay beyond his 25-game trial period, and the Bulldogs could release him in the meantime. But, based on what happened after the 2004-05 NHL season was scrapped, he expects the current lockout to create opportunities — and hopes to get one.

"I don't know where I'm going to end up," he said. "I have absolutely no idea. Right now, all I'm worried about is putting it together down here."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.05.2012

645760 Ottawa Senators

Philosophical differences

By Wayne Scanlan, Ottawa Citizen December 4, 2012

Yes, the Ottawa Senators have heard from the Swedish hockey federation, requesting Mika Zibanejad's presence at a certain world junior tournament in Russia.

But, no, the Senators are still not inclined to let Ziba go.

"I have talked to the federation in Sweden and suggested we would talk again," Murray said, in an email to the Citizen Tuesday evening. "Our interest is for Mika and his development and we think he is best served here."

"He has had a tough adjustment (to the AHL) and a month away will be like starting over upon his return. We will talk further but as of now he will stay here."

Now, I really wish I was covering the world juniors in Ufa, Russia later this month, if only to get into the scrums involving Swedish head coach Roger Ronnberg. What a quote he delivered across the pond, on the Senators decision to keep last year's Swedish hero, Zibanejad, in AHL Binghamton during the tournament.

The Swedes did not appreciate news that Ufa would be a Ziba-free zone. In fact, Peter Forsberg (not that one), vice-president of the Swedish Hockey Federation, contacted Murray and told SportExpressen.se that has "hope" that Murray might relent and allow Zibanejad to play for Sweden.

Not likely, says Murray.

As you no doubt heard or read, the Swedish outrage started with coach Ronnberg.

"It's pretty damn sad to me that Canadians in Ottawa's management will sit and decide about the Swedish junior national team," Ronnberg said. "Europeans always have to be on our backs for them over there and that they can dictate and decide about these tournaments."

"They are pretty stubborn. It's a game of power against Europe, this."

On our backs for them?

Wow. I wish Ronnberg would tell us how he really feels.

This sort of raw emotion is usually reserved for the heated moments following a difficult loss in a big game. But then, losing Zibanejad from the roster is a big loss for the defending champs from Sweden. In six world

junior tournament games last year, Zibanejad produced four goals and eight points, including the overtime 'golden goal' in the championship final.

The Swedes are already missing two of their best defencemen to injury — Jonas Brodin, the Minnesota Wild prospect, and Oscar Klefbom, a first-round pick of the Edmonton Oilers and a world junior all-star in 2012.

Under the circumstances, losing a healthy Zibanejad because the Senators want him to continue his small ice/pro league development in Binghamton, put the Swedes over the top. This isn't your run of the mill world junior session, remember. This is a tournament marked by an NHL lockout, meaning a powerhouse hockey nation like Canada will have a wealth of talent available it wouldn't have had if the NHL were playing games.

That brings us to the Oilers' decision to (apparently) free up Ryan Nugent-Hopkins for junior duty — but only if RNH is medically cleared to play for Canada. Nugent-Hopkins is currently in Edmonton getting his shoulder treated, and a decision on his status won't be made until next week. It could be the NHL club is also waiting to see if the lockout is nearing an end, in which case RNH could be back in Oilers colours.

Like Zibanejad, Nugent-Hopkins has been spending the lockout in the AHL (RNH is with Oklahoma City), and that's where the similarities end.

Unlike Zibanejad, Nugent-Hopkins has never played in the world junior tournament.

Unlike Zibanejad, Nugent-Hopkins is an established NHL player, exploding into the pros with 52 points in 62 games in 2011-12, until he injured his shoulder, which required surgery. In the end, RNH was a runner-up for the Calder Trophy and probably would have won the rookie award if he hadn't missed 20 games.

The Oilers know what they have in Nugent-Hopkins. A first overall draft choice in 2011, RNH is the Oilers' future top line centre, unless injuries hold him back. While a year in the AHL won't hurt Nugent-Hopkins' development, neither will a few weeks in Russia, relishing his first world junior event.

Zibanejad's story is radically different. In fact, it's safe to say the Senators have had serious concerns about his development. Selected sixth overall by Ottawa in the same 2011 draft, Zibanejad is also a centre, but was shifted to the wing this fall.

While Nugent-Hopkins blossomed in the NHL, Zibanejad will need time — he played just nine NHL games as an 18-year-old rookie, producing just one assist, and was sent back to Djurgardens for development. To his detriment, the team had a dreadful season, Zibanejad got into some bad playing habits, according to those who watched the team, and he was likely destined for a full year of development in the AHL, regardless of whether a Collective Bargaining Agreement could be reached.

Would it kill him to go back to the big ice, and junior competition, for a month or so? Maybe not. But unlike RNH, he's been there, done that.

If Zibanejad were progressing along the same track as Nugent-Hopkins, the Senators wouldn't have a care in the world about sending Ziba to Ufa. But Zibanejad — with one goal and six assists in 16 AHL games — is not on that track. He has a lot to figure out about the North American game.

Gutsy call by the Senators — they have a batch of Swedes in their system and don't want to bite the hand that feeds them.

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645761 Philadelphia Flyers

Upbeat labor talks between NHL owners, players

Sam Carchidi, Inquirer Staff Writer

There were different participants at the bargaining table Tuesday in New York, and they created some cautious optimism in the NHL labor dispute.

One of the new voices, Pittsburgh Penguins co-owner Ron Burkle, reportedly made his presence felt at the first session, which lasted nearly 5 1/2 hours before a dinner break. Burkle's input drew upbeat reviews from

the players, sending more positive vibes than at any point in the work stoppage.

For the first time in the 80-day lockout, a meeting included some players and owners. There were 18 players, six owners, Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner, and Steve Fehr, special counsel for the players' union.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA boss Donald Fehr - the respective leaders who have thus far been ineffective in the negotiations - were not present. It was a frustrated Bettman who suggested the leaders not attend, trying a different approach in hopes it would end the labor war.

Donald Fehr huddled with the players during the dinner break.

No Flyers were at the meetings, which included stars such as Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby, Chicago's Jonathan Toews, Buffalo's Ryan Miller and Tampa Bay's Martin St. Louis.

The owners who attended included hard-liners Jeremy Jacobs of Boston and Murray Edwards of Calgary. The other owners who were there were Winnipeg's Mark Chipman, Toronto's Larry Tanenbaum and Tampa Bay's Jeff Vinik.

A year ago, the NBA ratified a new collective bargaining agreement on Dec. 8 and started the season on Christmas. Optimists were hopeful the NHL could follow a similar path. Cynics pointed out that the NBA and its union already had a tentative agreement in place last year on Nov. 25.

The last NHL lockout that ended with an in-season agreement was in 1994-95. That season, a settlement was reached on Jan. 11 and a 48-game season was salvaged.

The NHL, which has canceled games though Dec. 14, and the players are battling over numerous issues, including how to divide hockey-related revenue, free agency, arbitration, length of individual contracts, and length of the new agreement.

The NHL Board of Governors meeting will be Wednesday in New York, and the owners could select a drop-dead date for when the season cannot be saved. They could also cancel more games, though that may not happen because of Tuesday's progress.

Ed Snider, the Flyers' chairman and founder, Peter Luukko, president of the Flyers' parent company, Comcast-Spectacor, and general manager Paul Holmgren are expected to attend the meeting.

Junior national picks. Forward John Gaudreau, the pride of Gloucester Catholic and a 2011 Calgary Flames draftee, was named to the preliminary U.S. junior national team, which also includes defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere, the Flyers' third-round pick last June.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.05.2012

645762 Philadelphia Flyers

Without Gary Bettman and Donald Fehr, progress at NHL meeting

After a marathon day of negotiating, a representative from the NHL and the NHL Players' Association stood side by side and addressed the media.

It was the first time that has happened in this labor war, an indication that progress was made Tuesday in New York.

Steve Fehr, special counsel for the NHLPA, said it may have been the best negotiating day of the 80-day lockout.

"But I don't want to paint too rosy of a picture," he said, adding that lots of work still needed to be done.

Fehr was flanked by Bill Daly, the NHL's deputy commissioner.

"I think everyone wants to get a deal done, so that's encouraging," said Daly, who thanked the players for attending.

The sides will meet again Wednesday.

There were different participants at the bargaining table Tuesday _ and they created some cautious optimism in the labor dispute.

One of the new voices at the meeting, Pittsburgh Penguins owner Ron Burkle, reportedly made his presence felt at the first session, which lasted nearly 5½ hours before a dinner break. Burkle's input drew upbeat reviews

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NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA boss Donald Fehr _ the respective leaders who have thus far been ineffective in the negotiations _ were not present. It was a frustrated Bettman who suggested the leaders not attend, trying a different approach in hopes it would end the labor war.

Donald Fehr huddled with the players during the dinner break.

At the second session, late Tuesday, Donald Fehr and Bettman were reportedly planning to attend the meeting, but did not.

No Flyers were at the meetings, which included stars such as Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby, Chicago's Jonathan Toews, Buffalo's Ryan Miller and Tampa Bay's Martin St. Louis.

The owners who attended included hard-liners Jeremy Jacobs of Boston and Murray Edwards of Calgary. The other owners who were there: Burkle, Winnipeg's Mark Chipman, Toronto's Larry Tanenbaum and Tampa Bay's Jeff Vinik.

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The NHL, which has canceled games though Dec. 14, and the players are battling over numerous issues, including how to divide hockey-related revenue, free agency, arbitration, length of individual contracts, and length of the new CBA.

The NHL Board of Governors meeting will be Wednesday at 11 a.m. in New York, and it will follow the meeting between players and owners. In the BOG meeting, the owners could select a drop-dead date for when the season cannot be saved. They could also cancel more games, though that may not happen because of Tuesday's progress.

Ed Snider, the Flyers' chairman and founder, Peter Luukko, president of the Flyers' parent company, Comcast-Spectacor, and general manager Paul Holmgren are expected to attend the meeting.

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645763 Philadelphia Flyers

Two sides cautiously optimistic after latest talks

panaccio_byline_new.png

Could a resolution be nearing that would end the NHL lockout?

That's the question coming out of New York City late Tuesday night after two sessions between owners and players that seemed to exude cautious optimism about bridging the gap for a new collective bargaining agreement.

"Very cautious," one source said. "Still very early, but better dialogue today."

It's been quite a while since both sides considered they made significant progress in the talks, but that may have finally changed.

The lockout enters its 81st day Wednesday, when the league's Board of Governors convene in Manhattan for their regularly-scheduled winter

meeting, albeit this one with a shortened season -- 50 games or so -- on the line.

Both sides will meet again prior to the BOG meeting. Tuesday's talks lasted almost eight hours with a break.

Eighteen players -- no Flyers -- representing the NHLPA met with six league owners on Tuesday in Manhattan.

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and union executive director Donald Fehr did not participate in the first session, while deputy commissioner Bill Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr did participate.

Bettman suggested the unusual meeting last week.

Fehr told reporters after midnight that the events represented a "constructive day," and perhaps the "best day we've had, but still work to be done."

Daly, who spoke with him jointly, added the two sides will talk again Wednesday morning.

"I think everyone wants to get a deal done, so that's encouraging," Daly said. "We will work hard to make a deal."

The two sides met for almost six hours in their first session, breaking up into small and large group settings, much like how the league often conducts its meetings with general managers.

The first session ended around 7:30 p.m. Talks resumed shortly after 10 p.m. before ending a little after midnight.

As with other meetings in the past, such as the one on Nov. 21 when the union last presented a new proposal that moved toward the owners on a percentage share of revenues, there were positive vibes during the break.

That meeting, however, ended on a surprisingly negative tone. This one ended in optimism.

Bettman will address the Governors on Wednesday at 11 a.m. and is scheduled to have a news conference at 1 p.m. His presser was planned in advance of Tuesday's talks, so there may not be anything to read into that.

Will he have the framework of a new CBA to take to them for a vote, or at least tell them that significant progress has been made?

The two sides were \$182 million apart in revenues and very far apart on contractual rights issues from late-November's talks in Manhattan.

The players' group was led by Sidney Crosby and Jonathan Toews, along with union stalwart Ron Hainsey, who has been at every negotiation session.

The others: Kevin Westgarth, who has attended many previous CBA negotiations, plus Craig Adams, David Backes, Michael Cammalleri, B.J. Crombeen, Mathieu Darche, Shane Doan, Shawn Horcoff, Jamal Mayers, Manny Malhotra, Andy McDonald, Ryan Miller, George Parros, Brad Richards and Martin St. Louis.

There were tweets suggesting that the interaction between Crosby and his owner, Ron Burkle, was well-received by all in attendance.

Once upon a time, Crosby saved the Penguins franchise. Now he's in position to perhaps save the NHL season.

TSN.ca said both sides made new concessions to each other Tuesday that generated traction, though an imminent resolution couldn't be stated.

No members of the Boston Bruins were at the meeting. It's very likely the union didn't want any Bruins to engage hardline owner Jeremy Jacobs, who many concede is running this lockout and who has become the poster boy of the union and fans' wrath throughout North America.

The remaining owners who attended were: Burkle (Pittsburgh), Mark Chipman (Winnipeg Jets), Murray Edwards (Calgary Flames), Larry Tanenbaum (Toronto Maple Leafs), Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay Lightning) and Jacobs.

Most of those owners are considered "moderate" in their lockout stance, which may have been Bettman's way of saying to the players, "it's not just the hardliners taking this stand, it's the moderates, as well."

Even if the two sides have inched closer to a deal, Bettman needs to have a date set when it's no longer feasible to have a shortened season and that requires BOG approval. He might now delay that to see where this goes with the talks.

Ironically, Tuesday's unusual gathering was held at the Westin New York in Times Square, which saw a number of 2004-05 negotiating sessions during the last hockey lockout.

Flyers chairman Ed Snider, club president Peter Luukko and GM Paul Holmgren will represent the club at the BOG meeting.

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645764 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL Notes: Sestito leaving EIHL team

TIM RIDAY

Tommy Sestito is leaving the Sheffield Steelers of the Elite Ice Hockey League to seek a spot in a more prominent league, according to the Sheffield Star (via ProHockeyTalk).

Sestito registered 19 points in 17 games with the Steelers. The Flyers' tough guy also managed to rack up 69 penalty minutes.

"Tommy has been great for us and we will miss him," Steelers coach Ryan Finnerty said. "He had one little slub but normally played with some edge. The guy coming in [Simon Ferguson] is no slouch, either, though.

"We respectfully part company with Tommy, wish him well and move on."

The Star also reports that Sestito could be looking for work in the Czech Republic.

The 25-year-old appeared in 14 games for the Flyers last season. He registered one assist, a minus-3 rating and 83 penalty minutes.

Rask returns to Boston

After a successful stint with HC Blzen in the Czech Republic, CSNNE.com's Joe Haggerty reports that Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask is back in Boston.

Rask took the ice Tuesday morning with teammates Milan Lucic, Brad Marchand, Shawn Thornton and a handful of other locked-out NHLers.

With HC Plzen, Rask put up a 6-2 record with a .936 save percentage and a 1.85 goals against average.

Roy to skate with AHL squad

Stars forward Derek Roy, who is recovering from shoulder surgery, is expected to practice with AHL Texas next week, according to Mike Heika of the Dallas Morning News.

The Sabres traded Roy to the Stars in July in exchange for forward Steve Ott and defenseman Adam Pardy.

Roy struggled with Buffalo last season, registering just 44 points in 80 games. He's expected to replace Mike Ribeiro, who was traded to the Capitals earlier this offseason, as one of the Stars' top two centers whenever hockey picks up.

The 29-year-old has one year remaining on his contract, with a cap hit of \$4 million.

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645765 Philadelphia Flyers

Time running out as players, owners meet

It's either the beginning of a solution to save the 2012-13 NHL season or it's the end.

Today in New York, six owners and a field of players -- expected to be led by Sidney Crosby and Jonathan Toews -- will discuss the lockout, which now enters its 80th day.

"He's well-informed; he wants to be part of the group that gets the game back on the ice," Pascal Dupuis told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette about Crosby's involvement.

There wasn't a ton of optimism being expressed in private by players on Monday. The fact that Boston's Jeremy Jacobs, who has become the catalyst for anger, distrust and downright hatred among the players, will be present, won't help matters.

Even worse, the one executive players were hoping would be present -- MSG boss James Dolan -- was not selected by NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman. Dolan was a central figure in ending the NBA lockout last year.

Owners attending include: Ron Burkle (Pittsburgh Penguins), Mark Chipman (Winnipeg Jets), Murray Edwards (Calgary Flames), Larry Tanenbaum (Toronto Maple Leafs), Jeff Vinik (Tampa Bay Lightning) and Jacobs.

The amount of distrust between these two groups was never more evident than the past weekend when it took the better part of three days just to agree on the ground rules of these talks.

It is expected that the players will fill out their roster shortly before the meeting begins.

Whatever occurs today will be front and center Wednesday when Bettman meets with the Board of Governors (11 a.m.) in New York City at the law firm of Proskauer Rose, which represented the NFL and NBA in their labor problems.

It's anticipated Bettman will ask for a "drop dead" date, which is when there absolutely has to be a CBA in place or the season is cancelled.

If the two sides were to agree on a CBA by Dec. 15 and begin playing by the end of the month, they might squeeze a 48- to 50-game season in.

Meanwhile, the league is expected to cancel more previously-scheduled games for December sometime this week.

Finally, league deputy commissioner Bill Daly refuted a report late Monday by WBZ in Boston saying a new CBA could be announced by Thursday, telling Sports Illustrated there wasn't "a single morsel" of truth to that happening.

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645766 Phoenix Coyotes

Oilers D Ryan Whitney chats about friendship with Coyotes D Keith Yandle

By SARAH MCLELLAN

Last week, NHLers stayed in Scottsdale to train for a week as part of a traveling camp for locked-out players.

Coyotes defenseman Keith Yandle has been a member of this caravan since it started in Colorado in September. Since the camp arrived on his home turf, he naturally played the role of local tour guide. He also was detailing the benefits of living in the Valley.

"It's good for us to get these guys in town and everybody to see how good of a lifestyle it is," Yandle said. "These guys could be free agents one day, and this is the first selling point."

It wasn't a tough sell to get friend and Edmonton Oiler Ryan Whitney to come train in Arizona. The mild weather was a nice change from the winter temperatures in Boston, where Whitney and Yandle spend their off-seasons.

Here's what Whitney had to say while in town:

Question: You and Yandle are both from the Boston area. How did the friendship start?

Answer: Keith's brother's a little older. He's my age, so I grew up with him since we were 10 years old. Keith's three years younger. When we got older, I started hanging out with him. Now I work out with him in the summer and skate, so we've become pretty good friends.

Q: Could you always tell he would become an All-Star defenseman?

A: I knew he was always going to be a really good player. It was just a matter of time. It seems he's got a really good fit here. I know he loves living here and really likes the guys on the team. So it was just a matter of time before he became a really elite player.

Q: You're one of the more popular NHL players on Twitter. Have you tried to convince Yandle to join the social media trend?

A: I've told him he'd be pretty good at it. He occasionally calls me to tweet stuff. I'll do stuff that he says. I don't even know if he's on Twitter just to follow people. He's more of a non-technology guy.

Q: You've been hobbled by ankle issues the past few seasons. Were you hoping to put all that behind you this season?

A: I was ready to go and really hoping we started. I still do. But obviously it's out of one guy's control. We just hope that it's soon enough that we can get back on the ice because guys are obviously itching to play and getting tired of practicing with each other.

Q: Do you plan to keep traveling with this camp or are you considering playing elsewhere?

A: I've thought about going to Europe. It's tough right now. Right now I figure if you go and it'd get fixed, it'd be in the next couple of weeks. Hopefully nothing gets canceled for the year but if that happens, maybe go play somewhere but I really haven't decided yet.

Negotiations continue

The NHL and Players' Association will get back to the bargaining table today, but the usual cast of characters won't be there.

Commissioner Gary Bettman and Union head Don Fehr won't be part of this session. Instead, a mix of owners and players will be involved in the meeting.

Here is USA Today's advance of the meeting.

The following owners will be present: Ron Burkle (Penguins), Mark Chipman (Jets), Murray Edwards (Flames), Jeremy Jacobs (Bruins), Larry Tanenbaum (Maple Leafs), and Jeff Vinik (Lightning).

Coyotes captain Shane Doan is among the players attending in addition to Sidney Crosby, Jonathan Toews, Martin St. Louis and Brad Richards.

The idea for the meeting came about after federal mediators could not push the process along.

"After spending several hours with both sides over two days, the presiding mediators concluded that the parties remained far apart, and that no progress toward a resolution could be made through further mediation at this point in time," Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement. "We are disappointed that the mediation process was not successful."

Arizona Republic LOADED: 12.05.2012

645767 Pittsburgh Penguins

Crosby, Penguins owners push to save NHL season

By Rob Rossi

The Penguins are sending everyone over the boards to try to end the NHL lockout.

Mario Lemieux arrived in New York on Tuesday, a day in which progress between the owners and players was facilitated in large part by co-owner Ron Burkle on one side and team captain Sidney Crosby on the other. Lemieux and team CEO David Morehouse are expected to attend the Board of Governors meeting Wednesday, multiple sources said.

Burkle and Crosby were described by participants in the five-hour talks as voices of reason. Their shared point of view: The NHL should not risk another round of canceled games — they're already canceled through Dec. 14 — and the league may not recover if a season is lost to a labor dispute for the second time in eight years, the sources said.

Talks between the NHL and its Players' Association continued late into Tuesday.

The Penguins are a moderate in the labor war, but they will not break ranks at the Governors' meeting, sources said. Rather, their contingent will try to establish what owners need to reach an agreement, the sources said.

Crosby also will not break ranks with the players' union, but his objective over the past week has been to establish common ground among players who have lost trust in NHL ownership and management as a whole, the sources said.

Over the past few weeks, Crosby, Burkle and Lemieux have privately discussed plans to bridge the gap between players and owners. The sources said all three had grown frustrated with the lack of progress.

Crosby and Burkle flew to New York together Monday. Burkle lives in suburban Los Angeles. Crosby's Los Angeles-based agent, Pat Brisson, also was on the flight, the sources said.

None of the Penguins' management contingent was available for comment, but Crosby told the Tribune-Review on Tuesday morning, "Ron is a great owner. He wants everything to be first class, and he cares about everyone in the organization. He only wants what's best for the team."

The Penguins had no voice in previous labor meetings during the lockout, but the sources said Burkle requested to be involved early last week. His net worth is \$3.5 billion, built on a California grocery empire, and he gained a reputation of helping strike deals with the unions he employed.

Among the other owners in the talks Tuesday was Tampa Bay's Jeff Vinik, who has become a favorite of Burkle and Lemieux since Vinik purchased the Lightning in February 2010. Lemieux has discussed ways to end the lockout with Lightning general manager Steve Yzerman, a fellow Hockey Hall of Famer, the sources said.

In all, six owners met with 18 players, including the Penguins' union rep, Craig Adams. The meeting involved large group discussions and smaller sessions among teams — not dissimilar to an NHL general managers' meeting.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and union special counsel Steve Fehr attended, but commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr were not present.

Four owners not previously involved in talks attended the meeting. The NHL invited an unlimited number of players.

The sources said Burkle and Crosby shared the belief that players needed to hear from new owners because of the narrative that a handful of hard-line owners — the Boston Bruins' Jeremy Jacobs has gained the most publicity in this category — were hijacking the process.

Burkle, Lemieux and Crosby are aware they risk pushback from their respective sides for trying to establish trust, but they felt that risk was worth the reward, the sources said.

The divides remaining between the sides include the definition and split of revenue, guaranteeing current players' contracts and contractual rights such as free agency and maximum term limits.

Staff writer Josh Yohe contributed. Rob Rossi is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at rossi@tribweb.com or 412-380-5635.

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.05.2012

645768 Pittsburgh Penguins

Crosby arrives in New York, eager to work with Burkle

By Josh Yohe

Penguins captain Sidney Crosby confirmed to the Tribune-Review early this morning that he has arrived in New York and will take part in today's unique labor meeting between six owners and a handful of players. The meeting, which will not include NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman nor NHLPA executive director Don Fehr, is considered vital if an agreement is to be reached in time to save the NHL season.

Bettman made the proposal for such a meeting last week.

Penguins co-owner Ron Burkle will also be at the negotiating table, and Crosby made his respect for Burkle quite clear.

"Ron is a great owner," Crosby told the Tribune-Review this morning. "He wants everything to be first class and he cares about everyone in the organization. He only wants what's best for the team."

Given that Burkle will be one of six owners on hand today — and it is believed he has wanted to become involved in negotiations for a while — indicates that Burkle believes having a season is what's best for his team.

Crosby feels the same and will be joined by Chicago captain Jonathan Toews, Buffalo goalie Ryan Miller and a couple of other NHL players. He arrived in New York late last night after spending the previous six days working out with players in Phoenix. Crosby came down with a case of food poisoning last week while in Arizona but is fully recovered.

Many of the Penguins expressed a loyalty to Burkle and Mario Lemieux on Monday. Burkle's presence at today's meeting, it was widely agreed, is a positive development. Unlike owners like Boston's Jeremy Jacobs and Washington's Ted Leonsis — Jacobs, in particular, has infuriated players by refusing to budge from his stance that the NHL should not budge from its stance in labor talks — Burkle is viewed as a moderate who is willing to listen to the players.

Crosby echoed those sentiments and should be comfortable dealing with Burkle today.

"He is committed to giving us a chance to win every year," Crosby said.

If there is any winning this season, perhaps the relationship between Burkle and Crosby will be needed to produce success off the ice.

It might represent the only chance for an NHL season.

Burkle has always been a positive force for his players, including Crosby.

"As players," Crosby said, "we all realize that and appreciate it."

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.05.2012 Possible progress made in NHL labor talks

December 5, 2012 12:02 am

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The ice that has encased the NHL since mid-September just might be starting to crack.

And if so, the Penguins apparently will have played a leading role in breaking it up.

Co-owner Ron Burkle was one of six owners who met with 18 NHL players - a group that included Penguins captain Sidney Crosby and player representative Craig Adams -- in New York Tuesday, and seems to have been the driving force in what was widely viewed as a productive, encouraging session.

"I think everyone wants to get a deal done, so that's encouraging," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told reporters after the meeting wrapped up around midnight.

NHL Players' Association special counsel Steve Fehr echoed that upbeat assessment, saying it was, "maybe the best day we've had so far."

Although they did not take questions, it was noteworthy that Daly and Fehr stood side-by-side while addressing the media, something that has not happened in the past.

The sides will meet again early today, before a long-planned meeting of the league's Board of Governors, which is set for 11 a.m.

Burkle's fellow co-owner, Mario Lemieux, was not officially part of the talks, but surfaced at the hotel where the meeting was held. Lemieux was accompanied by longtime friend Pat Brisson, who just happens to be Crosby's agent.

The Penguins' ownership is a moderate in the league's labor dispute, and there were numerous reports of players who were in the meeting praising the perspective Burkle, a multi-billionaire reputed to be an outstanding negotiator, brought to it.

Most early, not-for-attribution, reports from inside the talks suggested that the sides managed to find some common ground, which hadn't happened very often in previous get-togethers.

While there was much talk of "progress," no details emerged immediately on areas of the dispute where traction was generated. Nonetheless, those involved in the negotiations seemed to be infused with a sense of cautious optimism that had been missing in the aftermath of most earlier meetings.

The owners and players gathered at a Manhattan hotel shortly after 2 p.m. and, after about 5 1/2 hours of small- and large-group meetings, broke for dinner, during which time the union also conducted a conference call.

A couple of hours later, the parties reconvened for Round 2.

Tuesday's meeting was rooted in a suggestion by NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman, who proposed holding an exchange of ideas in which he and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr would not be involved.

Initial indications were that there would be six owners and six players involved in Tuesday's session, but the league ultimately decided not to limit the number of NHLPA members participating.

Consequently, Crosby and Adams were joined by Jonathan Toews, Martin St. Louis, Ryan Miller, Brad Richards, David Backes, Mike Cammalleri, B.J. Crombeen, Mathieu Darche, Shane Doan, Ron Hainsey, Shawn Horcoff, Jamal Mayers, Manny Malhotra, Andy McDonald, George Parros and Kevin Westgarth.

The other owners who took part were Jeremy Jacobs (Boston), Murray Edwards (Calgary), Jeffrey Vinik (Tampa Bay), Larry Tannenbaum (Toronto) and Mark Chipman (Winnipeg).

Daly and Steve Fehr also participated.

The league's collective bargaining agreement expired Sept. 15, and Bettman imposed the lockout a day later.

Games have been cancelled through Dec. 14, and the league has called off the Winter Classic, which was planned for Jan. 1 at Michigan Stadium in Ann Arbor, and the Jan. 27 All-Star Game in Columbus, Ohio.

NOTES -- Four locally trained players -- goalie John Gibson and forwards J.T. Miller, Vince Trocheck and Riley Barber -- are among the 27 on Team USA's preliminary roster for the world junior championships. Team USA's 23-man roster for the tournament will be announced Dec. 23. ... Penguins prospect Anton Zlobin is one of 31 candidates to invited to try out for Russia's entry in the tournament, while another 2012 draftee, center Teddy Blueger, will play for Latvia. Dave Molinari: Dmolinari@Post-Gazette.com and Twitter @MolinariPG.

645769 St Louis Blues

Hockey Guy: New format, same hurdles in NHL talks

17 hours ago • By Jeff Gordon

NHL players and owners will meet today without commissioner Gary Bettman and union czar Donald Fehr in the room.

Will this change anything?

Some owners believe that Fehr has somehow misled his members in the NHL Players Association. He hasn't.

The players know what's up and most are solidly behind their lead negotiator.

Some players believe Bettman is the root of evil on the other side. He isn't.

Bettman is hapless, not evil. He is just doing the bidding of hard-line owners who are demanding huge player concessions despite the league's steady financial growth.

So optimism is in short supply today. While the negotiating format has changed, the challenges remain the same.

After spending the summer awarding comically over-sized contracts to their players, certain owners turned around and demanded a scorched-earth strategy in negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement.

Never mind that the players hate Bettman and were spoiling for a fight. Never mind that the players hired Fehr, the toughest sports labor negotiator in North America.

The owners are aiming for Total Victory . . . and so here we are, with the NHL fan base in flames and the league staring at billions of dollars in long-term damage if and when it resumes operation.

This stunning brand suicide could trigger NHL front office defections, further franchise instability and even league contraction.

Unless the owners take a more conciliatory negotiating tone and start treating the players as business partners, the NHLPA could execute the nuclear option -- decertification, a move that would throw this whole matter into the courts.

Here is what some of the more savvy NHL observers have to say about all this:

Kevin Allen, USA Today: "Just six months ago, it seemed as if the NHL was in the midst of probably the most exciting business period in league history. Every NHL playoff game was televised nationally. Ratings were up. Sponsorships were up. The NHL's attractiveness and desirability in the corporate world seemed like it was at an all-time high. There was buzz about a Winter Classic drawing more than 115,000 to Ann Arbor, Mich. Players are getting paid well. What recession? The NHL seemed poised to enter the golden era. But with the NHL lockout in its 79th day, it seems as if that has been forgotten. Anger is in control of the NHL CBA negotiations. Both sides view the other side as being unreasonable when it comes to determining what's fair. There is enough rage on both sides of the argument to fuel the blowing up of the entire season. That's why Tuesday's meeting . . . is important. No one expects six owners and six players to truly bargain. The real hope is new voices might bring reason and calm to a negotiation that is top heavy with emotion and distrust."

Scott Burnside, ESPN.com: "The NHL's board of governors meets in New York on Wednesday, but first, on Tuesday, a group of NHL owners and select players will meet for a powwow, accepting commissioner Gary Bettman's suggestion he and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr step back after federal mediation fell apart after two days. Stunt? PR move? Or catalyst to a deal? We'll find out soon enough, but there are lots of questions about whether this will amount to anything."

David Ebner, Globe and Mail: "Tuesday's meeting, in the wake of last week's failed mediator-led sessions, is an attempt to remix the recipe. The NHL Players' Association hadn't said who would attend, but the likes of Chicago's Jonathan Toews were headed to New York. Among owners, two mainstays will be there, Jeremy Jacobs of Boston and Murray Edwards of Calgary, but are complemented by a fresh cross-section of the league, including Pittsburgh's Ron Burkle and Tampa Bay's Jeff Vinik."

Pat Hickey, Montreal Gazette: "A number of the Lightning players, including Vincent Lecavalier and Martin St. Louis, were asked about Vinik last week and they said they believed that Vinik was anxious to play. This is the same response you'll find from players in Montreal and other cities around the NHL. There is very little animosity toward individual owners, but what happens if the players get into a meeting and discover that Vinik is as much of a hardliner as Jacobs?"

Pierre LeBrun, ESPN.com: "Fresh voices are needed in this impasse, that's clear and obvious. But it's not just new voices that are needed, but rather voices that matter, voices that can make the difference. And I think, in Penguins owners Burkle, there's a real positive here."

Stu Hackel, SI.com: "You have to wonder . . . if this player-owner gathering is turning out exactly the way that Bettman hoped when he suggested it. The players will still have some union staff in the room, which wasn't part of his original thinking. And the fact that Rangers owner Jim Dolan, who is believed to be a foe of the lockout, had sources leak to Larry Brooks of The New York Post that he wanted in on the talks (and was excluded) was a reminder that the owners are not as united as Bettman wants to portray. Will this all result in renewed and productive negotiations? Not too many are holding out hope of that."

Stay tuned . . .

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 12.05.2012

645770 Tampa Bay Lightning

Panik finally putting it together with Crunch

turnovers and I think I've played more consistently . . . hopefully its going to continue."

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 12.05.2012

645771 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning owner, players participate in NHL labor talks

Damian Cristodero, Times Staff Writer

With the two biggest egos in the negotiations to end the NHL lockout out of the room, the league and Players' Association apparently made their first progress in weeks toward ending the 81-day labor war.

Face-to-face talks between owners and players — without commissioner Gary Bettman or union executive director Don Fehr — went late into Tuesday night at a New York hotel.

Reports called the talks substantive and said players were cautiously optimistic that progress was made toward a new collective bargaining agreement.

Union counsel Steve Fehr and NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly even held a joint news conference.

"It was maybe the best day we've had," Steve Fehr told reporters, "but lots of work to be done."

Meetings will continue today, again without Bettman and Don Fehr. The Board of Governors also is to meet.

The Lightning was well-represented at the meetings with Jeff Vinik among six owners who attended, and wings Marty St. Louis and B.J. Crombeen among 18 players, who also included Penguins star Sidney Crosby and Rangers and former Lightning center Brad Richards.

The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review reported Penguins co-owner Ron Burkle and Vinik were voices of reason. It is believed Vinik, while wanting the best financial deal possible for owners, wants a season to be played.

The article characterized Vinik as "a favorite" of Burkle, who believes the league may not recover from a second season in eight years lost to a labor dispute.

The sides met for more than five hours in an initial session, broke for dinner then got back to it, though meetings were characterized more as an exchange of ideas than a negotiation.

The most interesting news, though, was that the absence of Bettman and Fehr, according to reports, lowered the tension and distrust between the sides that had grown over time.

While players have said they would agree to a 50-50 split of revenues — they received 57 percent last season — they also want all current contracts honored, something at which the owners have balked.

There also have been divides on player contract rules and how much to expand revenue sharing between the teams.

Games through Dec. 14 have been canceled as has the Jan. 1 Winter Classic and the All-Star Game. Daly has said games could be played about 10 days after a deal is reached.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 12.05.2012

645772 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning's Victor Hedman having "great experience" playing in Kazakhstan

By Damian Cristodero, Times Staff Writer

If ever you are in Kazakhstan, Victor Hedman said, better not to order horse in a restaurant.

By Erik Erendsson

First-round talent, fourth-round effort equated into a second round pick.

That sums up the draft day experience for Lightning prospect Richard Panik. The 6-foot-2, 205-pound right wing was projected as a potential late first-round draft pick in 2009 but questions from scouts about his willingness to showcase his talents on a consistent basis saw his stock drop.

Scouting service Red Line Report said of Panik "On talent alone he'd be first round material."

Though his stock dropped out of the first round, when he was still available as Tampa Bay was set to use the 52nd overall pick, Panik immediately became one of the Lightning's top forward prospects as he oozed talent, something severely lacking in the organization at the time. But that marker followed him around from Bellville to Guelph in the Ontario Hockey League right into last season as a rookie with the Lightning's farm team in Norfolk.

"Panik came in labeled as "Hey he has all the tools in the toolbox, but Panik only opens the toolbox just once every six games",", Syracuse head coach Jon Cooper said.

Though Tampa Bay's depth in the farm system has become much deeper than it was when Panik was drafted year, his recent improvements may have him better lined to one day play in the NHL despite the recent additions of J.T. Brown, 2011 first-round pick Vladislav Namestnikov and Cory Conacher, among others.

Now in his second full year as a professional, Panik might be putting together his exceptional talent with a better consistent effort and stronger play in the defensive end. Through 19 games with Syracuse in the American Hockey League, Panik is second on the Crunch and tied for fifth overall in the league with 11 goals on the season and is tied for 10th overall with 20 points.

His career-long 12-game scoring streak — the longest streak in the AHL this season by four games — was snapped in Sunday's loss in Binghamton.

After a solid second half of last season — he finished with 19 goals and 41 points in 65 games — Panik appears to be on the right path to finding the necessary consistency level in his game that allows the coaching staff to give him more ice time which in turn allows more opportunities for Panik to put his offensive talents on display.

"The kid has found a real consistency to his game and I think hopefully this will stick with him from today, tomorrow and the rest of his career," Cooper said. "He kind of came in as sort of a project X and I'm not going to lie, a couple of years ago that was that guy. But in a short year and a half he's gone from a regular healthy scratch to a regular top line guy on our team. That's a credit to him to buying into what it is we are doing."

Panik said it was a difficult process for him making the transition from junior to the NHL last year, which affected his confidence with the puck.

"Last year it was difficult for me, it was my first year as a pro and after not having a good NHL camp, I had to fight for a spot in the AHL," he said. "Last year when I did play I had lots of turnovers and I didn't play consistently."

So Cooper and the coaching staff worked with Panik on learning to balance out his game by making sure he took care of the little details, particularly in the defensive zone which started to result in more offensive opportunities. The progress has been easy to see.

"He's been made accountable so if Richard Panik wants to be Richard Panik he just has to work in some other areas of his game like the defensive side," Cooper said. "I think when he kind of grasps that it just isn't the north end of the ice that matters but the whole part of the ice, he's kind of taken a little bit of pride in that. Now all of a sudden Richard has gone from good one out of every six games to now he's goods every six games and average maybe one."

It's been an approach Panik brought with him to training camp and has carried over into his play.

"My focus at the start this season was I didn't want it to be like last year," he said. "It helped me a lot when Coop was talking to me what should I do better last year. Now the season is going good; I'm not doing that many

Yes, it is a delicacy there. But, really, "It's disgusting," Hedman said. "It was chewy. It's tough to explain what it tastes like."

It is a minor demerit.

The ultra-modern capital city of Astana, where the Lightning defenseman is playing during the NHL lockout, has plenty of top-notch restaurants that offer his favorite sushi.

Add that Hedman's team, Barys, is in the playoff hunt and he has blossomed into one of the top blue-liners in Russia's Kontinental Hockey League, and the experience already has been worthwhile.

"A great experience," Hedman said by phone. "I've been playing a lot and developing my game. I'm very happy I chose to come here, and I'm very eager to get back to Tampa and prove I've gotten better as a player."

Hedman's 18 assists are tied for second among league defensemen and his 18 points in 21 games are sixth. He is averaging 21:51 of ice time and is plus-12.

But Hedman, 21, said he is most excited about his work on offense, especially on the power play where he wants to expand his role with Tampa Bay.

The big Swede last season had only four assists on the power play and averaged just 1:08 of ice time. Overall, he had five goals, 23 points in 61 games with an average 23:05 of ice time.

But Hedman said he now better understands how to meld offensive creativity with defensive positioning. His reaction time also has improved.

"The more time he can spend on (the power play) the more comfortable he will be," Lightning general manager Steve Yzerman said. "I know he has the ability to play on it, so it's a matter of getting the opportunity and he's getting that over there."

"You can definitely get better playing there," said Tampa Bay captain Vinny Lecavalier, who during the 2004-05 lockout played in Russia for Kazan. "It's a little different style of play, a little more free on the ice. It's not as structured. But it's not like you're playing 16-year-olds. It's the second-best league in the world."

As easily as it seems Hedman fit in, there were adjustments.

His coach speaks only Russian, which Hedman said requires the goaltenders coach, who was born in Russia but lives in Michigan, to translate into English. The 54-game regular season also allows for more practice time than the NHL's 82-game schedule.

"We might get one day off every three weeks," Hedman said. "I want to work hard every day. That's why it's good. Sometimes you wish there was more flow to the practices, but coach works a lot on the system. You just have to get used to it and accept it."

Much like accepting one will spend a lot of time indoors in Astana, considered one of the world's coldest capitals with winter temperatures as low as minus-50.

So, Hedman turns on his tablet to keep up with Homeland, his favorite television show, and emails from the Players' Association about the lockout.

As for his meals, he's "playing it safe," staying away from anything with horse meat.

"You have to try it once," Hedman said, "but never again."

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 12.05.2012

645773 Toronto Maple Leafs

Canadian junior team defence big and skilled

Daniel Girard

News of Ryan Murray's season-ending shoulder injury was seen as a big blow to Canada's hopes at the world junior hockey championship in Russia.

The 19-year-old, second overall pick of the Columbus Blue Jackets, was to anchor the blue line, a returnee from last year's bronze-medal winning team who went on to become the second-youngest Canadian to Paul Kariya

when he played at the senior world championships in Helsinki and Stockholm.

There's no doubt that Murray, the captain of the WHL Everett Silvertips, will be missed as Canada looks to win gold for the first time since 2009.

But even with Murray on the shelf, Canada is replete with a collection of big and skilled defencemen who will be the envy of any team in the tournament.

"You never want to see anybody get hurt," head coach Steve Spott said Tuesday. "But ultimately, if we were going to have an injury, the one area that maybe we could afford was on our back end because of the depth."

A dozen defencemen are vying for seven spots on the final roster.

Boston prospect Dougie Hamilton, one of two returning defencemen, is a potential team captain. A complete player, the Niagara Ice Dog is the league's top-scoring rearguard with 39 points in 30 games and is plus-23.

"With his versatility, obviously he has the ability to run our power play but the challenge for Doug is going to be playing against the other team's top line as well," Spott said. "It's going to be a great challenge for him."

Leafs prospect Morgan Rielly of the Moose Jaw Warriors may join Hamilton on the top defensive pairing, especially with his performance in last summer's Canada-Russia Challenge and last month's Subway Series.

"The two of them are superb defencemen who can play in all areas of the game," said TSN hockey analyst Craig Button, who tracks junior prospects through his Craig's List. "They really are exceptional talents."

Also returning is Pittsburgh's Scott Harrington of the London Knights, a big strong guy who also has the ability to quarterback the Canadian power play.

Detroit prospect Xavier Ouellet, who had a strong Canada-Russia Challenge, is "a terrific two-way defenceman," said Button, even if unknown to many.

Ryan Murphy, a Carolina first-round pick who plays for Spott in Kitchener, is "a dynamic, puck-handling, puck-possession player," Button said.

"On the bigger rink, that's a real valuable asset."

Spott agrees, but when speaking of both Murphy and Rielly is quick to point to the need for each to "play a risk-free game" when suiting up for Canada.

The competition promises to be fierce for the other two spots on defence.

With all the offensive talent assembled, Vancouver fifth-rounder Frank Corrado may be a popular choice because, as head scout Kevin Prendergast said, "he's a stay-at-home-player, he's gritty, he brings leadership."

Corrado will battle for a spot against three others who also played in Canada-Russia over the summer — Minnesota first-rounder Matthew Dumba and New York Islanders prospects Griffin Reinhart and Adam Pelech.

Pittsburgh first-rounder Derrick Pouliot, Detroit prospect Ryan Sproule and Calgary draft pick Tyler Wotherspoon round out the invited defencemen.

"It's a very competitive group back there," Spott said.

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.05.2012

645774 Toronto Maple Leafs

World junior hockey championships: Leafs prospects Tyler Biggs, Garret Sparks invited to U.S. camp

Daniel Girard

Maple Leafs prospects Tyler Biggs and Garret Sparks have been invited to the final selection camp for the United States world junior team.

Biggs, 19, the 6-foot-2, 223-pound forward in his first year with the Oshawa Generals has 15 goals and 16 assists in 30 games, good for second in team scoring on the East division leader behind Canadian invitee Boone Jenner.

The Leafs first pick, 22nd overall in 2011, is one of 15 forwards invited.

Sparks, 19, is one of three goalies. The 6-foot-2, 211-pound seventh-round pick, 190th overall, in 2011 is having a solid season with the Guelph Storm. He's posted a 15-7-0-3 record with a 2.91 GAA, .916 save percentage and three shutouts for a team sitting fourth in the OHL Eastern Conference.

Defenceman Seth Jones of the WHL Portland Winterhawks, a potential first-round pick in next spring's NHL entry draft, headlines a list of 27 players, which includes three returnees. Sarnia Sting forward Alex Galchenyuk, third overall draft pick of the Montreal Canadiens last spring, and Stefan Noesen of the Plymouth Whalers, an Ottawa Senators first-rounder, were also called.

The U.S., which finished out of the medals last year, will cut its squad to 23 players after a camp in Helsinki Dec. 19-23. Their first tournament game in Ufa, Russia is Dec. 27 against Germany. They face Canada on Dec. 30.

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.05.2012

645775 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: Season could be saved as labour talks heat up

It's day 80 of the NHL lockout. And - as Kevin McGran tells us - the players will meet with the owners in search of a breakthrough.

Optimism that the NHL season could be saved was rising as talks between players and owners went surprisingly long and continued until midnight in New York.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and Steve Fehr — the NHLPA's special counsel appeared together shortly after midnight to deliver some positive-sounding statements. It was the first time the two appeared together to talk to the media after a bargaining session.

"I think everybody wants to get a deal done, so I think that's encouraging," Daly told the New York Daily News. "We look forward to making more progress.

"A lot of work remains to be done," Fehr told The Canadian Press.

If the NHL is to be saved this season, it may well be the Pittsburgh Penguins who deserve the credit. It turns out that Sidney Crosby, Mario Lemieux and others within the Penguins organization have been working privately to find a resolution.

Lemieux, a Hall of Famer and co-owner of the Penguins, arrived in New York on Tuesday. He didn't participate in the talks between players and owners that pointedly left NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr on the sidelines.

But Crosby did, as did Lemieux's partner with the Penguins, Ron Burkle.

And the three — Crosby, Lemieux and Burkle — had been working together privately, the Pittsburgh Tribune Review reported Tuesday night.

"Over the past few weeks, Crosby, Burkle and Lemieux have privately discussed plans to bridge the gap between players and owners," a player said. Citing sources, the paper said all three had grown frustrated with the lack of progress.

"Crosby also will not break ranks with the players' union, but his objective over the past week has been to establish common ground among players who have lost trust in NHL ownership and management as a whole," sources said.

There had been a fairly tight cone of silence on the talks between player and owners, but it was believed Crosby and Burkle were the voices of reason inside the room.

The paper said the threesome were worried the league would never recover from its self-inflicted wounds if games beyond Dec. 15 were cancelled.

The paper said Burkle requested to be involved early last week. His net worth is \$3.5 billion (U.S.), built on a California grocery empire, and he gained a reputation of helping strike deals with the unions he employed.

Of note, Crosby's agent, Pat Brisson, was also reported to be in the hotel where the talks were taking place.

The NHL has called an afternoon news conference, but that had been preplanned due to the board of governors meetings planned for Wednesday.

In all, 18 players took part in the talks as well as six owners. Leafs co-owner Larry Tanenbaum, Jets co-owner Mark Chipman and Lightning owner Jeff Vinik were — like Burkle — taking part in talks for the first time. Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs — deemed a hard-liner — and Flames co-owner Murray Edwards were in the talks. They had been by Bettman's side through most of the talks this fall.

The league locked out the players Sept. 16. More than one-third of the season has been cancelled — games through to Dec. 16. The league is losing up to \$20 million a day.

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.05.2012

645776 Toronto Maple Leafs

Bruins, Leafs players missing out on opportunity to speak to their bosses

By Michael Traikos

Zdeno Chara and Joffrey Lupul are in Russia, Tyler Seguin is in Switzerland, and Clarke MacArthur is in Germany. But where are Phil Kessel and John-Michael Liles? Where are Shawn Thornton and Brad Marchand?

Where are the Boston and Toronto players who should be speaking up against Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs and Maple Leafs owner Larry Tanenbaum?

Jacobs and Tanenbaum, along with four others NHL team owners — Calgary's Murray Edwards, Pittsburgh's Ron Burkle, Tampa Bay's Jeff Vinik, and Winnipeg's Mark Chipman — are meeting with NHL players in New York on Tuesday. And while there are 18 players in New York today, including two from Pittsburgh (Sidney Crosby and Craig Adams), one from Calgary (Michael Cammalleri), Tampa Bay (Martin St. Louis), and Winnipeg (Ron Hainsey), Boston and Toronto are noticeably absent.

Down Goes Brown: NHL lockout — A players' guide to owners

Maybe this is coincidence. Maybe Boston and Toronto did not have any players who had been actively involved in the negotiating sessions. Then again, considering that Toronto is the richest team in the NHL and that Boston's Jacobs has been blamed for this lockout, maybe it was out of fear.

Boston's Thornton told reporters last month that the longer this lockout stretches, the chances increase that his career could be over. So maybe speaking out against Jacobs would be just that — a career killer. Toronto goaltender James Reimer had attended previous sessions, but after his sub-par season last year, maybe he did not want to rock the boat.

Still, it would have been beneficial for all six owners to sit across from players that are on the payroll.

"I think you'd want players to speak to the owners they are employed by," player agent Kevin Epp said last week. "You want a guy like [Vancouver Canucks owner Francesco] Aquilini talking to Cory Schneider or [Montreal Canadiens owner] Geoff Molson talking to Josh Gorges."

At this meeting, players and owners will have a chance to talk about the issues that have prevented both sides from reaching a deal on a new collective bargaining agreement. It is not a bargaining session. No one is signing anything. It is simply an opportunity to see if removing commissioner Gary Bettman and union leader Don Fehr will spark change.

Having a player speak directly to the person signing his cheque should be invaluable. Crosby, who signed a 12-year, US\$104.4-million contract in the summer, can look Burkle in the eye and ask whether the signing was done in good faith. Vinick and Chipman can explain to St. Louis and Hainsey how the lockout is actually hurting small-market teams like Tampa Bay and Winnipeg.

Jacobs and Tanenbaum, however, get off free.

It would have been nice had Seguin been able to question Jacobs' hypocrisy, for Liles and Lupul to spew the venom they previously directed at Bettman towards Tanenbaum. But that responsibility will now be left up towards players like Jonathan Toews, David Backes and Kevin Westgarth, who do not have a personal attachment to those other cities.

The NHLPA has been given an opportunity here. But Boston and Toronto are missing out.

National Post LOADED: 12.05.2012

645777 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: A players' guide to owners

By Sean McIndoe

Hi guys ... your pal Donald Fehr here. As you know, you've been selected to represent the NHLPA in today's special "players/owners" meeting. The league released the names of the owners and league officials who'll be representing them over the weekend, which gave me time to put together this scouting report on the key stakeholders you'll be dealing with today.

Have a look, and make sure you're prepared.

And remember, if at any point you get confused or lose track of our negotiating points, just look for the window washer outside who looks mysteriously like me wearing a moustache made of duct tape.

Mark Chipman, Winnipeg Jets

Strength Many of the negative feelings in this dispute have revolved around contract rights for top-tier players, so it will probably be good to include an owner who doesn't have any.

Weakness Occasionally annoys fellow owners by saying crazy things like "Hey, did anyone notice how moving that struggling southern team to a better market made us all way more money?"

Strength He also has ownership stakes in Liverpool FC and the Boston Red Sox, so even if this meeting ends in a full-scale fist fight, it will still be the most successful thing he's been a part of all year.

Weakness Every time the negotiation teams agree on an updated set of rules regarding unrestricted free agency, he sneaks over during a break and writes "(except for Stamkos)" in tiny print at the bottom.

Ron Burkle, Pittsburgh Penguins

Strength Unlike everyone else in the room, will probably try really hard not to fall asleep the second Sidney Crosby starts talking.

Weakness He's always ranting about NHL players being cement-headed morons who couldn't negotiate a decent deal to save their lives, then trailing off awkwardly when he realizes his Penguins co-owner is standing right behind him.

Jeremy Jacobs, Boston Bruins

Strength Has earned a reputation as an owner who can quickly achieve consensus with colleagues who may disagree with him.

Weakness He achieves that consensus by pointing a bony fingertip at them and muttering, "Be gone," until it's just him sitting alone in an empty room surrounded by smoking piles of ash.

Bill Daly, NHL deputy commissioner

Strength Is not, in the strictest technical sense, Gary Bettman.

Weakness Whenever he tries to make a statement to NHL fans, he's interrupted after 30 seconds by Frank Luntz looking up from a piece of paper labelled "Mindless Clichés" and yelling "BINGO."

Murray Edwards, Calgary Flames

Strength Has been one of the league's key negotiators throughout this entire process, so if everyone in the room just listens to everything he says and then does the exact opposite we can probably have this thing wrapped up by lunchtime.

Weakness Has been known to bore the NHL's most influential decision-makers with fanciful stories of a mysterious far-off place called "the Western Conference."

Larry Tanenbaum, Toronto Maple Leafs

Strength Is often the very first person that other NHL owners call during times of need, although those calls only ever consist of the other owner repeatedly yelling, "Where's my cheque, revenue-sharing boy?"

Weakness Any time the two sides start talking about who should win on a certain bargaining point, he'll make everyone stop and explain what exactly they mean by this bizarre and foreign concept of a "win."

National Post LOADED: 12.05.2012

645778 Vancouver Canucks

High-paced scrimmages, no post-concussion symptoms a boon for Ballard

By Ben Kuzma

VANCOUVER — The hockey homecoming novelty has worn off for Keith Ballard, but the benefit could be lasting.

An alum of the University of Minnesota, the Vancouver Canucks defenceman has taken to a sheet of ice at the Minneapolis campus three to four times a week with as many as 30 players during the NHL lockout. Far from casual gatherings, they have been run by former European and college coach John Harrington, who assisted on Mike Eruzione's go-ahead goal for the U.S. in the famous 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics triumph over the Soviet Union.

Now you know why they call it the State of Hockey.

From former Golden Gophers like Erik Johnson, Kyle Okposo and Ballard to current Wild players Zach Parise, Mikko Koivu, Niklas Backstrom and Cal Clutterbuck and a host of other NHL players who reside in Minnesota during the offseason, the lengthy sessions may give them a leg up if there's a shortened season.

"We've got ice every day and after skating for 45 minutes and then a 45-minute scrimmage, the rust comes out," chuckled Ballard. "It's pretty impressive the group we have and the pace of our skates."

The season can't start soon enough for Ballard who actually has something to build upon. After missing the final 29 regular-season games with a concussion, he played in the final four conference quarterfinal encounters with the Los Angeles Kings. The bitter disappointment of a surprising first-round exit was tempered by Ballard looking confident and poised in a pairing with Chris Tanev. There was patience instead of panic as he logged 16:35 in the Game 4 victory which included 2:33 of shorthanded time. More importantly, the whiplash he suffered Feb. 4 on the cumulative effects of two hits against Colorado — his face hitting the end boards on a check from Daniel Winnik before being crosschecked in the back on the next shift — has not produced post-concussion symptoms.

"I've been good," added the 30-year-old Ballard. "And if I had anything, I wouldn't have come back and played in the playoffs. But I've had nothing since then and nothing over the summer. I've been fine. I was pleased how I came back and played after missing that much time and that was a big step. It was a little re-assuring and a good feeling to play pretty well. But from a team standpoint, it was extremely disappointing."

"I think how L.A. did it — and I don't want to say luck — but the Kings barely got in the playoffs and put it together at the right time. We had good games with them but then we're down 3-0. You don't want to say it was a learning experience because that means you got what you didn't want."

Disappointment has often been associated with Ballard in his two seasons with the Canucks. With three seasons left on his contract at \$4.2 million US annually, it's a hefty price tag for anyone in a third pairing and it will only be magnified when the salary cap ceiling drops in a new collective bargaining agreement. But Ballard maintains he's in a good place, even if coach Alain Vigneault often chose to play the departed Aaron Rome ahead of him.

"I don't know what they [coaches] have in mind for me," he said. "I've had a lot of different partners there and you kind of expect that. With Chris, we've had good chemistry and communicated really well. If that happens good. If not, you do the best with what you have."

"My first year was more of an adjustment period than I had probably anticipated and there were a lot of ups and down, but I felt really comfortable last year. I'm in a different role than previously in my career"

[Florida, Phoenix] and I've done everything I can to embrace my role and do the best I can with it. I just want to continue to do that."

In the interim, a Christmas without hockey will find the blueliner at Ballard's Resort in his native Baudette, Minn. The family-owned fishing resort is near the Canadian border and Lake of the Woods. It was established in 1961 and it's where Ballard learn to catch walleye, whether in the summer or frigid winter in one of those ice-fishing shacks.

"You get up there and get in your jeans and a sweat shirt and you'll be just fine, even though it's 20 below zero," said Ballard. "Unless you have to go to the bathroom, you usually stay pretty warm. I haven't been up there since September and we're just waiting for the ice to get a little thicker. A lot of people have said: 'Are you bored?' Obviously, I want to be playing, but to spend a lot of time with my wife and daughter and to not be on a six-game road trip, I'm enjoying that aspect of it.

"I'm not walking around and moping every day."

OF NOTE — Cory Schneider made 35 saves Tuesday but Ambri-Piotta lost 4-1 to the Zurich Lions, who are coached by Marc Crawford. Former Canucks forward Ryan Shannon and Dustin Brown had a goal and an assist each for the Lions.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 12.05.2012

645779 Vancouver Canucks

A ray of hope in NHL labour talks?

JOANNA SLATER DAVID EBNER

Direct talks between NHL players and owners extended late into Tuesday night, negotiations described as substantive and positive, which serves as a first sign of progress in weeks and comes just ahead of a key meeting of the league's board of governors on Wednesday.

The players-owners meeting – with 18 players and six owners – was convened at a New York hotel to add new voices to the debate, to revive stalled negotiations following failed mediation last week. NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA head Donald Fehr were not in the room, and the meeting began shortly after 2 p.m. ET, stretching 51/2 hours before an hour-long dinner break, the players ordering food in, the owners departing.

The biggest name in the room was Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins, who was flanked by the likes of Chicago's Jonathan Toews, Phoenix's Shane Doan and Buffalo's Ryan Miller, as well as Calgary's Michael Cammalleri. Lesser-known names, such as Winnipeg defenceman Ron Hainsey and Anaheim enforcer George Parros, were also there. The 18 faced a half-dozen owners, led by mainstays Jeremy Jacobs of Boston and Murray Edwards of Calgary, plus new faces, Larry Tanenbaum from Toronto, Ron Burkle from Pittsburgh, Jeff Vinik from Tampa Bay, and Mark Chipman from Winnipeg.

No official statements were issued but reports suggested the talks were productive. One report tagged a new addition to the owners' roster, Burkle, as an important moderate voice, as had been forecast given he was known as a friend of labour in his business career. A Sports Business Journal reporter cited an unidentified player as saying, "Good meeting. I'm optimistic."

Should Tuesday serve as a lasting platform to underpin a resolution, regular-season hockey could emerge fairly quickly, in 10 days or so after a deal is made. Bill Daly, NHL deputy commissioner, said "at least seven days for training camp" and "at least a couple days" to finalize a new collective agreement would be needed.

It was unclear late Tuesday whether the players and owners would continue to meet on Wednesday. The NHL governors will meet Wednesday morning in New York, and Bettman is expected to brief reporters in the early afternoon. The board meeting will be dominated by the labour talks but there isn't a set framework for the gathering, according to Vancouver Canucks president and general manager Mike Gillis.

"We don't have an agenda at this point," Gillis told Vancouver radio station Team 1040 on Tuesday morning. Gillis was in New York with Canucks owner Francesco Aquilini and chief operating officer Victor de Bonis. Gillis expressed optimism for Tuesday's meeting.

"The next couple days are important days but we've thought other days were important in the past," Gillis said.

"You know, I'm hopeful, I think there's going to be a new form of communication today."

It was Day 80 of the lockout Tuesday and the scene played out in midtown Manhattan. The unorthodox meeting took place at the Westin hotel, around the corner from Times Square and 10 blocks directly north of Madison Square Garden, home of the New York Rangers. Bettman, while not in the room, was seen at the hotel, the spectre of the commissioner ever-present.

A little after 2 p.m. on the balmy December afternoon, the players entered a conference room on the third floor of the hotel, whose staff restricted access to the area. Outside the meeting room, a table full of refreshments – coffee, juices, water – stood untouched.

Hours passed. One floor up, in a room reserved for a possible press briefing, 40 or so journalists waited for someone to emerge, a phalanx of upward of a dozen television cameras at the ready. No one came. Reporters sat on the floor, traded theories about the talks, dashed across the street to retrieve coffee or snacks. Day turned to night.

The biggest news in 51/2 hours: that the owners had departed the hotel for their dinner.

If the seeming positive tone on Tuesday does not hold, and acrimony returns, the next major strategic play will probably be the players moving to decertify their union. The tactic in the past was considered unlikely to be used by players' unions, but last year unions in both the NFL and NBA used the move to some success. In the NBA, after more than four months of go-nowhere talks, the players dissolved their union and less than two weeks later they had a deal, with owners making concessions.

Decertification allows players to sue owners under antitrust law and the tactic is likely to become a standard weapon in battles such as the NHL against its workers, according to labour expert Nathaniel Grow.

"Players will likely continue to dissolve their unions during future lockouts in order to gain negotiating leverage over ownership through the assertion of antitrust claims," wrote Grow of the University of Georgia in a forthcoming paper on the NBA/NFL labour scraps in the Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment and Technology Law.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.05.2012

645780 Vancouver Canucks

NHL, union have many hurdles to clear in search for a deal

DAVID EBNER

On Tuesday afternoon – when NHL players and owners are set to meet without Gary Bettman and Don Fehr – the weather in New York is forecast to be positively balmy, some clouds and 17 C in early December.

The temperature inside is unclear. Some owners are suddenly optimistic while others see a season slipping away. And should Canada's biggest hockey star, Sidney Crosby, be in the room, my colleague Roy MacGregor highlights a big unspoken question in this lockout, player safety and concussions, which has gone essentially unmentioned when a year ago it was the biggest story in hockey and now subsumed by a lockout that has been a long calculus over divvying up millions and billions of dollars.

But if Tuesday proves to be a breakthrough, and given it is now December, the question of mechanics stews. Reviving hockey would happen quickly, if a deal were to be had, with about 10 days from the agreement to the puck dropping for regular-season games, according to Bill Daly, NHL deputy commissioner. He will be in the room Tuesday afternoon, along with Steve Fehr, counsel for the players association.

"Timeline is we likely need at least seven days for training camp and at least a couple days before then to finalize and adequately document the deal," said Daly in an e-mail on Monday evening.

Monday evening also saw a seeming unusual media report, from sports anchor Steve Burton of WBZ-TV in Boston. Burton reported that there had been a private meeting Monday with a "high-ranking official" from both

sides, the players and the league, and "significant progress" had been made, with a deal possibly announced Tuesday or Wednesday.

Daly, as he did in last week when mediation failed, described the gap between the two sides as significant.

A source from the owners side with a pessimistic view told The Globe on Monday that the gap between the two sides is possibly too large to bridge.

In theory, the sides are only \$182-million apart, based on the now-often cited agreement on the players acquiescing to the owners' demand for a 50-50 split of hockey revenues. But the players want an infusion of \$393-million to cover current contracts, whereas the owners have offered \$211-million.

The figure of \$182-million does not seem massive against revenue of \$3.3-billion in 2011-12, especially with the acknowledged disaster of losing a second season in nine years.

Still, last week, mediators spent several hours with both sides over two days and, according to Daly, the conclusion was: "the parties remained far apart."

On Monday evening, responding to a question about the reported \$182-million gap, Daly pointed to the other big issues such as player contracts and length of the next collective bargaining agreement.

Owners are, as with the revenue split, seeking concessions, while players are trying to hang on to what they had agreed to just seven years ago.

"Differences aren't just financial," said Daly by e-mail. "Still a long way apart on system issues and term. Unfortunately, lots left to agree to."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.05.2012

645781 Winnipeg Jets

Jets check Burmi's 'upper-body injury'

By: Staff Writer

ALEX BURMISTROV'S NHL developmental road, which has taken him from Atlanta to Winnipeg to St. John's over the last three years, has hit a bit of a speed bump.

Burmistrov returned to Winnipeg this week along with IceCaps teammate John Albert to have Jets doctors examine what team officials are calling an "upper-body injury."

The extent of the injury is not known, but an IceCaps spokesman said Tuesday night that with a four-day break in the schedule before the club returns to the ice again Friday night in St. John's against Springfield, the team opted to have Burmistrov checked out by the Jets medical staff. The spokesman said the IceCaps hope to have both players back in the lineup soon.

Burmistrov's arrival in Winnipeg became public when he used his Instagram account to post a picture of his airline ticket here.

He has played in all 22 games with the IceCaps this year, including last Saturday's 5-3 road loss in Wilkes-Barre/Scranton.

The 21-year-old Russian is trying to grow his game in the American Hockey League after scoring 13 goals with the Jets last year but struggling with consistency.

-- Ed Tait

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 12.05.2012

645782 Winnipeg Jets

Another go at the gold

By: Ed Tait

Just to be clear right from the get-go: Jacob Trouba is enrolled in the University of Michigan's School of Kinesiology and not geography.

So when he is asked for a scouting report for Ufa, Russia -- the site of this year's World Junior Hockey Championship and a spot the Winnipeg Jets' 2012 first-round draft pick will soon be visiting as a member of Team USA -- Trouba has to make a small confession:

His knowledge of Ufa is about the same as most of the rest of us -- which, and we apologize for the wide-ranging assumption here, is probably diddly and squat.

"I know probably just as much as you do," Trouba chuckled when reached Tuesday in Michigan. "I'll have to wait and see what it's like. All I know is I'm looking forward to it."

(A quick aside for the curious: Ufa is the capital of the Republic of Bashkortostan in Russia, has a population of just over 1 million and is approximately 1,400 kilometres east of Moscow. Here endeth the lesson.)

Trouba, drafted ninth overall by the Jets last June, is one of 27 players invited to Team USA's world junior championship selection camp, beginning Dec. 16 in Tarrytown, N.Y. He'll be one of three returning members from last year's squad, along with goaltender John Gibson and forward J.T. Miller. Avenging

First and foremost for those wearing the red, white and blue will be this: avenging last year's showing, when the Americans were sent to the relegation round for the first time since 1999.

"It's definitely exciting," Trouba said.

"It's something I had hoped to be a part of again. But just knowing it's here now is exciting and seeing the guys I'm going to be with and that it's that time of year is pretty cool.

"I've been waiting awhile to make up for what happened last year."

Trouba made Team USA last year as a 17-year-old and now, just like fellow Jets draft pick Mark Scheifele with Canada, is hoping that experience will have him better prepared this time.

"Last year, I was fighting for a spot at camp and then just fighting to make the team," Trouba said. "This year, I know what to expect going in, and so because I'm better prepared for it, I hope I can help the team be better prepared for it."

The Jets love Trouba's upside, given his mix of physical play, his offence and a growing reputation as a player with a nasty streak.

And while Jet brass have seen him a lot this season at Michigan, the progress reports from outside the organization have also been nothing but positive.

"He's been excellent," said Team USA GM Jim Johansson in a conference call Tuesday.

"He's taken on a large role as a freshman (at Michigan). But if you didn't have a game program, you'd never think he was a freshman. He's physically mature, he's playing at a high level, he can generate offence for you, he can play tough against the top players and he can deliver big hits in games.

"He's a guy who, as his game continues to grow with continued repetition and experience, everything just keeps getting better and he just keeps getting more and more of a full package."

And then there's this from ex-Jet Phil Housley, Team USA's head coach:

"I thought he had a great tournament last year and he had a good camp at Lake Placid and continued to improve his game. We're going to need to lean on some guys that have leadership qualities when the time gets tough or we face adversity."

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645783 Winnipeg Jets

Jets' Trouba invited to Team USA selection camp

By: Ed Tait

Another Winnipeg Jet prospect is one step closer to strutting his stuff again on the international stage.

Jacob Trouba, the Jets' first-round pick in the 2012 NHL Entry Draft (9th overall), has been invited to Team USA's World Junior Championship Selection Camp beginning Dec. 16th at the New York Rangers' Madison Square Garden Training Center in Tarrytown, NY.

"It's definitely exciting," said Trouba today from Michigan. "It's something I had hoped to be a part of again. But just knowing it's here now is exciting and seeing the guys I'm going to be with and that it's that time of year is pretty cool.

"I've been waiting awhile to make up for what happened last year."

What happened last year? The Americans went 1-3 and were sent to the relegation round for the first time since 1999.

Team USA has invited 27 players to its camp and Trouba is one of three returning members from last year's squad, along with goaltender John Gibson and forward J.T. Miller. After the first camp, the team will hold an additional session in Helsinki, Finland before announcing its 23-player roster on Dec. 23rd.

The Trouba announcement comes one day after Canada announced the 37 players heading to their selection camp, including 2011 Jet first-rounder Mark Scheifele.

The 18-year-old Trouba has played in 14 games at the University of Michigan, recording 10 points (4G, 6A) while playing significant minutes as a freshman.

The 2013 IIHF World Junior Championships will be held Dec. 26-Jan. 5 in Ufa, Russia.

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 12.05.2012

645784 Websites

ESPN / NHLPA puts right players at the table

By Scott Burnside

By now, everyone connected to the NHL lockout should have the common sense to temper even the remotest hint of optimism that something is going to happen to break the labor impasse.

Frankly, given the shambles this negotiation represents, that part has been easy.

It is no different now that the NHL Players' Association has unveiled the roster of players that will meet Tuesday afternoon with a reconfigured group of NHL owners, minus the leaders from both sides: commissioner Gary Bettman and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr.

Still, as you wander down the list of 18 NHL players who hope to turn Tuesday's dialogue into some sort of forward traction, it's hard not to see this as some sort of last, best hope at a deal to save some portion of the 2012-13 season.

There are players who have been involved in the process more or less from the get-go, including Craig Adams, Kevin Westgarth, Ron Hainsey, George Parros and David Backes. But it's the group that rounds out the 18 that provides a significantly different dynamic.

There's Pittsburgh captain Sidney Crosby, who will be sitting across the table from Pens owner Ron Burkle, one of four new owners brought in for this meeting.

Crosby's place at the table cannot be understated -- nor can Burkle's, for that matter.

Crosby was "the face" of the new NHL after the last lockout scuttled the entire 2004-05 season. He now represents a strong and unifying presence among a player group that appears to be as unified as the day the lockout began in mid-September.

Also at the table will be former Hart Trophy winner Martin St. Louis. The veteran Tampa forward has a ton of credibility, and the fact that Lightning owner Jeff Vinik has been added to the ownership mix should also provide for some healthy give and take.

Murray Edwards, chairman of the Calgary Flames ownership group and part of the NHL's bargaining committee, will see a familiar face at the table as Flames star Mike Cammalleri is part of the player group. Cammalleri remains among the brightest of NHL players.

The other owners expected to represent the league Tuesday are Jeremy Jacobs of the Boston Bruins -- a lightning rod for player discontent during the lockout -- Mark Chipman of the Winnipeg Jets and Larry Tanenbaum of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Along with Crosby and St. Louis, the players' contingent will be heavy on leadership and credibility both on and off the ice, with Chicago captain Jonathan Toews -- a frequent critic of the owners during the lockout -- and Phoenix captain Shane Doan in the mix. Former Vezina Trophy winner Ryan Miller, one of the most passionate and eloquent players in the game, is also part of the players' roster.

Multiple sources have told ESPN.com they expect this meeting to be about establishing a dialogue about how to bridge the gap that exists between the two sides, as opposed to a traditional bargaining session.

Certainly the new faces on the ownership side of the table should allow players to gather a broader cross-section of information from the players' perspective. Likewise, the mix of players, which includes some of the game's most high-profile, most respected players, should give owners a fuller understanding of where the players stand on negotiations.

Will things get heated?

They'd better. There's only a season at stake here.

No reason to start pulling punches now.

Will it be enough to save at least a portion of the 2012-13 season?

If not, it won't be because the two sides didn't bring the right people to the table.

ESPN LOADED: 12.05.2012

645785 Websites

ESPN / Penguins' power play brings deal closer

By Pierre LeBrun

NEW YORK -- The players emerged from the room around midnight and scurried down the hotel escalator past reporters, unwilling to share much, if anything.

The smiles on some of their faces, however, suggested it wasn't a bad day at all.

As one player would later share via text message to ESPN.com, "There was certainly traction. But I don't want to say more."

That cautious optimism -- the key word being cautious -- was on full display when NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHLPA outside counsel Steve Fehr stood shoulder to shoulder in a joint media availability after the marathon sessions, Fehr calling it possibly the best day in the entire process, while Daly nodded in agreement.

But other than that, both sides were tight-lipped. Like a pitcher working on a no-hitter through six innings, it's too early to get too excited.

I'd be ready to say this, however: I'm willing to bet there's a far greater chance of hockey this season than not after Tuesday's developments.

At the center of this fragile momentum is the presence of the Pittsburgh Penguins, led by reclusive billionaire owner Ron Burkle, who shined brightly in talks Tuesday, according to sources, the players receptive to his tone.

Burkle's first appearance in labor talks comes at a critical time in the process, with both sides having tried nearly everything else -- mediation, large group meetings, small group meetings, etc.

When NHL commissioner Gary Bettman offered to bench himself from this meeting as long as NHLPA counterpart Donald Fehr did as well, it was an opportunity for Burkle to enter the picture and do his thing.

Burkle over the past couple of weeks had conversed with Sidney Crosby's agent, Pat Brisson, and fellow Penguins owner Mario Lemieux and to some degree Crosby, as well, as the group tried to find common ground among the obvious, divisive issues between both sides of the labor impasse.

Talk about a Penguins power play.

Lemieux, in town for Wednesday's board of governors meeting, was spotted in the hotel lobby along with Brisson and others after the meeting Tuesday night, once again underlying all of their common interest in the cause.

Crosby was certainly happy to see Burkle get added to Tuesday's owners-players meeting, having much respect for the Penguins owner and certainly the hope that his inclusion would bring a moderate voice to the owners' side at a time when players were growing weary of hearing from hard-liners such as Jeremy Jacobs (who was nevertheless still in the room Tuesday).

Burkle's track record in his private business life suggests that he was just the man to try to find middle ground. When the Pittsburgh arena deal nearly fell through, Burkle's involvement helped save the project. His awards from labor groups in California underline his ability to negotiate fairly.

Combined with a similar desire shared by Crosby to do everything possible to save a season, the Penguins owner and his superstar captain put their best feet forward Tuesday in an attempt to push things back in the right direction.

Sources on both sides Tuesday night described for the very first time seeing a real desire to try to get a deal done. But they were also cautious in saying the early traction in talks could easily combust once again, just as it did last month when four consecutive days of talks raised hopes but ultimately crashed in a fiery Friday session.

Of course, that was then and this is now. We're in December. Both sides are feeling the immense heat of a season hanging in the balance. Both sides are keenly aware when you talk to them that this is potentially the last shot at getting something done before the union ramps up talk of decertification and the owners threaten to blow up the entire season.

And perhaps, all along, the league was waiting until this stage of the process to finally, finally show a willingness to play ball on its numerous demands in the player contracting rights. Neither side would divulge specifics late Tuesday night, but I'd be shocked if the league didn't finally relent on some contracting rights demands. That would certainly go a long way toward making the players eager to make a deal.

I'm always weary of judging the success of bargaining talks by looking at the length of the meeting. But in this case, Tuesday's late-night session is indeed a sign that we still have a chance for hockey this season.

The same couldn't be said just a week ago.

ESPN LOADED: 12.05.2012

645786 Websites

FOXSports.com / Ducks' Ryan gels with Kings' Kopitar at Mora IK

Jon Rosen

One obscure argument to ending the lockout is that Freeway Faceoff is much more alliterative and marketable than Swedish National Road 70 Faceoff.

But until that agreement is reached, the greatest collection of premier in-season Southern California hockey talent can be found when Mora IK matches up against Sodertalje SK in Sweden's second-tier Hockey Allsvenskan, which has emerged as a popular stopping ground for locked-out NHL stars.

On Tuesday, Cam Fowler's Sodertalje club traveled four hours north on a national road to Dalarna County and FM Mattsson Arena before emerging as 3-2 winners over Mora IK, the club of Anaheim Ducks teammate Bobby Ryan and Los Angeles Kings rival Anze Kopitar.

It was a Sodertalje win that came with a price, at least for one defenseman.

"I wired a wristshot off his foot, so he's a little unhappy with me," Ryan said of Fowler. "I've got to go apologize."

One subject that needs no apology is Ryan's level of play since joining Mora. The right wing coming off a fourth straight 30-goal season in Anaheim has immediately rekindled his scoring touch while skating on the same line as a player he'd ordinarily be going to battle against in one of the Western Conference's fiercer rivalries.

"It's nice to be on this side of the ice with him a little bit, instead of trying to shut him down, because he's made me a minus quite a few times," Ryan said.

Instead, Kopitar has assisted on three of Ryan's four goals in the three games they've played together. Trailing by two late Tuesday, Kopitar had a fraction of a second with the puck and used it to feed a well-positioned Ryan at the top of the right circle for a power play one-timer that took the sniper down to his knee to finish off.

It's not really any surprise that the two skilled players have found their chemistry quickly on a larger ice surface that illuminates Ryan's speed and allows more room for artistry.

"Our power play is pretty different when [Ryan's] playing for us," said head coach Patrik Wener.

The skill set Ryan brings to central Sweden appears to be greatly in concert with his team's efforts and schemes.

"It's much more of a skilled and patient game, that's for sure," Ryan said. "That's always been something that I've tried to at least use in the NHL. It's translated pretty well over here. Obviously the systems are different, but I think with the big ice and more time to build up speed and things like that, you're able to come through the neutral zone and have some more options. I don't think tonight was much of an indication, but there certainly have been a lot of chances for us."

Mora has floated amongst the top four-to-eight teams for much of the Allsvenskan season, and Kopitar's 26 points (in 23 games) rank him sixth amongst league scorers. Looking to expand the scoring depth of his club and continue to build on the team's success in landing locked-out talent – Marian and Marcel Hossa, Shawn Horcoff, Dan Cleary and Andreas Lilja played for Mora in the top-tiered Elitserien during the 2004-05 work stoppage – club director Peter Hermodsson and a coach chatted with Kopitar last month to find out if he "knew any other goal scorers," according to Kopitar, that might be interested in joining the team.

Word travels fast during the lockout. After Kopitar asked his agent about Ryan's status, he went to sleep and woke up the next day to an email from Ryan inquiring about Mora. From there, it was only a matter of finalizing contractual minutiae.

"He's definitely fun to play with," Kopitar said. "You just appreciate more, I think, the guy when you play with him instead of against him. He's definitely a big world-class player."

Earlier in the season Anze Kopitar drew attention when he signed with Mora so he could play on the same line as his younger brother, Gasper, while staying in game shape during the lockout.

But Gasper is currently on the mend – he's eyeing a weekend return from a minor knee injury – and Ryan has inserted himself alongside Kopitar seamlessly. The respect runs both ways for the two traditional rivals.

"To see him six times a year, and getting to know him and playing against him for all those years, he does a lot of special things – away from the puck, as well," Ryan said of Kopitar. "He's definitely a player that when he touches the puck, you're up and ready for something special. He delivers a lot of the time."

Until the collective bargaining agreement is reached, they'll attempt to drive Mora up the standings so that it has a favorable position in advance of the Kvalserien, a round robin tournament in March that pits two Elitserien and four Allsvenskan teams against each other in an effort to determine which two teams will play in the Elitserien the following season. In its current position, Mora would have to emerge from the Forkvalserien, a pre-tourney pool of four teams, to even gain entry in the six-team Kvalserien.

"We've been playing OK," Kopitar said. "We've been playing some good games and some not-so-good games. I think consistency is key, just like it is in any other team. It brings me back a couple years when we were the

same thing with L.A. It's just consistency, and older guys leading the charge."

Shortly after Kopitar's arrival in town, Mora IK was expecting to also secure the services of Los Angeles defenseman Davis Drewiske, who at the last moment decided to remain in Southern California during the lockout.

Living at roughly the same latitude as Anchorage, Alaska is a challenge for any professional athlete, but if there's anyone who can weather the surroundings of a sub-arctic boreal forest, it has to be someone who lives part-time in Idaho, right?

"I haven't seen much of Idaho in the winters," Ryan said. "But I've never felt cold like this. It gets to minus-25, but it's just a different kind of cold. It goes straight to the bone.

"It's a different landscape...and much different culturally, that's for sure."

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NBCSports.com /NHLPA confirms Crosby, Toews among 18 players meeting with owners

Mike Halford

Here's part of the official NHLPA statement regarding the group of players selected to meet with owners on Tuesday at 2PM ET at the Westin New York at Times Square:

This afternoon, the players will meet a group of owners.

The 18 players present in New York today are:

Craig Adams, David Backes, Michael Cammalleri, Sidney Crosby, B.J. Crombeen, Mathieu Darche, Shane Doan, Ron Hainsey, Shawn Horcoff, Jamal Mayers, Manny Malhotra, Andy McDonald, Ryan Miller, George Parros, Brad Richards, Martin St. Louis, Jonathan Toews and Kevin Westgarth.

The 18 players will meet with six owners — Boston's Jeremy Jacobs, Calgary's Murray Edwards, Tampa Bay's Jeff Vinik, Toronto's Larry Tanenbaum, Pittsburgh's Ron Burkle and Winnipeg's Mark Chipman.

Some quick facts on the group:

– Darche is the lone unrestricted free agent.

– Teams represented: Pittsburgh (x2), Chicago (x2), St. Louis (x2), Tampa Bay (x2), Calgary, Phoenix, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Buffalo, Florida, Los Angeles, New York Rangers.

– Teams not represented: New Jersey, Nashville, Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, San Jose, Washington, Ottawa, Montreal, Dallas, Colorado, Carolina, Minnesota, Anaheim, Toronto, New York Islanders, Columbus.

– There are no European players among the 18.

– The highest-salaried player, under contract, is Brad Richards (owed \$12 million this year.) The lowest is Kevin Westgarth (\$700,000).

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NBCSports.com /Four reasons why owners have been willing to sign players to long contracts

Jason Brough

The New York Post's Larry Brooks took the NHL to task today, slamming the likes of Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs and Jets owner Mark Chipman for signing players to six-year contracts right before the old CBA expired, then having the gall to demand five-year limits during current negotiations.

It wasn't the first time the owners have been accused of hypocrisy, and the players are justifiably upset with the NHL's demands. Nobody wants their employment freedoms restricted.

That said, there are good reasons owners have been willing to sign off on long-term deals.

Here are the four main ones:

1. Because the players are young. Tyler Seguin (six-year deal) is only 20. So is Taylor Hall (seven years). Evander Kane (six years) is 21 and Jordan Eberle (six years) is 22. All four are franchise players that will still be in their 20s when their contracts expire. For that reason, the NHL may be willing to soften its position on term limits for restricted free agents. Maybe it's a six-year max, maybe it's eight.

2. To reduce the cap hit. It's the back-diving type of contract the NHL won't allow to exist in a new CBA. The league should have addressed this loophole before it signed the last CBA, but there's no point crying over spilled milk. Currently there are 16 players with contract lengths of 10 years or longer. Of those 16, only a handful signed with the expectation they'll still be playing when their deals expire. Take Roberto Luongo's 12-year, \$64 million contract that's set to expire when he's 43. In reality, it's only a nine-year deal; the last three years are for minimal salary. In hindsight, the Canucks probably shouldn't have agreed to it, given they're now trying to trade him and his contract is the biggest impediment to a deal. But looking back, without Luongo's artificially lowered cap hit, they likely wouldn't have been able to acquire Chris Higgins and Maxim Lapierre at the trade deadline prior to their run to the Stanley Cup finals in 2011. Both players were key additions that year.

3. To get the player. You can argue all day about the wisdom of Wild owner Craig Leipold for committing a combined \$196 million to sign unrestricted free agents Ryan Suter and Zach Parise to identical 13-year deals this summer. But that was the market and it was the only way he could win the bidding war for their services. Again, you can question the wisdom of the deal, but Leipold felt he needed to make the investment to invigorate a fan-base that had grown tired of losing. Given there weren't many Wild fans complaining, it's hard to argue he failed in that regard.

4. To keep the player. See: Shea Weber, who forced Nashville's hand when he inked a 14-year, \$110 million (\$58 million) offer sheet with the Flyers. The Predators had already lost Suter to free agency; they felt they couldn't lose their other franchise defenseman. Was it smart? Guess we'll find out. But like Suter and Parise, Weber was going to get big dollars and term wherever he ended up. For Nashville, it was either buck up or start rebuilding again. Suffice to say, Preds fans were glad ownership chose the first option.

For the NHL, demanding term limits on contracts is no different than demanding a salary cap. It's being done to level the playing field and protect owners from themselves.

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Wall Street Journal / The Money Train That Is Sports TV

By JASON GAY

Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban is not everyone's barrel of fun but I like him because he's impish and honest, and the other day he said an obvious but rather extraordinary thing. He was talking about the recent controversy involving the NBA and the San Antonio Spurs, and he opined that the league was correct to fine the Spurs \$250,000 for not playing their best players in a nationally televised game versus Miami last week. Cuban said he didn't really have a problem with the Spurs sitting their aging talent—they have done it before—but suggested they should have picked another game, and not one scheduled for a big telecast on TNT.

"My opinion is, if it wasn't a Thursday night TV game, nothing would have happened," Cuban said, according to the Dallas Morning News. He later added: "Rest your starters for the long haul? One game earlier, one game later? Sure. Rest them when you've got our biggest customer at stake, that's a whole different animal."

Thank you, thank you, thank you, Mr. Cuban. I know it seems silly to praise someone for acknowledging the plain-sight relationship between a sports league and television, but that relationship is seldom characterized in such a collaborative manner, especially as far as game action is concerned. Cuban probably thought he was just stating a fact—and he was stating a fact—but it was valuable to hear it out loud.

Because television does rule sports, like never before. Not a month seems to pass in which there's not some new TV contract announced for a professional or college sports league, and the figures are astonishing—billions of dollars, piled high over years, sometimes decades. Last year at this time, the NFL reached new agreements with Fox, CBS and NBC that totaled \$27.9 billion. Even regional leagues and single teams can command huge figures, sometimes into the billions for one franchise alone. The Los Angeles Times reported late last month that Fox and the Los Angeles Dodgers were closing in on a deal valued around \$6 billion. (Fox is a unit of News Corp NWSA -0.10% ., which also owns The Wall Street Journal.)

These megadeals are not breaking news. This is the accepted reality. Television is the driver behind the comical conference-hopping that is rearranging the geography of college sports, as the map is redrawn and San Diego State and Boise State are welcomed into something that still calls itself, with no irony, the Big East. It is behind Maryland's move to the Big Ten and Louisville's escape to the ACC. It is why the BCS championship occurs on Monday prime time in early January, not the calm of New Year's Day. Television is at the heart of the coming BCS playoff—the Journal's Rachel Bachman reported that ESPN's deal for the new format is worth about \$470 million annually.

These are flabbergasting amounts of money, and it only makes sense that it elevates the partners who are writing the checks. That's what Cuban meant when he called TV "the driver for all things financial in sports. Period, end of story. We are not 10 years ago where TV is just another source of income. That is the money train. Period, end of story, no questions asked."

The Money Train is what the San Antonio Spurs ran up against when they decided to rest the aging Tim Duncan, Tony Parker and Manu Ginobili versus Miami. Sure, you can have the distraction arguments—the Spurs rest their seniors all the time; they'd already played a tough stretch of games that week; the NBA schedule is too long and intense. You can accept Stern's vague statement that the Spurs' Day Off was "contrary to the best interests of the NBA" and a "disservice to the league and our fans."

Or you can just cut to the chase with Cuban: This was about TV. That doesn't mean the NBA's fine of San Antonio wasn't completely over the top, or doesn't provoke troubling questions (should TV relationships be valued over player relationships?). But it is to confront a reality that sports is still prissy about: that games are entertainment, and entertainment is what the networks pay top dollar for. It is to embrace the obvious. The Spurs made a perfectly defensible choice that crossed a bright modern line. You can love it or hate it. But don't look to the basketball court for an explanation. Look at the screen in your living room.

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