

# SPORT-SCAN DAILY BRIEF

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Former Bruin Stan Jonathan faces four years or more in jail

By Kevin Paul Dupont

OHSWEKEN, Ontario — Stan Jonathan grew up here on the rolling, open land inhabited by the Six Nations of the Grand River, where hunting and farming remain deeply entwined in Iroquois culture to this day. A spirited, gritty winger whose days with the Bruins came to a close 30 years ago, Jonathan returned to this southern Ontario reservation once his NHL career ended and lives in a modest brick ranch at the corner of Third Line and Chiefs-wood roads.

For the moment, Jonathan isn't taking any visitors, or discussing days past or present. He's not talking at all. Facing perhaps a minimum four years in prison, charged in the shooting death of another hunter Nov. 11, the 57-year-old Jonathan on Friday is scheduled to be in a Brantford courtroom, answering to a charge of criminal negligence causing death.

Just over a month later, no one has suggested it was anything but an accident. Jonathan allegedly fired a high-powered rifle (.270 Weatherby Magnum Mark-5) from the side of Third Line Road, approximately 3½ miles east of his house, presumably at a stirring in a line of trees more than 1,200 feet across a harvested cornfield.

According to a media release by the Six Nations Police, Jonathan was hunting deer at approximately 8 a.m. that Sunday, and the lone shot he squeezed off felled and killed another hunter, Peter (PJ) Kosid, a 28-year-old aspiring electrical forester from nearby Hamilton, who left behind a fiancée, their 8-month-old son, and her 4-year-old daughter from a previous relationship.

"I'm sorry, I can't say nothing," Jonathan, far stouter than his playing days, said when a reporter from Boston knocked on his backdoor last week. "Court orders, I'm not allowed to say anything. Sorry, I really am, and I do appreciate your coming by, but we've had a lot of reporters here recently and I've had to tell them all the same — I'm just not allowed to talk."

Kosid, according to a Nov. 14 release by Six Nations Police, was "in the bush, dressed in camouflage, bow hunting" and the "two hunters were not known to each other and were not hunting together."

Hunters are often required, or at the very least advised, to wear a piece of orange clothing, for example a hat or vest. The police report stated only that Kosid wore camouflage.

"If he had orange on, [the release] would say it," noted Constable Derrick Anderson, the Six Nations Police media officer, using an index finger to underscore the pertinent words of the media release in a brief interview at the police station. "So to be fair to every-one involved . . . it says right here, 'dressed in camouflage' . . . so, if it doesn't specify it, that means he had no orange."

No telling if an absence of orange apparel would factor into how Jonathan fares in the courtroom. A call and an e-mail to Jonathan's attorney, Toronto-based Kenneth R. Byers, were not returned.

According to his parents, Bob and Wendy, Kosid was allowed to hunt at the Third Line Road location at the invitation of his friend, who had the authority to grant such permission. None of the reports in the local press suggested that Jonathan had a similar invitation.

Print and online reports about the shooting also raised questions as to why Jonathan fired his rifle at the side of a road in a residential area. The spot, identified by Anderson when shown a digital image of the shooting site, is between two houses on the same side of Third Line Road. The nearest house, to the west, is at most 100 yards from where Jonathan fired, while the house to the east is some three times more distant. A report in the area's largest newspaper, the Hamilton Spectator, noted the field was off limits to gun hunting.

"One careless shot," Sabina Marrone, Kosid's fiancée, told the Spectator, "and my husband is taken away from me." The coroner, said Marrone, told her the shot struck Kosid in the back and he expired quickly because of the loss of blood.

Criminal negligence causing death carries a minimum four-year sentence when a firearm is involved.

"It's not like we think he did it on purpose," the victim's brother, Brad Kosid, told the Spectator, "but it was so careless. It was a split-second decision that cost a life."

Jonathan, a fifth-round draft pick of the Bruins in June 1975, was a favorite of Don Cherry's, the club's bombastic and flamboyant coach of the late '70s. Jonathan left the Six Nations reservation at age 17 to play junior hockey in Peterborough, approximately 140 miles to the north, and was drafted out of the Petes at the end of his third season, after piling up 36 goals and 39 assists in 70 games.

He was only 21 when he made the Boston roster in October 1976, Cherry finding space for him on his celebrated "Lunch Pail Gang" roster that included Hall of Famers Jean Ratelle, Brad Park, John Bucyk, and Gerry Cheevers, and other longtime Spoked-B favorites such as Terry O'Reilly, Wayne Cashman, and Rick Middleton.

A fearless, 5-foot-8-inch left winger, Jonathan went on to play 392 regular-season games and 63 more in the playoffs with the Bruins, prior to being sold to the Penguins after suiting up for only one game in the 1982-83 season. Without a doubt, his time in Boston is best remembered for the pound of flesh he took out, mostly from the face, of Montreal's Pierre Bouchard during the 1978 playoffs. Some seven years older, 6 inches taller,

and 30 pounds heavier, the Habs' barrel-chested defenseman was bloodied by a succession of Jonathan's jack-hammer punches.

The night of the memorable fight at the Garden, noted Clark Booth in his book that chronicled the Bruins' first 75 years, Jonathan "whaled" Bouchard "to within what seemed an inch of his life."

According to friends, acquaintances, and ex-teammates, Jonathan in his post-career has worked various jobs here since his pro career ended in the spring of 1983. For years, they say, he worked on construction jobs. Lately, according to a longtime friend in Boston, he has kept busy owning a business that rents party equipment. The day a reporter from Boston knocked on Jonathan's backdoor, two Chevy pickups, a Ford Explorer, and a large pontoon-style boat filled much of the driveway and part of the backyard.

When answering the door, Jonathan was shoeless, wore black sweat pants and a dark green T-shirt, his black hair turned predominantly gray. He was polite, appeared tired, and was some 35-40 pounds heavier than his posted playing weight of 175 pounds.

"I hope everyone learns from this," Marrone told the Hamilton Spectator. "Line up your shot, see what you're shooting at. I'm told [Jonathan] is very remorseful, but that means nothing to me right now."

Kosid, an avid outdoorsman, also left behind infant son Robbie and stepdaughter Ava. A service for him was held Nov. 19 at the Scottish Rite Club in downtown Hamilton and a website, [www.pjkosid.com](http://www.pjkosid.com), was established in hopes of bringing in donations to support the children.

Marrone said she plans to spread her fiance's ashes at Turtle Island, one of his favorite canoeing and fishing areas.

A licensed massage therapist, Marrone has yet to return to work, according to Kosid's mother.

"She just can't go back, not yet," said Wendy Kosid, reached by phone at her home in Hamilton. "Her life is upside down. Our life is upside down."

Kosid's father, a graduate of the University of Kentucky, likened learning the news of his son's death to that day in November 1963 when he was a student on the Lexington, Ky., campus and heard President Kennedy had been assassinated.

"Just the feeling, something you can't do anything about," he said, struggling for the right words, "it's something that . . . takes you . . . takes your entire . . . your entire life changes."

Kosid, just 11 days short of his 29th birthday when he was killed, was an avid fisherman and hunter, according to his mother. Her brother, Tom, taught him to fish at a young age and his dad taught him to hunt. Days before his death, Peter texted his mother, excited that a videocamera he had set up on the Third Line property showed deer were plentiful.

"In his text, he was all excited, saying, 'Mom, I think this is going to be the year!'" recalled Wendy. "He had gotten close before, but he never really shot a deer with a bow. And he was against guns . . . strictly a bow hunter." One deer, Peter told her, stuck his nose directly in the camera, causing it to trigger.

Soon after the shooting, Wendy made the trip to Ohsweken, some 25 miles southwest of the family home in Hamilton, to see where her son was shot.

The trip provided some better understanding of what happened, but provided no peace.

"I don't have a sense of peace," she said. "I just want him back."

Her son felt safe on the property, Wendy said, adding a sense of tragic irony to his death.

"Why would [he think of] turning around [just] because cars were driving by?" she asked, rhetorically.

Bob and Wendy Kosid will be in the Brantford courtroom Friday, full of questions, their hearts still aching. Jonathan, currently free on \$10,000 surety, will respond to the charges, and the case most likely assigned a trial date.

"Was it an accident? I don't know," said Wendy Kosid, contemplating a reporter's question. "Could be. I don't know what hunters are like with guns. My son was a bow hunter, which is totally different, so . . . I have no opinion on that. I mean, I can't imagine . . . you know, it probably was an accident, but I just don't know."

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646381 Boston Bruins

Bruins prospect Niklas Svedberg preps for NHL in Providence

By Fluto Shinzawa

PROVIDENCE — The unthinkable in the National Hockey League is a way of life in the American Hockey League.

Up top, as minor leaguers refer to the varsity, players do not play three games in three days, even with the fastest and plushest of private jets at their disposal.

Niklas Svedberg's eventual destination is the NHL, where the goalie will never assume a three-in-three workload. But last month, after Providence's 2-1 road win over Portland on Nov. 17, Svedberg informed his boss that he needed to prepare for every situation. Even the ones that aren't going to happen in the NHL.

The 23-year-old Svedberg was coming off a 36-save performance for his second win in two nights. The following afternoon, Providence would host Bridgeport at the Dunkin' Donuts Center. Coach Bruce Cassidy could have spelled Svedberg by starting Michael Hutchinson against the Sound Tigers. Svedberg, however, wasn't planning on a day off.

"We're busing back from Portland and got a 3 o'clock game the next day," Cassidy recalled. "He's like, 'Well, I want to go back in. Go ahead and use me.'"

"He's a guy that wants the net. There's no doubt there. He's not sitting there saying, 'Well, we don't play three-in-three in the NHL. I don't know why I should have to.' There's never an answer like that. It's, 'I've got to learn how to do it because that's the schedule.'"

"He's dialed, let's put it that way."

It was somewhat secondary that Svedberg, in his third start in three days, gave up four goals in a 6-2 loss to Bridgeport. For the Swedish goalie, 2012-13 is akin to a year abroad, where immersion and firsthand learning of all situations are the priorities.

But unlike a foreign exchange student, Svedberg is stateside for good.

"This is what I want to do," Svedberg said. "I want to play in the NHL. I think the best way for me is to come here, play in the American League, and work my way up."

Last May 29, caught a goalie short after learning of Tim Thomas's intention to sit out 2012-13, the Bruins signed Svedberg to a two-year, \$2 million contract. Last season, the undrafted Svedberg drew NHL eyeballs when he backstopped Brynas to the Swedish Elite League championship.

The Bruins' plan was to ease Svedberg into North American play in Providence. This season, Svedberg was scheduled to back up Hutchinson, the team's third-round pick in 2008. So far, both goalies have shredded the original plan in divergent manners.

Hutchinson, who underwent surgery on both hips during the offseason, has submitted a spotty start to his third pro season. Through eight appearances, Hutchinson is 2-4-1 with a 3.02 goals-against average and an .885 save percentage. Hutchinson didn't record his first win until last Saturday, when he stopped 24 shots in Providence's 5-2 victory over Portland.

While the projected No. 1 goalie has yet to find his touch, Svedberg has claimed the starting job. In 16 games, Svedberg is 10-4-1 with a 2.34 GAA and a .921 save percentage. As Providence (12-8-2) tries to climb the standings, Cassidy has looked to Svedberg for stability in goal.

"We weren't sure what we were going to get out of him," Cassidy acknowledged. "He's the type of guy that when the puck drops, the intangibles he brings are better than what you see in practice. He's a guy who competes hard in the net. It shows. His numbers are pretty good."

The Bruins need Svedberg to be a quick study. When the lockout ends, Svedberg stands to be the first Providence goalie to get the nod if injuries hit Tuukka Rask or Anton Khudobin. Given Rask's recent history of groin ailments, depth in goal is a requirement if the Bruins want to avoid a repeat of 2011-12.

Rask injured his groin last March 3. Khudobin would have been promoted to back up Thomas. But Khudobin was out with a wrist injury. Hutchinson had to dress for two games before the Bruins imported Marty Turco from Austria.

For a European goalie, the adjustment to the AHL is not simple. In North America, the rinks are smaller. There is less real estate in the neutral zone. Players prefer dump-ins to stickhandling over the blue line. They skate in straight lines toward the net. Once they arrive at the crease, they are not friendly to goalies.

All those tweaks can throw off a European goalie's approach. Svedberg has had to tweak his positioning to adjust to the narrower rinks. He has been leaving his crease more to play dump-ins and settle hard-arounds behind his net. The traffic and belligerence in his face have required Svedberg to track pucks more efficiently and battle the jungle of bodies.

During training camp, shooters found openings high on Svedberg. With more games and practices, Svedberg is now making himself taller to reduce the space he was once showing. Svedberg credits goaltending coach Bob Essensa for helping him refine his technique, which leans more toward the athletic than the positional.

Essensa and the Bruins don't want Svedberg reinventing his game. They'd prefer smaller corrections to overhauls. Svedberg won a Swedish League title and an NHL contract because of his style.

"I've never tried it," Svedberg said of NHL play. "But it's the best league in the world.

"I feel comfortable with the game I have. That's the game I would try to play in the NHL as well, just hopefully in a better way. You want to develop your game every day with all the details.

"In the big picture, I'm trying to play my game. That's what I feel comfortable doing, no matter which level it is."

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646382 Boston Bruins

Bruins' Shawn Thornton keeping in shape

By Jason Mastrodonato,

Not playing hockey, or getting paid, isn't ideal, but Shawn Thornton has an advantage over many other players during this NHL lockout: He can continue doing what he does better than most — beat the snot out of people.

With the lockout in Day 82, and owners suspending talks in New York and rejecting the latest proposals from the NHLPA, the Bruins enforcer has had plenty of extra time to get to the gym. And box. And do jujitsu.

You know, normal Thornton stuff.

"I'm actually in pretty good shape right now," he said Thursday from a charity event hosted by Kevin Youkilis downtown. "Conditioning shouldn't be a problem. I enjoy it. That's the easy part.

"We skate every day. I'm still boxing, doing jujitsu, still lifting, doing all that stuff to stay at my optimal playing weight."

Thornton said, if necessary, he would go to New York to help the cause.

"Sidney [Crosby] is there," he said. "So that's good."

Thornton remains "cautiously optimistic" the NHL stalemate ends soon.

"I hope it's the now, not the never," he said. "Every day that goes by ticks away at the calendar and the clock. And we lose paychecks every day too. And [the owners] lose revenue and games played every day. So I hope the sense of urgency is finally kicking in on both sides."

Boston Globe LOADED: 12.14.2012

646383 Buffalo Sabres

One of the greats of baseball writing bets on Fehr

Mike Harrington

ChassRetired New York Times baseball writer Murray Chass is considered one of the godfathers of reporting on sports labor relations, and was honored by the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown in 2003 (right) as the winner of the J.G. Spink Award from the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

Chass worked closely for many years covering Marvin Miller, the late czar of the MLB Players' Association and the mentor of current NHLPA czar Donald Fehr, so he intimately knows how Fehr operates.

So you should take Chass' column on Fehr posted on his personal Web site today as pretty solid analysis. The headline is "Bet on Fehr, Not Bettman."

Wrote Chass: "Major League Baseball's annual revenue has soared beyond \$7 billion, and baseball is so awash in money that the two sides don't need to fight over caps and taxes. The N.H.L., meanwhile, remains in the dark ages of labor relations. Bettman has made sure they stay there with no apparent emergence or advance in sight."

Chass' column is a pretty insightful read. Another veteran baseball scribe, Thomas Boswell of the Washington Post, wrote an equally interesting column on Fehr last month.

Memo to hockey: This isn't 1978. Stop fighting the union. You need to form a partnership. By the end of the current labor deal, baseball will have 22 consecutive years without a work stoppage. And the sport has never been healthier (don't talk to me about television ratings either. That's hardly a reflection of the health of the game).

Those that foolishly waste the airwaves with "the employer always wins" rants on this lockout simply don't grasp what baseball has done for nearly two decades. And Fehr was a big part of that. The NHL's turf-war strategy has been flawed from the beginning.

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646384 Buffalo Sabres

MSG to air Sabres' 2003 blowout against Caps that featured dual hat tricks, Peters' first goal

John Vogl

The Sabres rang in New Year's with a night to remember in 2003-04. Miroslav Satan and Maxim Afinogenov each recorded a hat trick during a 7-1 shellacking of Washington.

Andrew Peters added the other goal, his first in the NHL, and the erstwhile enforcer will help viewers relive the game Monday night.

The blowout from Dec. 31, 2003, is next up in MSG's "Classic" series. It will air at 8 p.m. and feature Peters doing commentary.

MSG will reair the Sabres' 1976 victory over Russia on Dec. 24.

Buffalo News LOADED: 12.14.2012

646385 Chicago Blackhawks

Opening act for a closed show: 'Bettman and the Boneheads'

Steve Rosenbloom

NHL muckamuck and Gary Bettman sock puppet Bill Daly said last week he was out of ideas for saving this locked-out season.

Excuse me, but when exactly did you or the NHL have even one idea?

Besides making the players indentured servants, I mean?

You know what Bettman's next idea will be?

Making the players pay to participate, like the NHL is squirt hockey.

Yes, hoser, you should be happy to pay for the right to play in a league run by Jeremy Jacobs' house elf as the Boston Bruins owner channels his inner Billfold Wirtz.

The late Blackhawks owner was one of the loudest voices the last time the owners hit on the great idea to lock out the players and lose a season and then some. Wirtz wanted cost certainty, as he called it, but what he really wanted was a rigged game.

And he got it. Wirtz got his precious cost certainty. But now, the terms Wirtz fought so hard to get because he didn't want to flex his financial muscles to win the Stanley Cup are not good enough.

If you judge by the rhetoric from Bettman and the bonehead owners -- opening act for "Five For Fighting: Bettman and the Boneheads" -- it sounds like the last deal was the worst thing that ever happened.

If you're a Hawks fan, it was. Or, it was bittersweet, at least.

After Wirtz died, his franchise moved into the modern era -- "What's this thing called a TEE-vee, Pully?" -- and won the Cup. His Draconian demands, however, cost his team about half of those champion players. The Hawks haven't won a playoff series since. The short-sightedness of the father was visited on the son.

And now, that collective bargaining agreement that Wirtz absolutely had to have as he put his hand in the back of Bettman's wooden head last time is the one the owners claim they can't live with now.

I love what Rocky Wirtz has done with the Hawks -- with what used to be the Hawks, anyway. I love the many ways the NHL produced a better product. I hate the way Jacobs is starring in the role of Billfold Wirtz, Part Deux, as Bettman's puppeteer.

That last sentence outweighs the first two for me at this moment. I hope the players hold out long enough to cost Bettman his job. I hope the players hold firm enough to cost Jacobs part or all of his franchise. I hope only 12 teams survive this a-puck-alyse and we end up with a better product and a better-run league.

I figure the idiots running what formerly was the NHL won't be happy until the new CBA gives them the right to send players to their rooms without dessert. So then, Stevie Sunshine will see you next December at what likely will become the Tribune's annual "Slap Shot" night.

Tangent: The Tribune has more sports movie nights in the works after you packed the Music Box for an enthusiastic, laugh-filled night the only time we tried this. We haven't nailed down our festival schedule, but I think we're going to see Al Czervik asking the deathless question: "Whoa, did somebody step on a duck?"

Back to hockey for now, and I can't give any more of a heads-up to those of you shut out this year. Charlestown Chiefs captain Johnny Upton already committed to participate in our "Slap Shot" night the way "Steve Hanson" did this year.

You look to your captain when things get tough, and while Upton promised not to flash anyone next year, it's appropriate to adapt his immortal description of the Hanson Brothers to Bettman and the Boneheads:

"These guys are a (bleepin') disgrace."

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 12.14.2012

646386 Chicago Blackhawks

Roenick's book delivers hard-hitting stories

By Tim Sassone

There was never any doubt where Jeremy Roenick stood on a topic.

He was both bold and brash when he came to the Blackhawks in 1989. You wanted an opinion on something? You went to No. 27's locker and never came away disappointed.

His outspoken style didn't sit well with many veteran teammates such as Chris Chelios, Dirk Graham, Steve Smith and Greg Gilbert, but how could you stay mad at a guy who backed up his words with his play on the ice?

Roenick twice scored 50 goals to become only the third Hawk to do so, joining Bobby Hull and Al Secord. No Hawk has done it since Roenick bagged 50 in 1992-93.

Three times he topped 100 points, which only three others have done in franchise history: Hull, Stan Mikita and Denis Savard.

He played tough and he played hurt.

In his new book, "J.R., My Life as the Most Outspoken, Fearless and Hard-Hitting Man in Hockey," written with USA Today hockey writer Kevin Allen, Roenick speaks of the 1989 playoff game in St. Louis when he was cross-checked in the mouth by Glen Featherstone and lost several teeth.

Roenick went to the bench and was telling his teammates about the "chiclets" he still had in his mouth when coach Mike Keenan screamed at him to go tell referee Kerry Fraser. Roenick did, sticking out his tongue for Fraser to examine. Featherstone got a major penalty and the Hawks, trailing 1-0 at the time, scored 2 power-play goals in eight seconds (1 of them by Roenick himself) to take the lead for good.

Roenick credits that incident with winning over those teammates who didn't take him seriously.

"I had proven to them what I was all about," Roenick wrote.

After that game, Graham paid his young teammate perhaps the ultimate compliment: "That," Graham said, "is being a Blackhawk."

The second biggest mistake late Hawks owner Bill Wirtz ever made was trading Roenick to Phoenix in the 1996 off-season for Alex Zhamnov and Craig Mills after Wirtz and general manager Bob Pulford got mad at Roenick's agent for asking for what they felt was too much money: \$4 million a year.

The worst mistake Wirtz made was letting Hull go to Winnipeg over another money issue.

"You will never get \$4 million to play in this league," Roenick remembered Pulford saying.

Not long after the trade, Roenick got \$20 million over five years from the Coyotes.

The book is filled with juicy Keenan stories with Roenick crediting the former Hawks coach with molding him into the player he became.

"He was Dr. Frankenstein and I was his creation," Roenick wrote.

"Playing for Mike Keenan in Chicago was like camping on the side of an active volcano. He was a tyrant, a schoolyard bully, an old-school coach who tried to motivate players through intimidation, belittlement and fear. The truth is that Keenan scared me into being a better NHL player."

The Keenan stories will be the highlight of the book for Hawks fans.

"I think they're going to really enjoy the relationship I had with Keenan, and what it was like in the locker room with Keenan," Roenick said before spending nearly four hours signing copies of his book on Wednesday at Anderson's Bookshop in Naperville. "He scared the (bleep) out of me because I wasn't a physical player when I left high school. I was finesse, passive player. I wasn't a hitter."

Roenick also touches on the Oct. 9, 1999 incident at the United Center when he high-sticked pal Tony Amonte in the face while playing for Phoenix.

Roenick contends he was enraged on the ice after his wife, Tracey, came down to the dressing room following the second period to confront him in front of his teammates about what she felt was his out-of-control lifestyle off the ice.

"By the time I arrived on the bench, I was an angry bull and someone was going to pay a price for my anger," Roenick wrote. "Although no one believes me, I would swear on the Bible that I just slashed the first person who came near me, and it was Tony Amonte."

"I will go to the grave swearing that I didn't know it was Tony ..."

Roenick and Amonte didn't speak to each other for a year and a half after that.

Roenick still is outspoken today, especially when it comes to the nearly three-month-old lockout, which he blames on both sides.

"The players did give a lot by offering the 50-50 split; that's a lot by the players," Roenick said. "The owners gave back and said we'll make the contracts full and honored. Now the players don't like the length of the contract, a 10-year CBA and an eight-year player contract."

Roenick thinks the union should accept what the owners are offering.

"I think there's a deal on the table that needs to be signed," he said.

Roenick still remembers the season that was canceled in 2004-05 as a low point in the game's history.

"This is the second time in eight years and I don't know how much more fans can take," Roenick said. "Social media lets you know today how upset people are and it's rampant."

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 12.14.2012

646387 Chicago Blackhawks

CSN to air 2010 Game 5 matchup between Blackhawks, Predators

NINA FALCONE

Comcast SportsNet will be re-airing Blackhawks Classics until the NHL lockout comes to an end. Tune in tonight at 7:00 p.m. to catch the 2010 Game 5 matchup against the Predators when Marian Hossa scored the game-winning goal in overtime.

The Blackhawks were just seconds away from falling to the Predators in Game 5 of the 2010 playoffs, but that's not how things were meant to end on the ice that night. As Patrick Kane tied the score with just 13 seconds left in regulation, the Blackhawks gained a lot of momentum going into overtime that led to their 5-4 victory.

After killing a 5-minute major Marian Hossa had to serve for a hit on Dan Hamhuis, No. 81 returned to the ice and found the back on the net to lead to Chicago's 5-4 victory that evening.

Here's a look back at the dramatic ending to the game:

Some fans shared with us their favorite memories from the 2010 matchup.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.14.2012

646388 Colorado Avalanche

NHL lockout 2012: Players from 1994-95 say short season then was fun

By Adrian Dater

As much as lockouts seem woven into the fabric of today's NHL, there has been only one shortened regular season before this year. Disregarding the one season when no games were played (2004-05), the only NHL season shortened by a work stoppage came in 1994-95, a 48-game affair that, surprisingly, is fondly remembered by many of the players who went through it.

Not that anyone enjoyed missing a paycheck, but some players who experienced a 48-game season say today's players would like it better than they might think if the NHL goes that route.

"Every game felt like a playoff game. It was very exciting as a player in that way," said former Avalanche winger Dave Reid, who was the Boston Bruins' player representative that season. "The puck was dropped and you had to win that game. The playoff race was on from Game 1. You knew you couldn't have a slump at all if you wanted to make the playoffs, so you were just so geared up to play all the time, as opposed to a normal season where you knew you could lose a few in a row and still be fine."

The NHL lockout is in its 90th day, but negotiations for a collective bargaining agreement are plodding along. There seems to be widespread

agreement that, if a season is to happen at all, it will be 48 to 54 games in length. NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said if a season is to have any integrity at all, it will need to have a minimum of 48 games.

Unlike the NBA, whose lockout last year produced a 66-game season instead of 82, starting on Christmas, the NHL is unlikely to squeeze so many games into a shortened calendar. If the Avalanche's 82-game regular season had stayed intact, Colorado would have played its 39th game Jan. 12. The NHL's 1994-95 lockout was over Jan. 11, 1995, and nine days later the season began. That year, the NHL extended the end of the regular season from its intended mid-to-late April finish to May 3, so teams didn't have to play as many games on back-to-back nights as the NBA did. It's possible that could happen again.

"I don't remember it being very taxing on the body, any more than if it had been a full season," said Claude Lemieux, the former Avalanche winger whose New Jersey Devils won the Stanley Cup that season, with Lemieux winning the Conn Smythe Trophy. "We condensed things by maybe a couple weeks shorter than they would have been, but it wasn't bad. And the games were all like playoff games. You knew you couldn't fall off the wagon much, so it was definitely more intense for the players and the fans."

That 1994-95 season was the last in Quebec for Joe Sakic and the Nordiques. The team flourished in the 48 games, finishing 30-13-5 for first place in the Eastern Conference.

"We really came in ready to play," said Sakic, whose team lost in the first round of the playoffs to the New York Rangers. "We knew that (if we had) a three- or four-game losing streak, we were probably done for the playoffs. It was no fun sitting out those three or four months, but once we got back we kind of forgot about it and were real excited to play. It went great, but we just couldn't follow things up in the playoffs."

For the Avs, or any team to succeed in a possible shortened season, Lemieux said the first week or two back as a team will be the key.

"You have to adjust your mind-set a lot," he said. "You get thrown into the deep end of the pool right away."

Adrian Dater: 303-954-1360, adater@denverpost.com or twitter.com/adater

Then and now

The NHL locked out players to start the 1994-95 season, a dispute that lingered until Jan. 11, 1995. Some key facts from that year, with similarities and differences from today:

- Season was reduced from 84 to 48 games. A similar schedule could result this time, though the regular season now is only 82 games.
- There were 26 teams in the NHL that season, now there are 30.
- If the 1995 Stanley Cup Finals between Detroit and New Jersey had gone to seven games, the final game would have been played July 1 — which would have been the only time in league history to feature a July game. New Jersey won in a four-game sweep, finishing on June 24.

Denver Post: LOADED: 12.14.2012

646389 Dallas Stars

Stars' Stephane Robidas on eating reindeer, learning Finnish and more

MIKE HEIKA

Stars defenseman Stephane Robidas recently returned from a 15-game stint with HIFK Helsinki of the Finnish Elite League, and I caught up with him on his experience playing overseas.

Robidas played in Germany during the 2004-05 lockout, and said he wanted to go somewhere to play hockey if the NHL was not going to be playing.

Q: You had some good games and bad games in Finland (2 goals, 3 assists, -11 in 15 games), how do you feel about your overall play?

Robidas: It wasn't as good as I would have hoped, and I probably put too much pressure on myself. The Finnish League is very good, and the challenges are really tough. The rinks are all different sizes, so sometimes you get a big European rink and sometimes you get a rink that's closer to

the NHL. You have to adjust game to game. It's an intense league, so they play very hard.

Plus, HIFK is sort of like the Montreal Canadiens over there. We weren't winning (13-13-5, ninth place) and you could tell that everyone there was under a lot of pressure. So, of course, I felt that pressure, too.

I would have liked to have done better.

Q: You played a lot of minutes there, getting over 30 minutes in one game. Where do you feel you are in your career right now at age 35? Are you comfortable playing fewer minutes if that's what the Stars want from you (Robidas saw his minutes decline from 24:32 in 2010-11 to 22:46 in 2011-12)?

Robidas: I will do whatever the coaches want. I've always been that way. But I don't think I have to cut my minutes back. I didn't feel like conditioning was a problem. I had no problem with my hip (past surgeries), and my shoulder surgery (from the summer) responded very well. That's one of the reasons I wanted to play, just to see how all of that was working.

I know we all get older, but I felt good, and I think I can play lots of minutes. If they decide I need to play 18 or 20 minutes, I'm fine with that, too.

Q: Did you learn any Finnish while you were there? Did they speak English or French?

Robidas: No, and no, and no. It was tough. Everything they do there is in Finnish, and it's not the easiest language to learn. When I was in Germany, there were similar words between German and French \_ and a lot of people spoke English. But communication was a big issue there. It was tough.

Q: Did you enjoy any of the Finnish traditions?

Robidas: They have great food there, so I ate a lot of the local food. I had reindeer, and it was unbelievable. They serve it with cranberry sauce, and it was so tender. Honestly, every meal I had there was good. Lots of soups, lots of creams, lots of sauces. It was excellent.

Q: Do you think you'll go back if there is no season?

Robidas: I don't know. It was hard. Last time when I went to Germany, I had my whole family with me, and it was like a family adventure. This time, they're in school and they had to stay back here. That made a big difference.

I'm just hoping everything can get settled and we can start playing again. That's how I'm looking at it right now.

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646390 Dallas Stars

Stardate: Dec. 13, 2011 - Bachman shuts out Rangers with 34 saves

Mike Heika

NEW YORK - The Richard Bachman story continues to grow, even if his coach sometimes refers to him as "the little guy."

Bachman, the smallest goalie from the AHL, didn't just win his second NHL start Tuesday, he dominated. The 24-year-old netminder stopped 34 shots against a New York Rangers team with one of the best records in the NHL, backstopping the Stars to a 1-0 victory.

"It's very impressive," Stars coach Glen Gulutzan said of Bachman walking into an intense Madison Square Garden and shutting out the 17-7-4 Rangers. "I've never seen the little guy get rattled. He's got a calm demeanor and is a very intelligent goalie, and he doesn't panic or get rattled easily, and that's a good quality for a goaltender."

Listed at 5-10, Bachman looks out of place in a league that has plenty of goalies 6-4 or taller. But the 2006 fourth-round draft pick from Colorado College has shown at every level that he's a battler, and he's doing it now at the ultimate level.

"It's amazing, it's fun," Bachman said. "I try not to get too nervous and stay on the same routine just to calm the nerves, but you have to walk in past all of the famous people who have played here, and you do get a little jitters.

And I think it took a little while to get loose, but I kind of settled in for the third."

If Bachman was nervous, he didn't show it. He turned away shots early, survived a collision with Rangers forward Carl Hagelin and then was outstanding during two third period penalty kills.

"I thought tonight maybe there were a few more things lying around him than usual, but he made some huge saves," Gulutzan said. "The 2-on-1... and then right at the end, the slap shot from the point that he saw at the last minute. When you get saves like that in somebody else's building, it lends itself to getting a few points."

Bachman's heroic turn couldn't come at a better time for the Stars. Kari Lehtonen is sidelined by a groin injury that could keep him out until after Christmas. Veteran backup Andrew Raycroft struggled in back-to-back games, allowing five goals in each. But Bachman has walked into Los Angeles and New York and won intense, low-scoring games in the span of four days. He is 2-0-0 with a 0.43 GAA and .986 save percentage.

"We're really not that surprised," said Trevor Daley, who scored a huge goal for the second game in a row. "Every time he's been up, he's been great, and he's living up to the expectations."

The win pushes the Stars to 17-11-1, good for 35 points and first place in the Pacific Division. And to credit only Bachman wouldn't be fair. The Stars have been fairly healthy the past two games and have played a very solid team game. Players such as Eric Nystrom, Philip Larsen and Jamie Benn contributed strong defensive play, while Gulutzan spread his minutes. What's more, the team stayed patient in being able to beat Henrik Lundqvist, who had the Rangers on a 7-1-1 roll entering the game.

"This is a grind game, and we have to grind it out," said Gulutzan. "We have to play hard to win, and we're accepting that game to game. Teams that stick with it the longest are the teams that will stand at the end, so we just have to stick with it."

And if that means standing on Bachman's shoulders right now, "the little guy" seems to be ready to handle the weight.

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646391 Detroit Red Wings

Ilitch project moves forward in state House as tax questions arise

By Matt Helms and Kathleen Gray

The state House approved legislation Thursday that could allow a tax break to help build the \$650-million proposed Red Wings arena and entertainment district that the Ilitch organization hopes to build in downtown Detroit, even as questions emerged about at least \$2 million in unpaid property taxes that the Ilitches' Olympia Entertainment may owe the city.

During House deliberations, an opponent of the arena challenged the tax break, alleging that the Ilitch entertainment empire owed \$1 million to the city. Records checked by the Free Press, first reported on [freep.com](http://freep.com), indicated that the organization owes more than \$2 million in unpaid property taxes, penalties and interest on Joe Louis Arena and Cobo Arena, dating to 2006.

The Ilitch organization released a statement late Thursday saying the city's tax bills are erroneous, adding that the company is proud of being a responsible corporate citizen.

"Upon further examination, it is our organization's belief that the taxes in question have been accrued to Olympia Entertainment in what appears to be an error.

"Olympia Entertainment has not received any notices about the taxes in question. The City of Detroit is the property owner of Joe Louis Arena and Cobo Arena and is the taxable entity. Olympia Entertainment is incorrectly listed as the property owner of record on the tax rolls, and our organization will be in touch with the Assessment Division within the City of Detroit's Finance Department to have the property owner of record corrected on the tax rolls," the statement read.

State law says property normally exempt from property taxes -- in this case, the city owns the property -- is taxable to the lessee when it is leased for

for-profit purposes. There are exceptions under the law, but it was not clear late Thursday whether Joe Louis Arena falls under those exceptions.

The tax bills became a topic of discussion Thursday as lawmakers in Lansing debated and then approved a bill that gives the pizza, sports and entertainment giant founded by Mike and Marian Ilitch tax breaks to build their arena for the Wings that would anchor a retail, entertainment and housing district downtown.

The state House passed the bill by a 58-49 margin Thursday afternoon. It would allow Detroit's Downtown Development Authority to continue to capture funds -- about \$12 million a year -- to help pay for infrastructure needs associated with the project that would be the new home of one of the National Hockey League's most successful teams. The Red Wings typically lure thousands of visitors downtown to spend money at the city's restaurants, bars and casinos, although this season has been sidelined by a player lockout.

State Rep. Lisa Howze, D-Detroit, said Thursday she voted to approve the deal after she was told that, under terms of the Ilitch lease of Joe Louis, Olympia and the city agreed to split the property taxes 50-50, but that arrangement ended in June 2010 when the lease expired.

Discussions about a new arena have gone on for years, with both the city and the Ilitch organization hoping to get a new hockey arena rather than locking the Ilitches into another long-term lease at Joe Louis.

Details about the lease agreement weren't available. The city wouldn't provide the Free Press with a copy of the document Thursday.

Mayor Dave Bing's office declined to discuss the lease deal or the property tax issue in detail, but spokesman Bob Warfield said the city "will work with the Ilitches to reconcile what they owe."

Records reviewed at the city Finance Department's Treasury Division show the amount the city says Olympia will owe by Dec. 31 is \$2,272,354.11, with penalties and interest, dating to 2006. That figure includes 2012 winter property taxes of just more than \$58,000 due by year's end; all other taxes were labeled delinquent.

City records show no payment has been made toward the delinquent taxes as of Thursday.

Olympia Entertainment has leased Joe Louis Arena from the city for years, but it wasn't immediately clear which portions of Cobo are referred to in the tax bill.

The blockbuster plan for a new arena wouldn't come without significant tax breaks, and there were differences of opinion on the bill, even among Detroit Democrats.

State Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Detroit, who voted against the bill, said the project would rob the state school-aid fund to benefit a corporation that was delinquent in its taxes to the city.

"Detroit is completely broke, and this is a company that actually owes money to the city," she said. "Your schools will end up paying for this project. We need to stop and evaluate this properly."

But state Rep. Shanelle Jackson, D-Detroit, said it was a worthy project that was essential for the city. She voted in favor of the bill.

"Opportunities like this are few and far between," she said. "This is an opportunity for investment in the city of Detroit, and to put Detroiters to work."

Democrats in the Legislature had threatened to withhold their votes on the Ilitch financing arrangement in opposition to Gov. Rick Snyder and state Republicans' efforts to replace Public Act 4 -- the state emergency manager law voters repealed in November -- with a bill that critics say would provide distressed cities substantially the same draconian options as before, trampling on local elected officials.

Nick Ciaramitaro, director of legislation and public policy for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 25 -- Detroit's largest employee union -- cited the delinquent taxes at a hearing Thursday before the House Tax Policy Committee, where the Ilitch organization was making its case for a law allowing taxes collected through Detroit's DDA to be used for the new arena plan.

Ciaramitaro, a former Democratic state representative from Macomb County, argued against the proposal, citing the unpaid taxes.

Council members and union leaders for months have pressed Bing's administration to go after unpaid taxes and other revenues owed to Detroit by corporate enterprises and some of its wealthiest business leaders, particularly as city workers have borne deep cuts in pay and benefits as the city tries to right its deeply troubled finances.

On Tuesday, as the City Council approved crucial reform contracts that Bing had sought under the threat from the state that Detroit could be placed under an emergency financial manager, Councilwoman JoAnn Watson asked Bing whether the city would devote the resources to collect debts that she and others say could exceed \$800 million.

Even if the city collected only a quarter of that amount, it would represent a significant turnaround in Detroit's financial picture, Watson noted. The implication: It could help pay down Detroit's immediate deficit -- now pegged as high as \$326 million -- and ease pressure on the city to implement further cuts to public services and the city's work force as the state threatens deeper intervention in Detroit's fiscal affairs.

Watson declined to comment Thursday. She has emphasized in public meetings that Detroit is owed potentially hundreds of millions in unpaid concession, franchise, parking and other fees, and inaction on pursuing those funds hobbles the city's efforts to stay afloat and address its enormous long-term pension and bond obligations.

State Sens. Tupac Hunter and Virgil Smith, Detroit Democrats, said they supported the Ilitch arena plan but called on the Ilitches to clear up the tax matter.

"There is no reason Mike Ilitch and his company should not be paying their property taxes on one arena while asking for tax breaks on another, and I hope this issue should be resolved right away," Smith said.

Howze, a candidate for Detroit mayor in 2013, said she ended up supporting the bill because "there was a greater amount at stake than the taxes in question -- a \$600-million investment, 5,000 jobs and revenues from income taxes generated in Detroit. That far outweighed any back taxes they owed."

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646392 Detroit Red Wings

House gives boost to possible tax break for \$650M proposed Red Wings arena project

By Matt Helms and Kathleen Gray

The state House approved legislation Thursday that could allow a tax break to help build the \$650-million proposed Red Wings arena and entertainment district the Ilitch organization hopes to build in downtown Detroit, even as questions emerged about \$2 million or more in unpaid property taxes the Ilitches' Olympia Entertainment may owe the city.

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But the Ilitch organization released a statement late Thursday, saying the city's tax bills are erroneous, adding that the company is proud of being a responsible corporate citizen.

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The tax bills became a topic of discussion Thursday as lawmakers in Lansing debated and then approved a bill that gives the pizza, sports and entertainment giant founded by Mike and Marian Ilitch tax breaks to build an arena for the Wings that would anchor a retail, entertainment and housing district downtown. The area behind the Fox Theatre, west of Woodward, has been named as one of three possible sites.

The state House passed the bill by a 58-49 margin Thursday afternoon. It would allow Detroit's Downtown Development Authority to continue to capture funds — about \$12 million a year — to help pay for infrastructure needs associated with the project that would be the new home of one of the National Hockey League's most successful teams. The Red Wings typically lure thousands of visitors downtown to spend money at the city's restaurants, bars and casinos, although this season has been sidelined by a player lockout.

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Staff writers John Gallagher and John Wisely contributed to this report.

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646393 Detroit Red Wings

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

Posted by James Jahnke

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

- Lions: Louis Delmas was among several defensive backs to get back on the practice field today. Drew Sharp isn't impressed by the way the team's draft gambles have played out. Cardinals CB Patrick Peterson says Calvin Johnson is only the second-best receiver in the league -- but that their matchup Sunday (4 p.m., Fox) will be the best in the NFL this season. Peterson also is perplexed by Matthew Stafford's variety of throwing motions. Ready for a mock draft? Todd McShay has the Lions taking Alabama CB Dee Milliner. DT Corey Williams is on IR and might need more surgery. Ndamukong Suh doesn't believe that an anonymous teammate really ripped him. RB Mikel Leshoure said "it was tough" to hear about fatal wreck involving former Illinois teammates. And as for the Cardinals, Ryan Lindley will start at QB, but Brian Hoyer is available as a backup.

- Spartans: Joe Rexrode wrote a nice story about the relationship between Tom Izzo, Jud Heathcote and Gus Ganakas. Joe also answered questions in a live chat this morning. Jon Reschke is trying to persuade other recruits to join him at MSU. One recruit on the Spartans' radar is the son of former player Jim Morrissey. Punter Mike Sadler was honored at the Free Press Dream Team banquet Wednesday night. Raymond Green had a big night -- and earned kudos from LeBron James. And Rexrode shared what he knows about the Jabari Parker recruitment.

- Wolverines: Cass Tech tackle David Dawson said he is focusing on Michigan, Ohio State and Alabama. U-M plays in the volleyball Final Four

tonight (7 p.m., ESPN2). U-M (and MSU) were among the unluckiest college football teams in America this season, a writer said. Tom Brady? Dead sexy. U-M will host Notre Dame at night again next season. And John Beilein talked more about his departure from West Virginia.

- Red Wings: Prospect Riley Sheahan -- you know him as the purple Teletubby -- pleaded guilty today to drunken driving. In labor negotiations, the NHL and players are still far apart, of course. Niklas Kronwall says the players are taking their stand for the next generation. And the organization raised \$24,000 for the Salvation Army by ringing bells.

- Pistons: The hectic schedule is hurting some of the younger players. Two of the young guys, Kim English and Khris Middleton, were sent to the D-League on Wednesday. Beat writer Vince Ellis answered your questions in a chat. And Buckets Blakes of the Harlem Globetrotters will chat at 11 a.m. Friday. Submit questions anytime.

- Tigers: The club hired Mike Henneman to coach pitchers at Class A West Michigan. Three division rivals have bolstered their pitching staffs, but Jamie Samuelsen says the Tigers are still the best in the Central. Maybe that's why ticket prices are going up? And check out our gallery of our favorite No. 12's, including Andy Dirks, Jim Price and Rod Allen.

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646394 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Riley Sheahan pleads guilty to drunken driving

By Helene St. James

Detroit Red Wings prospect Riley Sheahan pleaded guilty this morning in Grand Rapids to operating a vehicle with a blood-alcohol content of .17 or more.

Charges of displaying or using false identification and driving the wrong way on a one-way street were dismissed.

Sheahan's legal representative, Terese Paletta, was not immediately available for comment, but a clerk at the 61st District Court said Sheahan entered a guilty plea before judge Jeanine N. LaVille on the drunken-driving charge.

Sheahan next faces a presentencing investigation, then sentencing.

Sheahan, who turned 21 earlier this month, was arrested Oct. 30 while driving in downtown Grand Rapids. He was dressed in a purple Teletubby costume for Halloween and was carrying the ID of Grand Rapids Griffins teammate Brendan Smith.

Sheahan was charged under Michigan's "super-drunk" DUI law because of his blood-alcohol content.

The Wings drafted Sheahan 21st overall in 2010. General manager Ken Holland told the Free Press that the team is monitoring Sheahan's situation.

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646395 Detroit Red Wings

NHL negotiations in 'critical stage,' Wings' Henrik Zetterberg tells reporter

By Gregg Krupa

Attending the World Floorball Championships in Switzerland, Henrik Zetterberg told Swiss television that the NHL lockout has entered a crucial phase and the next two-to-three weeks may tell the tale of the current lockout, the third in the league in two decades.

Asked by a Unihockey.ch reporter when he will return to play in the NHL after two months playing for EV Zug in Switzerland, Zetterberg was pretty much stumped.

"That's a tough question," said the usually approachable, always unassuming Zetterberg, who likely will be announced as the next captain of

the Red Wings shortly after a collective bargaining agreement is signed. "I'm trying to answer it in different ways, every time. It's tough to do.

"We don't really know.

"I think we're in this really critical stage of negotiations, and the next two or three weeks is going to be really important. We'll see.

"You know, I'm really happy I got an opportunity to come here and play, and we'll see how long it's going to last."

Zetterberg, 32, had his worst start for the Red Wings at the beginning of last season, enduring perhaps the most pesky scoring drought of his career before ending the season with about the same scoring he has produced in recent seasons.

By playing in Europe, he likely will have a jump on the vast majority of NHL players who are trying to stay in shape without playing in professional games.

Zetterberg has fairly lit up the National League A in Switzerland, along with the Red Wings' latest prospect, the speedster Damien Brunner. Playing in 17 games, Zetterberg has 12 goals and 16 assists for 28 points.

Brunner, in 27 games, often on a line with Zetterberg, has 23 goals and 25 assists.

Their line mate, Linus Omark, is similarly hot, with 12 goals and 31 assists in 29 games. Currently the property of the Oilers, Omark may be on the trading block and the Wings may have some interest.

The Swiss reporter joked with Zetterberg about the comparative travel arrangements in the league in which he plays and the league out of which he is locked.

"Yeah, it's nice to have just a two-hour bus ride, rather than a five-hour flight after games," he said.

Floorball is similar to hockey, though it is played on a court; it was invented in the 1970s in Zetterberg's home country, Sweden.

Zetterberg said he was attending the world championship to watch the son of a friend, who is playing.

Detroit News LOADED: 12.14.2012

646396 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' Riley Sheahan pleads guilty to drunken driving

By Associated Press

Grand Rapids — Red Wings prospect Riley Sheahan, arrested in a Teletubbies costume in Grand Rapids, has pleaded guilty to drunken driving.

The 61st District Court says Riley Sheahan pleaded guilty Thursday to operating a car with a blood-alcohol level of 0.17 or higher. He was placed on probation for a year and must work on a work crew for 49 hours.

Sheahan, who plays for the Grand Rapids Griffins — the Red Wings' AHL affiliate, also must attend a class on how alcohol-related crashes affect victims. He was wearing the costume of a purple Teletubbies character named Tinky Winky when on Oct. 29. Police at the time said he had a blood-alcohol level of 0.30, well over the legal limit.

The 21-year-old Sheahan was 20 at the time.

Detroit News LOADED: 12.14.2012

646397 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings' prospects Jake Paterson, Xavier Ouellet to play for Canada at World Junior Championships

Ansar Khan |

A pair of Detroit Red Wings prospects, goaltender Jake Paterson from the Saginaw Spirit and defenseman Xavier Ouellet, were selected Thursday by Team Canada for the World Junior Championships in Ufa, Russia.

Paterson (6-1, 183), in his second full season with Saginaw (OHL), is 11-12-3, with a 3.49 goals-against average and .901 save percentage. The Red Wings selected Paterson in the third round (80th overall) of the 2012 entry draft, citing his athletic ability and calm demeanor.

Ouellet (6-0, 190), Detroit's second pick (48th overall) in 2011, has five goals and 25 points in 26 games for Blainville-Boisbriand Armada of the Quebec Major Junior League. He's a two-way defenseman who moves the puck well.

Detroit signed him to a three-year entry-level contract in March. He will begin his pro career next season, competing for a spot on the Grand Rapids Griffins.

The roster announcement came at the conclusion of Canada's National Junior Team selection camp, which ran from Dec. 10-13 in Calgary, and included 36 players. Red Wings prospect Ryan Sproul, a defenseman for Sault Ste. Marie (OHL) did not make the cut Thursday.

Canada's first game is Dec. 26 against Finland.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.14.2012

646398 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings prospect Riley Sheahan, who was arrested in Teletubby costume, pleads guilty to drunk driving

Peter J. Wallner

Sheahan, who plays for the Grand Rapids Griffins, was in Grand Rapids District Court on Thursday, Dec. 13, before Judge Jeanine N. LaVille.

According to a clerk at the 61st district court, Sheahan had to pay a \$1,325 fine today and agreed to complete 49 hours on a work crew, attend a victim impact class and serve 12 months of probation.

A person found guilty of driving with a blood-alcohol content of .17 or more receives a one-year suspension of their driver's license, according to the Secretary of State office. After 45 days they are eligible to drive using an ignition interlock device installed at the owner's expense.

Sheahan's attorney, Kevin Petterson, was not available. The Red Wings organization has not commented.

Recently, Jim Nill, the Red Wings assistant general manager, said of Sheahan, "He's getting help right now and will continue to get help."

Sheahan, who turned 21 on Dec. 7, was wearing the costume of a purple Teletubby, also known as Tinky Winky, when he was pulled over by Grand Rapids police on Oct. 29 for driving a 2012 Jeep Wrangler the wrong way on Ottawa Avenue NW, near Pearl Street.

According to the police report, he blew .30 twice in a breathalyzer test at Kent County Jail, and was carrying the Michigan driver's license of Brendan Smith, a teammate on the Griffins.

Sheahan is in his first full season with the Griffins after a successful collegiate career at Notre Dame. The 6-foot-2, 212-pound center, the Red Wings top pick in the 2010 draft, has four goals and four assists in 20 games this season.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.14.2012

646399 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings prospect pleads guilty to drunken driving

(AP) —

A Detroit Red Wings prospect has pleaded guilty to drunken driving following his arrest in a Teletubby costume in western Michigan.

The 61st District Court says Riley Sheahan pleaded guilty Thursday to operating a car with a blood-alcohol level of 0.17 or higher. He was placed on probation for a year and sentenced to 49 hours on a work crew.

Sheahan, who plays for the Grand Rapids Griffins, was wearing the costume of the purple Teletubby named Tinky Winky when he was arrested in Grand Rapids on Oct. 29. Police at the time said he had a blood-alcohol level of 0.30, well over the legal limit.

The 21-year-old Sheahan was 20 at the time of the arrest.

Macomb Daily LOADED: 12.14.2012

646400 Edmonton Oilers

Picking goalies for Canada's world junior team usually crapshoot

Jim Matheson

I know Laurent Brossoit is bummed he didn't make Canada's world junior team, but here's three Hall of Famers who never played on that team—Patrick Roy, Marty Brodeur (OK, he's not there yet but he will be) and Eddie Belfour. Same with local boy Cam Ward, who has a Conn Smythe trophy and a Stanley Cup ring in Carolina. They've made out just fine.

Over the last 30 years, Canada's had way more Philippe DeRouville's and Olivier Michaud's on that team than guys who've gone on to fame and fortune. It's no guarantee you're going to be an NHL star goalie just because you wear a maple leaf.

Here's who's played goal for Canada in the world junior since 1982:

Justin Pogge, Jeff Glass, Rejean Beauchemin, Maxime Ouellet, David LeNeveu, Brian Finley, Jamie Storr, Manny Legace. Jimmy Waite, Norm Foster, Frankie Caprice, Leland Irving, Alex Auld. Beauchemin never played a single NHL game. Same with Glass. Pogge has played seven, Ouellet got into 12, Foster 13, LeNeveu 22. Waite was a stud world junior goalie and played 106 NHL games. Legace played 365 and Auld, a career backup, 237. Storr was supposed to be the best of this bunch but didn't work hard enough at his craft after LA drafted him in the first round.

These guys have had better success: Roberto Luongo, Marc-Andre Fleury, Mike Vernon, Ken Wregget, Sean Burke, Jeff Hackett, Stephane Fiset, Felix Potvin, Trevor Kidd, Jose Theodore, Marc Denis, Martin Biron, Mathieu Garon, Carey Price. Devan Dubnyk, Jonathan Bernier, Steve Mason and Josh Harding are still feeling their way.

Of this bunch, Vernon and Fleury have Cup rings. Burke played 18 seasons, Wregget 17, Theodore won Hart trophy. Potvin played 635 games over 13 years. Luongo's played over 700 games with 61 shutouts.

Off the camp, you're right to say Brossoit got jobbed. Bob McKenzie, THE expert on all things world junior, says the Oil Kings' goalie was the second best at the camp with the likely first and second guys going in, Malcolm Subban and Jordan Binnington, 3-4. Saginaw's Jake Paterson shocked everybody by being the best at camp, not allowing a single goal in the games, but he's only 18, and he'll be the No. 3, sitting in the seats.

What it comes down to is this: Hockey Canada also looked at the goalie's body of work over the past year (league games, internationally, Memorial Cups). They like Subban because he plays on an international size surface in Belleville in the OHL and the Russian kids seem spooked when he's in the Canadian net. The worlds are in Russia, in Ufa. Binnington made it because he's been better than Brossoit in league play this season and it didn't hurt him that Canadian coach Steve Spott sees him more in the OHL. Spott coaches in Kitchener; Binnington plays in Owen Sound.

"Brossoit was a tough decision. Laurent was good," said a highly-paced junior source.

He'll never play in the world junior, but did it hurt Roy or Brodeur or Belfour or Ward?

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 12.14.2012

646401 Edmonton Oilers

Edmonton Oilers Taylor Hall and Jordan Eberle targets of AHL opponents' shut-down lines

By Derek Van Diest

EDMONTON - Despite their personal success with the Edmonton Oilers last season, Jordan Eberle knew he and his sidekicks, Taylor Hall and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, weren't just going to show up and light up the American Hockey League this year.

Having spent a brief period in the AHL on his way up to play with the Oilers, Eberle was aware of the calibre of the league and knew it would take some time to find traction.

"It's a great league," said Eberle. "It's very underrated, most guys don't understand how good it is. I knew what to expect, although it was a little different coming down from the NHL rather than going up from the AHL. But it's nice that Taylor and Ryan are here as well. It makes it a lot easier."

Not surprisingly, the trio of young Oilers find themselves near the top of the Oklahoma City Barons scoring charts heading into Friday's games against the visiting San Antonio Rampage.

Eberle has 14 goals and 30 points in 23 games, Nugent-Hopkins has eight goals and 20 points in 19 games, while Hall has six goals and 19 points in 15 games.

It hasn't come easy though. The three have had to work hard to put up their impressive numbers, having gotten off to a slow start to the season by their standards.

"The guys here are just as strong, they're just as fast as they are in the NHL," Eberle said. "I think the biggest thing is that maybe plays aren't made at the same level as in the NHL. They're not as quick."

"But on every team there are five or six guys that can play in the NHL and those are usually the guys that we're matched up against. You're getting that quality and calibre every night, anyways."

Due to the NHL lockout, the Barons aren't the only team featuring a handful of NHL players waiting out the work stoppage.

That has made an already competitive league all that much better.

"The game is a little sloppier down here, but at the same time it's a bit grittier," Hall said. "Everyone works their hardest and everyone is trying to make it to the next level to the NHL. You're always going to get guys that are giving it their all every night against you. That's been a little bit tough at times."

"When we're on the ice, the other team just wants to shut us down. It's a real challenge for them to try and do that and we respect that. There haven't been any teams or any players that have taken cheap shots or anything like that, they just play hard against us. We have to get used to that, we're not going to expect anything different. I still think we've done a pretty good job and hopefully we can keep getting better throughout the year."

Unfortunately for the Barons, individual success has not necessarily led to team dominance this season. The club is currently on a five-game losing skid and sits ninth in the AHL Western Conference standings.

The Barons lost a pair of games in both Houston and San Antonio before falling 4-2 to Peoria at home on Tuesday.

"We've been in all the games, it's just a matter of closing them out." Eberle said. "We've struggled in that aspect, but I think we have a good enough team and a skilled enough team that I think things are going to change."

With Eberle currently second in league scoring behind defenceman Justin Schultz and Hall starting to find his stride, it seems only a matter of time before the Barons turn their fortunes around.

However, Hall, Eberle and Nugent-Hopkins aren't currently away with the Canadian World Junior team as they are on borrowed time in Oklahoma City.

If and when the NHL lockout is settled, the three will be back in Edmonton along with Schultz and perhaps a couple of other players.

"We have a lot of core guys here that are going to be core guys in Edmonton," Eberle said. "It's good with our chemistry both on and off the

ice. If the league were to start right now we'd be at a big advantage. We're playing a North American-style game and we have a lot of guys playing."

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 12.14.2012

646402 Minnesota Wild

Discussions between NHL, union and moderators end without progress, but plans to talk again

IRA PODELL, Associated Press

NEW YORK - Negotiators from the NHL and the players' association made it into the same room to talk this time. They just didn't carry any meaningful progress out of it.

A second straight day with a federal mediator didn't do anything to bring the sides closer to a settlement on Thursday as the lockout dragged on with dwindling hope that the hockey season will be saved.

NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr talked face to face with lead league counsel Bob Battersman, which was a positive development because the sides were kept separate on Wednesday and met only with the mediator. Fehr is expected to talk on Friday with NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly, either in person or by telephone, to discuss how to proceed in their search for a new collective bargaining agreement.

"I'm not sure what the next steps will be," Daly told The Associated Press in an email. "I do expect the mediators to stay involved in terms of monitoring our ongoing negotiations, but at this point there are no further sessions planned. It doesn't appear there was movement by either side on any of the main issues over the last two days."

Daly and NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman, along with union executive director Donald Fehr didn't participate in Thursday's talks.

The dispute has gotten so big that President Barack Obama was asked about the stalemate during an interview Thursday with WCCO-TV in Minneapolis.

"My message to owners and to players is, 'You guys make a lot of money and you make a lot of money on the backs of fans, so do right by your fans. You can figure out how to spread out a bunch of revenue that you're bringing in, but do right by the people who support you,'" Obama said. "And I shouldn't have to be involved in a dispute between really wealthy players and even wealthier owners. They should be able to settle this themselves. And remember who it is that's putting all that money in their pockets."

While the President isn't jumping into the fray, the mediators aren't likely to jump out yet.

"I expect the mediators will continue to be involved," Steve Fehr wrote in an email to the AP. "(I) do not want to characterize the discussion."

Mediators talked to each group separately Wednesday in suburban New Jersey and carried messages back and forth.

The league and union hadn't met since talks fell apart a week ago on the third straight day of negotiations in New York. Mediators rejoined the conversation Wednesday following two failed days last month, but still couldn't achieve a breakthrough.

The latest round of talks was supposed to be held away from reporters and cameras, but the meeting location was quickly revealed Wednesday. Both sides briefly made public statements then in frustrated tones.

When the NHL agreed last week to increase its make-whole offer of deferred payments from \$211 million to \$300 million, it was part of a proposed package that required the union to agree on three nonnegotiable points. Instead, the players' association accepted the raise in funds, but then made counterproposals on the issues the league stated had no wiggle room.

Bettman then said that the offer was being pulled from the table. Mediators, however, asked the union Wednesday if that proposal was back in play, would the players take it or leave it?

"It wasn't much of a decision," said Brendan Morrison, one of 13 players to attend Wednesday's talks. "I thought the gap would be closed much quicker, but it hasn't come to fruition yet, so we have to keep working."

The offer wasn't actually resubmitted by the NHL. Neither side made proposals Wednesday or Thursday.

All games through Dec. 30 have been canceled, 43 percent of the season, along with the New Year's Day Winter Classic and the All-Star game.

After talks ended last Thursday, Donald Fehr began the first of his two news conferences that day by proclaiming he believed the sides had agreements on such issues as actual dollars and a players-funded pension plan. He returned moments later to reveal the NHL rejected everything offered.

The 2004-05 season was lost completely, resulting in the players' association accepting a deal that included a salary cap for the first time. While no such major philosophical disputes exist in these negotiations, the sides still aren't ready to come to an agreement.

A 48-game season was played in 1995 after a lockout stretched into January. Bettman said he wouldn't have a shorter season than that.

The NHL wants to limit personal player contracts to five years, seven for a club to re-sign its own player and has elevated the issue to the highest level of importance. The union countered with an offer of an eight-year maximum length with the variable in salary being no greater than a 25 percent difference between the highest-paid year of the deal and the lowest.

The other sticking points the NHL demanded of the players are a 10-year term on the new agreement, with a mutual opt-out option after eight years, and no compliance buyouts or caps on escrow in the transition phase to the new structure. The union presented an offer of an eight-year deal with a reopener after six.

Star Tribune LOADED: 12.14.2012

646403 Montreal Canadiens

Toronto prospect Rielly earns the right to wear a leaf of a different colour

ERIC DUHATSCHKE

The Twitter universe for the average junior hockey player is a couple of hundred followers, and that's where Morgan Rielly sat for most of last year. It was a lost year of sorts for him, a knee injury early in the Moose Jaw Warriors' season limiting him to 18 regular-season games and five more in the playoffs after he nagged his way back into the lineup.

But Rielly's draft stock stayed high, and when he went to the draft combine, he gained a couple of hundred more followers. Then came the day the Toronto Maple Leafs made him their first pick, fifth overall, and boom, it exploded.

"On draft day, I had almost a thousand – maybe," Rielly said, "and after the draft, I looked at my phone and it was something like eight or nine thousand. It's about 12,000 right now, and it's plateaued there, but it's still pretty cool."

Rielly (@mriles4) is actually at 12,167 followers, but the real measure of his rising fame is that there is now also a fake Morgan Rielly Twitter account, created after the Leafs drafted him, something that truly measures his arrival on the scene. And on Thursday, after he made Canada's world junior team, he tweeted "whatta dream come true .. lost for words."

Altogether, there were five members of the NHL's draft class of 2012 trying out for Canada's world junior team, but only Rielly and Griffin Reinhart made the cut. Rielly has been paired in camp mostly with Dougie Hamilton, a player the Boston Bruins chose with a Toronto draft choice (acquired in the Phil Kessel deal), and they will likely be the No. 1 pair.

Leaf Nation is going to want to monitor that pairing because isn't it fun to play what might have been?

Rielly's value to the world junior team greatly increased after Everett Silvertips defenceman Ryan Murray was lost to a season-ending shoulder injury, because Murray likely would have drawn the assignment to play alongside Hamilton.

But Rielly, who is scoring a point a game for an offensively challenged Moose Jaw team, has the sort of skill set that will translate well on the big ice. He also has the ability to defend without taking a penalty. In 33 games this season, he has not had a single minor penalty, and has only one five-minute major.

Overall, team defence figures to be a strength on this Canadian team, with Scott Harrington back for another crack, along with three other 19-year-olds new to the team this year – Xavier Ouellet (Blainville-Boisbriand), Tyler Wotherspoon (Portland) and Ryan Murphy (Kitchener). Apart from his "world-class" skill set, what coach Steve Spott particularly likes about Rielly is the fact that he has the puck most of the time.

On this team, with Hamilton playing the stay-at-home role, Rielly will get a chance to go to the attack. "I trust him," Spott said this week. "We've won with him before."

There has been progression in his game too. Rielly says it took a few games at the start of the season to get back into the rhythm of playing, "but I'm extremely happy to be healthy again. I knew I had some high expectations of myself and that I had to play hard and play well every night. That's what I've tried to do. I knew I had to prove myself after my injury – that I can play at a high level still – and I've kind of been trying to do that all year, and I think things have been going well for me."

No matter what happens with the NHL lockout, the Leafs have assured Rielly he will be with the Canadian junior team for the duration. He also understands that his life will never be the same after getting drafted by the Leafs, and that Toronto is just different from any place else in the known hockey world.

Pressure and scrutiny are facts of life for all high draft choices, but in about two-thirds of NHL precincts, they can disappear into the woodwork if they choose to do so, and live a relatively normal private life. In Toronto, that's more challenging and something the Leafs need to factor into their player evaluations.

Not everybody is cut out to play in Toronto, but Rielly looks as if he is. There is a steadiness about him that comes through, the kind of even-keel personality you need to play the brand of hockey that he does – which is a dynamic, all-over-the-ice offensive presence. In short, there is a bit of Erik Karlsson in him, but in a stockier frame. His junior coach, Mike Stothers, thinks Brian Leetch is a more apt comparison.

But however the future looks, Rielly says he got a glimpse of what life as a Leaf would like at their July prospects camp and he's good with it.

"When I went to the camp there after the draft, I had a chance to see what it's all about," Rielly said. "I had to do quite a few interviews. I knew what to expect after I got drafted, that an aspect of playing in Toronto is dealing with that kind of stuff. I've never had a huge problem with it. I do it. I've embraced it a little bit and you know what? It's enjoyable for me."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.14.2012

646404 Montreal Canadiens

MacKinnon and Drouin survive final cuts to make Canadian junior team

ERIC DUHATSCHKE

For the first time in five years, Canada will have two 17-year-olds in the lineup for the world junior tournament, after the Halifax Mooseheads pair of Nathan MacKinnon and Jonathan Drouin both made the cut for the 2013 tournament in Ufa, Russia.

Canada dropped eight more players Thursday, following a 2-0 exhibition win over a Canadian university selects team – and a couple of the decisions came as minor surprises.

Edmonton Oil Kings goaltender Laurent Brossoit was the odd man out, despite having a solid camp. Canada will go with three players from the OHL: Malcolm Subban (Belleville Bulls), Jake Paterson (Saginaw Spirit) and Jordan Binnington (Owen Sound Attack).

Binnington gave up both goals Thursday. Paterson had the strongest camp of all and did not surrender a goal on 33 shots.

On the blueline, another player who'd had a good three days – Frank Corrado of the Sudbury Wolves – didn't survive either. (Corrado is a fifth-round pick of the Vancouver Canucks and versatile, but not especially big.) The other defencemen released were Ryan Sproul (Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds) and Mathew Dumba (Red Deer Rebels).

Up front, the final four players dropped were: Mark McNeill (Prince Albert Raiders), Tom Wilson (Plymouth Whalers), Hunter Shinkaruk (Medicine Hat Tigers) and Daniel Catenacci (Owen Sound).

Shinkaruk is also an NHL draft-eligible player, like MacKinnon and Drouin, and though he made his presence felt, it was unlikely Canada was prepared to go that young on its final roster.

In 2008, the last time the national squad had a pair of 17-year-olds on the roster, they were Steven Stamkos and John Tavares, who were back-to-back No. 1 overall NHL draft choices.

Because of the current NHL lockout, Hockey Canada applied for Russian visas for all 36 players attending the camp, just in case the owners and players settle their dispute and the season starts before the world junior tournament ends.

Several players – notably Morgan Rielly (Toronto Maple Leafs) and Boone Jenner (Columbus Blue Jackets) – have been told by their NHL teams they would not be recalled from Russia, no matter what happens with the lockout.

"It's a tough decision, they said it was one of the toughest they had to make," the disappointed Corrado said. "You can always take that, but ... obviously, I'm not happy I'm not on the team. But I thought it was a good camp, nonetheless."

For his part, Broissoit wasn't sure why he drew the short straw, after showing well in camp. Among goalies, he had the second-lowest save percentage. "You wonder what else you could have done," he said, "but it is what it is."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.14.2012

646405 Montreal Canadiens

Canada's junior team beats university squad 2-0 in exhibition game

CALGARY — The Canadian Press

Anthony Camara and Ty Rattie scored for Canada's junior team in a 2-0 win over a team of university players at selection camp Thursday.

It was the last chance for the players invited to selection camp to impress coach Steve Spott and his assistants. Eight players were to be released after the game and the 23-man Canadian team revealed.

Jordan Binnington stopped 19 of 21 shots in net for the university all-stars in his half of the game. Jake Paterson didn't give up a goal on 11 shots in relief.

Laurent Broissoit and Malcolm Subban combined for a shutout in Canada's net with 13 and nine saves respectively.

Paterson is the youngest of the four goalies invited to camp, but was the only one with a shutout through his three half-games at camp. The Saginaw Spirit netminder stopped 33 shots in total

Thirty-six players arrived Monday in Calgary to compete for jobs. They all had one practice and — for those who weren't among the five released Wednesday — three games to earn a job on the team.

The NHL lockout made for stiff competition at camp as Canada is in the rare position of having its best under-20 players available for the upcoming world junior championship in Ufa, Russia.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.14.2012

646406 Montreal Canadiens

Jonathan Bernier commits to Spengler Cup team if lockout continues

By Chris Johnston

Jonathan Bernier is committed to representing Canada at the Spengler Cup if the NHL lockout continues through the end of the month.

The Los Angeles Kings goaltender has been playing for the Heilbronn Falcons in Germany's second division during the work stoppage and plans to join the Canadian team for the Dec. 26-31 event, according to a source.

Like the other NHLers tentatively scheduled to wear the Maple Leaf in Davos, Switzerland over the holidays, Bernier's availability hinges on the status of collective bargaining talks back in North America.

Hockey Canada doesn't expect to formally name the Spengler Cup team until just before Christmas because of the uncertainty brought on by the NHL lockout. Canada is scheduled open the tournament against Adler Mannheim on Dec. 26.

Bernier previously represented Canada during the 2008 world junior championship, winning gold as a backup to Steve Mason, and at the 2011 IIHF World Hockey Championship. He also played in the world under-18 championship.

If NHL players continue to be locked out, Canada should be strong up front. Tyler Seguin, Jason Spezza, Patrice Bergeron, John Tavares, Matt Duchene and Brooks Laich are all currently playing for teams in the Swiss league and have shown some interest in the event.

Earlier this week, the Canadian team's architect acknowledged that he'd been in contact with all of them.

"These are top-end guys that would obviously put us in a good situation with our overall team makeup," said Brad Pascall, Hockey Canada's vice-president of national teams. "No matter what event it is we always try to put our best team together — our goal is to win these events."

The Spengler Cup is a six-team tournament that dates back to 1923. Traditionally, Canada sends a group of pros based in Switzerland along with a handful of guys from other European leagues and the American Hockey League.

Canada last won the event 2007, when it had veteran Curtis Joseph in goal.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.14.2012

646407 Montreal Canadiens

Fantasy: Habs lose game, Subban

By Pat Hickey,

MONTREAL — Jeff Carter's second goal of the game snapped a 3-3 tie and propelled the Stanley Cup-champion Los Angeles Kings to a 5-3 win over the Canadiens Thursday night, but that was only the beginning of the bad news.

Earlier in the day, the Canadiens learned that David Desharnais suffered an upper-body injury Wednesday night in New York and the Canadiens finished the Los Angeles game without defenceman P.K. Subban.

"We're not sure what the problem is, but it looks like Desharnais is day-to-day. But P.K. could be a matter of weeks rather than days," coach Michel Therrien said.

There was an unconfirmed report that Subban suffered a hip pointer when he was checked along the boards in the second period by Mike Richards. Subban attempted to return to the ice after missing a shift, but was in obvious discomfort.

Carter capped a three-point night when he beat Carey Price at 9:01 of the third period. He also scored at 3:10 of the second period to give the Kings a 3-1 lead.

The Canadiens rallied to tie the score as Brian Gionta scored at 6:45 of the second period and Tomas Plekanec scored a power-play goal at 19:35. The power play was one of the few bright spots for the Canadiens, who went 2-for-5. The Kings were 0-for-3 with the extra man.

"We showed a lot of determination to tie the score, but we gave the momentum back to them," Gionta said. "You have to give them credit for playing good defence, but we only had four shots in the third period and we didn't respond after they took the lead."

The Kings came out of the first period with a 2-1 lead. Dustin Brown opened the scoring at 11:01 with assists from Carter and Richards. Tomas Kaberle tied it when he beat Jonathan Quick on the power play at 18:41, but Simon Gagné put the Kings back on top at 19:20.

"We just had a breakdown," Therrien said. "You can't give up goals in the first or last minute of a period."

Anze Kopitar added an insurance goal for the Kings at 16:16 of the third period.

Ryan White and the Kings' Kyle Clifford exchanged blows in the third period with the linesmen stepping in after White opened a cut over Clifford's right eye.

Next up for the Canadiens is a pair of games against the Buffalo Sabres. The teams meet Friday in Buffalo and are back at the Bell Centre on Monday. That will be the Canadiens' final home game before they embark on a six-game road trip around the Christmas holiday.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 12.14.2012

646408 Montreal Canadiens

Pat Hickey: How to get 'em back on the ice

By Pat Hickey,

MONTREAL — Random thoughts while waiting for the National Hockey League owners and players to get on the same page — or at least in the same room:

The Botta plan: There have been numerous suggestions on how to get the two sides back on the ice and my favourite comes from Chris Botta of Sports Business Journal.

Botta was once the crackerjack public-relations director for the New York Islanders and is a passionate fan of the game. He has proposed a return to the ice while the two sides continue to negotiate. Under Botta's scheme, the hockey-related revenue that would normally be split by the owners and the players would be donated to charity until a settlement is reached.

The one flaw in the plan would be getting the two sides to agree on a charity.

Generation gap: New York Rangers forward Jeff Halpern was kicking it as he tweeted from the 12.12.12 concert Wednesday night at Madison Square Garden. At one point, the 36-year-old Halpern said he was dancing to Another Brick in the Wall and expressed amazement that 23-year-old teammate Ryan McDonagh had never heard of former Pink Floyd frontman Roger Waters.

The presence of the two Rangers at the sold-out concert raises an important question: How did they score the tickets? If they were given preferential treatment as members of the MSG family does that mean the Rangers are subject to a hefty fine for fraternizing with the enemy?

To boycott or not to boycott? With their emotions running the gamut from A (anger) to A (apathy), a number of fans have been calling for some sort of boycott to express their displeasure over the NHL lockout.

We've already seen some signs of a grassroots movement with slumping sales of NHL-licensed merchandise and Molson beer.

There will be marginal fans who will cross NHL games off their list of things to do, particularly in the smaller markets in the U.S. But a call for a general post-lockout boycott of games doesn't make much sense because the reason fans are upset is that they can't watch games.

But there are some ways for fans to send a message to the owners that are relatively painless and can save fans some money. When the NHL does come back, skip the concessions. You want a beer? Stop in a local watering hole before the game. You won't have to spend the \$10.75 the Bell Centre charges for a can and you'll have a choice of brews including some that may just taste better.

And here's a suggestion for the NHL when the league does return to the ice: Don't insult us with an on-ice message saying thanks. If you have to sacrifice that precious advertising space, the only appropriate message would along the lines of "Please forgive us."

A cure for withdrawal: Fans who are looking for a hockey fix should drop by the Étienne Desmarteau Arena in Rosemount at 1 p.m. Saturday to watch Les Girls play Les Boys.

Les Girls are the Canadian Women's Hockey Association-champion Montreal Stars, while the Les Boys are, well, Les Boys. They are the member of the cast of the popular Quebec movie franchise and TV show, with former NHLers Enrico Ciccone and Georges Laracque making guest appearances.

This isn't the first time the two groups have faced each other. The plot of Les Boys III had the beer-league players playing — and losing to — the Canadian Olympic women's team.

Current Stars Kim St. Pierre and Caroline Ouellette had roles in the movie, along with Danielle Goyette. St. Pierre's boyfriend, actor and producer Lenny Jo Goudreau, will play for Les Boys.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 12.14.2012

646409 Montreal Canadiens

Injury bug hits Habs in fantasy loss to Kings

Posted by Stu Cowan

Suffering Canadiens withdrawal? The Gazette has the answer with the ultimate fantasy experience as beat writer Pat Hickey and Gazette techie Eric Tobon employ EA Sports NHL 13 to produce The Season That Isn't. Here's how things might have looked in Thursday night's game between the Canadiens and the Los Angeles Kings at the Bell Centre.

Jeff Carter's second goal of the game snapped a 3-3 tie and propelled the Stanley Cup-champion Los Angeles Kings to a 5-3 win over the Canadiens Thursday night, but that was only the beginning of the bad news.

Earlier in the day, the Canadiens learned that David Desharnais suffered an upper-body injury Wednesday night in New York and the Canadiens finished the Los Angeles game without defenceman P.K. Subban.

"We're not sure what the problem is, but it looks like Desharnais is day-to-day. But P.K. could be a matter of weeks rather than days," coach Michel Therrien said.

There was an unconfirmed report that Subban suffered a hip pointer when he was checked along the boards in the second period by Mike Richards. Subban attempted to return to the ice after missing a shift, but was in obvious discomfort.

Carter capped a three-point night when he beat Carey Price at 9:01 of the third period. He also scored at 3:10 of the second period to give the Kings a 3-1 lead.

The Canadiens rallied to tie the score as Brian Gionta scored at 6:45 of the second period and Tomas Plekanec scored a power-play goal at 19:35. The power play was one of the few bright spots for the Canadiens, who went 2-for-5. The Kings were 0-for-3 with the extra man.

"We showed a lot of determination to tie the score, but we gave the momentum back to them," Gionta said. "You have to give them credit for playing good defence, but we only had four shots in the third period and we didn't respond after they took the lead."

The Kings came out of the first period with a 2-1 lead. Dustin Brown opened the scoring at 11:01 with assists from Carter and Richards. Tomas Kaberle tied it when he beat Jonathan Quick on the power play at 18:41, but Simon Gagne put the Kings back on top at 19:20.

"We just had a breakdown," Therrien said. "You can't give up goals in the first or last minute of a period."

Anze Kopitar added an insurance goal for the Kings at 16:16 of the third period.

Ryan White and the Kings' Kyle Clifford exchanged blows in the third period with the linesmen stepping in after White opened a cut over Clifford's right eye.

Next up for the Canadiens is a pair of games against the Buffalo Sabres. The teams meet Friday in Buffalo and are back at the Bell Centre on Monday. That will be the Canadiens' final home game before they embark on a six-game road trip around the Christmas holiday.

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646410 Montreal Canadiens

Mediators still involved in NHL talks

Posted by Stu Cowan

The Associated Press reported on Thursday afternoon that federal mediators are still involved in the NHL labour talks and the league's deputy commissioner Bill Daly told AP in an email that the league has had "some back and forth with the mediator."

"Too early to say whether we will be meeting," Daly wrote on the 89th day of the league's lockout. "Ultimately up to the mediator."

You can read more by clicking here.

Hockey Night in Canada's Elliotte Friedman wrote Wednesday night: "If all a mediator is going to do is ask the players, 'Would you accept the owners' most recent offer if it was put back on the table?' then it's a useless process."

You can read Friedman's column by clicking here.

Meanwhile, former Habs great and Hall of Famer Bob Gainey celebrated his 59th birthday on Thursday. Gainey stepped down as a special adviser to the Canadiens on March 29, 2012, the same day GM Pierre Gauthier was fired. Gainey is now a senior adviser of hockey operations for the Dallas Stars.

Find out where Red Fisher ranked Gainey in his Top 10 Canadiens list by clicking here.

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646411 Montreal Canadiens

Habs 1992-93 season flashback: Racicot gets pounded by Rangers

Posted by Stu Cowan

NEW YORK – What's to be done with the wreckage after the roof falls in? Crate it and forget about it?

"That's the last thing you'd want to do," snapped an exercised Brian Skrudland in the moments after this 10-5 lashing administered by the New York Rangers. "I'd look back on this every time we started feeling we can start a game down two goals. I'd think about it over and over again," said Skrudland. "I'd look at it over and over again."

Skrudland, obviously, has a strong stomach.

The Embarrassment was the worst inflicted on the Canadiens since they crashed 11-6 to Hartford early in the 1985-86 season. It was, in every way, a team effort, but the problem is that one player is likely to take the hit for it.

In other words, hold the anointment of Andre Racicot as the unchallenged backup to Patrick Roy. He was bad in a 31-shot game. Horrid, when it's considered that the Rangers scored early and frequently in each of the three periods. On the other hand, he had more than sufficient company – in every area.

What went wrong? Everything.

Why?

Well, let's see.

Perhaps the best way to explain it is that Racicot was treated like a guy with an infectious disease by most of his associates. They stayed so far away from him, they were in another time zone.

"Give up goals early," fumed Skrudland, "and it catches up to you, and we didn't care enough about it. If hurtin' doesn't start now, it won't happen in April and May. That was our problem last year. When it was all over, the hurtin' wasn't enough.

"I feel badly for Andre," said Skrudland. "It's not like us to give up. If you don't feel something from this, it makes for a long season."

Racicot felt something after relinquishing two goals apiece to Sergei Nemchinov and Doug Weight, and others to Tony Amonte, Steve King, James Patrick, Alexei Kovalev, Mark Messier and Mike Gartner.

"I'm not going to let one game ruin my career," he sighed.

True, but it's also true that managements don't sit still when the opposition leaves its backup goaltender in tatters – no matter what the reason happens to be.

It's also particularly annoying when the goals come early and quickly – and what's earlier and quicker than Amonte and King scoring within 10 seconds in the third minute of the game? Or Patrick and Weight scoring in the first and fifth minutes of the second period.

Then, there's Nemchinov and Messier getting goals before the third period was two minutes old.

Say this much about Racicot: he's consistent.

In his last starting assignment, he relinquished two goals in the first three shots he faced. Last night: two goals in four shots.

Neither goal – and others later – was high quality stuff. They were goals which prompt coaches to change quickly, but patience is something Jacques Demers is determined to bring to the arena. It's what he used in Winnipeg – and it paid off handsomely when Racicot lifted his game several levels to lead the Canadiens to a 3-2 overtime victory. Sadly, it's what Demers used last night – and paid the price for it. Sadly, because no goaltender should be allowed to face that much embarrassment.

Oh: the Canadiens goal-scorers were Mathieu Schneider and Stephan Lebeau with two apiece, and Mike Keane getting the others.

Racicot, who went the distance, got the starting assignment for all of the right reasons. What it comes down to is that while he had won his last six games, the opposition was fairly soft. The suggestion from management was that he be used more and against stronger opposition and, yep, the Rangers in Madison Square Garden surely represent the best kind of oppositon.

The Rangers scored long and short. They scored quickly. They got good goals and bad ones, and what they showed most of all was a terrible lack of respect for the Canadiens, with two goals in the first period and four in each of the second and third periods.

"No respect for us at all," grunted Skrudland.

Ugh!

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646412 Montreal Canadiens

Auction for signed Forum seat has begun

Posted by Stu Cowan

Are you still looking for a Christmas gift for that special hockey fan on your shopping list?

How about a blue seat from the old Forum signed by six members of the current Canadiens roster?

Beginning at 11 a.m. Thursday and continuing through 11 a.m. Tuesday, The Gazette will be auctioning off the Forum seat through eBay on our hockeyinsideout.com website with all the money going to The Gazette

Christmas Fund, now in its 47th year of putting food on the tables and gifts under the holiday trees of less fortunate Montrealers.

The starting bid will be \$500 and you can place your bid by going to [hockeyinsideout.com/auction](http://hockeyinsideout.com/auction). For more information on The Gazette Christmas Fund, go to [montrealgazette.com/christmasfund](http://montrealgazette.com/christmasfund).

The six Canadiens players — Carey Price, Brian Gionta, Travis Moen, Colby Armstrong, Josh Gorges and Brandon Prust — signed the seat during another Gazette Christmas Fund fund-raiser last month in which Montrealer Caroline Tardif bid \$3,300 in an eBay auction through [hockeyinsideout.com](http://hockeyinsideout.com) to dine at Montreal steak house Moishes along with the Canadiens players and The Gazette's Dave Stubbs.

"It sounds like an odd thing to say, but I was happy to see how really 'normal' all the guys were," Caroline told Stubbs about her dinner with the players and her partner Eric Legault. "They're so down-to-earth and easy to talk to. They totally made us feel included and welcome, like we were part of their group, not two outsiders just looking in."

Caroline added: "I'm also happy to think I may have contributed in helping less fortunate Montrealers enjoy a more pleasant holiday season. As for me, my Christmas sure came early this year and I've loved every second of it."

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646413 Nashville Predators

Nashville Predators enforcer Brian McGrattan has reasons to smile

Josh Cooper

BRIAN McGRATTAN

- Height/weight: 6-5/235
- Age: 31
- Hometown: Hamilton, Ontario
- How acquired: Claimed off waivers by the Predators on Oct. 11, 2011
- NHL teams: Ottawa Senators (2005-06; 2007-08), Phoenix Coyotes (2008-09) Calgary Flames (2009-10), Nashville Predators (2011-12)
- AHL teams: Binghamton Senators (2002-03, 2004-05), San Antonio Rampage (2008-09), Providence Bruins (2010-11), Syracuse Crunch (2010-11)
- Penalty minutes: 456 in 212 NHL games played
- Twitter handle: @bigern10
- DATE: Thursday, Dec. 13.
- DAY: 89.
- LAST NEGOTIATIONS: Thursday, Dec. 13, in New Jersey.
- NEXT NEGOTIATIONS: Today, by phone.
- NO PROGRESS: Representatives from both sides made it into the same room with a federal mediator Thursday. They just didn't make any noticeable progress. President Barack Obama told a Minnesota TV station to "do right by your fans." Obama said: "My message to owners and players is, 'You guys make a lot of money and you make a lot of money on the backs of fans, so do right by your fans. You can figure out how to spread out a bunch of revenue that you're bringing in, but do right by the people who support you.'"

Brian McGrattan is unintentionally intimidating. His 6-foot-4, 235-pound frame is etched in body art. His face seems to wear an almost permanent scowl.

But ask the Predators enforcer about Year Four of his new life and a smile purses his lips.

"I made it back to the NHL, got engaged at Christmas, re-signed in July, got married in July, so it has all been good," he said. "I'm a firm believer that if you do the right thing then good things will happen for you."

Dec. 4 was a big day for McGrattan. It was the day he hit his fourth year of sobriety — Year Four, as he likes to call it. And with that moment came reflection about his path and how he has become the player, and man, he is today.

On the anniversary, he posted the news on Twitter, and received scores of messages of support and congratulations from his friends around the NHL.

"If you work hard and have a good attitude, you will achieve a good balance and things will go your way, he said.

Day One of McGrattan's journey happened while he was with the Phoenix Coyotes in 2008, and he will always hold onto that moment.

"I don't want to forget," he said. "I was on the tail end of a bender, and I just woke up. It was kind of the only clarity I've had in the last 10 years. I called my mom at work and was pretty upset. I was crying."

When McGrattan decided to enter rehab, he said, he felt embarrassed, wondering what the rest of the hockey world would think of him. But after a couple of weeks, he realized that he needed to accept his decision, and that if he did, others would understand.

"Now it's something I'm very proud of," McGrattan said. "It's something I wear on my sleeve and something I'm not embarrassed of. It's something I'm very happy I have."

When the Predators claimed McGrattan off waivers on Oct. 11, 2011, they were looking for an intimidating presence to add to their lineup. But they also found someone who quickly bonded with his teammates — especially captain Shea Weber, who often jokes and laughs with McGrattan in the dressing room.

"I just played against him a few times when he had his red mohawk in Calgary," Weber said. "I never knew anything except he was tough. I got to know him and liked him a lot as a person and as a teammate as well. He does a great job on the ice, and we're fortunate to have him."

McGrattan also helped mentor former Predators forward Jordin Tootoo, who wasn't even a year sober when McGrattan came to Nashville. They bonded, and through helping Tootoo, McGrattan saw that he could aid others as an addictions counselor when his playing career is over.

"I'm at a point now in my life where I can give back and help people that were in the situation I was in," McGrattan said. "I've been given an opportunity to do that."

Preds on the diamond: Predators players went to Vanderbilt's Hawkins Field on Wednesday for a little batting practice.

Weber is good friends with Commodores coach Tim Corbin, and he's also a big Vanderbilt baseball fan.

"This week kind of worked out that we weren't doing anything yesterday, and got out there and had some fun," Weber said. "(Corbin) has been a good friend and someone I stay in touch with. He's a very good man, and I love watching baseball there. They've had a good program, and he's someone I will stay in contact with for a long time."

Fisher stays charitable: The lockout has given Predators forward Mike Fisher more time to work with Room in the Inn, a local homeless outreach organization.

Fisher was given the NHL's Foundation Player Award last summer for his charitable work. Wednesday he took part in a Room in the Inn fundraiser at Merchants restaurant downtown.

"They're a great organization and they do a lot of good work. There's a lot of great people there who make a difference in people's lives," Fisher said.

Fisher added that as holiday time nears, he would partake in several more charitable endeavors.

Tennessean LOADED: 12.14.2012

646414 New Jersey Devils

Mediators Unable to Breathe Life Into Stalled Labor Talks

By REUTERS

(Reuters) - National Hockey League (NHL) owners and players appear no closer to ending a lockout that could wipe out an entire season after working with U.S. federal mediators for a second consecutive day on Thursday.

The mediators and NHL Players' Association (NHLPA) Executive Director Donald Fehr were back at the table Thursday but, unlike Wednesday, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and deputy commissioner Bill Daly did not participate.

"There has been contact between the parties today," NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr, who said he spoke with lead NHL counsel Bob Battersman, told reporters.

"I think we're done with contact for tonight, expect there will be contact tomorrow but I am not sure if it will be by telephone or in person."

Bettman has said he cannot see the NHL, which normally runs an 82-game regular season, playing less than a 48-game campaign. But with 42.8 percent of the season already canceled, time is quickly running out.

The two sides appear to have inched closer on the main sticking point of how to divide \$3.3 billion in revenue.

The league is seeking an immediate 50-50 split while players, who will see their share chopped from 57 percent, want the cuts brought in gradually with a "make whole" provision in place to cover money that would be lost on current contracts.

Several other contentious items remain on the table, including the length of a new collective bargaining agreement and contract limits to drug testing and continued participation in the Winter Olympics.

(Reporting by Steve Keating in Toronto; Editing by Frank Pingue)

New York Times LOADED: 12.14.2012

646415 New Jersey Devils

Sweden Scraps Rule, Paves Way for More North Americans

By REUTERS

STOCKHOLM (Reuters) - The Swedish Ice Hockey Association has cleared the deck for more players from north America in its clubs by deciding to scrap a rule that limits teams to two non-EU players.

"There has been a desire from clubs to avoid having to limit themselves only to the European market," association chairman Christer Englund told Aftonbladet newspaper.

"Instead of forcing clubs to limit themselves, they can now recruit from north America. There aren't too many countries that can deliver players of high class. We also get players with a different playing style."

Englund ruled out any negative impact of the decision taken by the association's elite committee.

"It makes no difference if they come from the Czech Republic or north America," he added.

(Reporting by Philip O'Connor in Dublin; editing by Amlan Chakraborty)

New York Times LOADED: 12.14.2012

646416 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout update: NHL, NHLPA continue talks with mediator, but still no progress; Sidney Crosby calls meetings 'discouraging'

Charles Curtis,

Second verse, same as the first.

Once again, representatives from the NHL and players' association met with a mediator in New Jersey. As NHL.com's Dan Rosen said, the two sides will talk Friday. But other than that, there's not much to report.

NHLPA special council Steve Fehr did say, via video provided by Sportsnet, "It's good that we're talking. It's better than not talking."

Earlier today, Josh Yohe of the Tribune-Review reported Penguins star Sidney Crosby isn't pleased with what he's heard about this week's meeting with mediators.

"For me, it just doesn't make any sense," he told Yohe. "Why can't they get in the room and keep talking? I don't know what that mindset is or how that's going to help things progress."

While the negotiations have slowed to a crawl, it's inspired a few ideas that would help the game in the future.

Forbes' Tom Van Riper suggested it's time for contraction. "The 21st century hockey industry basically mirrors the 19th century railroad industry: too much capacity," he wrote. "And just as some modern politicians are intent on investing in high speed rail that no one wants to ride, the modern NHL has pushed out more hockey across the country than people want to see."

Here's the most damning statistic he cited -- in the past seven seasons since the last lockout, "six franchises have suffered operating losses in every one of them," with the Hurricanes in the red for all but one season and the Sharks losing money in all but two years.

If and when the game does return, USA Today's Kevin Allen thought a 48-game season should be followed up with a 24-team playoff, up from 16 teams. "Can you imagine the intensity of those best-of-three play-in rounds? Historically, the most buzz about the NHL playoffs comes in the first round because there are fans from 16 teams still believing they can win the Stanley Cup. Wouldn't the buzz be greater if 24 teams were still alive in this one-time unique postseason format?" he said. Allen also threw in a few other ways to make a season worth watching -- a smaller regular season and no conferences.

Of course, the two sides have to agree to have a season in the first place. That's where ESPN.com's Scott Burnside comes in. He spoke to "one NHL governor" who gave him an outline of a deal he thought would work for the union and owners: "A nine-year CBA with a 7-year out for either side; A six-year contract limit with front-load/back-diving protection and 8-year limits for players who have been with a team for five years; Some simple buyout option as long as the buyouts were within the salary cap."

That's assuming the NHL doesn't take proposals off the table as it threatened, including "make-whole" money.

Burnside spoke to players who said the offer he described would be good enough to vote on. "I think it's definitely worth looking at. We'd have to look it over and see what the implications are but it's something to work with for sure. I think that will get some traction," another player told Burnside.

Unfortunately, for now, that's fantasy. The reality is we've seemingly reached another stalemate as the clock slowly ticks.

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.14.2012

646417 New Jersey Devils

NHL players ask to deal with league's strict attorney

By TOM GULITTI

Another day of meetings at the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service's sub-regional office in Woodbridge on Thursday failed to yield any progress in the deadlock between the NHL and its players.

There was little hope that it would after the sides met separately with federal mediator Scot Beckenbough for six and a half hours on Wednesday. The process continued anyway, though, with league attorney Bob Battersman meeting face to face with NHL Players' Association special counsel Steve Fehr and Beckenbough on Thursday afternoon.

Beckenbough worked separately with the players and Battersman earlier in the day.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and deputy commissioner Bill Daly did not participate in Thursday's proceedings, which took place on Day 89 of the owners' lockout, but were in contact with Battersman throughout the day. Interestingly, it was the NHLPA that requested Battersman's presence Thursday, a source said. Battersman is viewed by most as less willing to be flexible in negotiations.

The lack of results was predictable as the three main points of contention remained unchanged — the length of the new collective bargaining agreement (the NHL asked for 10 years with an out after eight and the players proposed an eight-year deal with an out after six), contract restrictions (length and variance in annual salary) and salary cap transition issues (contract buyouts, cap on escrow).

The sides plan to be in contact again today, but it was undecided when they will next meet in person.

Bergen Record LOADED: 12.14.2012

646418 New Jersey Devils

NHL puts stale in stalemate

By LARRY BROOKS

The NHL's peculiar approach to collective bargaining yielded predictable results yesterday when the league neither met collectively with the NHLPA nor bargained with the union.

A second straight day of mediation, this one featuring executive director Don Fehr and counsel Steve Fehr for the NHLPA and Proskauer Rose counsel Bob Battersman for the NHL, ended in continued stalemate when the league insisted last week's already rejected offer was take-it-or-leave-it.

An individual with knowledge of the day's events told The Post the union was informed the league would be willing to discuss transition issues only if the NHLPA agreed in full to the NHL proposal presented after two days of player-owner meetings.

While there are players who would accept that offer in order to save the 2012-13 season, there are at least an equal percentage of team executives appalled by Canceled-in-Chief Gary Bettman's refusal to attempt to bridge what is a narrow gap on the outstanding issues of CBA length and contract term limits.

The league has proposed a 10-year CBA with an eight-year out clause for the players while the PA has proposed an eight-year deal with a six-year out clause.

The NHL has proposed a five-year contract term limit that would increase to seven years for free agents (restricted and unrestricted) signing with their own teams. The NHLPA has proposed an eight-year limit across the board. There is also a difference on allowable annual salary variance within a contract.

Bettman has indicated he believes a schedule of 48 games would constitute a season of integrity, thereby leaving the commissioner approximately a month before canceling the season for the second time in the last eight years.

The NHLPA was scheduled to provide an update to its executive board consisting of the 30 player reps last night via conference call. It is unknown when the league and union will next convene.

The 31,000-member National Hockey League Fans' Association released the results of a poll yesterday to which 1,305 Americans and 739 Canadians responded.

According to the poll, 15 percent of US respondents believe the NHL has taken the more reasonable course in negotiations while 30 percent of Canadians believe that to be the case. Thirty-nine percent of the Americans believe the NHLPA has been more reasonable, as opposed to 26 percent of Canadians. Forty percent of fans from both countries do not believe either side has been reasonable.

New York Post LOADED: 12.14.2012

646419 New York Rangers

From Madison Square Garden to Madison Avenue

By STUART ELLIOTT

IT is not surprising that someone who works in advertising once interned at Vogue and has the fashion sense, and looks, to model occasionally. Similarly, it is not unusual to find ex-athletes at agencies. Nor is it out of the ordinary that someone in the industry is also an owner of a bar. Or active in causes like marriage equality and helping the victims of Hurricane Sandy. Or turns up, from time to time, in the gossip columns.

When all that biographical information is on one résumé, however, the result is, to paraphrase a familiar slogan, not your father's Madison Avenue.

The résumé belongs to Sean Avery, who spent 12 years playing for National Hockey League teams that included the New York Rangers. Not long after finishing his hockey career in March, Mr. Avery began working with David Lipman, the longtime advertising executive, whose business interests include the Lipman agency in New York.

For a time, the signers at the end of Mr. Avery's e-mails described him as the chief strategy officer at Lipman. More recently, he has become "kind of an editor at large," he said, handling a range of assignments for the agency and its parent, Revolute Holdings. Revolute also has investments in companies in apparel (Genetic Denim, Nic & Zoe), media (Archetypes, Tauntr) and sports (ProCamps, Spartan Race).

Along with working with Mr. Lipman, who is the chairman and chief creative officer at Lipman and chief creative officer at Revolute, Mr. Avery spends time with Michael Mendenhall, partner and president at Revolute, and Andrew Spellman, chief executive at Revolute.

Mr. Avery, who is 32, does not shy from discussing the sheer unexpectedness of what he calls "this transition I've gone through."

When he replies to a question at a meeting or after-work event like, "Oh, so what brings you here?" Mr. Avery said, "You always see this shift in a person's face, half confusion, half interest."

But advertising is not so far afield, he added, because when he was playing hockey, "I was always marketing myself."

In addition, Mr. Avery is keenly interested in technology and social media. And, as a former professional athlete, "I had the cash," he said, to be "a consumer since I was 19, a high-end, luxury-brand consumer."

The transition has not been seamless, Mr. Avery acknowledged.

"Sometimes I don't do it the right way," he said of his interactions at Lipman. "It's not a locker room; you can't challenge people the same way: 'Let's go. We need you.'"

When that impulse comes over him now, "I go for a walk," he added, laughing.

"The hardest thing is the long days," Mr. Avery said, referring to employees at the agency "who are in 10, 12 hours every day."

"For 15 years I had the same day," he recalled. "I would wake up, eat, practice, work out, eat and sleep, then I would go and play. So now, an eight- or nine-hour day in the office, I can't do it."

Still, "I love going in there," Mr. Avery said, meaning the Lipman headquarters, in the meatpacking district, where he works from the top-floor office of Mr. Lipman.

A client who works with Mr. Avery is effusive in her praise.

"As a professional athlete, you have love of the game and passion, and Sean is certainly bringing that to Lipman," said Susan Duffy, chief marketing officer at Stuart Weitzman, a shoe marketer, which just re-signed with the agency for a second year.

She ticked off attributes like "his love of business, his love of the luxury market, his love of fashion," adding: "He wasn't classically trained, with an M.B.A. or college. He has an M.B.A. degree in social networking. He's a connector."

Mr. Avery is involved in the campaign for the Stuart Weitzman line for spring and summer 2013, which will bring in the supermodel Kate Moss as the brand's new face, to be photographed by Mario Testino. In a meeting last week at Lipman, Mr. Avery beamed as he offered a preview of ads featuring Ms. Moss in knee-high gladiator sandals.

"It was so odd how it all happened," Mr. Lipman said of Mr. Avery's arrival, "but it's beautiful."

Mr. Lipman and Mr. Avery met in May 2011, after a client suggested that Mr. Avery appear in a campaign for Hickey Freeman men's suits. Mr. Lipman, familiar with Mr. Avery's reputation as an outspoken agitator on (and sometimes off) the ice, demurred. Days later, Mr. Lipman read an article about Mr. Avery's becoming the first pro athlete to speak out for legalizing same-sex marriage in New York State by appearing in a video for New Yorkers for Marriage Equality.

"I'm flabbergasted. It floored me," Mr. Lipman said. Now, Mr. Avery is "integral to my thought processes; he challenges me, he supports me, he has in each meeting at least one idea."

"That doesn't mean there aren't growing pains," Mr. Lipman added, laughing, citing how, at 3 p.m., Mr. Avery, recalling his hockey life, will sometimes ask, "Isn't it time for a nap?"

After Mr. Avery previewed the Stuart Weitzman ads, Mr. Lipman previewed a print and video campaign for another client, 7 for All Mankind jeans, that is to be introduced in February. Mr. Avery will appear in the campaign, sporting in some ads, through makeup, the kinds of black eye and cut lip emblematic of his previous career.

New York Times LOADED: 12.14.2012

646420 New York Rangers

NHL attorney Bob Battersman and NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr resume mediation, but their positions don't change

By Pat Leonard

Day 89 of the lockout was similar to Day 88: it did not advance negotiations between the NHL and the NHL players' association.

NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr and NHL attorney Bob Battersman met together with a federal mediator in Iselin, N.J., and they expected to touch base again on Friday, but there was no change in either side's bargaining position.

Battersman was the only league representative present, likely meaning he was the only person the union asked to participate. Commissioner Gary Bettman and deputy commissioner Bill Daly do not believe mediation will resolve the lockout, but they wouldn't decline an invitation to return for a second straight day.

That said, Bettman and Daly not only should have been there; they should have been in the same room with NHLPA executive director Don Fehr and his brother, Steve, working on a deal that would save the 2012-13 season. At least, that's what Sidney Crosby told the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Thursday morning, after the NHL and NHLPA failed to meet once in person during mediation that lasted six-and-a-half hours on Wednesday.

"They didn't even have a face-to-face meeting," Crosby told the Tribune-Review's Josh Yohe. "From what I heard, it was just a meeting with mediators. It is discouraging. For me, it just doesn't make any sense. Why can't they get in the room and keep talking? I don't know what that mindset is or how that's going to help things progress."

Crosby's comments are interesting because the union, led by Fehr, is the party that requested this mediation process in the first place. Crosby is not breaking ranks with Fehr by criticizing Wednesday's format, but it's worth noting that arguably the best hockey player in the world – one with a level head – believes mediation is a waste of time.

Have a question about the Blueshirts or a comment? Find Pat on Twitter at @NYDNRangers.

New York Daily News LOADED: 12.14.2012

646421 NHL

NHL talks: At least they're back in the same room again

By IRA PODELL

NEW YORK – Two days of talks between the NHL, the players' association, and federal mediators still haven't provided any answers how to end the lockout.

Representatives from the fighting sides made it into the same room with a federal mediator Thursday. They just didn't make any noticeable progress. After a failed day Wednesday when the parties on either end of the hockey labor dispute never met with each other, lawyers from each group spoke face to face Thursday.

Article Tab: image1-NHL talks: At least they're back in the same room again

They appear no closer to a deal to save the season.

President Barack Obama addressed the stalemate in an interview Thursday with WCCO-TV in Minneapolis.

"My message to owners and to players is, 'You guys make a lot of money and you make a lot of money on the backs of fans, so do right by your fans. You can figure out how to spread out a bunch of revenue that you're bringing in, but do right by the people who support you,'" Obama said. "And I shouldn't have to be involved in a dispute between really wealthy players and even wealthier owners. They should be able to settle this themselves. And remember who it is that's putting all that money in their pockets."

Players' association special counsel Steve Fehr, who met with league lead counsel Bob Battersman on Thursday, said the sides intend to talk Friday either in person or by phone.

"I expect the mediators will continue to be involved," Fehr wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "Do not want to characterize the discussion today."

At no point on either day this week did union executive director Donald Fehr meet with NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and deputy commissioner Bill Daly.

Daly said he expected to talk to Steve Fehr on Friday.

"I'm not sure what the next steps will be," Daly told the AP in an email. "I do expect the mediators to stay involved in terms of monitoring our ongoing negotiations, but at this point there are no further sessions planned. It doesn't appear there was movement by either side on any of the main issues over the last two days."

Mediators talked to each group separately Wednesday in suburban New Jersey and carried messages back and forth.

The league and union hadn't met since talks fell apart a week ago on the third straight day of negotiations in New York. Mediators rejoined the conversation Wednesday following two failed days last month, but still couldn't achieve a breakthrough.

"There were discussions of the various issues involved and how far apart we are and where we go from here," Donald Fehr said Wednesday. "I can't tell you that any progress was made."

The latest round of talks was supposed to be held away from reporters and cameras, but the meeting location was quickly revealed Wednesday. Both sides briefly made public statements then in frustrated tones.

When the NHL agreed last week to increase its make-whole offer of deferred payments from \$211 million to \$300 million, it was part of a proposed package that required the union to agree on three nonnegotiable points. Instead, the players' association accepted the raise in funds, but then made counterproposals on the issues the league stated had no wiggle room.

Bettman then said that the offer was being pulled from the table. Mediators, however, asked the union Wednesday if that proposal was back in play, would the players take it or leave it?

"It wasn't much of a decision," said Brendan Morrison, one of 13 players to attend Wednesday's talks. "I thought the gap would be closed much quicker, but it hasn't come to fruition yet, so we have to keep working."

The offer wasn't actually resubmitted by the NHL. Neither side made proposals Wednesday.

All games through Dec. 30 have been canceled, 43 percent of the season, along with the New Year's Day Winter Classic and the All-Star game.

After talks ended last Thursday, Donald Fehr began the first of his two news conferences that day by proclaiming he believed the sides had agreements on such issues as actual dollars and a players-funded pension plan. He returned moments later to reveal the NHL rejected everything offered.

The 2004-05 season was lost completely, resulting in the players' association accepting a deal that included a salary cap for the first time. While no such major philosophical disputes exist in these negotiations, the sides still aren't ready to come to an agreement.

"I never thought the issues were as big as they were back in '04-05," Morrison said Wednesday. "Apparently, I was wrong."

A 48-game season was played in 1995 after a lockout stretched into January. Bettman said he wouldn't have a shorter season than that.

The NHL wants to limit personal player contracts to five years, seven for a club to re-sign its own player and has elevated the issue to the highest level of importance. The union countered with an offer of an eight-year maximum length with the variable in salary being no greater than a 25 percent difference between the highest-paid year of the deal and the lowest.

The other sticking points the NHL demanded of the players are a 10-year term on the new agreement, with a mutual opt-out option after eight years, and no compliance buyouts or caps on escrow in the transition phase to the new structure. The union presented an offer of an eight-year deal with a reopener after six.

Orange County Register: LOADED: 12.14.2012

646422 NHL

NHL lockout: No progress after 2nd day with mediator

Sports Network

ISELIN, N.J. -- The NHL and the NHLPA met with federal mediators for a second straight day Thursday, but the meetings apparently were unproductive again.

The two sides decided to meet again Thursday after getting together for a little more than six hours Wednesday.

On Thursday, the NHL was represented by legal counsel Bob Batterman at the office of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service in Iselin, N.J. NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr and special counsel Steve Fehr were among the union representatives present.

Meanwhile, Steve Fehr and Batterman sat in on a meeting with mediator Scot Beckenbaugh and agreed to talk Friday, either by phone or in person.

"I think we're done with contact tonight; we're still working on a bunch of stuff as we always are," Steve Fehr said. "I expect there will be contact (with the League on Friday); not sure if it will be by telephone or in person, or if it is in person where it will be.

"It's good that we're talking. It's better than not talking and we'll see what happens."

The two sides also met with mediators on Nov. 28 and 29, but those meetings broke off without progress being made.

Thursday's meeting comes three days after the National Hockey League eliminated another block of games from the schedule with the lockout nearing a full three months.

Games from Dec. 15 through Dec. 30 were the latest to be wiped out, bringing the total to 526 lost to the lockout that started Sept. 16. The Winter Classic on New Year's Day was also canceled, as was the All-Star Weekend in late January.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 12.14.2012

646423 NHL

NHL, union remain apart on issues and in meetings

By Associated Press

NEW YORK — The latest round of NHL labor talks ended with the two sides in different rooms from each other.

The players' association and league negotiators met separately Wednesday with federal mediators in suburban New Jersey, holding discussions that didn't appear to have moved the sides any closer to a deal to save the hockey season.

There was hope going into Wednesday that negotiations could get back on track to the point they were last Thursday before talks fell apart.

When the NHL agreed last week to increase its make-whole offer of deferred payments from \$211 million to \$300 million it was part of a proposed package that required the union to agree on three nonnegotiable points. Instead, the players' association accepted the raise in funds, but then made counterproposals on the issues the league stated had no wiggle room.

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman then said that the offer was being pulled from the table. However, mediators asked the union on Wednesday, if that proposal was back in play, would the players take it or leave it?

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The offer wasn't actually resubmitted by the NHL. Neither side made any proposals Wednesday.

"There were discussions of the various issues involved and how far apart we are and where we go from here," players' association executive director Donald Fehr said. "I can't tell you that any progress was made."

All games through Dec. 30 have been canceled, about 43 percent of the season, along with the New Year's Day Winter Classic, and the All-Star game.

No new meetings have been scheduled.

Mediators rejoined the process Wednesday, at the request of the players' association, after they were unable to move the sides any closer to a deal during two days of talks last month.

Whether they will stay involved is uncertain.

"We did several different caucus meeting rooms, and really there's nothing new to report," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said Wednesday, the 88th day of the league's lockout. "We don't have a conclusion to the process."

After three straight days of talks between the sides ended last Thursday, Fehr began the first of his two news conferences by proclaiming he believed the sides had agreements on such issues as actual dollars, and then returned moments later to reveal the NHL rejected everything his side offered.

The 2004-05 season was lost completely before the players' association accepted a deal that included a salary cap for the first time. While no major philosophical issues such as that exist in these negotiations, the sides still don't seem to be ready to come to an agreement.

"I never thought the issues were as big as they were back in 04-05," Morrison said Wednesday. "Apparently, I was wrong."

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and no compliance buy-outs or caps on escrow in the transition phase to the new structure. The union presented an offer of an eight-year deal with a reopener after six.

No owners were with Bettman and Daly on the NHL side Wednesday, but the union had plenty of players in tow: Morrison, Craig Adams, Adrian Aucoin, Brad Boyes, Chris Campoli, Mathieu Darche, Shane Doan, Ron Hainsey, Jamal Mayers Andy McDonald, Steve Montador, Douglas Murray, and Daniel Winnik.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 12.14.2012

646424 NHL

NHL labor talk update: Players, owners might be in same room soon

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Federal mediators are still involved in hockey's labor talks, and the NHL and the players' association might soon be getting together again.

The sides met with mediators but not each other Wednesday. The mediators were back at it Thursday in an attempt to help broker a deal to save the season. The players' association met with the mediator in the morning and planned to talk to him again in the afternoon following a lunch break.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly told The Associated Press in an email on Thursday that the league has had "some back and forth with the mediator."

"Too early to say whether we will be meeting," Daly wrote on the 89th day of the league's lockout. "Ultimately up to the mediator."

No progress was reported Wednesday when the sides were in the same building in suburban New Jersey, but not in the same room. Mediators talked to each group separately and carried messages back and forth.

The league and union haven't met face-to-face in a week since talks fell apart a week ago on the third straight day of negotiations in New York. Federal mediators rejoined the conversation on Wednesday following two failed days last month, but still couldn't achieve a breakthrough.

"There were discussions of the various issues involved and how far apart we are and where we go from here," players' association executive director Donald Fehr said Wednesday. "I can't tell you that any progress was made."

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Dallas Morning News LOADED: 12.14.2012

646425 NHL

Obama on NHL labor talks: 'Do right by your fans'

By KEN THOMAS Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama is urging the NHL and the players' association to "do right by your fans" and find a solution to the league's lockout.

Obama says in an interview with WCCO-TV in Minneapolis that as president, he shouldn't have to get involved in a sports lockout. He says owners and players "make a lot of money and you make a lot of money on the backs of the fans, so do right by your fans."

Representatives from both sides met with a federal mediator Thursday but didn't make any noticeable progress. The two sides appear no closer to a deal to save the season.

Obama says both sides "can figure out how to spread out a bunch of revenue" and should do right by the people who support them.

Star-Telegram LOADED: 12.14.2012

646426 NHL

NHL labor talks wrap up with still no progress

By IRA PODELL

NEW YORK — Negotiators from the NHL and the players' association made it into the same room to talk this time. They just didn't carry any meaningful progress out of it.

A second straight day with a federal mediator didn't do anything to bring the sides closer to a settlement on Thursday as the lockout dragged on with dwindling hope that the hockey season will be saved.

NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr talked face to face with lead league counsel Bob Battersman, which was a positive development because the sides were kept separate on Wednesday and met only with the mediator. Fehr is expected to talk on Friday with NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly, either in person or by telephone, to discuss how to proceed in their search for a new collective bargaining agreement.

"I'm not sure what the next steps will be," Daly told The Associated Press in an email. "I do expect the mediators to stay involved in terms of monitoring our ongoing negotiations, but at this point there are no further sessions planned. It doesn't appear there was movement by either side on any of the main issues over the last two days."

Daly and NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman, along with union executive director Donald Fehr didn't participate in Thursday's talks.

The dispute has gotten so big that President Barack Obama was asked about the stalemate during an interview Thursday with WCCO-TV in Minneapolis.

"My message to owners and to players is, "You guys make a lot of money and you make a lot of money on the backs of fans, so do right by your fans. You can figure out how to spread out a bunch of revenue that you're bringing in, but do right by the people who support you," Obama said. "And I shouldn't have to be involved in a dispute between really wealthy players and even wealthier owners. They should be able to settle this themselves. And remember who it is that's putting all that money in their pockets."

While the President isn't jumping into the fray, the mediators aren't likely to jump out yet.

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Star-Telegram LOADED 12.14.2012

646427 NHL

Ticker: Mike Eruzione selling Miracle on Ice memorabilia for family's future

By Steve Schrader

Mike Eruzione, captain of the gold medal-winning U.S. hockey team, is selling much of his memorabilia from the 1980 Olympics, including his jersey and stick from the Miracle on Ice upset of the Soviets. He told ESPN.com's John Buccigross he's doing it for his family.

"I'm not broke!" he said. "I'm not doing this for my own purpose or gain. I think I can do a lot of good for others with what I get. My first grandson, Michael, was born a week ago. I've thought about his future and the cost of tuition for my daughter and things like that."

Eruzione added his gold medal would never be sold "as long as I'm alive."

The opening bid on the jersey at Heritage Auctions will be \$1 million.

Buccigross said he heard Mario Lemieux offered to buy it.

"Yeah, Mario offered me 100 bucks for my jersey," Eruzione said.

Wow. Those NHL owners sure can drive a tough bargain.

Quick hit

• LeBron James, after former Spartan/Golden State rookie Draymond Green's lay-up with 0.9 second left beat the Heat on Wednesday: "It was great competition out there between me and him. I've also respected him especially in college, a big-time player and no one really gave him a shot, but you can tell he knows how to play the game."

"Any team that got him he will find a way to get minutes because he knows how to play the game ..."

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 12.14.2012

646428 NHL

No movement in NHL, players talks

By Helene St. James

Mediation has proved of little benefit as the NHL and NHLPA continue to fight over a new collective bargaining agreement.

Federal mediators met again Thursday with representatives from the league and the Players' Association, but the day ended as it began -- in a stalemate.

Numerous meetings since owners locked out players Sept. 16 have gotten the sides no closer to detente, and the discord is threatening to do to the 2012-13 NHL season what the last labor dispute did in 2004-05: Last too long to salvage any games.

Don Fehr, the union's executive director, said last week that he thought the sides weren't far apart, but commissioner Gary Bettman disagreed, and nothing has changed.

The league wants the PA to concede in a few areas specifically, the most contentious of which is player contracting rights. The NHL is seeking restrictive control that will eliminate long-term, front-loaded deals, while the union is seeking a solution that will protect mid-range salary players. The NHL also wants a 10-year CBA with an opt-out after eight years, while the PA wants an eight-year deal with an opt-out after six years.

Detroit Free Press LOADED 12.14.2012

646429 NHL

NHL labor talks wrap up with still no progress

By IRA PODELL

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Miami Herald LOADED 12.14.2012

646430 NHL

NHL boycott: Hockey fans mad as hell and aren't going to take it anymore

By Dan Gelston The Associated Press

Sitting in a hockey locker room, Steve Chase became the latest die-hard fan fed up with the NHL lockout.

Living in Los Angeles, Chase believed the league had squandered all the goodwill built in the area after the Kings won the Stanley Cup. His weekly pickup games with friends became his only taste of the sport he loved because of the ongoing labor strife that has dragged on for months.

So he took a poll of his buddies, then took a pledge:

"We're not coming back."

Not for good. Just not after the lockout is settled, not for a while.

Chase started the grass roots "Just Drop It" campaign that encourages fans to boycott one NHL game for every game canceled after Dec. 21st. No tickets, no TV, no merchandise - not a minute or a penny spent on the league, punishment for what he believed are continued abuses of loyalty on their fan base.

He made a video and started a Facebook page, urging fans to click the "like" button and join the cause. More than 11,000 angry fans have joined since the weekend, a puck drop in the circle compared to the millions of fans who attend games, but the latest small sign fans won't again be easily won back.

"People are trying to crush the NHL," Chase said. "That's not our goal. Our goal is just to get hockey back. Hopefully somebody, somewhere cares about this and decides, 'Guys, we've got to get back and talk.' The fans are right."

"They're fighting over our money."

The days of letter writing and 30-second phone calls to sports radio stations have ballooned to steady streams of hashtags, Facebook posts and homemade videos from fans who just want to come in from the cold of this labor battle and watch their slap shots and saves. They are exasperated over a work stoppage with no end in sight and little regard for the fans.

Penguins captain Sidney Crosby understood why fans are upset over the third lockout in Commissioner Gary Bettman's 20-year tenure.

"I don't blame anyone for being frustrated with this process," Crosby said. "Everyone's got to be frustrated with the way this has gone. It's pretty easy for everyone involved to feel that way."

Kind of like they sing in a song about union executive director Donald Fehr's old sport, some fans vow it's one, two, three lockouts and they're out.

"I wouldn't blame them if they did that by any stretch," Penguins forward Craig Adams said, "but I can't predict that."

It's actually pretty easy to call this shot.

For all the angry tweets, texts, threats and organized campaigns, fans will still pick up the remote and print out tickets as soon as the strife ends.

They always do. In every sport. Remember 1994? After the World Series was wiped out, baseball loyalists vowed never to return to the old ball game. Fueled by super-sized sluggers and retro ballparks, attendance topped 60 million in 1996, 70 million in 1998 and soared to 79,503,175 in 2007.

The NHL, of course, can't match those numbers. But the story arc is still the same. The NHL drew 20,854,169 fans when the sport returned in 2005-06 - 497,970 more than the total in 2003-04, the season before the lockout.

The NHL saw an attendance uptick each of the next three seasons and totaled a record 21,468,121 fans in 2011-12.

Fans are filling stadiums from A (Air Canada) to X (Xcel Energy) and most geographic points in between. If there are fans still holding out over the lost season and refusing to step foot inside an NHL arena, they're at least throwing on their oversized Winter Classic sweaters and watching from home.

The 2004 Stanley Cup finals between the Tampa Bay Lightning and Calgary Flames averaged 3.286 million viewers on ABC/ESPN, the Nielsen company said. Those numbers actually dipped in 2006 and 2007 when Carolina and Anaheim, two nontraditional hockey markets, won the Cup.

When hockey-mad cities like Pittsburgh, Detroit, Philadelphia and Chicago all reached the finals, though, the ratings soared. The Blackhawks-Flyers series in 2010 on NBC/Versus averaged 5.167 million viewers, the highest for the finals since 2002, Nielsen said.

The NHL is coming off its sixth consecutive year of record revenue, with a projection of more than \$3.2 billion by the end of the 2012 Stanley Cup playoffs, the league said.

Don't forget, the NHL has a \$2 billion, 10-year deal with NBC Sports Group through the 2020-21 season.

"Our fan support coming back last time was outstanding and we were probably a little bit surprised to see how good it was," Adams said. "That speaks to how much the fans love the game."

The NHL clearly caught some breaks coming out of the last lockout.

The league marketed its comeback around rising stars like Crosby and Washington's Alex Ovechkin. They added fan-friendly shootouts and the New Year's Day Winter Classic. The league made the two-line pass legal to help bust up the neutral-zone trap and created chic commercials to appeal more toward casual fans.

This time - whenever the lockout ends - the league might be all out of tricks. They'll need to dig. And it could take years to recover from the wreckage.

Some teams are trying to keep their brand alive among an increasingly uninterested public. The Flyers aired classic games and brought back former stars for autograph signings at a sports bar in the same complex as the Wells Fargo Center.

Gerry Helper, special assistant to the president and senior vice president for the Nashville Predators, said the team enjoyed their best season ticket renewal year in franchise history this past offseason.

The Predators have stayed aggressive in developing benefits packages for season ticketholders during the work stoppage. They organized "Preds Pride Day" activities and something called a "Smashmob" for a youth hockey game last month where they brought their public address announcer and mascot, and created a Predators' game-like atmosphere. Helper wrote in an email to The AP the Predators have stayed in touch with season ticket holders via email and phone.

Not every Predators fan feels appreciated. Tom Begley, of Franklin, Tenn., canceled the two season tickets he has held since Day 1 of the franchise. He also estimated approximately 1,000 people like himself are season-ticket holders from the first day. He said the team has done plenty of events for all season-ticket holders, but nothing special for that select group.

"I got not even a phone call from the Predators just to say, 'Look we know you're a loyal die-hard season-ticket holder from Day 1. Why don't you come down and do something at the arena?'" he said. "Hey, if I feel like it down the line and I want to buy tickets again I can do it. Right now, I don't know. I'm not convinced that hockey here in Nashville is going to be viable long-term. I am scared to death of what Donald Fehr is doing to the game and it's a shame. It really is."

In Pennsylvania, the government is getting involved in the messy dispute.

Democratic U.S. Sen. Bob Casey on Wednesday urged the U.S. Small Business Administration to provide additional assistance to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia businesses that have been adversely affected by the lockout. Casey claimed small business in Pittsburgh are losing nearly half of the \$2.1 million in revenue generated for each Penguins home game. He wrote Philadelphia is losing \$1 million in revenue from each lost home game.

All the bluster of a boycott is easier tweeted than done. Fans can't quit Sid the Kid, Ovi, Big Z, The Warden, Phil the Thrill and The Doaner.

On Opening Night in January 2013 or October 2013 or November 2015, whenever, the teams will be back ready for the first faceoff.

So will the fans.

At least some of them.

AP Sports Writers Will Graves in Pittsburgh and Teresa M. Walker in Nashville, Tenn., contributed to this report.

LA Daily News: LOADED: 12.14.2012

646431 NHL

THERE USED TO BE AN ARENA – PITTSBURGH CIVIC ARENA “THE IGLOO”

Posted by Bob Miller

The most unique building in the National Hockey League was originally known as the Pittsburgh Civic Arena but was also known by its more popular name, “The Igloo,” home of the Pittsburgh Penguins from 1967 to 2010. The name “Igloo” came from the construction of the dome roof supported by a 260-foot long cantilevered arm on the exterior of the building. It was the first retractable roof major-sports venue in the world.

The building was constructed in 1961 for use by the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera at a cost of \$22 million, which would equal \$171 million in 2012 dollars. The hydraulic jacks never functioned properly so the roof was kept permanently closed after 1994.

The Pittsburgh Hornets of the American Hockey League played in the arena from 1961 to 1967, when the Penguins became part of the NHL expansion. The Penguins first game was played on October 11, 1967, a 2-1 loss to the Montreal Canadiens. It was the first game played between an expansion team and a member of the “Original Six.” On October 21 of that year, the Penguins became the first expansion team to beat an “Original” NHL franchise as they beat the Chicago Blackhawks, 4-2.

The Los Angeles Kings played their first game at The Igloo on October 28, 1967, and beat the Penguins, 5-3. That Kings roster featured players such as Eddie “The Jet” Joyal, “Cowboy” Bill Flett, and goaltender Terry Sawchuck. My first broadcast in the building was on January 16, 1974, as the Kings won 2-0.

One of my most fond memories of games in “The Igloo” was of listening to their popular Organist Vince Lascheid. In the early years of the arena, the organ was located just to my left in the press box, so I had a full view of Vince as he played. He would play songs designed to get under the skin of opposing teams. In our games, when the Kings would come from their dressing room, Vince would be playing the song, “Send in the Clowns,” and he would time it perfectly so that when the first Kings player stepped on the ice Vince would play the line “Don’t bother they’re here.” I would always smile and give Vince a thumbs-up sign for his impeccable timing. Lascheid was the Penguins Organist from 1970 to 2003, in the era when the organ was the instrument of choice for music at all hockey games, and in my opinion was so much better than the loud canned music of today. Vince Lascheid is in the Penguins Hall of Fame and passed away in 2009 at age 85.

We always had fun in Pittsburgh and I remember one night, December 14, 1993, after the Kings beat the Penguins, 4-2, a group of us went to a Karaoke bar. A group of Penguin fans recognized some of us and asked, “Are you guys with the Kings?” When we said yes, they began to boo. I told them, “I am going to get up and sing a song in honor of the Penguins defense.” Then they started to cheer and asked, “What are you going to sing?” I said I was going to sing “Blue Bayou.”

The greatest player I ever saw play at the Igloo was Mario Lemieux, who could control a game like no other player. He was almost unstoppable on the power play. My good friend, the late coach Bob Johnson, whom I met while I was broadcasting University of Wisconsin hockey, led the Penguins to a Stanley Cup championship in 1991. His favorite phrase was, "It's a Great Day for Hockey." After he passed away, that phrase was on the ice at The Igloo, and it always had special meaning for me each time I worked in the building.

In later years the arena became known as Mellon Arena, named for Mellon Financial, which had naming rights. The Penguins played their final game at Mellon Arena on May 12, 2010, losing to Montreal, 5-2, which eliminated them from the Stanley Cup Playoffs in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference Semifinals.

The Penguins now play in their sparkling new home, the Consol Energy Center, which is located right across the street from the old arena. The Civic Arena, Mellon Arena or The Igloo, whichever name you preferred, was demolished between September 2011 and March 31, 2012.

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 12.14.2012

646432 NHL

NHL Lockout: When "take it or leave it" is nothing of the sort

Jonathan Willis

Following the NHL lockout requires, among other things, a dark sense of humour. Both sides are prone to being economical with the truth, whether it's Don Fehr holding a news conference where he strongly implies the deal is "this close to being finished" or Gary Bettman making his fifth "this is absolutely the best we can do" offer; whether it is maddening or funny is mostly just a matter of perspective. There are dozens of other examples – players drinking and tweeting, the way the league doesn't say things like "seven years of record revenue" any more, tales of Don Fehr showing up late for critical meetings, and the like – but today it's all about funny rhetoric.

TSN's Darren Dreger tweeted the following this morning:

Darren Dreger



@DarrenDreger

NHL has delivered the message it is pretty much a take it or leave it, however, that doesn't mean the league won't trade on certain things.

13 Dec 12

Reply

ReFavorite

This follows yesterday's revelation that the NHL's last offer – an offer angrily pulled "off the table" after the NHLPA had the gall to try and negotiate off it rather than deliver a yes-or-no answer – had made a reappearance at a bargaining session between the two sides featuring federal negotiators.

To sum up: last week the NHL made a take it or leave it offer which represented the furthest point they could go (Gary Bettman described it as "further than we should have gone") and after the NHLPA attempted to negotiate a better deal that offer was retracted. Today, not only is that offer back on the table, but the league is willing to negotiate off it.

It would be a stunning reversal if "stunning reversal" hadn't already become the league's go-to bargaining position. Certainly since the mid-October offer predicated on an 82-game schedule, the NHL has been issuing ultimatums and darkly hinting that this time this is as far as they can go (this pattern actually started even earlier; when the pre-season games were cancelled the league implied that the offers would get worse as revenue started disappearing).

The NHLPA has consistently responded by declining to take the league at its word. They've been rewarded when the league's subsequent actions have contradicted its prior statement: the league has made a number of

'take it or leave it' style offers and not one of them as of yet has actually turned out to be a 'take it or leave it' scenario.

That is not to say that the NHLPA are the good guys in this dispute. A point I've made repeatedly over the NHL lockout is that there are no good guys: there are two rich parties, both with highly competent representation, fighting over their share of billions of dollars in fan/government money. There is no point in trying to determine the side of truth and justice, because there is no side of truth and justice in this dispute.

What is beyond dispute, however, is that Gary Bettman has lost the ability to credibly issue ultimatums. The NHLPA has been repeatedly rewarded for doubting his word. If he remains NHL commissioner following this latest labour battle, it's a lesson that anyone negotiating with him would do well to keep in mind.

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 12.14.2012

646433 NHL

Dowbiggin: Labour battle threatens NHL TV reputation

BRUCE DOWBIGGIN

In the current NHL labour squabble, the players are concerned how the league can push its revenues so they don't lose money under the proposed 50/50 sharing scheme (versus the current 57 per cent the players take in).

One revenue number they know is stable: the 10-year, \$2-billion (U.S.) deal the NHL signed last year with NBC for its national U.S. rights. Because of the PVR revolution, live TV sports are now the straw that stirs the broadcast business cocktail.

As such, there was debate about the NBC contract when it was announced. Had commissioner Gary Bettman scored a coup or had he sold off the rights for too long?

Compared to the NBC contract that preceded it – a revenue-sharing deal with no upfront money that made nearly nothing for the NHL – the current deal is impressive, guaranteeing the league \$200-million a year to have its games on NBC and NBC Sports Network (NBCSN).

Critics, however, took issue with the extended term of the contract, saying the NHL has no idea of what the technological landscape will look like in a decade. Who in 2002 foresaw the technological innovations of PVR, social media, tablets and smartphones that shape the industry in 2012? That \$200M. a year might look like chump change in five years, let alone in 10, if the tech revolution keeps making pro sports richer.

In its defence, the NHL points out it needed stability with a U.S. broadcaster after so many decades of bouncing like lottery ball from network to network. Once play resumes, NBC has a decade to help grow the sport and, goes the thinking, increase hockey's footprint on American TV.

That needs TLC. The proof of the NHL's failure to exploit TV over the decades is reflected in the revenue discrepancy between it and the other major pro sports. Forget the NFL and Major League Baseball, who get billions for their rights; the NHL's take-home is still dwarfed by the NBA's \$930-million a year. It's also puny next to the fees being paid for NCAA football.

Before Bettman, then-NHL president John Ziegler had the league rights hopping from networks such as ESPN to fly-by-nights such as SportsChannel America. Bettman has continued the hopscotch pattern since taking over in 1993, as the NHL has gone from NBC to ABC to FOX, back to ABC and then back to NBC following the 2004-05 lockout.

On the cable side, when ESPN balked at paying full price for the NHL coming out of that lockout, the league bounced to OLN. OLN changed names to Versus and now NBCSN.

All this volatility did nothing for the NHL's reputation with viewers, networks and sponsors. But the hiring of John Collins as NHL chief operating officer has stabilized the league's image. The advent of the Winter Classic and the all-star game draft, and popularizing the NHL entry draft were steps in that direction.

Now, much of that is jeopardized by the current lockout.

If another full season is lost, it will set back the NHL's corporate and broadcast reputation to the 1980s.

North of the border

Canadian broadcasters are privately smarting over the NHL's labour gamble. With a new national contract due in the fall of 2014, however, most are keeping their feelings to themselves, lest they anger the commissioner with a little candour.

At CBC, some are quietly rooting for cancellation of the 2012-13 season so they can get an extra season added to their current contract, thereby delaying a decision of how much money they can afford to bid when the \$100-million a year deal ends.

In addition, a delay in NHL rights payments would allow CBC to enter a more robust bid for CFL TV rights, should they come up this March.

Industry insiders tell Usual Suspects the entire CFL TV negotiations for a new contract in the 2013 season might take very different look if the NHL's TV contract is set back a year.

Commissioner Mark Cohon is watching carefully, perhaps cheering that he has the floor open to his league in the next few months.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.14.2012

646434 NHL

Stalled lockout talks put media in play as leaks surface

JAMES MIRTLE

Talk of compromise in the NHL lockout is finally in the air.

Only instead of coming at the bargaining table, it's leaking out through media in the kind of back-channel dealings that can sometimes occur near the end of these interminable labour disputes.

With mediation failing to produce any progress for a second consecutive day Thursday, one anonymous member of the NHL board of governors provided American all-sports cable network ESPN with the framework for a potential lockout-ending deal.

Unsurprisingly, it involved essentially splitting the difference on the three most divisive issues.

According to the report, the NHL governor proposed a nine-year collective agreement (with an opt-out after seven years for either side), a six-year limit on player contracts (with an option for eight-year deals for players who have been with a franchise for five years) and a "simple buyout option," where the buyouts money would count against the salary cap.

ESPN also spoke with two players who felt such an offer would be worth a vote of the NHL Players' Association.

The proposal is the kind of common-sense compromise that has been missing throughout a lot of this process and that has likely cost the NHL a longer regular season.

Even if this anonymous proposal eventually prompts a deal, the league is unlikely to be able to play much more than a 48-game season, just as it did in 1994-95, when that lockout ended on Jan. 11, and the puck was dropped nine days later.

That time frame, however, gives both sides another three weeks until they would have to get really serious – which is why they're mired in a standoff.

No one wants to give in early, and not get enough.

No one wants to budge and risk giving up too much.

The reality of the fight, however, is there's little remaining to fight over. The league has, to a great extent, gotten what it wanted out of these negotiations, and the players have put up the kind of fuss they wanted to prove they were unified and wouldn't back down.

In the end, whenever games are finally played, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman will have cut the players down to a 50-per-cent share from 57 per cent, have term limits on contracts and have a collective agreement that will

almost definitely extend past his retirement date. (Unless you envision the 60-year-old commish hanging on past 67.)

The remarkable thing about all of this is that even after dragging the lockout out to near its breaking point, many outside observers believe the league should be able to recover to a large extent.

Ask a marketing or sponsorship analyst plugged into the pro sports world and they'll point out that a shortened season will likely only mean a one-time 25-per-cent or 30-per-cent hit to revenues, especially with sponsorship agreements and TV deals already signed and season's tickets spoken for.

That puts some \$2.3-billion (U.S.) or more on the table for the taking if they can get a deal done by mid-January – a pretty appealing carrot, given waiting beyond then could easily result in nothing going to either party.

If there's long-term damage done to the business, the pain will be shared by both sides, but financially speaking, that can be mitigated by simply having any kind of abbreviated season to wash away the ugliness that's occurred the past three or four months.

Fans, history has shown, have short memories.

At this point, any outcome other than a jam-packed half-season doesn't make any sense, not with so many involved able to forecast the endgame here.

As one player remarked after seeing the ESPN story Thursday: "It's funny that their proposal is just more toward the middle from the one we gave the NHL [last week]. What a concept."

The only question is when do those at the heart of the talks see that and will that be in time for them to realize the c-word – compromise – isn't such a bad thing?

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.14.2012

646435 NHL

Talks between NHL, union and moderators end without progress

Ira Podell

Two days of talks between the NHL, the players' association, and federal mediators still haven't provided any answers how to end the lockout.

Representatives from the fighting sides made it into the same room with a federal mediator Thursday. They just didn't make any noticeable progress. After a failed day Wednesday when the parties on either end of the hockey labour dispute never met with each other, lawyers from each group spoke face to face Thursday.

They appear no closer to a deal to save the season.

President Barack Obama addressed the stalemate in an interview Thursday with WCCO-TV in Minneapolis.

"My message to owners and to players is, 'You guys make a lot of money and you make a lot of money on the backs of fans, so do right by your fans. You can figure out how to spread out a bunch of revenue that you're bringing in, but do right by the people who support you,'" Obama said. "And I shouldn't have to be involved in a dispute between really wealthy players and even wealthier owners. They should be able to settle this themselves. And remember who it is that's putting all that money in their pockets."

Players' association special counsel Steve Fehr, who met with league lead counsel Bob Battersman on Thursday, said the sides intend to talk Friday either in person or by phone.

"I expect the mediators will continue to be involved," Fehr wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "Do not want to characterize the discussion today."

At no point on either day this week did union executive director Donald Fehr meet with NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and deputy commissioner Bill Daly.

Daly said he expected to talk to Steve Fehr on Friday.

"I'm not sure what the next steps will be," Daly told the AP in an email. "I do expect the mediators to stay involved in terms of monitoring our ongoing negotiations, but at this point there are no further sessions planned. It doesn't appear there was movement by either side on any of the main issues over the last two days."

Mediators talked to each group separately Wednesday in suburban New Jersey and carried messages back and forth.

The league and union hadn't met since talks fell apart a week ago on the third straight day of negotiations in New York. Mediators rejoined the conversation Wednesday following two failed days last month, but still couldn't achieve a breakthrough.

"There were discussions of the various issues involved and how far apart we are and where we go from here," Donald Fehr said Wednesday. "I can't tell you that any progress was made."

The latest round of talks was supposed to be held away from reporters and cameras, but the meeting location was quickly revealed Wednesday. Both sides briefly made public statements then in frustrated tones.

When the NHL agreed last week to increase its make-whole offer of deferred payments from \$211 million to \$300 million, it was part of a proposed package that required the union to agree on three nonnegotiable points. Instead, the players' association accepted the raise in funds, but then made counterproposals on the issues the league stated had no wiggle room.

Bettman then said that the offer was being pulled from the table. Mediators, however, asked the union Wednesday if that proposal was back in play, would the players take it or leave it?

"It wasn't much of a decision," said Brendan Morrison, one of 13 players to attend Wednesday's talks. "I thought the gap would be closed much quicker, but it hasn't come to fruition yet, so we have to keep working."

The offer wasn't actually resubmitted by the NHL. Neither side made proposals Wednesday.

All games through Dec. 30 have been cancelled, 43 per cent of the season, along with the New Year's Day Winter Classic and the All-Star game.

After talks ended last Thursday, Donald Fehr began the first of his two news conferences that day by proclaiming he believed the sides had agreements on such issues as actual dollars and a players-funded pension plan. He returned moments later to reveal the NHL rejected everything offered.

The 2004-05 season was lost completely, resulting in the players' association accepting a deal that included a salary cap for the first time. While no such major philosophical disputes exist in these negotiations, the sides still aren't ready to come to an agreement.

"I never thought the issues were as big as they were back in '04-05," Morrison said Wednesday. "Apparently, I was wrong."

A 48-game season was played in 1995 after a lockout stretched into January. Bettman said he wouldn't have a shorter season than that.

The NHL wants to limit personal player contracts to five years, seven for a club to re-sign its own player and has elevated the issue to the highest level of importance. The union countered with an offer of an eight-year maximum length with the variable in salary being no greater than a 25 per cent difference between the highest-paid year of the deal and the lowest.

The other sticking points the NHL demanded of the players are a 10-year term on the new agreement, with a mutual opt-out option after eight years, and no compliance buyouts or caps on escrow in the transition phase to the new structure. The union presented an offer of an eight-year deal with a reopener after six.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.14.2012

646436 NHL

How to get 'em back on the ice

By Pat Hickey,

MONTREAL — Random thoughts while waiting for the National Hockey League owners and players to get on the same page — or at least in the same room:

The Botta plan: There have been numerous suggestions on how to get the two sides back on the ice and my favourite comes from Chris Botta of Sports Business Journal.

Botta was once the crackerjack public-relations director for the New York Islanders and is a passionate fan of the game. He has proposed a return to the ice while the two sides continue to negotiate. Under Botta's scheme, the hockey-related revenue that would normally be split by the owners and the players would be donated to charity until a settlement is reached.

The one flaw in the plan would be getting the two sides to agree on a charity.

Generation gap: New York Rangers forward Jeff Halpern was kicking it as he tweeted from the 12.12.12 concert Wednesday night at Madison Square Garden. At one point, the 36-year-old Halpern said he was dancing to Another Brick in the Wall and expressed amazement that 23-year-old teammate Ryan McDonagh had never heard of former Pink Floyd frontman Roger Waters.

The presence of the two Rangers at the sold-out concert raises an important question: How did they score the tickets? If they were given preferential treatment as members of the MSG family does that mean the Rangers are subject to a hefty fine for fraternizing with the enemy?

To boycott or not to boycott? With their emotions running the gamut from A (anger) to A (apathy), a number of fans have been calling for some sort of boycott to express their displeasure over the NHL lockout.

We've already seen some signs of a grassroots movement with slumping sales of NHL-licensed merchandise and Molson beer.

There will be marginal fans who will cross NHL games off their list of things to do, particularly in the smaller markets in the U.S. But a call for a general post-lockout boycott of games doesn't make much sense because the reason fans are upset is that they can't watch games.

But there are some ways for fans to send a message to the owners that are relatively painless and can save fans some money. When the NHL does come back, skip the concessions. You want a beer? Stop in a local watering hole before the game. You won't have to spend the \$10.75 the Bell Centre charges for a can and you'll have a choice of brews including some that may just taste better.

And here's a suggestion for the NHL when the league does return to the ice: Don't insult us with an on-ice message saying thanks. If you have to sacrifice that precious advertising space, the only appropriate message would along the lines of "Please forgive us."

A cure for withdrawal: Fans who are looking for a hockey fix should drop by the Étienne Desmarteau Arena in Rosemount at 1 p.m. Saturday to watch Les Girls play Les Boys.

Les Girls are the Canadian Women's Hockey Association-champion Montreal Stars, while the Les Boys are, well, Les Boys. They are the member of the cast of the popular Quebec movie franchise and TV show, with former NHLers Enrico Ciccone and Georges Laracque making guest appearances.

This isn't the first time the two groups have faced each other. The plot of Les Boys III had the beer-league players playing — and losing to — the Canadian Olympic women's team.

Current Stars Kim St. Pierre and Caroline Ouellette had roles in the movie, along with Danielle Goyette. St. Pierre's boyfriend, actor and producer Lenny Jo Goudreau, will play for Les Boys.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 12.14.2012

646437 NHL

Scanlan: Betting big on young talent

By Wayne Scanlan,

At the current rate of progression, junior hockey players will be plucked from baby nurseries and the NHL will draft from the kindergarten ranks.

Or so it would seem, from watching the budding stars at your local neighbourhood rink. Somewhere along the line, the pace of development in hockey players has accelerated to the point that atom-age players are performing feats on the ice once seen from bantam players while the bantams will now take your breath away with their speed, skill and size. Is there growth hormone, along with fluoride, in today's drinking water?

All of this is a roundabout way of considering 15-year-old Connor McDavid's pending multi-year contract with Reebok.

I don't know what you were doing with your life at age 15, but most of my peers were wearing clip-on ties at Catholic school and trying to keep their football pants from falling down at practice. No one we knew was signing endorsement deals with a major sports corporation, but then, not many are today, either.

Connor McDavid is the exception — it says so right on the 'exceptional player' exemption that got him into the OHL at age 15, only the third player to earn that distinction. John Tavares, now a star NHL forward with the New York Islanders, and Aaron Ekblad, a first overall pick of the Barrie Colts last year, were the previous two granted early entries into the OHL.

McDavid, a forward with the Erie Otters, continues to crush most arguments against a player that young hanging with the 19 and 20-year-olds of major junior. While conducting himself with the confidence and maturity of a young adult, McDavid is producing at a better than point-per-game clip, 37 points in 32 games.

He didn't flinch at the notion of playing against the visiting Russians in the recent Super Series, but was wisely given a chance to broaden his game before being invited to Canada's world junior tryout. After all, McDavid could potentially play in the next four world juniors, even after missing this one.

The WJC is considered to be a 19-year-old's tournament, with a few, well, exceptions. Hockey Canada understands the value of being patient, and letting players gain experience through under-17 and under-18 international events prior to taking on the world in the under-20 spectacle.

Corporations aren't bound by the same doctrine. They see unique teenage talent as a commodity to harvest — and latching on to the next big thing is a calculated risk. From Reebok's point of view, making a mistake by jumping early is better than missing out by moving late.

Besides, they have seen McDavid in action, on and off the ice. If McDavid, the GTHL's player of the year for the Toronto Marlboros as a minor midget in 2011-12, progresses as they expect, Reebok will have a pretty special one-two hockey punch with Sidney Crosby and McDavid.

Crosby was an old man of 17 when he signed his first deal with Reebok. That was in 2005, a few months before the Kid's 18th birthday. Five years later, Crosby signed a seven-year deal with Reebok reportedly worth \$10 million.

Terms of McDavid's multi-year endorsement have not been disclosed, but it's significant. Reebok/CCM vice president Glen Thornborough told the Sports Business Journal that they see McDavid having a place among the hockey elite. All aboard ...

"We want to align with the best in the world, and we believe Connor McDavid is in that class," Thornborough said. "I won't get into the terms of it, but it would obviously extend into when and if he is in the National Hockey League. It is not an everyday occurrence in the industry that a player like Connor comes along. We are not in the habit of signing kids that age, but there are special occurrences and this is one."

Somewhat poetically, McDavid's business interests are represented by none other than Bobby Orr, who was terrorizing the junior ranks — then known as the Ontario Hockey Association — as a 14-year-old in 1962 with the Oshawa Generals. Bobby Orr knows about exceptions to the general rules of progression. He was one.

Special players, though not in the Orr class, are popping up with regularity. Oh yeah, you think this 15-year-old is something? How about 14-year-old Sean Day, recently profiled on TSN. A smooth, puck-control player like McDavid, Day, now with Detroit Compuware, has been called "the best 14-year-old I've ever seen" by no less an authority than Brian Kilrea, the legendary junior coach and GM who still scouts for the OHL Ottawa 67's.

Unlike in Orr's day, when a player groomed himself on local shinny ice, today's mighty mites are receiving superb coaching, and often professional

skating instruction. Just in the past five or six years, the support mechanisms for young players have blossomed. Toss natural talent into the mix and the result is a mini-explosion of phenoms.

At 14, Bobby Orr didn't have any corporations knocking on his door, but he did have the Boston Bruins brass paying a visit to his home in Parry Sound, and they presented a cheque for an outrageous sum in 1962 -- \$10,000.

To sweeten the deal for Orr's rights, they promised the boy's mother a new car.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 12.14.2012

646438 NHL

Discussions between NHL, union and moderators end without progress, but plans to talk again

By Ira Podell,

NEW YORK -- Two days of talks between the NHL, the players' association, and federal mediators still haven't provided any answers how to end the lockout.

Representatives from the fighting sides made it into the same room with a federal mediator Thursday. They just didn't make any noticeable progress. After a failed day Wednesday when the parties on either end of the hockey labour dispute never met with each other, lawyers from each group spoke face to face Thursday.

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President Barack Obama addressed the stalemate in an interview Thursday with WCCO-TV in Minneapolis.

"My message to owners and to players is, 'You guys make a lot of money and you make a lot of money on the backs of fans, so do right by your fans. You can figure out how to spread out a bunch of revenue that you're bringing in, but do right by the people who support you,'" Obama said. "And I shouldn't have to be involved in a dispute between really wealthy players and even wealthier owners. They should be able to settle this themselves. And remember who it is that's putting all that money in their pockets."

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At no point on either day this week did union executive director Donald Fehr meet with NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and deputy commissioner Bill Daly.

Daly said he expected to talk to Steve Fehr on Friday.

"I'm not sure what the next steps will be," Daly told the AP in an email. "I do expect the mediators to stay involved in terms of monitoring our ongoing negotiations, but at this point there are no further sessions planned. It doesn't appear there was movement by either side on any of the main issues over the last two days."

Mediators talked to each group separately Wednesday in suburban New Jersey and carried messages back and forth.

The league and union hadn't met since talks fell apart a week ago on the third straight day of negotiations in New York. Mediators rejoined the conversation Wednesday following two failed days last month, but still couldn't achieve a breakthrough.

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The latest round of talks was supposed to be held away from reporters and cameras, but the meeting location was quickly revealed Wednesday. Both sides briefly made public statements then in frustrated tones.

When the NHL agreed last week to increase its make-whole offer of deferred payments from \$211 million to \$300 million, it was part of a proposed package that required the union to agree on three nonnegotiable points. Instead, the players' association accepted the raise in funds, but then made counterproposals on the issues the league stated had no wiggle room.

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"It wasn't much of a decision," said Brendan Morrison, one of 13 players to attend Wednesday's talks. "I thought the gap would be closed much quicker, but it hasn't come to fruition yet, so we have to keep working."

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All games through Dec. 30 have been cancelled, 43 per cent of the season, along with the New Year's Day Winter Classic and the All-Star game.

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The 2004-05 season was lost completely, resulting in the players' association accepting a deal that included a salary cap for the first time. While no such major philosophical disputes exist in these negotiations, the sides still aren't ready to come to an agreement.

"I never thought the issues were as big as they were back in '04-05," Morrison said Wednesday. "Apparently, I was wrong."

A 48-game season was played in 1995 after a lockout stretched into January. Bettman said he wouldn't have a shorter season than that.

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The other sticking points the NHL demanded of the players are a 10-year term on the new agreement, with a mutual opt-out option after eight years, and no compliance buyouts or caps on escrow in the transition phase to the new structure. The union presented an offer of an eight-year deal with a reopener after six.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED 12.14.2012

646439 NHL

Henderson, Messier, King honoured by Hockey Canada

By Laurence Heinen,

Forty years after his legendary goal inspired a generation, Paul Henderson is taking his place among the Canada's hockey elite.

Henderson, along with longtime coach Dave King and NHL Hall of Famer Mark Messier, were named to the Order of Hockey in Canada on Wednesday. The program annually honours a select number of individuals whose "role or service in the game is recognized as extraordinary" in this country.

The three join the star-studded inaugural class of 2012 inducted last spring. Honourees a year ago included Jean Beliveau, Cassie Campbell-Pas-call, Wayne Gretzky, Gordie Howe and Gordon Renwick.

Henderson, 69, is best known for scoring the winning goal in Game 8 of the 1972 Summit Series to give Canada the victory over the Soviet Union. The goal is still celebrated in Canadian hockey circles today and has become part of the nation's identity.

"When I scored that goal, they interviewed me after the game and I specifically remember saying I've never been more proud to be Canadian at that minute," Henderson said on a conference call.

Henderson also recorded 477 points (236 goals, 241 assists) in 707 career NHL games with Detroit, Toronto and Atlanta and had 283 points (140 goals, 143 assists) in 360 career WHA games with Toronto and Birmingham. Henderson, who was diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia in 2009, said that he's pleased to be recognized for his efforts during his playing career.

"I've been battling cancer for three years and thank you for doing this while I'm still alive," he said jokingly. "I'd have really been ticked if you had waited until after I died."

King, 64, has a vast coaching resume, which includes guiding Canadian teams at the Winter Olympics, world hockey championships and world junior championships.

"It's a great pleasure to be inducted into the Order of Hockey in Canada," said King, who also has North American coaching experience at the NHL, CHL and university levels and international coaching experience in Germany, Sweden and Russia. "It's a great honour and certainly something that I'll always cherish."

Messier, 51, is a six-time Stanley Cup champion, two-time Hart Trophy winner and 15-time all-star. He is second on the NHL's all-time list with 1,887 points (694 goals, 1,193 assists) in 1,756 games over 25 seasons.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED 12.14.2012

646440 NHL

Edmonton needs to step up for taxpayer

By Cam Cole,

Let me say this about the ongoing Edmonton arena soap opera, the latest chapter of which began to unfold at city council Wednesday in the Alberta capital ...

No, let me first don the asbestos underwear, double-check to make sure my life insurance is paid up, and clear space in my email inbox.

There, all done.

Now: what if, instead of thinking of new and creative ways to raise and spend hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to further enrich the already wealthy drugstore billionaire Daryl Katz, Edmonton took a second look at the existing arena - the one with his company name on it - and said: "You know, this place is still pretty good. Not the best, not what a new one would be, not as good as Toronto's or Montreal's or Vancouver's, not in a great location ... but good enough."

It's radical thinking, I know.

Everyone is all wound up about the prospect of a shiny, brand-spanking new arena/ retail complex that would breathe new life into a moribund downtown, and if that's truly what moving out of Rexall Place would do, it's understandable why council might buy it.

(Although MTS Centre in Winnipeg is lovely, and in a perfect location, but they tell me you can still fire a cannon down Portage Avenue lots of non-game nights without fear of hitting a human.) Not to be a total contrarian here - I haven't covered many games in Edmonton since the Oilers' 2006 run to the Stanley Cup final - but is the former Northlands Coliseum such a hellhole?

Is it totally beneath a midsized Canadian market? It's been renovated and retro-fitted, jazzed up with fancy electronic signage and concourse-level luxury boxes, a spectacular home-team dressing room complex and rink-level lounges that allow the big spenders to pat the players on the shoulders or yell insults at them as they enter and exit their boudoir.

It has aged gracefully, without anything like the wear-and-tear and general air of decay that has afflicted its Long Island doppelgänger or even the much younger Joe Louis Arena in Detroit.

What, exactly, tops the list of things that are wrong with it? The artificial ice plant is "tired," so what used to be the best ice surface in the National Hockey League is now only average? Well, replace the ice plant. Dig up the concrete. Probably not a huge-ticket item.

ReXall Place doesn't have enough luxury boxes to produce the kind of revenue NHL owners have come to expect from their sports palaces built with someone else's money? Gee, given what we have learned in the last decade (more specifically, the last week) about NHL owners, cry us a river. The fairgrounds area around the arena is kind of down-market and sketchy? Northlands, the exhibition association, is still insisting on a cut of some of the revenues generated by the building it operates? The nerve of those greedy buggers.

The concourses are overcrowded and don't allow for enough high-end food and beverage concessions? The seats aren't comfy enough? Granted, the demographics have changed and are changing all the time - regular folks can't afford the prices tickets cost now - but are Ed-montonians, even wealthy ones, that demanding?

Fear and envy. An owner's best weapons.

There is a long, detailed, highly analytical story on this topic by Patrick Hruby on a site called Sports on Earth that explains the economic fallout of our North American culture of sports welfare (<http://www.sportsonearth.com/article/40595178/>) better than a couple hundred words in a sports column ever could. Read it and weep, Edmontonians, because one way or another, you're the meat in the sandwich.

However the government contribution is worded, or camouflaged, it doesn't come from the Arena Fairy. It's tax money, and not a user tax, either. It comes out of the pockets of hockey fans and people who give not one whiff about the NHL, alike.

Having been through something similar with the \$563-million (as far as we know) renovation of a 27-year-old B.C. Place Stadium, for which the province offered considerably less opportunity for public consultation, it's encouraging that at least Edmonton's council has made this a knock-down, drag-out fight, in trying to drive something resembling a hard bargain with Katz.

But Katz's \$100-million contribution to the \$475-million (and rising) project appears to be largely out of future revenues, and there remains a "missing" \$100-million component to the project that is supposed to come from "other orders of government" that, to date, no other government - i.e., provincial - has shown any great willingness to pony up.

Wednesday, the Katz Group, if not the man himself, returned cap in hand to council, two months after the city voted to walk away from the arena deal over a request from the Oiler owner for another \$210 million.

That came not long after Katz clumsily tried to frighten the city into thinking he might move the team to Seattle, or ... well, somewhere else. But Edmontonians had been there, done that, with Peter Pocklington a lifetime ago, and the implied threat backfired.

The arena deal the city had agreed upon wasn't all one-sided. Katz would sign a 35-year lease, pay to be the rink's operator, and back and forth the money, under various guises, would flow from one side to the other.

The catch is that the price tag reportedly will be more like \$700 million, or even higher, by the time the surrounding development and bells and whistles and infrastructure are completed - and at some point, even as well-intentioned as the mayor and councillors may be, it seems they are going to sign a deal that inevitably will add a considerable tax burden to the populace, and probably result in some really valuable programs and services being trimmed, in return for ... what? A better self-image, a sense of big-leagueness, a more vibrant feel to at least a few blocks surrounding the arena, on game nights? Sure. Like Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. Better than losing the team.

Fear and envy. Quell one, satisfy the other. Jettison an old arena, build a new one on credit. It's a disposable world. Someone will pay. Someone always does.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED 12.14.2012

646441 NHL

NHL lockout: Meetings with mediators fail to produce breakthrough

Ira Podell, Associated Press

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Dave Sandford/Getty Images

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646442 NHL

NHL lockout: Compliance buyouts surface as key issue

Chris Johnston, Canadian Press

Sitting in a hockey locker room, Steve Chase became the latest die-hard fan fed up with the NHL lockout.

Living in Los Angeles, Chase believed the league had squandered all the goodwill built in the area after the Kings won the Stanley Cup. His weekly pickup games with friends became his only taste of the sport he loved because of the ongoing labour strife that has dragged on for months.

So he took a poll of his buddies, then took a pledge:

"We're not coming back."

Read more ...

On the surface, it looks like the most bizarre point of contention currently prolonging the NHL lockout: Players fighting to give owners the right to buy them out once a new collective bargaining agreement is signed.

However, there is good reason behind the fight.

In addition to the added flexibility the NHL Players' Association feels compliance (or amnesty) buyouts will bring to the hard cap system — something the NHL is looking to tighten — is the fact that the only other time in league history they were offered buyouts, the players didn't make out too badly.

Fourteen men had their contract terminated for two-thirds of its remaining value during the 10-day buyout window that opened after the last CBA was signed in July 2005. Of that group, only two saw their NHL career end immediately because of it.

The rest, including well-compensated Rangers centre Bobby Holik, found work elsewhere and didn't end up taking much — or any — financial hit as a result.

"It kind of worked out," Holik told The Canadian Press in September. "It was not a priority, but between the buyout and the [free-agent] contract

from Atlanta it all worked out. The way my contract was structured, I don't think I lost anything even because of the lockout."

It's interesting that the topic of one-time compliance buyouts only made its way into the current negotiations last week, when the NHL and NHLPA started getting closer to a deal. Ultimately, it may end up being the final significant hurdle to cross before a new CBA is signed.

Of the three remaining issues deputy commissioner Bill Daly recently identified, transition rules are the only one where the sides are diametrically opposed. The NHLPA has accepted term limits on contracts but hasn't yet come as far as the NHL would like. Similarly, the sides remain separated by two years on the proposed length of the CBA.

As for transition, the NHL has offered one season with a salary cap of US\$70.2 million before reverting to one based on a 50-50 split of revenues, which would likely see it drop by about US\$10-million the following year.

If no special transition rules end up making their way into the new CBA, a number of teams would be forced to get creative with their rosters. For example, the Philadelphia Flyers already have US\$57.4-million in cap space committed to 16 players for 2013-14, according to capgeek.com.

And they are far from alone.

It's not based on their play, it's based on the economics

Should they end up being allowed, the most likely candidates for compliance buyouts would be highly paid veterans like 35-year-old defenceman Wade Redden, who earned US\$6.5-million last season while playing on the New York Rangers' AHL team. Only two of the 14 players bought out in July 2005 were under the age of 30 and nine of them were scheduled to earn more than US\$2.5-million.

The Detroit Red Wings used the amnesty to rid themselves of three players, the Columbus Blue Jackets and Dallas Stars each shed two players and the Philadelphia Flyers bid adieu to popular veterans John LeClair and Tony Amonte.

"It's not based on their play, it's based on the economics," Ken Hitchcock, then the Flyers coach, said of the decision.

Even from an individual perspective, a buyout is not always a bad thing.

Ray Whitney was a 33-year-old set to earn US\$2.66-million when the Red Wings cut him loose just days after the last lockout ended. Not only did he win a Stanley Cup in Carolina the following season, Whitney is still going strong at age 40 and signed a US\$9-million, two-year contract with Dallas over the summer.

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646443 NHL

Dismayed NHL fans vow to stay away when lockout ends

Dan Gelston, Associated Press

After watching negotiations go off the rails in a very public setting last week, the NHL and NHL Players' Association are heading back underground.

And they've invited some company.

The sides are set to resume talks at an undisclosed location Wednesday with U.S. federal mediators Scot L. Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney rejoining the process. Those men first met with league and union leaders Nov. 27 and 28 before deciding they couldn't help negotiations along.

The NHLPA continued to push for mediation when players and owners gathered in New York last week and the NHL eventually agreed. However, deputy commissioner Bill Daly acknowledged Tuesday that he would carry "no expectations" into the next session.

Read more ...

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pickup games with friends became his only taste of the sport he loved because of the ongoing labour strife that has dragged on for months.

So he took a poll of his buddies, then took a pledge:

"We're not coming back."

Not for good. Just not after the lockout is settled, not for a while.

Chase started the grass roots "Just Drop It" campaign that encourages fans to boycott one NHL game for every game cancelled after Dec. 21st. No tickets, no TV, no merchandise — not a minute or a penny spent on the league, punishment for what he believed are continued abuses of loyalty on their fan base.

He made a video and started a Facebook page, urging fans to click the "like" button and join the cause. More than 11,000 angry fans have joined since the weekend, a puck drop in the circle compared to the millions of fans who attend games, but the latest small sign fans won't again be easily won back.

"People are trying to crush the NHL," Chase said. "That's not our goal. Our goal is just to get hockey back. Hopefully somebody, somewhere cares about this and decides, 'Guys, we've got to get back and talk.' The fans are right.

"They're fighting over our money."

The days of letter writing and 30-second phone calls to sports radio stations have ballooned to steady streams of hashtags, Facebook posts and homemade videos from fans who just want to come in from the cold of this labour battle and watch their slapshots and saves. They are exasperated over a work stoppage with no end in sight and little regard for the fans.

Penguins captain Sidney Crosby understands why fans are upset over the third lockout in Commissioner Gary Bettman's 20-year tenure.

"I don't blame anyone for being frustrated with this process," Crosby said. "Everyone's got to be frustrated with the way this has gone. It's pretty easy for everyone involved to feel that way."

It's actually pretty easy to call what's going to happen.

For all the angry tweets, texts, threats and organized campaigns, fans will still pick up the remote and print out tickets as soon as the strife ends.

Chris Young/The Canadian Press

They always do. In every sport. Remember 1994? After the World Series was wiped out, baseball loyalists vowed never to return to the old ball game. Fuelled by super-sized sluggers and retro ballparks, attendance topped 60 million in 1996, 70 million in 1998 and soared to 79,503,175 in 2007.

The NHL, of course, can't match those numbers. But the story arc is still the same. The NHL drew 20,854,169 fans when the sport returned in 2005-06 — 497,970 more than the total in 2003-04, the season before the lockout.

The NHL is coming off its sixth consecutive year of record revenue, with a projection of more than US\$3.2-billion by the end of the 2012 Stanley Cup playoffs, the league said.

Don't forget, the NHL has a US\$200-billion, 10-year deal with NBC Sports Group through the 2020-21 season.

"Our fan support coming back last time was outstanding and we were probably a little bit surprised to see how good it was," Penguins forward Craig Adams said. "That speaks to how much the fans love the game."

The NHL clearly caught some breaks coming out of the last lockout.

The league marketed its comeback around rising stars like Crosby and Washington's Alex Ovechkin. They added fan-friendly shootouts and the New Year's Day Winter Classic. The league made the two-line pass legal to help bust up the neutral-zone trap and created chic commercials to appeal more toward casual fans.

This time — whenever the lockout ends — the league might be all out of tricks. They'll need to dig. And it could take years to recover from the wreckage.

Gerry Helper, special assistant to the president and senior vice-president for the Nashville Predators, said the team enjoyed their best season ticket renewal year in franchise history this past off-season.

The Predators have stayed aggressive in developing benefits packages for season ticketholders during the work stoppage. They organized "Preds Pride Day" activities and something called a "Smashmob" for a youth hockey game last month where they brought their public address announcer and mascot, and created a Predators' game-like atmosphere. Helper wrote in an email to The AP the Predators have stayed in touch with season ticket holders via email and phone.

I got not even a phone call from the Predators just to say, 'Look we know you're a loyal die-hard season-ticket holder from Day 1. Why don't you come down and do something at the arena?'

Not every Predators fan feels appreciated. Tom Begley, of Franklin, Tenn., cancelled the two season tickets he has held since Day 1 of the franchise. He also estimated approximately 1,000 people like himself are season-ticket holders from the first day. He said the team has done plenty of events for all season-ticket holders, but nothing special for that select group.

"I got not even a phone call from the Predators just to say, 'Look we know you're a loyal die-hard season-ticket holder from Day 1. Why don't you come down and do something at the arena?'" he said. "Hey, if I feel like it down the line and I want to buy tickets again I can do it. Right now, I don't know. I'm not convinced that hockey here in Nashville is going to be viable long-term. I am scared to death of what Donald Fehr is doing to the game and it's a shame. It really is."

All the bluster of a boycott is easier tweeted than done. Fans can't quit Sid the Kid, Ovi, Big Z, The Warden, Phil the Thrill and The Doaner.

On Opening Night in January 2013 or October 2013 or November 2015, whenever, the teams will be back ready for the first faceoff.

So will the fans.

At least some of them.

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646444 Ottawa Senators

Turris happy to be home for the holidays

by Ken Warren

When Kyle Turris returned from playing in Finland a few days ago, he found himself without any of his customized top-of-the-line composite sticks.

In order to practice with some of his locked out NHL colleagues at Carleton University while awaiting his sticks, he dropped into an Ottawa-area sporting goods store for some new lumber. He went old school, buying a couple of end-of-the-rack \$35 wooden sticks, shocking a sales representative who was unfamiliar with selling traditional models and clearly unaware that Turris is the Ottawa Senators second-line centre.

"The guy asked me whether I was playing road hockey," Turris said, with a laugh, following Thursday's workout.

Consider it yet another colourful incident in what has been a series of lockout adventures for the 23-year-old Turris, who signed a five-year, \$17.5 million contract extension with the Senators last summer.

He has spent the past two months in Oulu, playing for Karpat in Finland's top league, scoring seven goals and 12 assists in 21 games. Oulu is way, way up north, a few hours' drive to the Arctic Circle. By the time Turris left on Sunday, daylight was three hours long and the deep freeze never disappeared.

Turris has also learned plenty about Finnish culture and food — he likes reindeer and elk and isn't fond of a pre-game team meal of noodles topped with thick green curry — but he acknowledges that homesickness brought him back to Ottawa.

"It's going to be really nice to be at home for the holidays, with my fiancée (Julie) and my dog and my parents are flying in (from New Westminster, B.C.) for Christmas," said Turris. "Home is Ottawa now. That's where we're happy to call home."

Turris raves about how well the organization treated him, allowing him to play 20 minutes per game. He enjoyed the community and had a good relationship with his teammates. In the end, though, it just wasn't home.

"I thought I played all right," he said. "There was a lot to adapt to. Not just from the hockey-side, but the food was much different. There were some games where I really wasn't playing well because of the food I had eaten that day. I was getting better. It took a little bit to get used to it."

Turriss was committed to a strong workout plan last summer, working closely with close friend and Senators defence prospect Patrick Wiercioch, and felt he was in better shape to tackle the tight-checking of the NHL. In Finland, however, the game wasn't quite as physical, largely due to the Olympic-sized ice surface.

He played twice against Senators defenceman Erik Karlsson and Jokerit, based in Helsinki, losing a pair of one-goal games. Karlsson has seven goals and 17 assists in 27 games.

"It was fun playing against each other, we were talking a lot on the ice," Turriss said. "It's hard to get the best of him. Even if you (get around) him, he'll catch up to you."

The two also shared the flight home from Frankfurt, Germany on Sunday – the last leg of a lengthy trip for Turriss, which also saw him go from Lappeenranta, Finland to Riga, Latvia to Frankfurt.

If there's no resolution in the lockout, Karlsson is expected to return to Finland next week when the league ends its mid-winter break. Turriss, on the other hand, is unsure about his future plans.

"I told the general manager that we would keep in touch and see going forward," said Turriss. "We're keeping that open right now. If I was going back (to Europe), I would go back there."

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"The guy asked me whether I was playing road hockey," Turriss said, with a laugh, following Thursday's workout.

Consider it yet another colourful incident in what has been a series of lockout adventures for the 23-year-old Turriss, who signed a five-year, \$17.5 million contract extension with the Senators last summer.

He has spent the past two months in Oulu, playing for Karpat in Finland's top league, scoring seven goals and 12 assists in 21 games. Oulu is way, way up north, a few hours' drive to the Arctic Circle. By the time Turriss left on Sunday, daylight was three hours long and the deep freeze never disappeared.

Turriss has also learned plenty about Finnish culture and food — he likes reindeer and elk and isn't fond of a pre-game team meal of noodles topped with thick green curry — but he acknowledges that homesickness brought him back to Ottawa.

"It's going to be really nice to be at home for the holidays, with my fiancée (Julie) and my dog and my parents are flying in (from New Westminster, B.C.) for Christmas," said Turriss. "Home is Ottawa now. That's where we're happy to call home."

Turriss raves about how well the organization treated him, allowing him to play 20 minutes per game. He enjoyed the community and had a good relationship with his teammates. In the end, though, it just wasn't home.

"I thought I played all right," he said. "There was a lot to adapt to. Not just from the hockey-side, but the food was much different. There were some games where I really wasn't playing well because of the food I had eaten that day. I was getting better. It took a little bit to get used to it."

Turriss was committed to a strong workout plan last summer, working closely with close friend and Senators defence prospect Patrick Wiercioch, and felt he was in better shape to tackle the tight-checking of the NHL. In Finland, however, the game wasn't quite as physical, largely due to the Olympic-sized ice surface.

He played twice against Senators defenceman Erik Karlsson and Jokerit, based in Helsinki, losing a pair of one-goal games. Karlsson has seven goals and 17 assists in 27 games.

"It was fun playing against each other, we were talking a lot on the ice," Turriss said. "It's hard to get the best of him. Even if you (get around) him, he'll catch up to you."

The two also shared the flight home from Frankfurt, Germany on Sunday — the last leg of a lengthy trip for Turriss, which also saw him go from Lappeenranta, Finland to Riga, Latvia to Frankfurt.

If there's no resolution in the lockout, Karlsson is expected to return to Finland next week when the league ends its mid-winter break. Turriss, on the other hand, is unsure about his future plans.

"I told the general manager that we would keep in touch and see going forward," said Turriss. "We're keeping that open right now. If I was going back (to Europe), I would go back there."

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 12.14.2012

646446 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators' Kyle Turriss enjoyed time in Finland

By Don Brennan

Before Kyle Turriss could skate with other locked-out NHLers and Carleton Ravens Thursday, he had to go shopping for something he had not purchased himself in 10 years: A stick.

He wound up getting a wooden Sherwood Paul Coffey model with a big curve. It cost him \$35.

"I have sticks coming in (Friday) night," said Turriss, the Senators centre who returned Sunday from a two-month stint with Karpat Oulu in the Finnish SM-Liiga. "I wasn't spending \$300 on a stick I was going to break today."

Turriss laughed again as he recalled the exchange he had with a Sport Chek sales clerk who clearly did not recognize him.

"Do you need a road hockey stick or something?" Turriss was asked.

"No, I'm using it for shinny," he said.

"Do you need any help with it?" the guy asked him.

"No," said Turriss. "I'm okay."

Better than okay was his experience in Oulu, which is about a 5½-hour drive from the Arctic Circle and currently sees sunlight for about 3½ hours (from 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.) a day.

Turriss was roommates with the only other North American on the team, Sharks defenceman Jason Demers. In 21 games, he had 19 points, including seven goals.

"Home is Ottawa now," said the 23-year-old New Westminster B.C., native, who signed a five-year contract extension with the Senators in August. "That's where we're happy to call home. I'm really excited to be back.

"Oulu was awesome. The organization was great. They treated us really well. I was lucky to be put into a position where I was playing 20 minutes a game. It's a great league, really competitive. Any team can win on any given night. It was fun and a great experience."

When he wasn't at the rink, Turriss played video games with Demers and chatted on Skype with his fiancée Julie and friends.

He wasn't always feeling the best at game time, however, which is something he attributed to the food.

"Reindeer, elk ... that was all the good stuff," said Turriss. "Pre-game meals, we'd have one tray of noodles and one tray of sauce that was thicker than gravy, and was all green curry.

"I'm not used to having that kind of food before a game. Just doesn't sit very well in your stomach."

Turriss did notice the benefits of the rigorous summertime training he had with Senators strength and conditioning coach Chris Schwarz.

"Felt like I was a little faster, more explosive, stronger on the puck," he said. "It was a lot different because the ice was so much bigger and there was a lot less physicality. So it's hard to tell how much stronger you are or how much you improved. But I definitely felt good (about his game)."

Turriss twice lined up against Senators teammate Erik Karlsson, who is with Jokerit during the lockout. Karpas lost both games by a goal.

"We had a good time, it was fun playing against each other and talking lots on the ice," said Turriss. "It's hard to get the best of him. You beat him and he catches up to you."

Turriss isn't sure if he'll be going back to Finland after Christmas.

"Kind of left that open," he said. "The GM and I said we'd keep in touch moving forward, see how things are going. I believe the last day to go back would be the last day of January, as far as transfers or whatever it took to add a player to the roster.

"We'll keep that open."

Of course, he hopes the lockout ends and he doesn't have to make the decision.

"I think everybody is hoping that," said Turriss. "Players and owners don't want this to carry on. Everybody is hopeful that something will work out, but at the same time we want it to be fair."

If he does plan on returning to Oulu, Turriss might want to go shopping again first. This time, at Costco.

"Get those sun HappyLights," he said with a laugh.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 12.14.2012

646447 Ottawa Senators

Ottawa Senators star Erik Karlsson suspended by Finnish league for 'throwing' stick at ref after Jokerit loss

By Don Brennan

If Erik Karlsson does go back to Finland, he can show up a little late.

Playing for Jokerit in the SM-Liiga during the lockout, the Senators defenceman received a one-game suspension for throwing his stick at a referee after a 4-2 loss to TPS Turku on Dec. 8 — Karlsson's final game for the club before a break in the schedule.

Watching the video, it was more of an easy slide than a throw.

Karlsson, who had 12 penalty minutes and an assist in the game, was standing near his blue line as the teams gathered for the post-buzzer ceremony. He bent slightly and pushed his stick gently along the ice to where the officials were standing along the boards, about 30 feet away. It had lost most, if not all of its momentum by the time it arrived at the refs feet.

Karlsson took a flight to Ottawa Sunday and intends to return to Finland if the NHL lockout remains unsettled.

In 27 games for the league-leading Helsinki team, the Norris Trophy winner has seven goals, 24 points and 24 PIMs.

#### FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

Former Senators defenceman and Ottawa native Brendan Bell has signed with the Frolunda Indians of the Swedish Elite League.

The 29-year old defenceman arrived in Gothenburg, home of the Indians, Thursday morning.

"It's a good organization in a great city that I've got a little familiarity with," Bell, who had hip surgery in May after spending last season with the Connecticut Whale, said via text. "The lighter schedule will help me get back to playing at 100 percent health."

Senators captain Daniel Alfredsson spent the 2004-05 season with Frolunda, whose current lineup includes Colorado Avalanche star Matt Duchene.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 12.14.2012

646448 Philadelphia Flyers

Obama scolds NHL after talks go nowhere

Sam Carchidi,

A representative from the NHL and the players' union met Thursday but failed to make any progress during the 89th day of the lockout.

Steve Fehr, special counsel for the NHL Players' Association, and NHL attorney Bob Battersman met with a federal mediator in Iselin, N.J.

No talks have been scheduled, and even President Obama expressed frustration.

In an interview with WCCO-TV in Minneapolis, Obama said: "My message to owners and to players is, 'You guys make a lot of money and you make a lot of money on the backs of fans, so do right by your fans. You can figure out how to spread out a bunch of revenue that you're bringing in . . . And I shouldn't have to be involved in a dispute between really wealthy players and even wealthier owners. They should be able to settle this themselves. And remember who it is that's putting all that money in their pockets.'"

The NHL wants the union to agree to a five-year maximum on player contracts (seven years for a team to re-sign its own player), a 10-year collective-bargaining agreement, and no amnesty buyouts or escrow caps in the first year.

The players want an eight-year maximum on player contracts and an eight-year CBA. They are pushing for amnesty buyouts and do not want escrow caps.

Games through Dec. 30 have been canceled.

Holmstrom surgery. Adirondack Phantoms captain Ben Holmstrom, a center who played five games with the Flyers last season, will undergo surgery on his right knee and will be sidelined for an indefinite period, the club said.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.14.2012

646449 Philadelphia Flyers

No progress in NHL labor talks (again)

Sam Carchidi,

A representative from the NHL and the players' union met on Thursday but failed to make any progress during the 89th day of the lockout.

No future talks have been scheduled.

Steve Fehr, special counsel for the NHL Players' Association, and NHL attorney Bob Battersman met with a federal mediator in Iselin, N.J., but the talks were fruitless.

Again.

The NHL wants the union to agree to a five-year maximum on player contracts (seven years if you resign your own player), a 10-year collective-bargaining agreement, and no amnesty buyouts or escrow caps in the first year.

The players want an eight-year maximum on player contracts and an eight-year CBA. In addition, they are pushing for amnesty buyouts and do not want escrow caps.

Games have been canceled through Dec. 30.

Surgery for Holmstrom. Adirondack Phantoms captain Ben Holmstrom, a center who played five games with the Flyers last season, will undergo surgery on his right knee and will be sidelined for an indefinite period, the club said.

In 22 AHL games this season, Holmstrom had two goals and six assists while accumulating a plus-3 rating.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.14.2012

646450 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL, union meeting separately with mediator

Tim Panaccio

Day 89 of the NHL lockout looks very much like Day 88.

The union met with federal mediator Scot Beckenbaugh on Thursday morning and the league was to meet with him later in the day, according to a union spokesman.

There was a lunch break between sessions.

Beckenbaugh was to meet in the afternoon with Steve Fehr, the special counsel for the union, and the league's top advisory counsel, Bob Battersman, from Proskauer Rose.

It remained unclear whether NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman, or his deputy, Bill Daly, would meet with the mediator in the afternoon, though that would make sense once the mediator finished with the union.

Daly told the Associated Press on Thursday in an e-mail there had been "some back and forth with the mediator."

So far, there has not been a meeting of all parties in the room at one time.

Union executive director Donald Fehr had no comment when the talks with the mediator ended shortly after 4 p.m.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.14.2012

646451 Philadelphia Flyers

Checking in on overseas Flyers

Dave Isaac

The lockout is more than two months old and some Flyers refused to wait for a solution. A handful of the players headed to Europe even before they suited up in orange and black (or it had at least been a while for Ruslan Fedotenko).

Here's a primer for how the locked-out Flyers are doing in Europe and, well, a reminder of who is still a Flyer.

The players are listed in order of when they joined teams in other leagues.

Ruslan Fedotenko

For the first time since 2002, Fedotenko is a Flyer. It's his second tour of duty with the Flyers and he wasted no time making sure he was playing hockey this year regardless of a lockout.

He signed with Donbass Donetsk on Sept. 16, the day after the collective bargaining agreement expired. He has given goals and nine assists through 26 games in the KHL.

Jakub Voracek

After signing a four-year, \$17 million extension with the Flyers in July, the team probably held its breath when Voracek signed with HC Lev Praha of the KHL. Upon inking Voracek to a new contract, GM Paul Holmgren proclaimed Voracek would be the Flyers' first-line right wing on a line with Scott Hartnell and Claude Giroux.

Voracek has played only 18 games in the KHL after missing extended time with a knee injury. The 23-year-old has four goals and 10 assists for Lev Praha.

Ilya Bryzgalov

Much like his first season with the Flyers, it's been a rocky road for Bryzgalov with CSKA of the KHL. Through 10 games, he has a 2.41 goals-against average and .907 save percentage, which is much improved from his numbers earlier in the season when he was often a healthy scratch.

He's gotten in a tiff with reporters in Russia already, too. He was offended by the "filth" they had been writing about him and challenged them to touch his dry jersey.

Wayne Simmonds

Unfortunately the lockout has brought a rocky road for one of the classiest guys in the Flyers locker room. Simmonds has played in two different leagues alongside his best friend, St. Louis' Chris Stewart. He first signed with Eispiraten Crimmitschau in Germany's second-tier league. He had four goals and 10 assists in nine games.

The pair then signed with Bili Tygri Liberec in the Czech league, where once again Simmonds was the target of racism. The Czech fans chanted "Opice!" which translates to "monkey." Yahoo!'s Nick Cotsonika wrote a tremendous piece when he caught up with Simmonds in Liberec. He had four goals and two assists in six games with that team before coming back to North America. He played in the Operation Hat Trick charity game in Atlantic City and told the Courier-Post he'd probably just hang out at home in Toronto for a while before potentially signing anywhere else again.

Matt Read

On Sept. 30, Read signed with Södertälje of Sweden's Allsvenskan league. He had six goals and 18 assists in 20 games before returning to North America.

Danny Briere

Briere's agent, Pat Brisson, got a twofer when he dealt with the Eisbären Berlin of Germany's DEL league because another client, Claude Giroux, signed there as well. The pair signed on Oct. 4, only days before the would-be Flyers opener.

Briere reportedly has a rib injury now, but has six goals and 21 assists in 17 games for Berlin. He's the top scorer among locked-out Flyers. If the lockout continues, Briere may play in an outdoor game against the Nürnberg Ice Tigers on Jan. 5.

Claude Giroux

Giroux gave Holmgren a scare last month when he left Berlin to head home for medical tests and it was feared he might have a concussion. It was determined that it was just a neck injury, but Giroux has yet to return to his German team.

Giroux has only played in nine games and had four goals and 15 assists. He is reportedly at home in Ottawa and has begun skating again. Berlin plays Thursday, but then has a break until the 21st.

Tom Sestito

On Oct. 9, Sestito signed with the Sheffield Steelers of the EIHL. He scored eight goals and 11 assists in 17 games with the team. At the beginning of December he left the Steelers and is looking for work in a more prominent league.

Max Talbot

Talbot and his childhood friend, somewhat-newly-acquired Flyer Bruno Gervais, coordinated a makeshift tour of games throughout Quebec for the first couple months of the lockout. He signed with Ilves of SM-liiga in Finland. In 10 games he had two goals and three assists. On Dec. 8, he signed with Fribourg-Gottéron in Switzerland, joining fellow locked-out NHLers David Desharnais (Montreal Canadiens) and Patric Hörnqvist (Nashville Predators).

Bruno Gervais

Gervais signed with Heilbronner Falken of the second-tier German league that Simmonds first signed in. Through seven games, he has two assists.

Nicklas Grossmann

Grossmann took advantage of some ice time that Scott Hartnell purchased at the Skate Zone in Voorhees early in the lockout and rehabbed his knee and concussion issues. With Södertälje he was a teammate of Read before the forward returned to North America. He has one assist in four games after signing on Nov. 14.

Courier-Post LOADED: 12.14.2012

646452 Phoenix Coyotes

Phoenix Coyotes' Dave King recognized by Hockey Canada

by Sarah McLellan

Coyotes Development Coach Dave King has been named to the 2013 class of Distinguished Honorees of the Order of Hockey Canada.

King will be recognized, along with Mark Messier and Paul Henderson, at a ceremony in Ottawa in April during the 2013 IIHF Ice Hockey Women's World Championship.

Phoenix Coyotes development coach Dave King named Distinguished Honoree of the Order of Hockey Canada

Phoenix Coyotes Development Coach Dave King with head coach Dave Tippett

"This is a great thrill and I'm honored to be part of a class with Mark Messier and Paul Henderson," King said in a statement released by the Coyotes. "I've really enjoyed my time over the years working with the Canadian international programs. I was fortunate to have some success with Team Canada and guys like Dave Tippett and Sean Burke, who I'm working with now, were a big part of that. This is a very special honor."

Aside from King's pro coaching career, which has included stops in Calgary, Columbus and Montreal, the 64-year-old has coached Team Canada at the Olympics, World Championships and World Junior Championships. In more than 38 years of coaching, King has also been at the collegiate level, the Western Hockey League and overseas in European leagues.

Talks (somewhat) continue

The NHL and Players' Association met with federal mediators on Wednesday, but the sides were kept apart.

By lunch time on Thursday, it was still unclear whether or not Day 2 of meetings would result in a joint session. Read the latest from USA Today here.

The gathering came on the heels of Monday's announcement that games were canceled through Dec.30. That's a total of 526 regular season games — or 42.8 percent of the season.

Strong showing from Samuelsson

Coyotes prospect Henrik Samuelsson has been on the team's radar since his season started with the Edmonton Oil Kings in the WHL, and the Coyotes haven't been disappointed by his performance.

Samuelsson, a center, is third in team scoring with 16 goals and 16 assists and is a plus-6. Six of his goals have come on the power play and one was short-handed.

Phoenix Coyotes prospect and Edmonton Oil Kings center Henrik Samuelsson

Phoenix Coyotes prospect Henrik Samuelsson

"We're really encouraged," Coyotes General Manager Don Maloney said. "He's playing a lot. He's producing. He plays in every situation — power play, penalty killing — and we're just really happy with where his game is trending."

Adding penalty killer to his resume was a goal Samuelsson had coming into the season. Although he wasn't on the PK last season for the Oil Kings, he had experience in that situation from his time in Sweden.

"I wanted to be one of those guys that they can put out in any situation," Samuelsson said. "If they need a goal, they could put me out. If they needed somebody in the last few minutes just to shut them down, then they can trust me in that, too."

Unlike a large number of his first-round peers from the 2012 draft class, Samuelsson hasn't signed a contract with the Coyotes yet. But that's on the team's to-do list this summer.

"Depending on how Edmonton's season finishes and if Portland is still playing, perhaps we can get him into Portland at the end of his playing year," Maloney said.

Arizona Republic LOADED: 12.14.2012

646453 Pittsburgh Penguins

Crosby dissatisfied with NHL labor developments

By Rob Rossi and Josh Yohe

Frustration over the NHL's labor dispute is boiling over in Pittsburgh.

The NHL and its players' association have not negotiated since talks in New York broke Dec. 6, and another round of separate two-day meetings with the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service proved futile this week.

Hockey also is seemingly losing its staunchest supporters.

"They didn't even have a face-to-face meeting," Penguins franchise player Sidney Crosby said Thursday. "It is discouraging. For me, it just doesn't make any sense. Why can't they get in the room and keep talking? I don't know what that mindset is or how that's going to help things progress."

Added teammate Matt Niskanen, on break from playing overseas: "Obviously, no one's real happy right now."

An owners' lockout of players hits the 89th day on Friday, and players will miss a fifth paycheck Saturday. No face-to-face bargaining sessions are planned.

From definition and division of future revenue to money provided to honor current players' contracts, the NHL and union have battled over many issues. The latest big one is term of a new labor contract and maximum length of veteran deals.

Games are canceled through Dec. 30, with the Penguins slated to miss out on 17 home games that were each projected by tourism agency VisitPittsburgh to generate about \$2.1 million to the region.

Locally based 84 Lumber pours 22 percent of its marketing budget into the Penguins, a company official said.

"That money is contractually bound," said Jeff Nobers, 84 Lumber's vice president of marketing. "A lot of our marketing budget is predicated on the Penguins playing."

"If this is really down to minor issues, as it seems to be, why not just get it done?"

84 Lumber and Trib Total Media are two of 10 founding partners for Consol Energy Center, which opened in August 2010.

Nobers called the Penguins "a great business partner." He said 84 Lumber would not look to recoup any payments through legal action. He praised the recent efforts by Penguins majority co-owners Mario Lemieux and Ron Burkle to work with other moderate clubs in hopes of bridging the gap with players.

No major sponsors have stopped working with the Penguins during the lockout.

The Penguins Pond, a public outdoor rink that opens Friday at Highmark Stadium in Station Square, is sponsored by 84 Lumber.

Nobers said his company is missing out on six radio spots per game in addition to countless mentions of the "84 Lumber broadcast booth" by

Penguins Radio Network broadcasters Mike Lange and Phil Bourque. The 84 Lumber contract also provides loge-box seating for employees and boards advertisement space.

New for this season would be a season-long fan appreciation promotion that will pay one season ticket holder \$84,000 at the final regular-season home game.

The Penguins declined comment because clubs face a \$1 million fine for publicly discussing labor topics without NHL permission. Commissioner Gary Bettman reiterated last week he is worried about backlash from sponsors and fans dissatisfied by a second lockout in eight years. The 2004-05 season was lost to a labor dispute.

"Who you blame is irrelevant," Nobers said, adding he speaks with a Penguins contact every other day. "The end results are missed games, and if it's no season, that's what you're stuck with.

"Nobody anywhere can give you a sense when this will end, if it will end. It's been a strain."

Rob Rossi and Josh Yohe are staff writers for Trib Total Media. Rossi can be reached at [rossi@tribweb.com](mailto:rossi@tribweb.com) or 412-380-5635. Yohe can be reached at [jyohe@tribweb.com](mailto:jyohe@tribweb.com).

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.14.2012

646454 Pittsburgh Penguins

No progress made in latest NHL negotiations

By Dave Molinari

The NHL and NHL Players' Association have spent a lot of time in meetings the past few days.

They just haven't done it together very much. And it's not clear when they might again.

Federal mediator Scot Beckenbaugh served as a go-between for the parties in Iselin, N.J., for the second day in a row Thursday and, unlike Wednesday, the union and league representatives were together in a room for a while. Neither side, however, reported any progress.

"It's good that we're talking," NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr told reporters at the meeting site. "It's better than not talking."

He and NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly are expected to be in contact by phone today, but there's no guarantee that will lead to face-to-face talks.

Further direct involvement by a mediator seems unlikely at this time, although no announcement about that has been made.

Steve Fehr, the No. 2 man in the NHLPA, and league attorney Bob Battersman represented their sides Thursday, although NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr also was involved at one point.

While a number of issues haven't even been discussed in the 90 days since the lockout began, the NHL has insisted that three of its positions -- limits on contract lengths and structure, rules governing the transition to the new collective bargaining agreement and the length of the new CBA -- are not negotiable.

The league has not budged from the stance it took on those issues last week, while the NHLPA has shown no inclination to accept them as proposed. NHL players have been locked out since Sept. 16, and the league has canceled games through Dec. 30.

NOTE -- Evgeni Malkin remains the top vote-getter in balloting for the Kontinental Hockey League all-star game, with a 39,539-32,585 edge over Pavel Datsyuk Thursday evening. Today is the final day of balloting at <http://www.khlallstar.com/en/vote/>.

Post Gazette LOADED: 12.14.2012

646455 St Louis Blues

Blues could lose with new CBA agreement

By Jeremy Rutherford

Even if the NHL is ultimately deemed the "winner" of the collective bargaining negotiations, it may not mean a victory for the Blues.

The franchise lost an estimated \$20 million during the 2011-12 season, so it doesn't take a sports economist to figure out that the best-case scenario for Tom Stillman's new ownership group would have been a rollback in players' salaries.

The NHL's initial offer, last July, suggested dropping the players' share of hockey related revenue to 43 percent from 57 percent under the previous agreement. That was never expected to fly with the union, and now with the sides still unable to produce a new CBA despite agreeing on a 50-50 split, it's difficult to project which concessions will eventually be made by either side.

The league and the union communicated again Thursday through federal mediators but no progress was made.

A strong possibility even if there is a breakthrough in the four-month-old lockout is that the Blues won't benefit regardless of how negotiations end up, and thus the momentum created from a 109-point regular season and trip to the playoffs in '11-12 will be met with backlash despite no explainable gain.

The union has agreed to a seven-percent cutback in "HRRF" and moved toward the NHL on contract issues, but the league's agreement to pay \$300 million in "make-whole" money, honoring players' existing contracts, could create a larger challenge than many small- and mid-market franchises expected after the negotiations.

Many believe the Blues are among a group of clubs not thrilled with the NHL's decision to increase its make-whole offer from \$211 million, and while that proposal is reportedly off the table, it would likely return in exchange for contract concessions by the union.

The resulting aftermath -- fair or unfair to players -- will be a difficulty for the Blues to foresee turning a profit, even though they have ticket prices ranked in the bottom-third of the NHL and had two rounds of layoffs on the business side during the lockout.

The league established a record revenue in 2011-12 of \$3.3 billion but did itself no favors boasting about those gains, considering that its also facing record costs. Last month, Forbes reported that three teams -- Toronto, New York Rangers and Montreal -- accounted for 83 percent of the league's income, while 13 of the 30 clubs -- including the Blues -- lost money.

The league has failed to deliver the message in these negotiations that there is a "business need" for many struggling franchises to fix the economic system. Instead, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman has dropped lines such as "we're paying the players too much," which only motivated the union's contingency.

Forbes valued the Blues at \$130 million, ranking them last among the 30 teams in the league. With a payroll that would have been close to \$51 million in 2012-13, ranking 26th according to Capgeek.com, another projected financial loss this season illustrates the vulnerability of the franchise.

The Blues have continued to collect from the NHL's revenue-sharing program, and according to recent CBA negotiations, the total amount of those funds will increase to as much as \$200 million from \$140 million. However, several league sources have confirmed that as many as seven to eight teams could be added to the recipient group, meaning that clubs such as the Blues would actually get back less than they have received in the past.

Toronto, despite a Forbes' value of \$1 billion after turning a profit of \$81.9 million last season, tops the list of money-making teams that don't seem willing to split the pie more evenly, and so far, the NHL hasn't shown a desire to make that happen.

The assertion that only the "big boys" have Bettman's ear has proved to have validity during the lockout and questioning why the clubs with less influence haven't banded together to make their voices heard is legitimate. But that movement would now to be too late, as negotiations, seen to be going in the league's favor, have crossed the point of real returns for many teams.

For the Blues, even the NHL's contractual priorities aren't necessarily appetizing.

The NHL set out to ensure that teams would have players' rights for 10 years instead of seven, which would have helped keep the Blues' young core intact, but the league has backed off that. The NHL, meanwhile, has insisted on limiting signed contracts to a maximum length of five years (seven with the player's current team), which could shorten the Blues' plans on the term for defenseman Alex Pietrangolo's next deal.

At this point, the lone development viewed as a potential positive for teams such as the Blues is the expected decrease in the salary cap. The projected cap is \$70.2 million, and while transition rules to get all teams below a lower cap have yet to be agreed upon, clubs may eventually be forced to unload players, some of whom the Blues may be in position to target.

That, however, would mean spending more money. While new ownership has indicated a flexibility to increase payroll to upgrade the roster, it may not be wise for a franchise attempting to limit its losses and find stable footing.

After taking steps toward that end last season, the Blues could be facing a lose-lose proposition when the CBA talks wrap up.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 12.14.2012

646456 Tampa Bay Lightning

How about some hockey? AHL goalies Tokarski, Helenius making progress, coach says

Posted by Damian Cristodero

With the NHL lockout in its 89th day, Tampa Bay Lightning goaltenders coach Frantz Jean has been working weekly with Dustin Tokarski and Riku Helenius of the AHL's Syracuse Crunch. Both are in important seasons. Tokarski's contract expires at the end of the season, and Helenius, a 2006 first-round draft choice by Tampa Bay, is re-acclimating to the North American game after two-plus seasons in Europe.

So far, Jean said he likes what he sees, despite both players with stats that could use some polishing.

About Tokarski: "He came in in tremendous shape. He's really matured and takes ownership of his game. When he feels there's an issue that needs to be addressed, he addresses it right away. I like where he is at physically and mentally."

About Helenius: "I like the improvement I've seen since the start of training camp. His battle level is really high right now. We're doing baby steps with him, but the improvement is there every week."

As for stats, Tokarski is 9-4-2 in 16 games for the conference-leading Crunch with a 2.49 goals-against average and .900 save percentage. Helenius is 6-3-0 in 10 games with a 3.15 goals-against average, a shutout and .873 save percentage.

Helenius, though, is on somewhat of a hot streak. Discounting a 7-2 loss to Bridgeport on Dec. 9 in which both goalies had rough outings, Helenius in six previous games was 5-1-0 with a 1.98 goals-against average and .914 save percentage.

"He came in tentative and trying to be a little bit too technical," Jean said. "Now, he's really battling out there and making saves that are unexpected."

As for Tokarski, 23, who last season in five NHL games (1-3-1 with a 3.45 goals-against average and .879 save percentage), demonstrated he was not ready for the big show, his stats at Syracuse probably need to be better. The Lightning has substantial organizational depth in net and, in the case of Tokarski's contract, a decision to be made.

"Being able to control what's going on in front of him by controlling his rebounds and the momentums of games," Jean said about the part of Tokarski's game that has most improved. "He's really good at managing the game. I'm happy with his first one-third of the season."

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 12.14.2012

646457 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: KHL life makes Leafs' Joffrey Lupul long for steady diet of down-home hockey: Feschuk

By Dave Feschuk

Joffrey Lupul, the Maple Leafs forward, was back in Toronto this week after a six-week stint in the Kontinental Hockey League. Here's a brief statistical recap of his lockout-inspired adventures on the Russian frontier.

Games played: Nine. Goals: One. Sticks lost to suspected airport-baggage thievery: Eight. Splendid meals: Zero.

"The food (in Russia) was bad," Lupul was saying Wednesday. "That's the only thing I will say negative. It's nice to be back here and have a couple of regular meals."

Lupul, who touched down on home soil Tuesday, was among a handful of NHLers who spent part of Wednesday practising their on-ice craft at a midtown rink. Fellow Leafs James Reimer, Mike Komisarek and Matthew Lombardi were also among the group that ran through a gamut of skill-sharpening drills under the tutelage of instructor Dusan Kralick.

"It's good to see he's back," said Reimer of Lupul, who put up 67 points in 66 games for Toronto last season.

Whether and when Lupul will return to Russia is an open question. The KHL is currently on a nine-day break for international games and Lupul's team, last-place Avtomobilist, isn't scheduled to play again until Wednesday. Whether he'll hop a series of planes back to his club's home base of Yekaterinburg, Russia's fourth-largest city some 1,600 kilometres east of Moscow, is yet to be determined. Certainly the progress of the ongoing talks between the National Hockey League and its players will impact his decision.

"I don't know if I'm going to go back or stay here or what I'm going to do," Lupul said. "Obviously my heart's here. I want to play here. We'll wait and see how things go the next couple of days."

Wednesday's dose of lockout-related news, of course, wasn't exactly a definitive moment. The league and its union met separately with mediators, but reportedly not with each other, in a New Jersey office building. And while reports indicated the league told the players that an offer from last week was still available to them — this despite the venom that was spewed by both NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and union leader Don Fehr during some memorable moments of drama when the sides previously met in New York last week — it didn't take a labour-relations expert to deduce the hours of meetings wrought little progress.

Bill Daly, the league's deputy commissioner, was quoted as saying there was "nothing to report."

"I thought the gap would be closed much quicker, but it hasn't come to fruition yet, so we have to keep working," player Brendan Morrison told reporters in New Jersey. "I never thought the issues were as big as they were (during the lockout that claimed the entire 2004-05 season). Apparently, I was wrong."

Lupul, speaking before Wednesday's talks had adjourned, said he remained hopeful that an agreement was within reach.

"I've been optimistic the whole time," he said. "I mean, I think the point we are at now, where we've agreed on the dollars, I don't really see how we can miss the whole season."

The 29-year-old Lupul, one of the few non-Euros to venture to the KHL during the work stoppage, comes off as an open-minded sort. And while he acknowledged his time in Russia had been a mixed bag — "some good memories and some bad," is how he put it — he sounded like a man who embraced both sides of the life-experience ledger.

Lupul has already detailed some of his Russian travails in a lockout diary; there will be more chapters to come, he said. In one anecdote already published, he wrote of how, upon first entering Avtomobilist's dressing room, he thought he was being treated with unusual respect when each and every member of the team approached him to shake his hand. It turned out that a morning pre-practice handshake — every player seeking out every other player — is a Russian custom.

Lupul said he suddenly had unique insight into the difficulties faced by young Russians who've arrived in the NHL with minimal English and no previous exposure to North American life. One can't find a world much farther removed from Lupul's off-season oasis in plush Newport Beach, Calif., than an industrial metropolis on the border of Europe and Asia.

"The language was obviously really difficult. I don't think I envisioned there being quite that little English there. There's basically none," he said. "So, I mean, regular day-to-day life, going for dinner, becomes quite difficult."

The hockey, he said, was also "completely different" in ways he'd never considered.

"I was really surprised to see the style and the systems and the big ice and just their philosophy on playing," Lupul said. "There's basically no forechecking. Everyone just kind of stands back and traps — and waits, actually — at the other blue line. It's weird. I don't find it nearly as entertaining to watch. There's no physical play, not really. . . . But the players definitely have a lot of skill over there. They are a lot smaller. But there's a lot more passing and less dump-it-in, straight-ahead hockey."

Whether or not he returns, Lupul said his KHL run was worth the investment in time and energy and appetite suppression. Lupul, on his way to a presumably sumptuous Toronto lunch, rolled his eyes in mock dread when he was asked to recall his brushes with eastern Russia's culinary scene.

"Dill. I ate a lot of dill," is how he began his assessment, and he laughed a little. "They put sour cream and dill on pretty much everything. And cow tongue is everywhere over there. It was bland. Most of the food there is very bland. . . . But I ate it. I didn't have much of a choice."

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.14.2012

646458 Vancouver Canucks

Agent: Kesler 'several months away' from playing following offseason surgeries

Ben Kuzma

VANCOUVER — Ryan Kesler's return from offseason shoulder and wrist surgeries has been pushed back several months, according to his agent. The Vancouver Canucks beg to differ on the extent of that timeline provided by Kurt Overhardt, but it's not a stretch for anyone to suggest that the centre won't be back next month as forecasted earlier this fall.

When Kesler was re-evaluated two weeks ago at the Cleveland Clinic to assess progress from a May 8 procedure on his left shoulder and June 27 surgery on his left wrist, it was determined the rehab load placed on one side of his body was taking a toll and that progress has been slow.

"The re-evaluation was positive in that the surgeries were successful," said Overhardt. "However, the compounding nature of both of those surgeries being on the same side of the body, it's been very hard to properly rehab either one of them — particularly the shoulder — because that's obviously a big deal.

"I don't think it's fair to have any sort of time frame when he's going to be 100 per cent and cleared to play. I don't have a crystal ball and it's certainly months away, it's not weeks away. It's several months away."

If the NHL lockout ends and a shortened season commences next month, the Canucks will be further taxed to figure out their riddle in the middle. They expected to start without Kesler, but his setback means those second-line minutes must be eaten up individually or by committee. Chris Higgins played centre for the Montreal Canadiens while Alex Burrows and Mason Raymond have taken shifts in the middle A more viable option would be to promote Maxim Lapierre into that role and also see if Manny Malhotra and Jordan Schroeder can centre the third and fourth lines. Andrew Ebbett is on a two-way contract and playing for the AHL affiliate Chicago Wolves and could also work into the bottom-six mix. The Canucks could also seek help in a Roberto Luongo trade and landing Toronto Maple Leafs centre Tyler Bozak has long been rumoured. As for Kesler, the Canucks are holding out better hope for a quicker return of Kesler than Overhardt.

"I wouldn't necessarily say it's months away — that's news to me — and I haven't been given a timeline," said assistant general manager Laurence Gilman. "The rehab for his shoulder was complicated by the surgery that

happened with his wrist and it has impacted his ability to build strength in his shoulder.

"It's a gradual process and he's improving every day. We assume he'll be healthy in due course but when that's going to be, at this stage that's not clear."

Regardless, caution is obviously the best route for the 28-year-old Kesler to travel because a robust style has led to three surgeries in the last year. Multiple procedures have led to multiple problems and the latest are of great concern.

"It has affected his strength and range of motion to actually use the arm to stickhandle and shoot the puck," added Overhardt. "You have to properly rehab because if you don't, you're going to have imbalances, so they [Cleveland Clinic doctors] are trying to be really smart about it. He's got a lot of hockey ahead of him so we're trying to make sure that he recovers and comes back 100 per cent and play like he can play."

Kesler is being paid his \$5 million US salary and is under the care of the Canucks because he was injured when the collective bargaining agreement expired Sept. 15 and players were locked out by the owners. He was flying home to Michigan on Thursday and unavailable for comment, but knew long ago the rehab process was going to be arduous with two surgeries on his left side.

"If I had my shoulder surgery on the right side, it might have helped a bit," he said. "It's going to take time, but time heals everything."

It certainly explains how far off the mark the former Selke Trophy winner was last season. Hip-flexor stiffness from a previous surgery, a bad shoulder and bothersome wrist affected Kesler's shot velocity and accuracy and also his battle level in dropping from a career-high 41 goals to 22 and no goals in five playoff games. There was some encouragement when he collected 17 points in a 15-game span in December — scoring in five-consecutive games from Jan. 31 to Feb. 9 — but the Livonia, Mich. native then went eight games without a goal. Kesler tore a labrum muscle in his left shoulder on Feb. 9 but soldiered on, even though he had been nursing a wrist injury since November.

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 12.14.2012

646459 Vancouver Canucks

Daniel Sedin: NHLPA wouldn't accept latest proposal if put to a vote

Jason Botchford

If NHL owners are testing the players' resolve, they're going to be disappointed with the outcome, according to Daniel Sedin.

The owners have been pushing the concept that their latest proposal, made last week, is their best proposal.

Of course, we've heard it before, only to see the owners move again. Is this any different?

Well, there is one difference. There are those on the ownership side who are convinced if this latest proposal was put to a vote among the NHLPA it would be accepted.

It's a risk, albeit a calculated one, to base a decision around the theory. But it appears that's what the owners have done here with the position they won't negotiate. Now, it seems, it's up to the players to mull this over for the next couple of days before they decide on their next move.

"I think they're wrong," Daniel said of the owners. "We've given up more than we should have, I think, already. That's why it's frustrating to see they haven't moved a bit (this week).

"I do think they're wrong if they think (the PA would accept this in a vote).

"It's too bad. We're disappointed. And it's been like this since Day 1. We come in with offers and they just reject them. We're going to talk the next few days and see where we're at."

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 12.14.2012

646460 Vancouver Canucks

Canucks prospect Frankie Corrado a shock cut by Team Canada

646461 Winnipeg Jets

By Jason Botchford,

Jet knows just what Scheifele will face

The disappointment that engulfs the final cuts at Team Canada's world junior selection camp can seem so cruel.

Tim Campbell

Take one of Canada's final cuts, Frankie Corrado, who had a compelling underdog story that captured the hopes of despondent Vancouver Canucks fans for a day, or three.

HE'S been there and done that.

He was a 2011 fifth-round draft pick of the Canucks who conquered long odds just to get an invite to the camp.

He's also been Mark Scheifele's teammate for a short time and has a pretty good insight as to what the 19-year-old Winnipeg Jets draft pick is all about.

He knew it. He joked in one interview leading into the tryout about how out of place his tagline — fifth-round pick — looked amidst the draft day studs who lined the list of Team Canada's 37 hopefuls.

Jets captain Andrew Ladd, a gold-medal winner on the world stage at the 2005 world junior in Grand Forks, N.D., was asked to peer into the next few weeks to see what's ahead of Scheifele and Team Canada.

In other words, just being there was something special.

"He's a high-end player so he'll fit in wherever," Ladd said regarding Scheifele's apparent change of position to right wing for this tournament. "I think that's the unique part of these world junior teams, that everybody puts their ego aside and finds a way to help out.

But Corrado did what any one of us would dream of doing. The defenceman took his opportunity and he made something of it.

"If that means playing out of position, that's what guys will do."

He flexed his steady, all-around defensive play, the stuff that got him there, and added offensive flair, scoring two goals in two exhibition games. He was the only player with multiple goals and that changed expectations as he out-performed some who had a roster spot locked.

So far Scheifele has been matched with a pretty good skill group, including linemates Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Jonhan Huberdeau.

Ray Ferraro, who covered the camp for TSN, explained Corrado this way:

"I think at that level with that group, all those guys are used to playing on a big stage, being go-to guys for their individual team," Ladd said. "I don't think that's ever a problem. The level of confidence that Nugent-Hopkins will bring to that group will definitely help. He's going to be a guy they're going to rely in latter parts of games and in clutch situations. I'm sure he's excited for that opportunity."

"He hits, but he's not a hitter. He skates, but he's not Mason Raymond. He moves the puck, but he's not an elite puck mover. He does everything ... at a seven or eight level. He's not a 10 at any one thing.

"He seems to make the right play with the puck most of the time."

Ladd, who has participated on the world stage on several occasions, including for Team Canada at world championships in Europe, doesn't think this particular world junior assignment -- 12 time zones away in central Russia -- will matter too much.

It's an ideal, jack-of-all-trades description of what you'd hope to have in a third-pairing defenceman, the position Corrado could have slotted into if he had made it.

"I think once you get over there, it's not a big factor," he said. "Obviously travel and getting over the jet lag is something you have to deal with. But I think Hockey Canada is really good about going about it the right way, trying to find the best way to make sure guys are going to have the most energy possible.

Add in the goals he scored in his two exhibition games, and you had many convinced he had done enough to make the team.

"Once you get into the tournament, there's so much excitement and so few games that it's pretty easy to get up for them and find energy."

But this is Team Canada with its ruthless depth and, in the end, what Corrado accomplished in a few good days wasn't enough to overcome the long odds he faced when it started.

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 12.14.2012

For those who covered the camp at TSN, it was the biggest surprise of the selection process, and that should be indicative of one thing — how good Corrado looked in three days.

646462 Websites

"Wow, I am shocked," TSN's Bob McKenzie tweeted with the news of Corrado's cut.

ESPN / Rest easy, here is your new CBA

When it came down to it, Team Canada chose the more physical Tyler Wotherspoon, the Calgary Flames' second-round pick in 2011, in what has to have been one of most difficult decisions it made.

By Scott Burnside

You want to believe the draft status Corrado joked about never came into play, but you wonder, if all things were close to equal, where would Team Canada have leaned? The fifth-rounder or the guy with "second-round pick" on his resume?

We keep saying the two sides are close.

Corrado said he wasn't ready to deal with the media immediately after the news of his cut. But here's hoping the disappointment he's feeling doesn't last long. Everything that happened this week is wonderful news for Corrado, and the Canucks.

Many players, agents, governors, coaches, lawyers and pretty much everyone outside the key figures on both sides of the NHL lockout apparently believe it to be so.

"The fact he got this far in the process is a testament to how hard he worked and how far he's come," assistant general manager Laurence Gilman told The Province's Ben Kuzma.

But is it true? Is a deal within our grasp or is it merely wishful thinking from a group of people dumbfounded as another season appears ready to go off the labor cliff?

"It's a great experience for him to be competing with so many of Canada's top players.

Well according to at least one top-level executive on the owners' side of the table and a number of key players and agents, yes, the two sides are close.

"It has provided a great environment for him to assess himself against his peers. He should leave the camp with confidence that he can compete at the top level."

How close?

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 12.14.2012

One NHL governor provided ESPN.com with the framework for a deal he insisted would be palatable to both sides. Assuming the elements that were discussed last week in New York were still in place -- like \$300 million in "make-whole" monies, agreements on free agency and arbitration rights -- the governor said he believes the following elements would represent the

middle ground in the outstanding contracting, CBA term and transition issues.

Let's call it the Do This Deal or Get Coal in Your Stocking for a Thousand Years deal.

-A nine-year CBA with a seven-year out for either side.

-A six-year contract limit with front-load/back-diving protection and eight-year limits for players who have been with a team for five years.

-Some simple buyout option as long as the buyouts are within the salary cap.

The ownership source acknowledged that leaving out the buyout element as part of the transition to a new CBA would be the least contentious way to bridge the gap at least as it relates to the owners' concerns about funding the transition. The buyouts were introduced by the players' association last week, the timing of which annoyed the owners -- not to mention the fact the buyouts as the players suggested would be outside the hockey-revenue pie, a significant problem for the owners.

Still, the author of the Do This Deal deal felt that both owners and players would support such a framework.

It appears he's correct.

When the proposal was described to one high-profile veteran player, he agreed it was the kind of offer that at the very least could be put to a vote by the players' association.

Another player familiar with the often-tumultuous nature of the negotiations agreed that the governor's offer should prompt a vote. He wasn't certain it would pass, but at least it would give an accurate gauge of the union membership's feelings about settling. Such an offer would also show that the owners were negotiating as opposed to merely making demands, which is the perception many players were left with after a second attempt at mediation Wednesday in New Jersey.

"I think it's definitely worth looking at," another veteran player told ESPN.com. "We'd have to look it over and see what the implications are, but it's something to work with for sure. I think that will get some traction.

"But I would like our people to look at it before we say it's worth a vote. We hire them for these reasons, so I would like to hear their input."

Several players and agents we spoke to asked to reach out to the deal's author.

A veteran agent agreed that this is the kind of compromise on both sides that is needed for a deal, although he remained skeptical that hard-line owners would go for it.

"That type of movement is needed but with Jacobs in charge, it is doubtful," he said, referring to the chairman of the board of governors, Boston Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs.

It's difficult to say how the league might respond to such a framework. Those in charge have insisted that the elements they asked for from the players -- but were rebuffed last Thursday -- are all connected and that to move off the owners' desires for a five-year cap on contracts would require some give in another area, or to come off the league's desire for a 10-year term for a new CBA would require movement in another area.

Still, given that this idea came from the ownership side of the table suggests this isn't all wishful thinking from a group that fears for the game's very future.

Instead, doesn't a framework like this suggest that a deal is possible, that it's close? Not to suggest getting there will be easy but that it's possible, that by talking and moving the pieces around could, should yield a deal.

Sounds almost like negotiating.

Maybe Don Fehr and Gary Bettman would like to try it sometime. Sometime soon, that is.

ESPN LOADED: 12.14.2012

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NBCsports.com / Mark Cuban says now is the time for NHL to fix itself

Joe Yerdon

NBA owner Mark Cuban has never been a guy to stay quiet. Having gone through a lockout last year in basketball, getting asked about the NHL lockout yields some curious perspective.

Jimmy Toscano of CSNNE.com spoke with the Mavericks owner, and in Cuban's mind it's up to the NHL to get itself fixed right now.

"When you have all your southern franchises basically sucking wind, there's a message there that you have to fix it," said Cuban. "I mean, you have two different worlds; the north and the south. It's kind of like the civil war right now going on, and it's got to be fixed.

"So, yeah I'd cringe more as a hockey fan. I'd cringe more if they don't fix it. Just like the last one, it's only been like seven years right? But I even wrote a blog back then that they should have fixed it, and they didn't."

So wait, who does that make Ulysses S. Grant in this whole mess?

Cuban's thoughts on supporting the weaker franchises hint towards the fight over revenue sharing, but also the fight over getting rid of back-diving contracts, the kind the rich teams can afford and the poor teams can't.

As for how he figures negotiations are going, Cuban was blunt:

"They're both cluster[expletives]. There's no good way [to negotiate] because everybody thinks they have a solution in those scenarios and nobody wants to listen to the other guy's solutions."

Are we sure there isn't an NHL team for him to buy?

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 12.14.2012

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NBCSports.com / CBA meetings done, no progress, two sides to talk again Friday

Mike Halford

NHLPA special counsel Steve Fehr briefly addressed the media following a second day of federally mediated bargaining, this time with NHL counsel Bob Batterman.

Unsurprisingly, Fehr had little to say.

"There has been contact between the parties today, principally at the mediator's office," Fehr said. "I've met with the mediator, Bob Batterman — outside counsel for the league — has been there. We've met separately through the mediator at times, we've met together, Don was over there very briefly.

"I think we're done with contact for tonight."

What else we learned:

— FCMS mediator Scot L. Beckenbaugh was once again involved in talks, but little was accomplished. It sounds as though neither side showed any change in position.

— The two sides will speak again tomorrow, though it's unclear if they'll meet in person or via telephone. Fehr said he didn't know where a potential face-to-face meeting would be held.

— Sportsnet's John Shannon has been "led to believe" that federal mediators are now "out of the picture."

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NBCsports.com / Here's a CBA framework one NHL governor thinks could get a deal done

Jason Brough

the situation becomes. One false move, one mistake, could be costly. You can't force the brink to come before its time, and it's just not time yet.

When is the time? We have a pretty good idea.

Commissioner Gary Bettman said last week he couldn't imagine wanting to play fewer than 48 games. That means this is like 1994-95, when the sides came to an agreement and dropped the puck in January, and this not like 2004-05, when the league waited until Feb. 16 to scuttle the season.

The league wants more i's dotted and t's crossed than in '94-95, when the sides signed a memorandum of understanding and the league felt the final collective bargaining agreement didn't come out exactly how it wanted.

If the NHL issued a deadline, the players' union would use it as leverage. (AP)We're probably looking at mid-January at the latest – a month from now, as excruciating as that sounds – but we don't know for sure. Deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in an email Thursday that a drop-dead date has "never been considered."

Here is why it doesn't make sense to announce a drop-dead date now: It would confirm what the NHLPA has suspected – that the owners have had a "date" in mind all along – and it would give the league no flexibility.

NHLPA executive director Don Fehr would negotiate to the deadline, and if he feels it is artificial, past it. At best, it causes further delay. At worst, the league is forced to follow through on its threat or lose whatever credibility it has left in bargaining. If this ends up in court, the players can argue the owners bargained in bad faith, using the lockout as a strategy of first resort, trying to squeeze them to a certain point, no matter what.

Fehr's challenge is to sort through the uncertainty and mixed signals – teams quietly preparing to start, the league playing hardball – and determine when the owners really and truly have made their best offer. That's what the players hired him to do.

You can argue he already has overplayed his hand. The NHL pulled its last offer off the table – \$300 million in "make-whole" or transition payments gone, among other things. It is holding firm in three key areas – contract lengths/structure, the length of the CBA, compliance buyouts/escrow caps. If the league keeps some or all of that offer off the table, the owners' best offer will have come and gone.

But the league has bluffed before, and obviously Fehr doesn't buy it. If he did, the sides at least would be wrapping this up so the players could vote. He must feel that offer isn't off the table and the owners have some wiggle room in those areas – or that the players simply won't accept those terms and are prepared for the alternative.

Why not take a vote now?

Three months into the lockout, NHL arenas remain empty. (Getty)There is nothing to vote on yet. The league has won major concessions – a 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue and no guaranteed players' share, plus the concepts of maximum contract lengths, flatter contract structures and a long-term CBA – and the union feels the owners are just grinding the players for the last bits of dust. They doubt the owners are willing to cancel the season over what's left, and if they are right, why would they give up more when they already have given up so much? These issues should be far more important to them than to the owners, who will be guaranteed never to spend more as a group than the amount they wanted after a transition period, no matter how player contracts are done.

Individual players are itching to get back on the ice. Some no doubt would vote for the league's proposal as is. But it's hard to say how many from the outside, and say what you want about Fehr, he knows what his job is. It's to listen to the players. It's to get the best deal he can for them. It's to make a recommendation but ultimately to leave it up to them. It's not to serve his own agenda, as some fear he is doing.

Just a guess: Fehr pushes back until he truly feels the owners have made their best offer. Then he presents the players with their options – take the deal or dissolve the union, file antitrust suits and go boldly into the unknown. Even if he doesn't like the deal and the players accept it, he accepts that – the way his mentor, Marvin Miller, did when baseball players went on strike in 1972 against his specific recommendation to the contrary.

"You can basically on every major issue at every time take a pulse and look for a consensus," said Fehr Saturday in a speech to the Canadian Auto Workers. "And I learned a long, long time ago from Marvin Miller that in the end, if you really don't have any idea what to recommend, or none of the choices are good, or none of the options appear to be tremendously better than the others, what you do is you trust your membership, because they'll

An anonymous NHL governor has provided ESPN.com's Scott Burnside with a CBA framework that the governor believes would be "palatable" to each side of the NHL's labor dispute.

Now, whether this governor has any say in negotiations isn't clear, but here's the framework:

Assuming the elements that were discussed last week in New York were still in place — like \$300 million in "make-whole" monies, agreements on free agency and arbitration rights — the governor believes the following elements would represent the middle ground in the outstanding contracting, CBA term and transition issues.

...-A nine-year CBA with a 7-year out for either side.

-A six-year contract limit with front-load/back-diving protection and 8-year limits for players who have been with a team for five years.

-Some simple buyout option as long as the buyouts were within the salary cap.

In other words, each side would have to ever-so-slightly soften its current demands, aka compromise.

Burnside spoke to one "high-profile veteran player" who believed the framework could at least garner a vote by the union. Other players and agents agreed it had potential.

Again, this may not mean a thing if the governor doesn't know how far the league's lead negotiators (i.e. Gary Bettman, Bill Daly and Bob Battersman) are willing to bend. Remember that the owners have given the commissioner's office extensive power to bargain on their behalf.

Meanwhile, it doesn't sound like anything got done today.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 12.14.2012

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YAHOO SPORTS / NHL lockout: The delicate danger of a drop-dead date to cancel the 2012-13 season

Nicholas J. Cotsonika

Set a date. Take a vote.

I wish it were that simple. I really do. If you care about hockey – and no matter what you say, if you clicked on this, you still care – you want the NHL lockout to end. You wanted it to end yesterday, or last month, or two months ago. You never wanted it to start in the first place. I understand. Me, too.

The NHL indicated a drop-dead date for a CBA agreement has "never been considered." (AP)We want certainty. We want closure. We want a deal. If your job is connected to the NHL directly or indirectly, your livelihood could depend on it. And if you're a fan – especially if you're still a fan now, despite all of this garbage – you have every right to demand it. Your emotional and financial investment is what fuels this business. Without it, they have nothing to fight over. They risk it as they fight over it.

But as infuriating and frustrating as it is, remember that this isn't about making a deal, any deal, for the NHL and the NHL Players' Association. This is about each side trying to cut the best deal for itself – the owners forcing concessions, the players mitigating losses. This is about franchise values and profit margins and career earnings and job security. And so they are going to keep staring at each other until they truly believe it doesn't make sense anymore.

You can argue that they're getting to that point, or at that point, or past it. I have. I see a deal, or at least the path to one. I think it could get done relatively soon if at least one side is motivated enough. I think it should get done before the season is canceled, because based on where the sides' proposals were last week, they're too close for either side to make that sacrifice.

But this is high-stakes poker or low-speed chicken, and it won't be over until it's over. The closer they get to the brink of cancellation, the more delicate

tell you what the right thing to do is. All you have to do is make sure they know what the issues are and involve them enough so that they understand the context.

"And so, if there's any message that I can pass on to you, it would probably be just to reaffirm that which you already know, which is: If you trust your members and you tell them the truth and you involve them in the process, you'll get about as far as it's possible to go. You can't ask for more."

Another guess: The owners are betting the players won't dissolve the union. The owners think the players will blink in the end.

So that's where we are – the players doubting the owners will cancel the season over this, the owners doubting the players will dissolve the union over this, still playing their dangerous game, so close, yet so far away.

And as always, all the rest of us can do is wait.

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