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647064 Anaheim Ducks

Ducks prospect Holland keeps eye on NHL's return

By ERIC STEPHENS

Time never stops, and even the cherished moments often fade into the woodwork of life.

For a split second, promising Ducks prospect Peter Holland recalled his first brief spell in the NHL and how much time has passed since.

"I can't believe it's already been over a year since I played my last NHL game," Holland said.

It could be a matter of time before the next time. The ongoing NHL lockout has effectively pulled the dangling carrot from the string that young players such as Holland are chasing in trying to reach their ultimate goal.

The next couple of weeks are expected to determine whether the labor dispute culminates in an abbreviated or a canceled season. Holland, the scoring leader for the Ducks' American Hockey League affiliate in Norfolk (Va.), wants that carrot in front of him.

"Obviously it's frustrating," said Holland, speaking by phone on an off-day before the Admirals' home game against Albany. "You want the NHL to be there. It's something that you're working toward and hopefully you'll have an opportunity to have that."

"At the same time, I think we have a good squad here in Norfolk. Even though we're not showing it right now in the standings, we have a good team here. So you've got to make the best of that situation."

The Admirals are trying to find their way as a team, but Holland is doing his part to give the Ducks brass something to think about if and when the NHL lockout ends and the team in Anaheim gets back on the ice.

Holland has been Norfolk's leading scorer through the first third of the AHL season, pacing the Admirals in goals (11), assists (16) and points (27). The Toronto-born center also has been arguably the team's most consistent player, certainly on the offensive end.

The size and skill have always been there. Vancouver goalie Roberto Luongo can attest to Holland's shot as his lone NHL goal came on a wicked wristed shot from the slot on a rush.

Consistency, however, has been the question hovering around Holland since his days in junior hockey at Guelph in the Ontario Hockey League. Time is showing that the question is becoming less of a concern.

"I think I've come another step," Holland said. "I'm a year older now. I'm maturing in my game. The points aren't always going to come. We play too good of hockey in the AHL or the NHL or just any pro league. The points are nice to get and you work hard to get them but they're not always going to be there."

"So it's important for guys like me to work on other aspects of the game. Playing strong in the defensive zone, pressuring the puck. Doing the all-encompassing things that will lead to you getting the opportunities to in fact get points."

The little things that turn into points include faceoffs, and Holland provided an example of that last weekend: He won a draw to start overtime, which allowed Emerson Etem to pick up the puck in stride and score the winning goal against Albany.

It is faceoffs and defensive play that Holland has focused on to become a well-round player. The addition of Rod Pelley, who played in 52 games with New Jersey and the Ducks last season, has had a positive effect in both areas.

"We work together a lot in practice on faceoffs," Holland said. "It was something I tried to improve this summer and I think I've gotten a lot better this year. Any time you can start with the puck, it's a lot more fun playing with the puck on the offensive side than it is when the other team has it in your end. Definitely faceoffs are a big part of the game."

Ducks general manager Bob Murray sees a parallel with the 2004-05 season, when many talented young players played in the AHL as the NHL season was canceled because of a lockout. Players such as Holland are competing against opponents like Adam Henrique, a Calder Trophy finalist with New Jersey last season, and others who saw significant NHL duty in 2011-12.

For instance, the 2003-04 Cincinnati Mighty Ducks dressed Joffrey Lupul, Dustin Penner, Chris Kunitz, and Ilya Bryzgalov. The added experience, Murray believes, can only be beneficial for someone trying to break through, and he also pointed to Penner, Ryan Getzlaf and Corey Perry getting more AHL seasoning to start 2005-06 before coming up for good.

"The good thing for Peter is that the league is a better league this year, fortunately for him and unfortunately for everybody else," Murray said. "Like the last lockout, the American League is a really good league this year. He's getting to play against a better quality of players."

If the lockout does end, the Ducks figure to bring a handful of players up from Norfolk to compete for the final remaining openings on the roster in an abbreviated training camp. Holland is putting himself in position for an airplane ride to Orange County.

"He's close," Murray said when asked if the center is NHL-ready. "If I have one thing to say to him and I have talked to him, it's he has to be more consistent on the nights when it's going to be tough to score."

"You've got to find ways to contribute more often on more consecutive nights. It's tough. That's what he's got to do. But he's made some tremendous strides."

Holland acknowledged that he "definitely missed" the lack of a Ducks training camp in September. His camp is now an extended one in Norfolk where he plays to win games for the Admirals but also to leave an impression on the Ducks officials that are monitoring his progress and development.

"The main goal is to get back up there," he said. "It's a tough sport to make it in and a tougher one to keep it once you get there."

"How close do I think I feel? I think I feel close. But you never really know until you get there and start benchmarking yourself against the best players in the world."

It could be a matter of time before Holland is doing that.

Orange County Register: LOADED: 12.28.2012

647065 Boston Bruins

Tuukka Rask keeps skating, hoping

Steve Conroy

The NHL lockout is in its 103rd day and, with about two weeks to go before the plug likely is pulled on the 2012-13 season, there were no new bargaining talks scheduled as of yesterday.

The NHLPA has overwhelmingly been given the power to file a "disclaimer of interest," which would essentially dissolve the union and possibly send the whole mess into the courts. It seems like the only chance for a deal to be struck is if one side or the other cracks at the deadline.

Not a lot to feel good about if you're a NHL hockey fan.

But at 8:30 yesterday morning, when many folks were still sleeping off the Christmas turkey and egg nog, several players were working out at a local rink. Not only was their professional dedication on display, but so was their hope, however dwindling it may have been, that a season could be saved.

"It just seems so stupid to cancel the whole season," said Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask, who was joined by teammate Shawn Thornton, along with Brandon Yip, Jay Pandolfo and a couple of other hardy souls on the ice.

"In a lot of cities, it could be the end of the sport pretty much with fans not coming back. I know people love hockey here in Boston and we'll have a full house no matter what, but it's not good for anyone, especially the fans, to stop it all over again after seven years (since the last lost season)."

While Rask still thinks there will be a season, like other optimists he's already been proven wrong at one point during this lockout. He decided to come back to Boston from a successful stint with Plzen of the Czech Extraliga at the end of November because he was confident that the NHL would be back up and running by mid-December. That didn't happen, and now it's anyone's guess as to when it will.

Things are so dark right now, New Jersey Devils general manager Lou Lamoriello, one of the most respected executives in the league who has not taken an active role in these negotiations, told the Newark Star-Ledger yesterday, "I'm embarrassed for the game."

This was supposed to be the biggest year of Rask's career to date, as he was expected to take over the No. 1 netminder role for the B's.

But if he doesn't get to play here, he'll head back to Europe.

"I'm going to play somewhere, for sure," Rask said. "I don't know if I'm going back to Czech Republic or Finland. It's all open now. I'm just hoping I don't have to go anywhere and I can stay here for the season we've all waited for so much, and for me personally, too. Still, there's hope, right?"

Rask said he tries to convey that hope to frustrated fans he meets.

"They understand. Obviously, it's not my fault that we're not playing, so they're not giving me crap about it," Rask said. "But they want to see us back as much as we want to be back. And I totally understand. But what can we do? I just tell people to hang in there, that we're going to play. And I still think it's going to happen. I'm still optimistic. It can be tough on these days when there are only five skaters, but I'm still hopeful."

Thornton, who has remained in Boston for almost all of the lockout, has been doing his best to stay in shape, both physically and mentally. While he's been one of the most faithful local skaters, last week he took a therapeutic trip to Florida to visit with pro golfer Keegan Bradley and another buddy. He played a round of golf and took in the Patriots game in Jacksonville before heading home. On the morning of Christmas Eve, he

took youngsters from the Italian Home for Children, Massachusetts General Hospital and Children's Hospital to the movies.

And on Christmas Day, he found himself pounding out a five-mile run, something he wouldn't think of doing in the middle of a season.

But while he's making sure he's ready for a season, he doesn't have a clue whether it will happen.

"I thought we were at the endgame a month ago," Thornton said, "so I don't know what's going on."

"It just seems so stupid to cancel the whole season." — Tuukka Rask, Bruins

Boston Herald LOADED: 12.28.2012

647066 Buffalo Sabres

Only single seats remain for Amerks' game in Buffalo on Friday as team will set franchise attendance record

John Vogl

The Rochester Americans are coming to Buffalo for the second time this season. They'll leave with a record.

The Amerks will set a franchise single-game attendance record Friday in First Niagara Center when they play Lake Erie. Only single seats remain.

The Sabres have added and reconfigured seats, primarily in the 200 Level, and will now host 19,070 fans. The number is symbolic of the team's 1970 founding. Previous capacity was 18,690.

The Amerks' record of 17,898 was set Dec. 28, 2004, when they defeated Edmonton in Buffalo during the previous lockout.

Rochester and Lake Erie will meet for the third time. The first two were wild, with the Amerks earning a pair of 7-6 victories. They scored four straight goals to win Wednesday at home. They trailed, 5-3 and 6-5, in Cleveland on Dec. 13.

"It's been more run-and-gun games, and both teams kind of fall into that," defenseman T.J. Brennan said by phone today. "They have a lot of skill, but we have a lot of skill, too. We've just been coming out on top.

"That's not exactly our game plan there. We want to play a little more disciplined and better defensively, obviously."

The Amerks will hold a morning skate at First Niagara Center at 10 a.m., followed by Lake Erie at 11:15 a.m. The morning skate for both teams will be open to the public.

Friday's game will be televised on Time Warner Cable SportsChannel in Rochester and Buffalo.

Buffalo News LOADED: 12.28.2012

647067 Calgary Flames

Ex-Leaf Costello busted in burger joint brawl

Came to Toronto in infamous Sittler trade

By Lance Hornby

TORONTO - Rich Costello, one of the players the Maple Leafs received in the controversial trade of captain Darryl Sittler in 1982, was arrested last week on suspicion of assault in Southern California.

Laguna Beach Police Capt. Jason Kravetz told the Los Angeles Times that Costello and fellow ex-NHLer Jean-Francois Jomphe were picked up after an incident at a Jack In The Box fast food drive-through on Dec. 21. According to the police report, a 20-year-old male driver and a group of young friends in a VW Jetta were cut off in the line by a cab, with two passengers.

Angered by a hand gesture the VW driver made, Jomphe allegedly approached the Jetta and shattered the rear window, with glass shards cutting a male passenger in the back seat. The report says Costello tried to restrain Jomphe, but after a 44-year-old male bystander tried to get the two older men back in the cab, Costello allegedly tried to punch and kick him.

Costello, 49, was booked on suspicion of assault. Jomphe, 39, and a former Anaheim Duck, was charged with misdemeanor battery and vandalism. The two area residents were released for a later court date.

Costello, a New England high school forward, was a second-round pick of the Philadelphia Flyers in 1981. He was in the Sittler trade along with prospect Ken Strong and a second-round draft pick that became Peter Ilnacak. Costello played just 12 NHL games, all with the Leafs, getting four points. He was on the farm another four years and spent the balance of his short career in the minors and Europe.

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647068 Chicago Blackhawks

CSN airing Stanley Cup clincher

TONY ANDRACKI

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 Stanley Cup clincher when Patrick Kane scored the game-winning goal in overtime and the Blackhawks took the Cup back home to Chicago.

On June 9, 2010, the Blackhawks were clinging to a 3-2 lead in the series and in Game 6 against the Flyers as the Stanley Cup Finals looked to be coming to an end late in regulation.

But the Flyers' Scott Hartnell delivered a clutch goal with 3:59 left to play, setting the stage for Kane's heroics in overtime.

Just over four minutes into the extra period, Kane sent a wrister past goalie Michael Leighton. Those in attendance at the game and watching on TV were stunned for a brief moment, as nobody could tell for sure if Kane's shot had gone in.

But Kane knew, and he immediately started rejoicing with teammates on the ice as the Flyers skated off in awe.

Kane's game-winner snapped a 47-year Stanley Cup drought for the Blackhawks and ensured his name would live on forever in NHL lore.

Need more reasons to watch? Here are some additional memorable moments from the miraculous season:

--The Blackhawks won all three games played at the United Center in the 2010 Stanley Cup Final.

--Four of the six games in the 2010 Stanley Cup Final were decided by one goal.

--Kane led the Hawks with 8 points in the series vs. Philadelphia.

--Toews led the NHL with 22 assists in the 2010 playoffs.

--Patrick Sharp led the Blackhawks with four goals in the series.

--Dustin Byfuglien led the NHL with five game-winning goals in the 2010 playoffs.

--Duncan Keith led Chicago with six assists in the series vs. Philadelphia.

--Marian Hossa won the Cup in 2010 after being on the losing team the previous two years.

--Andrew Ladd was on the Stanley Cup-winning team in both 2006 and 2010.

--John Madden was on the Stanley Cup-winning team in 2000, 2003 and 2010.

--Toews won the Conn Smythe Trophy in 2010 for playoff MVP.

--It was the fourth Stanley Cup in Blackhawks team history.

So throw on your jersey, invite your friends over and relive this exciting game tonight since this is the most NHL action we may see for a while. Besides, you're not going to want to go out in tonight's windy, snowy mess anyways.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.28.2012

647069 Columbus Blue Jackets

Blue Jackets: Calvert gaining confidence in minors

By Aaron Portzline

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — When the Blue Jackets' 2010-11 season became a lost cause, left winger Matt Calvert was called up from Springfield and provided a ray of hope in the second half of the season.

When the 2011-12 season became a lost cause — right around Thanksgiving — Calvert became part of a question. A parade of players was recalled from Springfield, but denizens of Nationwide Arena were left to wonder: Where is Calvert?

"You see other guys packing their bags to go up, and you're happy for them," Calvert said. "But there's a part of you that's wondering ... why isn't that me? One of the biggest parts of playing hockey is confidence. If you don't have it, you don't have very much. And I admit: I was losing confidence last season."

There were several contributing factors. Calvert suffered a groin injury early in training camp, sapping him of the quick-burst speed that is his calling card. But even after the groin healed, the Blue Jackets didn't believe he was playing that well in Springfield. Nor did he play well in two early season call-ups to Columbus.

So he stayed in Springfield, watching Ryan Russell, Alexandre Giroux, Dane Byers, Darryl Boyce and others pack their bags. Calvert played in only 13 games with the Blue Jackets, none after Nov. 19.

"I expected to be an 80-game player after the way (2010-11) ended," Calvert said. "I got hurt in training camp, maybe lost a step, and it took me a while to get it back. And when I did get it back, the opportunity wasn't there for me like it was a year earlier." It was a learning experience. I learned a lot about being a pro, what it takes to stay at the next level. For the whole organization, it was a tough year."

Springfield coach Brad Larsen was an assistant with the Falcons last season. That, as well as his own career that bounced between the minors and the NHL, gave him a sense of what Calvert was experiencing.

"Matty Calvert's speed and pursuit and tenacity on the puck is what is going to separate him from other guys," Larsen said. "He creates scoring chances out of that, but if he loses that edge even a little bit, he's not the same player."

Larsen believes some of that "speed and pursuit and tenacity" was lost after his 2010-11 call-up to Columbus. Calvert had 11 goals and nine assists in 42 games, including a hat trick against Phoenix on Feb. 25, one of the few nights all season where Nationwide Arena was electric.

Calvert's nine goals after the All-Star Game tied Rick Nash for most on the team.

"He set the bar way up here," Larsen said, reaching high above his head. "He started to define his play by how many goals he was scoring. He was starting to play to score goals. And when he went 30-some games (between Columbus and Springfield last season) without scoring a goal, it messed with him. He totally got away from his game."

The Blue Jackets stressed to Calvert that he stick to the basics, that he grow his game within his skill set. That means using his speed, being defensively sound and being one of the best forecheckers in the league. As winter turned to spring, the Blue Jackets told Calvert they would not be recalling him to the NHL, that they wanted him to finish strong in Springfield and get ready for 2012-13.

"The last 30 games (of last season) I just stopped worrying about getting called up," Calvert said. "I stopped being frustrated because I wasn't up there, and I started playing better."

There has been no threat of a call-up this season because the NHL is 31/2 months deep into a lockout. But Calvert is one of many players excelling for Springfield. He has eight goals, eight assists and a plus-12 rating in 27 games.

"Everybody has expectations for you, and I have some for myself," Calvert said. "They were not met last season. When you come out of junior (hockey), you expect everything to be easy. You don't realize how much you still have to learn. That's what last season was for me. I think I'm a much better player for it."

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 12.28.2012

647070 Edmonton Oilers

Edmonton Oilers very active on Twitter in 2012

By Derek Van Diest, Edmonton Sun

EDMONTON - Today's athlete has become more accessible to fans than ever before, due to social media.

If you don't like the performance of a certain hockey player, you can use Twitter to voice your displeasure.

Want to wish Taylor Hall luck as he recovers from shoulder surgery? Tweet him.

Want to congratulate Jordan Eberle on a new contract extension with the Edmonton Oilers? Now you can do it directly through social media.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins is in Russia for the World Junior Championship, but all it takes is adding his Twitter handle on a 140-character message to get his attention.

One can only imagine what it would have been like growing up watching the Oilers through their glory days and being able to direct a message to Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier or Grant Fuhr.

Furthermore, how cool would it have been like if a player responded to a tweet.

Many of today's athletes have embraced the Twitter world allowing fans a glimpse into their everyday lives.

Players can now broadcast what they're doing and where they are at any given moment. Of course, they do it at their own peril.

"Went to the OKC thunder game and they lost. Now it's time to search for them on Twitter and tell them how bad they played. Not," tweeted Taylor Hall earlier this year, shortly after joining the Oklahoma City Barons.

Perhaps it's fitting Twitter has given fans and players alike a new platform to chirp.

Some of the most entertaining tweets are ones where players respond to fans' criticism and fire back.

Ryan Whitney once tweeted: "I think I've blocked about 500 people today. For future reference "bandaid" is one word. #peasants."

Whitney is one of the most vocal members of the Oilers on Twitter.

Since opening an account in April, 2009, the Oilers defenceman has accrued over 100,000 followers.

Imagine how many Whitney would have if he didn't have to block so many people.

It's become part of his identity and something he has fun with.

"It's depressing how lost I felt today when Twitter was down," Whitney tweeted this summer.

Hall, meanwhile, has over 222,000 followers.

He opened his @hallsy04 account in March, 2011 during his rookie season with the Oilers.

Hall is also interactive with his fans, encouraging them to send in questions while rehabbing his shoulder earlier this year.

"I'm pretty bored. If you guys wanna fire some questions my way I'll do my best to answer them," he tweeted in early October.

Hall actually became a twitter sensation after getting his head stepped on during a warm-up almost a year ago in Columbus.

The Oilers winger needed 30 stitches to sew up the gash in his forehead. A picture was tweeted out by the Oilers and numerous media outlets the following day, which went on to trend throughout North America.

Hall looked as though he had been in Dr. Frankenstein's workshop.

"The reports that I'm out for the season aren't true. I am going to be back as soon as possible. Thanks for all the get well responses," Hall tweeted the day after the incident.

Earlier in the year a less gruesome picture of Hall and his sidekick Jordan Eberle had made the rounds as the two went as the Vancouver Canucks green men to the Oilers Halloween party.

Hall is one of roughly a dozen members of the Oilers to have a Twitter account.

His 222,489 followers place him fifth among NHLers, behind Alexander Ovechkin (444,468), Paul Bissonnette (361,240), Georges Laraque (292,557) and Evgeni Malkin (247,388).

Eberle, meanwhile, has nearly 130,000 followers. The Oilers winger joined Twitter a little over a year ago after someone had opened a fake account under his name.

"Eberle does not have twitter. Whoever is posing as him is fake," posted Hall back in April, 2011.

Since joining, however, Eberle has been active with his posts, particularly while spending the lockout with the Barons.

The Oilers' leading scorer last season has had plenty of time to keep his fans up to date.

"Such a tough bounce going through customs and not having a pen for the customs form. #airportproblems," Eberle tweeted on his way back to Oklahoma City after having his jersey retired by the Regina Pats.

Ryan Jones is another member of the Oilers who is active in the social media scene.

The winger, who's become a fan favourite in Edmonton since coming over from the Nashville Predators, took many by surprise when tweeting out a picture of his new haircut this past April.

"Don't worry people. The flow will be back next season at full force," Jones tweeted.

With over 73,500 followers, Jones is among the heavily followed group of Oilers.

An active outdoors man, when Jones is not on the ice, he sometimes tweets about his hunting exploits.

"Close call with @ryantkohler this morning. Still looking for my first AB buck with a bow. #bowhunting," Jones tweeted in October.

He's also not a fan of having his grammar corrected in his tweets. It's actually become somewhat of a theme and will probably get you blocked.

"Just a friendly reminder... Grammar police automatically get blocked from my account. This is twitter, not an English 101 paper #buzzoff," Jones tweeted in October.

It appears to be a sensitive issue for the Miami University (Ohio) graduate.

"Had to fix a spelling mistake AGAIN since there are so many Inglesh teechars on tweeter," he wrote a month later.

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647071 Los Angeles Kings

Rink Ramblings

Posted by Nick Nickson

A remarkable playoff performance indeed by our beloved Kings last spring. We all had the thrill of witnessing accomplishments never been seen before in the long history of Stanley Cup Playoff play and might never see again.

For starters...a number eight seed winning the Cup. It was never done before and although a future number eight seed may win, it is a real long shot that they will do what the Kings did...beat the first, second and third seeds in their Conference to advance to the Final.

If that wasn't impressive enough...how about going up 3-0 in all four rounds after starting all four rounds on the road? The Kings never had the pressure of a "must win" game and were in total control in every series. No other Stanley Cup champion ever won the first three games of every series.

To cap it off, how about that road record! When they won Game 2 of the Final in New Jersey, it gave the Kings a 10-0 road record in the postseason, and dating back to the 2011 playoffs with San Jose, it was a 12-game road playoff winning streak. The ten straight road wins in one playoff year and 12 straight over two years are both new NHL records.

There are 30 teams in the NHL and 18 have now won a Stanley Cup. The Kings Stanley Cup in the spring was, of course, their first and it came in their 45th season.

We can now cross the Kings off the list of teams that have gone the longest without winning a championship. Toronto continues to hold the distinction of having the longest Cup drought. The Leafs last Cup win was in 1967, the season before the Kings and five other teams joined the NHL in the first wave of expansion.

St. Louis entered the league with the Kings and the Blues have yet to win in their 45 seasons. The Blues have made the Final three times in their history with appearances in each of their first three years of existence when they were the dominant expansion team.

Two other franchises that joined the league in 1970 have now gone 42 seasons without a Cup: Vancouver and Buffalo. The Canucks have made the Final three times in club history: 1982, 1994 and 2011. The Sabres have lost twice in the Final, once in 1975 and again in 1999.

Rounding out this dubious "top five" list is Washington. The Caps began play in 1974 and have been to the Final only once: 1998. The other teams without a Cup include Phoenix (started in Winnipeg), Florida, San Jose, Ottawa, Nashville, Columbus, Minnesota and Winnipeg (started in Atlanta).

Ziggy Palffy played five seasons for the Kings beginning in 1999-00, and during his tenure he scored 150 goals (an average of 30 per season) and added 340 points. He might have been the most exciting Kings player to watch since the days of Wayne Gretzky, who spent eight seasons with the Kings (1988-96).

After five seasons as a King and the cancellation of the 2004-05 season, Palffy left Los Angeles and signed with Pittsburgh as a free agent, but retired soon after due to a shoulder injury.

Palffy's days in the NHL may have ended but for the past five seasons he's played in his hometown of Skalica, Slovakia, in the Slovakian Elite League. Last season, at the age of 39, (he turned 40 in May), he led his league in scoring with 83 points (including 26 goals) in 48 games. He finished with 21 more points than his teammate Rene Skoliak, who placed second in league scoring.

As a King, Palffy scored 340 points in 310 games and he is one of only eight players in franchise history (minimum 200 points) to average at least a point a game. This list of "elite eight" also includes Gretzky, Luc Robitaille, Marcel Dionne, Bernie Nicholls, Charlie Simmer, Tomas Sandstrom and Jimmy Carson.

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 12.28.2012

647072 Montreal Canadiens

Subban stakes claim on starting job at world junior hockey championship

DONNA SPENCER

Malcolm Subban's acrobatics, experience and flair has made him Canada's starting goaltender at the world junior hockey championship for now.

Instead of letting the goaltending question linger deep into the tournament, coach Steve Spott felt it better to end speculation after Canada's opening game and infuse Subban with the confidence of knowing he's the man in net for the tournament.

Malcolm Subban back in net for Canada's juniors

"Malcolm's play is going to dictate how far he goes, but right now he's the guy we're going to continue to run with and it's going to be up to him to carry the ball," the coach said Thursday.

The Belleville Bulls goalie has size, reach and speed, plus familiarity with the wider ice in Europe because Belleville's Yardman Arena is the same size. Subban, six foot two and 200 pounds, sells his glove saves with a flick of the wrist, which tells the players in front of him "I got his."

"I feel like making those saves obviously helps a lot and making them a little fancy gives the team a little confidence," Subban said. "Just knowing your coaches have the confidence in you, that you're going to play all the games, that helps a lot obviously as well."

So after stopping 25 of 28 shots in Canada's 9-3 win over Germany to open the tournament, the 19-year-old from Toronto will be back in the net for Friday's Pool B game versus Slovakia.

Canada tops the pool at 1-0 with three points. The Slovaks forced Russia to overtime Wednesday before the hosts pulled out a 3-2 victory for two points.

A nervous moment in Canada's practice Thursday was a Boone Jenner collision with defencemen Xavier Ouellet in the neutral zone. Both players got slowly to their feet. Jenner can't play a game in the tournament until Monday because of a three-game suspension.

"They're both fine," Spott said. "I just went and checked on them."

Subban's point-blank pad save on Germany's Tobias Rieder in the third period Wednesday demonstrated he can make saves that change the tenor of a game.

"Everyone has seen that save that I don't think many people could make," goaltending coach Ron Tugnutt said. "When he makes that save, the bench kind of straightens up and gets excited."

"As a goalie myself, when you make that big save, you feel good about it and you know your team feels good about it."

The flaw in Subban's game since the start of selection camp in Calgary has been lapses of concentration resulting in questionable or soft goals.

Jordan Binnington of the Owen Sound Attack is less flamboyant in net, but his solid technique made the goaltending competition interesting at selection camp and in pre-tournament games.

Spott believes Subban has the mental resiliency to recover from gaffes, but prefers the Boston Bruins prospect not make them in the first place.

"These are one-goal games and if our goaltender goes to sleep for one second that could determine a gold or a silver medal," Spott said.

"If there is a tough goal, he can shake it off and deal with it, but ultimately we have to make sure we don't give up those soft goals. It's critical."

Germany's three goals on Boxing Day can't be classified as weak, but Subban was battling nerves for two periods before Tugnutt told him to calm down.

"I was a little bit firmer on him, which I hadn't been before, and he responded with a really good third period," Tugnutt said.

Subban started watching the world junior tournament on television at age 12. He felt a personal connection to the 2008 and 2009 championships because older brother P.K. was a defenceman on both Canadian teams that won gold.

P.K. Subban now plays in the NHL for the Montreal Canadiens. The Subbans are the seventh brother combination to play for Canada's junior team.

The others are Freddie and Dougie Hamilton (2012), Luke and Brayden Schenn (2008, 2010-11), Martin and Mathieu Biron (1997, 2000), Scott and Rob Niedermayer (1991-92, 1993), Sylvain and Pierre Turgeon (1983, 1993), and Mike and Randy Moller (1982).

Malcolm Subban has witnessed some of the best and worst experiences of his goaltending predecessors in recent world championships.

Carey Price in 2007 mesmerized the 14-year-old Subban while he watched the performance on a cafeteria television at his local Toronto hockey arena.

Price, now a Habs teammate of his brother's, stared down the U.S. in a semifinal shootout and was named the tournament MVP while Canada collected gold in Sweden.

Subban has also seen Jake Allen get pulled in the 2010 final against the U.S., Mark Visentin give up five third-period goals to Russia in the 2011 championship game, and Scott Wedgewood leave the 2012 semifinal against Russia with an injury after allowing four goals on 14 shots.

"It's a tough position," Subban acknowledged. "There's a lot of responsibility that goes into the goaltending job."

"The thing I'll try to build on is playing a full 60 minutes. I remember the one a couple of years ago when Russia was down three-nothing and came back and won. (I'll) just try and not let that happen I guess."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.28.2012

647073 Montreal Canadiens

Slovakia the next test on the road to world junior gold

ROY MacGREGOR

A spirited practice Thursday in preparation for Friday's second match of the tournament, against spunky Slovakia.

The Slovaks surprised and impressed late Wednesday as they forced pre-tournament favourite Russia to overtime on a late goal, only to lose 3-2 in the extra period.

The Slovaks were decidedly different from the Germans, a weak team trounced 9-3 by Canada earlier Wednesday at Ufa Arena. Slovakia is far quicker, far more adept at cycling the puck in the corners and more determined in front of their own net where they essentially set up a naval blockade to prevent any Russian torpedoes from getting through.

As to their own attack, it has everything to do with patience in the neutral zone and quick turnovers, the Slovak coaching staff using a 1-4 format to trap endlessly in the hopes of a quick transition that could allow them the advantage.

To counter all this, Canadian head coach Steve Spott had his teams working on speed, the practice more concentrating on getting back than getting down the ice. He had them blocking shots to take away the point strategy of the Slovaks and spent a great deal of time working with the Canadian defence as Canadian forwards like captain Ryan Nugent-Hopkins cycled pucks in the corners.

Spott also specified that he was looking to big defenders Dougie Hamilton and Scott Harrington to be Canada's "shutdown unit" when it comes to containing the swift, pesky Slovaks.

"We need to have more bite in the defensive zone," Spott said at the end of practice.

Having seen how the cocky Russians almost got bitten by the surprising Slovaks, Spott is determined if there is any biting to be done Friday, it will be by the Canadians.

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647074 Montreal Canadiens

NHL fantasy: Lightning beat Habs in overtime

By Pat Hickey, The Gazette December 27, 2012

TAMPA BAY — Martin St. Louis scored at 4:17 of overtime to give the Tampa Bay Lightning a 4-3 victory over the Canadiens Thursday night at Tampa Bay Times Forum.

St. Louis, who collected assists on two third-period power-play goals by Vincent Lecavalier, took a lead pass from Eric Brewer, and roofed a backhand after deking backup goaltender Peter Budaj.

"He put a pretty good move on me," said Budaj, who made 37 saves. "The ice was pretty bad and I wasn't expecting him to do anything fancy with the puck but he fooled me."

The Canadiens, who managed only 23 shots on former Canadien Mathieu Garon, took a 2-1 lead into the third period but Lecavalier tied the score at 2:34 and then gave the Lightning the lead at 13:54.

The lead didn't last long as Travis Moen scored his seventh of the season when he scored off the rebound of a shot by Josh Gorges at 14:29.

"Those penalties hurt us in the third period and it was particularly painful because they weren't good penalties," said coach Michel Therrien. "The second one was a retaliation penalty and those are selfish penalties. When we were at even strength, we outplayed them."

The Lightning went 2-for-7 on the power play while the Canadiens had two power plays and generated only one shot on goal.

Matt Carle scored the only goal of the first period at 6:59, but the Canadiens took the lead with two second-period goals. Colby Armstrong tied the score at 6:31 when he deflected a shot by Tomas Plekanec. Armstrong was filling in for Erik Cole, who made a brief visit to the dressing room after taking a hard check along the boards. Cole returned later in the period and gave the Canadiens their only lead when he scored at 15:24.

The Canadiens continue to play without P.K. Subban and David Desharnais, but Therrien said Desharnais will return to the lineup Friday night when the Canadiens play the Florida Panthers in Sunrise. Subban is in Florida as he continues his rehab from a hip pointer, but he said he's at least two weeks away from a return.

"With the snowstorm hitting Montreal, it's nice to have the warm weather. But it's hard to follow my brother at the world juniors when we're down here," said Subban, whose brother Malcolm is Team Canada's No. 1 goaltender.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 12.28.2012

647075 Montreal Canadiens

St. Louis nets OT winner against fantasy Habs

Posted by Pat Hickey

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647076 Montreal Canadiens

Habs 1992-93 season flashback: Bure leads Canucks to victory

Posted by Stu Cowan

VANCOUVER – It's easy, Kirk Muller was saying, if you know how.

All it takes to get out of this thing, which now has stretched to three consecutive losses, is to get the job done in your own end. After that, it's all downhill. Piece of cake.

"I think we should be going back a little more to the way we played last year," said Muller after last night's 5-2 loss to the Vancouver Canucks, which wasn't a sure thing until Pavel Bure got the second of his two third-period goals into an empty net with a little more than a minute remaining. Then, Jiri Slegr added another empty-netter with 35 seconds remaining.

"I don't think we have to go back all the way to what 600we used to do," said Muller.

"What we've got to do, though, is play a lot better in our end.

"When we get the puck out of our end, that's the time to go. We were doing a lot better in the third period than we were in the first half, even though they got those two empty-net goals, but we've got a lot of work to do. We're not doing as well as we did last year, not nearly as well."

It's difficult to say whether or not the Canadiens, as a team, got the job done in their own end last night. What's certain is that they had more than ample opportunity to lift that part of their game to another level against a Canucks team which established squatters' rights in the Canadiens zone from the moment Trevor Linden scored on Vancouver's first shot and came within a hair of another on his second shot.

What's also certain is that Patrick Roy got the job done in his end. Big time, even though he relinquished goals to Linden, Greg Adams and Bure before being yanked in favor of an extra attacker.

The Canadiens goal-scorers were Stephan Lebeau and Kevin Haller.

Roy made it back all the way last night, keeping his associates alive from start to finish, even though the Canadiens trailed by two goals twice, while the net was occupied.

Trouble is, he didn't get too much help from his friends at any time, and none on the goals.

Linden, for example, had some company alongside him, but still managed to get away a shot which beat Roy only 35 seconds into the game.

Then, on the Adams goal, Roy made the first stop on Bure, but Patrice Brisebois was barely getting back into the picture when Adams was tapping the puck beyond a fallen Roy.

There were, however, a lot of good things happening on this night, mostly by the goaltenders. In every way, this one belonged to them.

Kirk McLean didn't have the volume of work Roy had to handle, particularly in the first two periods when the Canucks outshot the Canadiens 27-19. On the other hand, the Canadiens probably had as many quality chances – which is all that matters.

In the first period, for example, he stopped Brian Bellows from point-blank range, which is never easy, and Todd Ewen from close in, which McLean

made look easy. A three-stop flurry in the final seconds of that period was goaltending at its best – which both goaltenders happened to be last night.

"There's really not a whole lot you can do when a goalie is playing that way," said Muller. "I mean, on another night, who knows what happens. In this game, well, we know how good he is."

The Canadiens also learned how good Bure happens to be – particularly on his third-period, power-play goal which re-established Vancouver's two-goal margin. Mike Keane had him against the boards, then let him get away. He beat Roy with an angled shot after jumping on a rink-wide pass from a good-looking offensive defenceman named Jiri Slegr, who's in the lineup only because Doug Lidster is hurt.

The Canucks, on their part, learned again how good Roy can be. He stopped them short and long. He was on top of loose pucks. He's back.

The problem with Muller and Friends, in addition to McLean's excellence, was that their principal snipers weren't burying their chances as they did earlier in the season. Lebeau made the most of his for the goal which lifted the Canadiens to within a goal of the Canucks, but too many of the Canadiens came to the arena with empty pockets.

The Canadiens are in Edmonton tomorrow night before heading to Calgary for a New Year's Eve party with the Flames.

Montreal Gazette LOADED: 12.28.2012

647077 Montreal Canadiens

Gorges organizes outdoor pickup game with fans

Posted by Stu Cowan

Canadiens defenceman Josh Gorges finally got a chance to lace up his skates for a hockey game on Wednesday – even if it was only an outdoor pickup game.

Frustrated by the ongoing NHL lockout, Gorges organized a game through his Twitter account at Verdun's Willibrord Park outdoor rink. An estimated 50 skaters, from small fry wearing caged helmets to teenagers and those older still, turned up for some crowded-rink shinny that saw Gorges on the ice from shortly before 2 p.m. until past 3:30. In a wool tuque, parka and jeans, minus-10 C feeling like minus-17 with the breeze, it was no doubt the longest shift he's played in his life.

You can read Dave Stubbs's column on Gorges's pickup game by clicking here.

The Willibrord Park rink is one four artificially refrigerated, Canadiens-funded rinks in city and borough parks as part of the team's Children's Foundation Bleu, Blanc, Bouge (Blue, White, Move) program to encourage youngsters to be active. A fifth one will open in January in N.D.G., which has citizens there excited. You can read Brenda Branswell's story on the fifth rink by clicking here.

With the NHL lockout set to drag into 2013, Jeff Z. Klein of the New York Times writes that commissioner Gary Bettman and the NHL owners view the lockout as a "kind of apocalyptic battle in which the players union must be defeated, even if the world must be brought down to do so." Read more by clicking here.

Jim Matheson of the Edmonton Journal wonders what will happen to the 2013 NHL entry draft if there is no season because of the lockout. Read his column by clicking here.

Klein of the New York Times also has a feature on Seth Jones, one of the top prospects for the 2013 draft. The defenceman with the U.S. team at the world junior championship is the son of former NBA player Popeye Jones. Read more by clicking here.

Donna Spencer of The Canadian Press has a story on how Malcolm Subban, P.K.'s brother, has grabbed the starting goaltender job with Team Canada at the world junior tournament. Read that article by clicking here.

And SportsPickle.com's recent list of new Christmas song titles included this one: Bettman Got Run Over by a Reindeer.

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647078 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout update: NHL, NHLPA still have no plans to meet

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

Stop us if you've heard this one before: nothing happened today in the NHL lockout.

You may not think that's news, but it is when the calendar is about to turn to a new year, with January fast approaching.

SportsBusiness Journal's Liz Mullen tweeted today that the "NHL [and] NHLPA remain in communication with still no plans to meet. Clock is ticking."

She also pointed out Jan. 2 is the date in which the players' union is "authorized" to vote to decertify.

Once again, we'll remind you that mid-January is still far enough off for a season to be saved. And there's likely plenty of back-and-forth left to go. SI.com's Adrian Dater listed what the NHL's position could be heading into next month: "1. Keep waiting out the players. 2. If they don't 'crack' in the next week or so (meaning, formally request getting back to the bargaining table and/or giving a new offer), they will then 3. formally issue the drop-dead date (likely between Jan. 10-15) along with 4. Offering up a new, likely tweaked final offer and then 5. Sitting back and waiting for a final answer."

That's what you may have to look forward to in the new year. And if there's actually a season? ESPN's Pierre LeBrun also provided a list of what the league should give to fans: NHL Center Ice and Game Center for free, realignment in 2013-14, "play-in" playoff games, three-on-three overtimes and looking into moving teams to Europe are among his ideas. It's a topic we covered earlier in the year with great suggestions from readers.

But there has to be a season for fans to get any kind of reward for sitting through this mess. "It's coming down to the wire right now," Devils GM Lou Lamoriello told The Star-Ledger's Rich Chere. "We've just got to trust the people that are involved. I'm embarrassed we are where we're at. That's the best expression I can use."

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.28.2012

647079 New Jersey Devils

NHL, NHLPA are in contact but haven't scheduled new meetings to try and form collective bargaining agreement

By Pat Leonard / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

With NHL games canceled through Jan. 14 and no resolution in sight, this locker room could be empty for a while.

There have been "multiple contacts" between NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHL Players' Association special counsel Steve Fehr recently, according to Daly, but they have scheduled no new meetings to try and form a new collective bargaining agreement.

Daly was asked in an email whether the NHL and NHLPA were planning to resume meetings and now were just discussing the details of who/when/where, or whether hope is bleak that they will get back together soon.

"We have not discussed convening a meeting recently and nothing new is planned at this point," Daly said in an email to the Daily News on Thursday.

Thursday was Day 103 of the NHL lockout. All games through Jan. 14 are canceled, including the Winter Classic. The All-Star Game is also out. Daly confirmed on Dec. 19 on Toronto radio that hockey needs to begin "sometime in mid-January" for a season to take place. The 1994-95 season was shortened by a lockout and had a 48-game season that started on Jan. 20.



The NHLPA's executive board has the authority to file for a disclaimer of interest until Jan. 2, which would disband the union and allow individual players to file anti-trust lawsuits against the league and seek punitive damages of up to three times their salaries. The NHL has made preemptive legal filings to try to limit the effectiveness of such a filing and conclude litigation quickly.

But time is precious, making it inconceivable that Thursday marked the 14th consecutive day the NHL and NHLPA had not met for bargaining or mediation.

New York Daily News LOADED: 12.28.2012

647080 New York Rangers

NHL News

Staff

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New York Daily News LOADED: 12.28.2012

647081 NHL

Middle of nowhere discovered in Ufa

ROY MACGREGOR

You know you're in hockey country when you run into a parade of 100 or so Santas – and most of them are carrying hockey sticks.

But this is a different "hockey country" – decidedly different.

Santa Claus in Russia is Ded Moroz, which translates to Grandfather Frost. He wears long, flowing red gowns and usually carries a staff – although in Ufa, most of the costumed participants chose hockey sticks this week in deference to the 2013 World Junior Hockey Championship being played at the local arenas.

Canada cruises to an easy win over Germany

Grandfather Frost is also often accompanied by his granddaughter, Snegurochka, the Snow Maiden; every one of them in this march down Lenin Street so stunningly different from, say, Punkinhead, that Ufa's wild traffic was even more chaotic and unpredictable than normal.

The streets are prairie wide – mercifully, as lanes mean nothing in either direction.

And this week they were howling with snow squalls as a deep freeze came down from the Ural Mountains and turned Ufa into a city roughly comparable to the crunching-snow freeze that struck Saskatoon during the 2010 WJHC.

But Ufa is far, far, far from Saskatoon, and not just in distance and time zones.

Here, the modern Russian Revolution has taken an industrial and oil city – actually a fortress ordered up by Ivan the Terrible that dates back to 1574 – and transformed it into a garish display of consumerism and fashion.

But not much is normal in Ufa. A far more accurate description would be "over the top."

Take fashion, for example. It is not just the preponderance of fake fur and real fur, fake purses and real purses, but the remarkable number of women in stiletto-heeled boots who appear to have chosen attraction over traction as they cross the streets in front of the quickly advancing traffic. They hurry along, their treasured heels leaving marks like cross-country ski poles in the ice and blowing snow.

In the shivering cold of the hockey rinks, scantily clad cheerleaders, some two dozen of them, perform constantly during the games, seemingly blissfully unaware of the scores as well as the temperature.

There are enough Christmas lights along Karl Marx Street and Revolutsionnaya Street to blind Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield if he happens to look down from the Russian space station.

Were it not for the five-inch heels, the Christmas revelers, the overkill of lights and the traffic, it might be possible to confuse the scene with Canada.

Few Canadians could have expected this, as most Canadians had never heard of Ufa before this past week and, once they had, quickly concluded it was in the middle of nowhere.

It is not, of course. Ufa – accent on the second vowel, not the first – is sort of in the middle of Russia, or the middle of the Europe-Asia continent, if you prefer: southeast of Moscow, northwest of Kazakhstan, so many time zones away from Canada that rabid and NHL-starved hockey fans are suffering sleep deprivation just trying to catch a period or two of Team Canada's quest for the gold medal.

If they could be here, though, they might think at certain times that they had never left Canada – and it goes far beyond the deep freeze that has settled throughout Russia.

All around the rink boards at Ufa Arena are ads for the likes of Canadian Tire ("Canada's Hockey Store"), Telus, Air Canada, Purolator, RBC...

And high in the stands fans dressed completely in red unfurl a huge banner: "HOCKEY IS OUR GAME!" Only the flag painted beside it is not the red maple leaf, but the Russian flag.

For those who have come to believe only Canada has such passion for the winter game, they should come to Ufa, where the fans belt out their anthem, pound their thundersticks and rise in their seats with a roar as the home side bursts up the ice.

But they are fans of Team Russia, not Team Canada.

It would technically be wrong to call them all "Russian" fans, as Ufa, the capital of the Republic of Bashkortostan is home to more than a million citizens, more of them Bashkirs and Tatars than Russians.

But that the people of Ufa, of whatever background, love their hockey is undeniable. They say it is their No. 1 sport and are mad for the local club, Salavat Yulaev, which is considered one of the strongest teams in the Kontinental Hockey League and were champions in 2008 and 2011.

The team, curiously, is named after a revolutionary poet who was tortured and died in prison in 1800. He sits astride his horse at the city's main monument, his famous words listed below: "I am not dead yet, my Bashkirs!"

He was, of course, talking politics, not hockey. Any threat to life these days in Ufa involves cars far more than guns or torture – the streets separating the broad-shouldered, barrel-chested architecture of the old Soviet Union in places where the colour of lights means little and markings are mere suggestions quickly covered up by the snow and ice.

In some ways, says Team Canada forward Nathan MacKinnon, the action in the streets is not that much different from world junior hockey.

"It seems like there's no lanes and everybody's battling for position," says the precocious 17-year-old from Cole Harbour, N.S.

"It's pretty crazy," agrees his 17-year-old teammate on the Halifax Mooseheads, Jonathan Drouin.

It is that indeed.

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647082 NHL

Potential short-season impact on revenues

JAMES MIRTLE

The NHL may potentially be able to play 48 games of an 82-game schedule this season, but that doesn't necessarily mean its revenues will be chopped by that amount.

The reason: The playoffs would remain the same length, and those 100-plus postseason games are the league's biggest of the year.

While it's safe to assume regular-season revenues will be down to 55 per cent of normal levels – should the league and its players agree to get back on the ice – by the postseason, fans and new sponsors are much more likely to be back on board with the league.

With no games to play, NHLer organizes his own - with the fans

"Will sponsors jump in immediately? I do not think so," S&E Sponsorship Group president Brian Cooper said. "Most of my clients, I would predict, would say, 'The majority of the season is gone, I'm not doing any market activation other than maybe the playoffs and the Stanley Cup.'"

The last time the NHL missed a full season (2004-05), it returned the following year with revenues that were essentially flat. Should that hold true this time, the league will likely generate somewhere in the realm of 70 per cent to 75 per cent of last year's \$3.3-billion (U.S.) during a shortened season.

"Unless you've had a fan revolt, unless you've had a large percentage of season-ticket holders cancel their tickets, you've got a base to get revenue from," said Paul Swangard, managing director of the Warsaw Sports Marketing Center at the University of Oregon. "Sponsors are typically on long-term deals and still with you. Television and media-rights holders are all waiting for that content to come back.

"It's a formula that gives them some level of certainty ... and a huge drop would be shocking."

That level of success would mean the 2012-13 lockout would potentially cost a total of between \$800-million and \$1-billion, with the owners and players splitting the pain due to taking a 50-per-cent share of revenues.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.28.2012

647083 NHL

The NHL's last big comeback

JAMES MIRTLE

In hindsight, just about everything went right. While there were plenty of dire predictions about how fans would react after a full NHL season was cancelled in 2004-05, they eventually came back in record numbers, pushing the league to record revenues year after year, leading up to last season.

Repeating that type of bounce back may be much more difficult this time around just because of how much went right that may not be repeatable now.

With no games to play, NHLer organizes his own - with the fans

1. The "new" NHL

New rules and new, more wide-open style of play. Those were two huge selling factors in 2005, especially when the NHL was coming out of the "Dead Puck Era," during which goals had dropped to historically low levels (slightly more than five per game) as clutching and grabbing was the norm. Then, came Brendan Shanahan's rules summit and a commitment to a crackdown, and the 2005-06 season became the year of "The New NHL."

Goals went way up (mainly due to all the power plays), the speed of the game increased and the product was, on many nights, better than it'd been in years. That's quite a selling feature.

2. The rise of the Canadian dollar

In October of 2003, the Canadian dollar was worth just 74 cents (U.S.). Three years later, just as the "new" NHL's second season was getting under way, it was about to crack 90 cents.

A year after that, it hit \$1.05.

That dramatic rise played a key role in helping revenues explode (ultimately providing 10 per cent to 15 per cent of the increase over the life of the last CBA), but it also turned Canadian NHL teams into some of the largest revenue generators in the league.

One year, in fact, all six franchises paid into revenue sharing.

Even the smaller Canadian teams were able to spend and compete, and that paid off with increased interest, which led to even higher revenues.

3. The big-market U.S. success

Revenues weren't just up in Canada, however. And as the salary cap kept climbing, the popular teams on both sides of the border were able to keep pace – something that eventually began to show on the ice. Revivals in large but dormant or sagging U.S. markets such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, Washington, Boston and Los Angeles, helped fuel the league's long-awaited TV ratings increases and popularity gains.

4. The Crosby-Ovechkin factor

That the NHL was injected with some new star power in two key markets didn't hurt either.

Back-to-back entry drafts brought Alex Ovechkin and Sidney Crosby into the league at the same time, and the rivalry between the two young stars generated buzz in every building they played.

5. The Winter Classic

A piece of marketing genius: Take a regular NHL game, pick two popular, high-profile teams and pit them against each other in outdoor football or baseball stadiums in an annual event.

The Winter Classic was a sponsor's dream, and once it took off, it drew in advertising dollars unlike any other event on the NHL calendar.

The players loved it, the fans loved it, and the NHL's bottom line did, too.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.28.2012

647084 Montreal Canadiens

Fans unlikely to embrace the NHL as they did after the last lockout

JAMES MIRTLE

This article is part of Next, The Globe's five-day series examining the people, places, things and ideas that will shape 2013.

There will be pain.

That is the message from top marketing and sponsorship executives who are following the NHL lockout and looking to its conclusion – whether that is a shortened season starting in January, or another full year is wiped out.

Fans are fed up. Sponsors are fed up, too.

And for the first time, the league could feel some significant blowback when it attempts to relaunch from its third prolonged work stoppage in just 18 years.

"Without a doubt," S&E Sponsorship Group president Brian Cooper said, when asked about the potential for a negative response from NHL fans and sponsors. "It's inevitable for any brand taken off the shelf. But not only taken off the shelf, one that has some ambiguous cloud of uncertainty around it or negative light shone on it.

"I think the product's great. I think the NHL's great and a lot of fans think the way I do, but there's been an emotional connection and a trust that has been tested. In some cases, people feel betrayed."

Unlike 7 1/2 years ago, when the NHL relaunched with new rules, new stars, a new financial system and watched as revenues quickly went up, the league has little in its arsenal whenever it returns from this latest stoppage.

The collective agreement will be somewhat different, but other than perhaps slightly more competitive balance, the changes experienced by fans will be minute.

Instead, it's believed the league will come back meekly, perhaps offering more of an apology than the last time, when the message "Thank you fans" was scrawled on the ice in all 30 buildings.

"Dare I suggest that they feel sorry for what they put their fans through?" said Paul Swangard, managing director of the Warsaw Sports Marketing Center at the University of Oregon. "It's sort of like a bank account, and instead of money you've got goodwill in the bank. If you spend it and don't rebuild it, you're eventually going to run out of money.

"There would potentially come a time – maybe not in the Torontos, Montreals and New Yorks – that there won't always be a core fan base. A little humility at the end of this, setting the right tone with fans, will help show players and owners are at least appreciative of the level of investment they're giving."

Whatever damage is done to revenues will likely affect the on-ice product, too. The players' share looks to dip to 50 per cent from 57 per cent, which will mean a lower cap (likely in the \$65-million U.S. range) in the first few years, and significant pain for teams that have committed a lot of payroll to players beyond the 2012-13 season. (The Vancouver Canucks, for example, has committed more than \$55-million in 2013-14 to just 13 players.)

That would mean some of the higher-salaried clubs will have to toss bodies overboard – likely for little in return – to the benefit of teams with plenty of cap space.

Then, there's the implications of a strict term limit on player contracts, which could range anywhere from five to eight years, depending on how negotiations progress. Such a move would wipe out the advantage many high-revenue teams have had in terms of front-loading deals and mean salary cap hits for star players would go up.

It's also likely the wealthier teams would begin compensating some of their depth players with longer contracts, meaning some teams could potentially have eight to 10 players on five- or six-year deals.

In theory, those shifts in the CBA should give teams on the lower end more of a fighting chance when it comes to signing free agents and retaining their own talent.

Teams such as the Florida Panthers, Carolina Hurricanes and Nashville Predators should be able to compete better, as was the case at the start of the last agreement, when the Hurricanes and Anaheim Ducks won the first two Stanley Cups under a very low salary cap.

As revenues rise, however, the imbalance is likely to again grow, and the wealthier teams will be able to continue to sink more and more money into areas outside of the cap: management, scouting and the minor-league system.

Perhaps, however, that should read "if" revenues rise. That wasn't really an issue the last time around, with the league growing by an average of more than 7 per cent a season under the last CBA.

Few forecast that kind of explosive growth again, but there's also optimism the NHL will eventually be able to regain its footing, especially if the end result of this fight is a half-season of games.

The hard-core hockey fans are especially forgiving, the experts say, and despite some thinly veiled threats in recent weeks, they are unlikely to give up for good.

"Until I see a galvanized base of fan revolt, I'm more confident than pessimistic that things will return," Swangard said. "The NHL has a great product on the ice. They give consumers a decent value for their entertainment value. And there's a cultural phenomenon there.

"There's ultimately damage that's occurring every time this happens. The negative passion that fans apply to these labour situations seems to get angrier and angrier and, yet, it's that anger that shows what makes the sports world so unique: The level of customer loyalty," he said.

"You wouldn't accept this in almost any other line of business. But for your favourite sports team, there's something intrinsically stronger that binds us to that product that makes us hard to walk away."

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647085 NHL

Not even U.S. green card can lure investors to Coyotes

DAVID SHOALTS-The Globe and Mail

Greg Jamison says he hopes to close the purchase of the Phoenix Coyotes in January, and while the usual doubters point out this is simply the latest in a long line of such predictions, they are giving him full marks for creativity in his hunt for investors.

This is due to Jamison's novel but failed attempt to find investors through the Immigrant Investor Program of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Two sources familiar with his investment plans said Jamison, the former president of the NHL's San Jose Sharks, tried to raise at least some of the \$170-million (all currency U.S.) purchase price by using what is also known as the EB-5 program.

EB-5 is the official name of the visa, a conditional green card, granted by the U.S. government to wealthy immigrants in exchange for an investment of at least \$1-million (\$500,000 in rural or high-unemployment areas) in an American business.

Jamison said Thursday he took a look at the program, which essentially trades green cards for cash, but said it will not be part of his financing package in the purchase of the team from the NHL. He declined again to reveal any of his investors or details of his financing plan, but said he hopes to close the sale in January.

"I've been at this 18 months, I've looked at everything," Jamison said. "I'm aware of the [EB-5] program and what it can do. We did discuss it, but we're not using it as part of our program, no."

One source said Jamison spent a lot of time and travel trying to attract foreign investors through the program, particularly in the Middle East. Another source said Jamison is not using the program because he failed to find any takers for the same reason he is having trouble getting conventional investors – the Coyotes are a poor investment.

A third source said while Jamison never discussed using the program with his only known investors, the Ice Edge group of Canadian and U.S. businessmen, at least one member of the group checked out the EB-5 program on his own to see if it would help land a green card.

A Los Angeles lawyer who specializes in setting up immigrant EB-5 investors in business deals said the program is popular enough that people can be selective about their \$1-million investment rather than write it off as the cost of a U.S. visa. The program is popular with Chinese immigrants and was expanded after the 2008 recession when companies like Marriott International and other hotel developers found it difficult to get conventional financing for hotel projects and turned to the program.

"People in China are sophisticated investors," said Catherine DeBono Holmes, a partner in the law firm Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell. "They're not going to invest in any old project, plus there's a lot of projects available. This is a pretty darn good program.

"If you've got the money, you can invest in a project where you have a decent chance to get your money back in five years. If you invest in a hotel

being built by a big company in Manhattan, you have a good chance [of a return].”

The chances of a profit on the Coyotes are remote. Former owner Jerry Moyes, who is being pursued in civil court by the NHL, said he lost more than \$300-million on the team before he placed it in bankruptcy in 2009. Since buying the Coyotes through the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in August of 2009 for \$140-million, the NHL has dropped more than \$200-million on the team despite \$50-million in subsidies from the suburban city of Glendale.

Glendale’s financial situation is so bleak, it forced Jamison to renegotiate a 20-year lease for Jobing.com Arena that they agreed to last June. He recently agreed to a revised deal that reduced the payment to him for managing the arena to \$11-million in the first year from \$17-million. The total payments over the first five years of the lease dropped to \$71-million from \$94-million, which is why one source said investors are not attracted to the sale.

The problem for Jamison is the NHL is not interested in dropping its \$170-million price, due to the money it has sunk into the franchise, despite the fact the St. Louis Blues sold for a reported \$130-million last spring. The Blues were also shaky financially but take in substantially more revenue than the Coyotes, who ranked last or second last among the NHL’s 30 teams in attendance since the NHL bought them. Also, the Blues sale included its American Hockey League farm team and the Peabody Opera House.

“The [Coyotes] price has been consistent all the way through,” Jamison said. “We don’t anticipate a change. There’s also different [reported] prices St. Louis really went for. I’ve heard the same price you have. I’ve heard other prices as well.”

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly, the league’s point man on the sale, could not be reached for comment.

Jamison said there are a lot of documents to work through with both the league and his potential investors on the sale, including the revised lease. He said he has not signed the new lease but has agreed to it.

One of the three sources familiar with Jamison’s plans is not as optimistic as Jamison the deal will close by the end of January. But the source believes Jamison does have substantial investors interested, although the pace of negotiations will have to increase if the sale is to be completed by then.

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647086 NHL

Today’s Oilers as seen through Paul Coffey’s eyes

Eric Duhatschek

Paul Coffey, above, considers himself a fan of hockey these days. As such, Coffey believes that the new-look Edmonton Oilers are on the right track, not just in terms of the talent that they have, but also in the style they want to play – wide open and aggressive, a throwback to an earlier era.

“You’ve got to let them play, you can’t shackle them,” said Coffey. “That’s what me, you, every fan of the game goes to see. There are so many games that are so predictable. When do you see a guy fly down the wing and take a slap shot any more? Never.

Canada’s Christine Sinclair celebrates scoring a third goal past the USA with her coach John Herdman in the women’s semi-final soccer match against at the London 2012 Olympic Games at Old Trafford in Manchester, August 6, 2012.

Year in Review

Top five most-read Sports stories of 2012

“That’s a pretty spoiled group, the fans up there, and I say that respectfully. They’ve seen it all. I think they have no choice because the fans in Edmonton will demand that. Some teams sell hope. Some sell reality. I think Edmonton’s got reality. They’re not just selling hope there.”

According to Coffey, the Oilers of his era eventually met all their potential, largely because of Wayne Gretzky’s influence.

“We continually got better because the greatest player in the world pushed us to become better,” said Coffey. “You had me, Kevin [Lowe], Mark [Messier], Glenn [Anderson], [Jari] Kurri, [Grant] Fuhr – a bunch of guys who just wanted to be great. We didn’t know how to get there, but we just wanted to be great.

“And you’ve got to remember, in the eighties, we were paid on productivity back then. We weren’t paid on, ‘Here’s your money, I hope you earn it. I hope you get the numbers we think you can get to.’ You had to produce back then to get paid and your increments were 10- or 15-thousand dollar raises. That’s why, I believe, it was so exciting back then. If you wanted to get paid, you had to go.”

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647087 NHL

Lockout remains at standstill as chance to save season slips away

DAVID SHOALTS

Another day passed without any steps toward a solution to the NHL lockout. There was some communication between the NHL and the NHL Players’ Association on Thursday but it was essentially just to determine there was no point in opening negotiations again.

The NHL owners have said they are not interested in negotiating unless the NHLPA presents them with new ideas. The players union contends it has made more than enough concessions to keep any negotiations going and remains open to a return to the table.

The clock is now ticking to Jan. 2, which is the date the NHLPA is authorized to dissolve. That authorization came in a vote by the NHL players for a “disclaimer of interest.” That gives the union’s executive committee the authority to dissolve the NHLPA by Jan. 2, which would clear the way for the players to launch an anti-trust lawsuit against the owners and have the lockout lifted by the courts. However, the union does not have to act by Jan. 2. It can dissolve at a later date.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman has made it clear the only way the owners would agree to a shortened season of no less than 48 games is if an agreement can be reached in time for the first game to be played Jan. 15. That leaves less than two weeks for the sides to cut a deal.

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647088 Ottawa Senators

Karlsson leaving Jokerit on good terms

Erik Karlsson’s Finnish adventure will finish Saturday.

by James Gordon

Erik Karlsson’s Finnish adventure will finish Saturday.

The Ottawa Senators defenceman has been playing for Helsinki-based Jokerit of the Finnish Elite League since the fall, when the National Hockey League imposed what is now a 103-day lockout.

The Norris Trophy-winning blueliner has decided to let his month-to-month contract expire and return to his native Sweden to wait out the NHL’s collective bargaining agreement, however.

In an e-mail exchange Thursday morning, Jokerit general manager Jarmo Kekäläinen said it was a pleasure having Karlsson aboard for the past few months.

“Erik was excellent, we were very happy and it was a pleasure having him,” Kekäläinen said. “He will be missed. Good player and a great guy.”

Jokerit’s attendance is averaging 9,600 this season, which Kekäläinen said was “a lot higher than last year.

“I am sure Erik has had an input in the improved figures.”

In a video posted on the team's web site Thursday, Karlsson said he hoped to put on one last good show for the home fans before packing his bags.

"I've been here for three months now and I think I really got settled in everywhere, and I've really enjoyed everything that's come up out of this journey here," he said. "I enjoyed the team a lot and obviously it's tough, taking this decision of heading back home and waiting for what's going to happen with the lockout, but right now that's the best option for me."

The diminutive defenceman was still holding out hope the NHL season will be salvaged in the next two weeks.

"They cancelled all the games through January 14th, so hopefully we'll play the 15th," he explained. "That's what everybody's aiming for now. You know, you can only hope and pray that the season starts soon again."

Karlsson has seven goals and 20 assists in 28 games for Jokerit, about the same points-per-game pace he set last season with the Senators.

He scored 19 goals and 58 assists in 78 games here, making him the runaway points leader among defencemen and propelling him to the Norris, which is handed out annually to the league's top defenceman.

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647089 Ottawa Senators

Subban wins starting role

Experienced netminder will face Slovakia Friday

By Joanne Ireland

Subban wins starting role

Malcolm Subban makes a pad save after German forward Dennis Reimer attempted to redirect a shot on goal Wednesday. Subban will start in goal against Slovakia on Friday.

The net belongs to Malcolm Subban. At least for now.

Subban, who got the start against Germany on the opening day of the world juniors, will start for Team Canada against Slovakia on Friday.

The Belleville Bulls netminder was named the starter ahead of Jordan Binnington of the Owen Sound Attack but he will have to be at his best if he wants to stay put.

He'll see a lot more rubber against Slovakia than he did against Germany, which generated 28 shots compared to the 46 shots Canada pumped at Elmar Trautmann.

"It's not even so much not seeing a lot of pucks," Subban said, "but when your team starts running up the score, it makes it even harder to stay focused because the game is almost out of reach. I'm also not used to not getting a lot of shots. Usually I'm not on all-star team."

Subban said he didn't get off to the best of beginnings in Canada's 9-3 victory, which is why he was leaning on goaltending coach Ron Tugnutt for some advice before the third period of Wednesday's game.

"I thought the first two periods I had the nerves going a bit. Obviously it was the first game and it's tough when you're not seeing that many shots but I thought by the third period, I had calmed down a lot," he said. "I was really excited. I couldn't wait to get started. I think it was the adrenalin."

Subban is also not used to the uncertainty of his role. With the Bulls he's the starter, with Canada, it's been a toss-up as to which of the two goalies would get the nod.

"The deciding factor was experience," said head coach Steve Spott.

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647090 Ottawa Senators

Cherry livid at Russia's Yakupov over 'dirty' Canadian Hockey League treated him 'royally'

The Canadian Press December 27, 2012

Don Cherry isn't happy about Russian sniper Nail Yakupov's comments regarding Canadian hockey players.

The commentator used Twitter to respond to a report Yakupov told a Russian website that Canadian players are "dirty."

The No. 1 pick of the 2012 NHL by the Edmonton Oilers, Yakupov played two seasons with the Ontario Hockey League's Sarnia Sting, collecting 80 goals and 80 assists.

"I see where Nail Yakupov said Canadian hockey players are dirty," Cherry tweeted Wednesday. "Let me see ... We let him take a Canadian kids (sic) spot in the Canadian Hockey League, let him learn his hockey in our program, treat him royally, give him great coaching so he can go number one overall and he calls us Dirty."

Canada will meet tournament hosts Russia on Monday in the final Pool B round-robin game for both teams the world junior hockey championship.

Cherry, who has a long history of criticizing European players, added: "I could care less what Nail thinks of us, what bugs me, he took a Canadian kids (sic) spot in the Canadian Hockey League."

Cherry has more than 104,000 Twitter followers.

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647091 Ottawa Senators

Chemistry experiment pays off with Canadian scoring explosion

Scheifele's move to wing helps top line dominate in rout of Germany

By Joanne Ireland

Chemistry experiment pays off with Canadian scoring explosion

Team Canada forward Mark Scheifele puts one of his two goals past German goaltender Elmar Trautmann in Canada's 9-3 win Wednesday.

On paper, the trio looked terrific. The slick Ryan Nugent-Hopkins flanked by Mark Scheifele and Jonathan Huberdeau. What team wouldn't want to unleash that offensive potential?

But in order for Team Canada's plan to work, Scheifele had to be able to make the transition from centre to right wing, and the three talents had to develop some chemistry.

So far, so good. The trio delivered on opening day, combining for four of Canada's goals in a 9-3 victory over Germany, and they will be the line to watch on Friday against Slovakia. It is their mission to dominate.

"That's what we wanted, we wanted to come together as a great line from the first game and I think that's what we did," said Huberdeau, who would surely be playing with the Florida Panthers and not the Saint John Sea Dogs were it not for the NHL lockout.

In fact the top line wouldn't have even been an option had the NHL been in action with Nugent-Hopkins playing for the Edmonton Oilers and Scheifele playing with the Winnipeg Jets.

"It's something you hope for when you put a line together like that. All three of those players are in an NHL mindset, all three have NHL abilities," said Spott. "The challenge was Mark Scheifele and how he would adjust to the wing.

"It still is a concern. You hope that Mark can continue to play there because he's such a tremendous centre-man."

The three were quiet in a warm-up tournament as was the team, which scored just three regulation goals in games against Finland and Sweden. Nugent-Hopkins said there were signs of progress in the 2-1 shootout win over the Swedes and then it clicked early against Germany.

Steve Yzerman, the Tampa Bay Lightning general manager who has overseen Canada's Olympic entries, was in Finland during the tournament

and not only addressed the team but also seconded the plan to give the top line a chance.

"Steve said it best," said Spott. "What it does is allows us to open up things for the likes of Ryan Strome and Boone Jenner (who is suspended and will join the team in the fourth game) and the Mark McNeills because teams have to put out their best checking line and their top two defencemen. They're just so dynamic so it should open up ice for the players below them.

"I think the Strome line could be the subplot of this tournament."

In the meantime, the top line has every intention of creating some havoc. Huberdeau said he couldn't remember the last time he played on a line with so much potential but he said it's been easy to play with Nugent-Hopkins and Scheifele.

"I just pass the puck and I know I'm going to get it back," he said. "We have good chemistry and we just have to keep going against Slovakia.

"We're just going to keep working harder.

"Of course it's possible (to not have chemistry). Maybe we got lucky. We don't know. Hopefully not. That's why we're going to keep working hard. We had a pretty good first game and that's what we wanted. Now we have to keep going.

"We are a line that can provide a lot of offence and that's what we want to do but we have to keep going and keep getting better."

He got no argument from Scheifele, who said the move to the wing has been that much easier given that Nugent-Hopkins is playing in the middle.

"He moves the puck so well. All I'm trying to do is get open, find those open spots. If I do, I know he's going to find me. Same with Hubie," said Scheifele. "They're both unbelievable players and I just want to compliment them.

"It's a short tournament and it's whoever comes together the quickest that is going to be the team that's going to win. We need to build off that game.

"We had talked to each other about getting off to a good start in this tournament and I think we did (but) we have a lot of games left and we have to keep developing our chemistry. "We just want to continue to dominate and get better and better each day."

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647092 Ottawa Senators

Big year, dumb luck for Sens

Team stunned critics in 20th year

By Wayne Scanlan, The Ottawa Citizen December 27, 2012

Minor hockey players love to talk about their favourite "celly," or goal celebration move.

It might involve a Theo Fleury body slide, a double knee swoop, a full arm curl or a body launch into the glass.

But what does a franchise do for an important "celly" of a moment in time?

As the Ottawa Senators approached the 2011-12 NHL season, they had a decision to make.

When would they celebrate the 20th anniversary of the club's return to the NHL?

There were no shortage of options. The 20th birth date of Ottawa's successful bid at the Florida board of governors' meetings had long since passed, given that it was on Dec. 6, 1990. But from there, a series of critical dates followed - the second franchise fee payment of \$22.5 million in June of 1991, the Aug. 18, 1991, Ontario Municipal Board approval of the Kanata arena proposal, the groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Palladium (two names ago) in late June of 1992.

Finally came the on-ice moment to celebrate, as all the bureaucratic red tape and complicated financing gave way to flesh and blood hockey: Game 1 of the modern Senators team, on Oct. 8, 1992, a 5-3 victory over the

Montreal Canadiens at the Civic Centre.

"Maybe Rome was Built in a Day," read the Citizen headline the next day, a tip of the cap to the Senators Roman centurion theme.

This was the moment to celebrate with a full year of reflection, a salute to the Senators heroes of the past, the day that the long and sometimes arduous buildup came to fruition. The timing of the anniversary was such that it would have made perfect sense to start the "celly" in October of 2012, marking the 20 years since that opening night in the Glebe, when Neil Brady scored the first goal in franchise history and Doug Smal sealed the win with an empty-net goal.

That the Senators chose NOT to mark the occasion in October 2012 will go down as one of their best decisions in recent memory.

As if the wounds of a three-month lockout were not deep enough, the pain and suffering would have been multiplied by having to cancel the feel-good, anniversary season.

Senators management staff say they can't take much credit for making the correct call. It had nothing to do with expecting a lockout this fall. Early in 2011, with the pending CBA hassles way off in the distance, the decision was made to mark the occasion during the 2011-12 NHL season, a year early, in effect.

"It was just dumb luck," says Senators president Cyril Leeder, about niftily avoiding a head-on collision with the lockout. "We asked the NHL which year was appropriate to celebrate an anniversary and they said both were. So, we chose last year."

Great call. Looking out from the black hole that has been the 2012-13 lockout, the 2011-12 season grows more fondly upon reflection:

At most home games, players from previous Senators teams were honoured, including 14 originals on opening night. Brady was there. Brad Marsh. Original captain Laurie Boschman. Fans received anniversary pins as they entered Scotia-bank Place.

Along with the 20th anniversary bash, 2011-12 was the year of the NHL All-Star Game and festival in Ottawa, after years of being unable to attract the gig due to hotel and convention space limitations. The festival at the newly built Convention Centre was a smash hit - it felt as though the entire region, along with NHL greats past and present, were all together under one roof.

This was also:

- The year of the Daniel Alfredsson comeback from back surgery.

- The year that Erik Karlsson, the captain's Swedish compatriot, would win the Norris Trophy in just his third NHL season.

- The year the City of Ottawa would induct four Senators pioneers into the Ottawa Sports Hall of Fame - Bruce Firestone, Leeder, Randy Sexton and Rod Bryden.

- The year rookie head coach Paul MacLean would bring just the right mix of folksy charm and tough love to an up-and-coming group. MacLean made it fun for players to come to the rink, but he had the gumption to nail star centre Jason Spezza's butt to the bench for parts of Game 6 against the Rangers.

- The year Mike Fisher would return to Ottawa for the first time since being traded away the previous spring in the Senators' remarkably quick rebuilding program.

- The year of the heritage hockey sweater, to celebrate the early Ottawa teams that won Stanley Cups as the Silver Seven and then Senators. It was risky, having players in a rebuilding season wearing jerseys with a big O on the chest. In a long losing streak, they would have been the Ottawa Zeroes. Instead the O stood for Originals.

- The year the Senators would be picked for last place by many hockey experts but would defy the odds and nail down the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

- The year Ottawa would push the New York Rangers to seven games in their first-round playoff series, before losing Game 7 by a 2-1 score.

Looking back from the dark shadows of a locked out October, November and December, it's the little things we all appreciate from the last season played. The rhythm of a daily schedule. Morning gatherings at the rink. The stretch drive to games that matter, back when the games people played took place on the ice.

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647093 Ottawa Senators

Senators blueliner Erik Karlsson leaving Jokerit of Finnish League to return to Sweden

Sun staff

Erik Karlsson is returning home to Sweden for the new year.

The Senators defenceman is leaving Jokerit, the team he is playing for in the Finnish Elite League, after games on Friday and Saturday. The reigning Norris Trophy winner told the club's website he could return if the NHL lockout kills the 2012-13 season.

"There is a big chance that I will return if the lockout continues throughout the season," Karlsson, 22, said.

Karlsson has seven goals and 20 assists in 28 games with the Helsinki-based team this season.

Kyle Turris, the other Senator in the top Finnish league, also left his team — Karpas — this month.

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647094 Ottawa Senators

Former Ottawa Senator and budding entrepreneur Zenon Konopka has no trouble keeping busy during NHL lockout

By Don Brennan, Ottawa Sun

Unlike other locked-out NHLers, boredom is never an issue for Zenon Konopka.

Since becoming a teenaged bar owner while captain of the 67's, he has maintained his many business interests. Konopka's current ventures include his own wine label (ZK28), a wine aerator (Vin-Aire) and different supplement lines.

Pure press Grapeseed Oil, as of the last month or so, is available in your local grocery store. Yes, the farm boy from Niagara-on-the-Lake has gone Farm Boy.

"It's big for me because I have tremendous respect for that company," Konopka, who is also doing some consulting work, said while shooting a commercial for a vitamin product Thursday in Toronto. "When I was in Ottawa, I shopped there; I realized that they care about quality and they care about the consumer. So it was kind of first on our list of (stores) we wanted to go after because they have such a reputable name."

Meanwhile, the 31-year-old centre is also not ready to throw himself head-on into an after-hockey career either. So like other NHLers, he is casting an eye towards opportunities overseas.

Konopka, who signed a two-year, \$1.85-million deal with the free-spending Minnesota Wild in the summer, is looking at "different countries" right now. Upon further probing, he says he'll likely wind up either in Poland or Russia.

"We've been talking with a KHL team the last week or so," he said. "As of right now I'm getting closer and closer to signing that deal."

Now, Konopka would seem to fit the European style of play like a long-bladed snow shovel goes into a small, round bucket of salt.

In 250 NHL games, he has amassed 877 penalty minutes, including league-leading totals in 2009-10 (265 with the Lightning) and 2010-11 (307 with the Islanders). He dropped to third on the list last season, racking up 193 with the Senators, but that was in just 55 games.

He's also been one of the NHL's most frequent fighters the last three years, dropping the gloves a total of 80 times.

But while others here have knocked his skating, Konopka does not believe he'll be like a fish out of ice water on the larger rink across the continent.

"In the Russian league now they're starting to realize the best players need to be taken care of," he said. "They've made a big push the last few years to get a little more physical in Russia."

Making the jump over the Atlantic now doesn't mean Konopka has resigned himself to the fact this NHL season will be wiped out.

He pointed out that "things can happen in a hurry" with negotiations for a new CBA and said he's staying positive the two sides will strike a deal. He also clarified the 'PA's most recent move.

"Our vote wasn't for filing for the disclaimer (of interest)," said Konopka, referring to a move that could push the matter to a courtroom. "The vote was to give the negotiation committee the power to pull the trigger if they feel it's needed. Those are the guys that have the most knowledge of what's going on in the negotiations. I voted yes, because they should have the power to invoke that, if they're going to do it. We haven't done anything yet. It's just giving them the option.

"I think it helps things because it was clearly stated that a lot of players have faith in the committee and in (executive director Don) Fehr. That's a positive. Hopefully it will help lead to a resolution sooner than later."

As both a player and an entrepreneur, Konopka knows the lockout is "terrible for business."

"I don't agree with the owners, but I understand some of their views," he said. "The reality of the matter is these 30 NHL owners are successful in business before getting involved with us, or they wouldn't have the bankroll to buy a team. These guys are obviously very highly intelligent businesspeople that know what they're doing. So it's something that eventually, hopefully, common sense will come to the forefront."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 12.28.2012

647095 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers draft pick scores in U.S. junior team's rout of Germany

BRIAN BABINEAU

Defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere, a player who may one day quarterback the Flyers' power play, scored a power-play goal as the United States cruised past Germany, 8-0, in the IIHF World Junior Championship tournament Thursday in Ufa, Russia.

"I like what I see from him. He's very creative with the puck," said Ian Laperriere, the Flyers' director of player development. "I'm glad he's playing in this tournament because it's a chance to see how he responds."

It was the first game in the International Ice Hockey Federation tournament for the Americans, who will have a much tougher challenge Friday when they face Russia in a 9 a.m. game that will be televised by the NHL Network and streamed live on NHL.com.

Eight players scored for Team USA on Thursday.

"We stuck to our game plan: all speed and forecheck hard," said Gostisbehere, a Union College (N.Y.) sophomore, in a phone interview from Russia after the game. "It's a big confidence-builder for us, and we're going to feed off it."

The lefthanded-shooting Gostisbehere, a Florida native who was drafted by the Flyers in the third round (78th overall) in June, gave Team USA a 5-0, second-period lead as he one-timed a blast from the top of the right circle into the upper corner.

The U.S. team scored 19 seconds into the game and never looked back.

Speedy left winger Johnny Gaudreau, a sophomore star from Boston College who played for three years at Gloucester Catholic, also helped the Americans.

"It's good to get a game under our belt," said Gaudreau, 19, who grew up in Carneys Point, N.J., and whose father, Guy, is the hockey director at the Hollydell Ice Arena in Sewell. "All four lines had goals, and our [defense] played well, and both of our goalies did a great job."

Gaudreau, a fourth-round selection of the Calgary Flames in 2011, helped Boston College win the national title last season. He has 11 goals and 23 points in 14 games this year for a B.C. team that is ranked No. 1 in the nation. The 5-foot-9, 150-pounder has been mentioned as a top candidate for the Hobey Baker Award, given to the nation's top collegiate player.

"It's exciting to hear that, but I don't let it get too far in my head," said Gaudreau, who formerly played for the Philadelphia Little Flyers and Team Comcast. "I'm just trying to win games and play well, and the guys are so close, it's been easy so far."

Gostisbehere (pronounced GOST-is-bear) has recovered from a summer concussion and has five goals and 13 points in 15 games for Union.

"I'm very excited to see what he can become," Laperriere said. "He's only going to get stronger and more confident."

Nicknamed "Ghost," Gostisbehere is 5-foot-11 and weighs just 167 pounds, so he uses his speed and smarts to compensate. Gostisbehere, 19, acknowledged that he needs to put on some pounds to help win more puck battles in the corners.

But Laperriere doesn't want him to bulk up too much.

"He moves well and is very agile, and that's what we like about him," Laperriere said. "We don't want him to put on too much weight. Today it's a fast game, and you don't need to be big."

Laperriere said Gostisbehere reminds him of a young Duncan Keith, a 29-year-old standout defenseman with the Chicago Blackhawks who is known for his stellar two-way play.

"I'm not saying he's him yet, but I like the way he wants the puck," Laperriere said. "Every chance he gets, he moves into the [offensive] play, sometimes too much. But I'd rather see someone who wants to get involved than the other way around."

Most young defensemen who jump into the offense have defensive shortcomings, Laperriere said. Gostisbehere is different.

"His defensive game is underrated," he said. "He's always in the right position."

Gostisbehere has not set a timetable for when he thinks he can reach the NHL.

"I'm just taking it one step at a time," he said. "I want to finish college and see where it takes me."

Before returning to Union - which he helped make a stunning run to the Frozen Four last season - Gostisbehere will try to aid Team USA's drive toward a championship.

"It's the greatest opportunity you can have, representing your country," he said. "We get to fly around the world and put the jersey on for our country, and we're having a blast."

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.28.2012

647096 Philadelphia Flyers

Team USA crushes Team Germany

Deanna Vasso, Philly.com Staff

The International Ice Hockey Federation's 2013 under 20 World Junior Hockey Championship began preliminary rounds this week. Team USA played their first game on Thursday in Ufa, Russia against Team Germany. USA crushed Germany in an 8-0 shutout win.

The IIHF's Lucas Aykroyd reports,

"The top American line came out on fire. Alex Galchenyuk and Riley Barber notched a goal and two assists apiece, while Sean Kuraly added a goal and an assist.

Jacob Trouba, Shayne Gostisbehere, Ryan Hartman, J.T. Miller, and Seth Jones also scored for the Americans." [ to view the full story]

Having survived the roster cuts needed for the competition, Flyers prospect Shayne Gostisbehere was among the top goal scorers in the game with a power play goal.

The Americans used their bigger size to their advantage over the smaller German players. They also were quicker on the attack by assaulting Germany's goalie Marvin Cüpper with 46 shots throughout the game.

Due to the Americans constant attack of Germany's net, American starter goaltender John Gibson only had to make 19 saves throughout the game.

The Americans are set to play Team Russia on Friday at 9 a.m. EST. Team Russia will have the home ice advantage. The Russians also have a talented roster with tough players like Nail Yakupov and Mikhal Grigorenko.

The game against Team Russia will be more of a challenge for Gibson, but he and the rest of the talented young players on Team USA are anticipating the battle.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.28.2012

647097 Philadelphia Flyers

Briere signs extension with DEL's Eisbaren Berlin

Staff

With NHL games canceled through Jan. 14 and no end to the 103-day-old lockout in sight, hockey fans aren't the only ones growing less optimistic about the chances of a 2012-13 season.

As such, Flyers center Danny Briere -- who's been playing with Eisbaren Berlin of the Deutsche Eishockey Liga of Germany since October -- signed a contract extension on Thursday through the end of the DEL season, his agent, Pat Brisson, confirms.

Briere's contract would allow the 35-year-old to depart Germany for Philadelphia if the NHL were to return this season. But if the entire season is canceled, Briere will remain in Berlin.

"They have been treating him first class," Brisson said.

Briere is Berlin's top scorer, and is fifth-overall in the DEL, with 33 points (nine goals).

He first signed a contract with Eisbaren Berlin on Oct. 4 along with Claude Giroux, who returned to the U.S. on Nov. 20 after sustaining a neck injury. Giroux has returned to the ice, but not with the Eisbaren, who will participate in the first-ever Winter Game, Germany's version of the NHL's Winter Classic.

Briere's contract with the Flyers continues through 2014-15.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.28.2012

647098 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL Notes: Hudler OK after scary injury

Staff

Calgary Flame Jiri Hudler needed stitches after taking a skate to his neck overseas, according to the Czech League's play-by-play announcer (via ProHockeyTalk).

But it could have been much worse.

Hudler's injury is believed to not be serious. Fortunately, the skate did not cut an artery in the Calgary winger's neck.

The 28-year-old posted 25 goals and 25 assists for 50 points last season with the Red Wings. Entering his first year with the Flames, Hudler spent his previous seven seasons in Detroit.

Kadri leaves game with 'headaches'



Toronto Maple Leaf Nazem Kadri left an AHL game after taking an elbow to the head, according to the Globe & Mail's James Mirtle (via ProHockeyTalk).

However, Kadri did not come out right after he took the elbow. The 22-year-old continued playing after a power play was assessed to the opposing team for the hit, but then exited with headaches, according to teammate Dallas Eakins.

Kadri, a three-year center, played in 22 games last season for Toronto and scored five goals.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.28.2012

647099 Pittsburgh Penguins

W.Pa. hockey stars pace Team USA to opening win

By Rob Rossi

Evgeni Malkin and some Pittsburghers will be at odds Friday.

Host nation Russia will take on the United States at the International Ice Hockey Federation World Junior Championship tournament in Ufa, Russia. NHL Network will broadcast the game live at 9 a.m., with a replay at 8 p.m.

Teams USA, Russia and Canada are in the same group. All three can advance past the preliminary round in the annual tournament that includes clubs composed of the NHL's top 20-and-under prospects.

The United States has medaled in two of the past three World Junior tournaments — claiming its second gold in 2010 and a bronze in 2011.

Team USA started strong Thursday with an 8-0 win against Germany at Ufa Arena. The margin of victory is significant because goal differential is a tiebreaker.

Whitehall's John Gibson, Team USA's No. 1 goalie, stopped 19 shots through two periods. He did not play in the third.

Forward J.T. Miller of Coraopolis scored a goal. He and Upper St. Clair's Vince Trocheck combined to win 25 of 36 faceoffs.

Malkin has not said which of the World Junior Championship games he will attend. Russia has not hosted the tournament since 2001. Malkin, the Penguins' reigning NHL scoring champion and MVP, is playing for his hometown Metallurg Magnitogorsk of the Kontinental Hockey League during the NHL lockout.

The lockout, enacted by owners Sept. 15, has resulted in games being canceled through Jan. 14. No negotiations between the league and Players' Association are scheduled.

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.28.2012

647100 Pittsburgh Penguins

Robert Morris hockey attracts strong field for Three Rivers Classic

Inaugural event good showcase for local talent

By Sam Werner / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

For an inaugural event, this weekend's Three Rivers Classic will have a familiar feel to it.

Robert Morris, Penn State, Ohio State and Miami (Ohio) will take the ice at Consol Energy Center in Pittsburgh's first major midseason college tournament, hoping to provide respite for a lockout-starved hockey city.

"I think this is an excellent field and should be an exciting two days of hockey," Colonials coach Derek Schooley said. "Hopefully people that are missing hockey will get behind college hockey because it is an excellent product. Players play extremely hard and play with a lot of passion."

Today's semifinals will feature Robert Morris facing off against Penn State and Miami taking on Ohio State. The two winners will play in the championship Saturday, and the losers will play in a consolation game. The semifinals are rematches of games that took place two weeks ago. Robert Morris beat Penn State, 3-2, in State College, and the RedHawks won at Ohio State, 3-1.

"Both teams are familiar with each other, so that will probably carry over from last game," Miami coach Enrico Blasi said. "You've still got to play the game."

The connection of these four teams goes beyond just this season. Penn State is new to the party, in its first year in Division I, but Robert Morris has played Miami and Ohio State routinely throughout its nine-year history. The Three Rivers Classic is the evolution of showcase games the Colonials have played against the Buckeyes and RedHawks at Consol Energy Center or Mellon Arena in previous years.

Schooley said he also hopes to develop the rivalry with Penn State. The Nittany Lions will play at Robert Morris next year, and the teams are set to be the hosts of the Three Rivers Classic for the foreseeable future.

"I think it's natural that you develop rivalries with schools that are in your area," Schooley said.

With Penn State joining the competition (and entering the ultra-competitive Big Ten next year), these four programs will likely be at the forefront of recruiting a burgeoning Pittsburgh youth hockey scene.

Three of the four teams have Pittsburgh-area natives on their rosters. Miami's leading scorer, freshman Riley Barber, hails from Washington, Pa. Barber will not play this weekend, though, as he is in Russia playing for Team USA in the IIHF World Junior Championship.

"Pittsburgh is becoming a very well-known hockey area," Schooley said. "The growth of hockey has been tremendous with the growth of the Penguins."

Even though pro hockey players haven't occupied Consol Energy Center since the Penguins were knocked out of the first round of the NHL playoffs last year, they still have an impact on the college players taking the ice this weekend.

"You start talking about Pittsburgh, Sidney Crosby, [Evgeni] Malkin, all those things, these guys, it's all they thing about. Our guys are on cloud nine right now," said Ohio State associate head coach Steve Rohlik, who will coach the Buckeyes this weekend while head coach Mark Osiecki serves as an assistant for the U.S. team at the Junior Championship.

For now, Schooley said he hopes the Three Rivers Classic becomes an annual fixture on the Pittsburgh sporting calendar, and said that perennial power Boston College has already committed to play in next year's event.

"I think anytime you can play for a championship, whether its the beginning of the year or at Christmastime, it's something you can really focus on and be a springboard," Schooley said.

Post Gazette LOADED: 12.28.2012

647101 Toronto Maple Leafs

Ex-Leaf Costello busted in burger joint brawl

By Lance Hornby

TORONTO - Rich Costello, one of the players the Maple Leafs received in the controversial trade of captain Darryl Sittler in 1982, was arrested last week on suspicion of assault in Southern California.

Laguna Beach Police Capt. Jason Kravetz told the Los Angeles Times that Costello and fellow ex-NHLer Jean-Francois Jomphe were picked up after an incident at a Jack In The Box fast food drive-through on Dec. 21. According to the police report, a 20-year-old male driver and a group of young friends in a VW Jetta were cut off in the line by a cab, with two passengers.

Angered by a hand gesture the VW driver made, Jomphe allegedly approached the Jetta and shattered the rear window, with glass shards cutting a male passenger in the back seat. The report says Costello tried to

restrain Jomphe, but after a 44-year-old male bystander tried to get the two older men back in the cab, Costello allegedly tried to punch and kick him.

Costello, 49, was booked on suspicion of assault. Jomphe, 39, and a former Anaheim Duck, was charged with misdemeanour battery and vandalism. The two area residents were released for a later court date.

Costello, a New England high school forward, was a second-round pick of the Philadelphia Flyers in 1981. He was in the Sittler trade along with prospect Ken Strong and a second-round draft pick that became Peter Ihnacak. Costello played just 12 NHL games, all with the Leafs, getting four points. He was on the farm another four years and spent the balance of his short career in the minors and Europe.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 12.28.2012

647102 Toronto Maple Leafs

Leafs prospect Nazem Kadri stays home from AHL road trip after hit to head

Sean Fitz-Gerald

Highly touted Toronto Maple Leafs hopeful Nazem Kadri did not accompany the team's American Hockey League affiliate as it embarked on a short road trip Thursday, one day after the forward left a game complaining of headaches.

A team official with the Toronto Marlies confirmed the 22-year-old forward was staying home. The Marlies were en route to Michigan, where they will face the Grand Rapids Griffins on Friday and Saturday.

Kadri, selected seventh overall by the Leafs in the 2009 NHL Entry Draft, was injured in the second period of Toronto's game against the Hamilton Bulldogs on Wednesday. He was handling the puck in his own end when Hamilton's Zack Stortini — a player with 104 penalty minutes and one solitary point this season — levelled him with a blindside hit to the head.

Stortini was assessed a match penalty for checking to the head. Kadri remained on the ice and earned an assist as the Marlies scored on the power-play that followed, but he left the game and did not return in the third period. He had just returned after missing three games with a hip injury.

"He told our trainers he hurt a rib and that he had headaches," Marlies coach Dallas Eakins said, in the Toronto Sun. "We shut him down."

The AHL will not issue any supplemental discipline for the hit.

"The AHL has reviewed the incident and rescinded the match penalty," league spokesperson Jason Chaimovitch wrote in an email to the National Post.

The Marlies won the game, 3-2, in front of an announced crowd of 18,800 at the Air Canada Centre.

Eakins was not immediately available for comment, but he did post an update on Twitter later on Thursday.

National Post LOADED: 12.28.2012

647103 Toronto Maple Leafs

2012 in Sport: Plenty of spin and PR, but still no end in sight to NHL lockout

Michael Traikos

2012 in Sport: Three hockey moments to remember

CROSBY RETURNS FOR GOOD

Sidney Crosby's second comeback of the season was not nearly as dramatic as his four-point return from a severe concussion in November. But while that appearance was fleeting — Crosby lasted just seven more games before missing another 40 games after re-injuring his head and neck — this was more significant. Crosby, who had an assist and was on the ice

for three of Pittsburgh's five goals in a 5-2 win against the New York Rangers, was back — for good. He played in the final 14 games of the regular season as well as six playoff games. The Penguins captain, whose injury became such a distraction that there had reportedly been talk of giving his 'C' away, scored nine goals and a remarkable 33 points during that span.

THERE WILL BE BLOOD

The playoffs have a different intensity than the regular season, but last season's opening round may have set a new record for mayhem. Marian Hossa was taken off the ice on a stretcher after a late hit from Raffi Torres; Shea Weber (pictured) rammed Henrik Zetterberg's head into the glass as though he were trying to extract coconut juice; and by the end of the first round, eight players had been suspended — one more than in the entire 2011 playoffs. The on-ice rage reached a new high during Game 3 of the Battle of Pennsylvania. There was hair pulling, headshots and even a Hulk Hogan imitation. There were three suspensions and a combined 138 minutes of penalties. There were also 12 combined goals.

UNLIKELY KINGS

It has been so long that hockey was last played that you almost forget that the Los Angeles not only won the Stanley Cup, but did so as the eighth-seeded team in the Western Conference. No one really considered the Kings underdogs, especially after they made a coaching change, acquired in Jeff Carter in a trade and finished the season on a 12-4-3 run. Led by an otherworldly goaltending performance from Jonathan Quick, the Kings torched the Western Conference. The Kings lost just twice in the first three rounds, won a playoff-record 10 straight games on the road and defeated the New Jersey Devils in six games in the final. Los Angeles, which entered the league in 1967 as one of the first six expansion teams, will have to wait just a little longer before raising its championship banner to the rafters.

How do you come up with hockey biggest moment of the year when the biggest moment has yet to arrive?

The NHL lockout started back in September and while it has provided fans with heartbreak (nearly 50% of the schedule has been erased) and much hand-wringing (can't they figure this out already?), it is far from over. We do, however, seem to be getting closer to the end, whatever that is.

Last Thursday, the league cancelled games up until Jan. 15, which is probably the drop-dead point. Meaning the next move will probably be the last move.

One of these days — and it could come before the calendar turns over to 2013 — commissioner Gary Bettman is going to announce the start of an abbreviated 48-game season or he is going to officially cancel the season.

That moment will undoubtedly be the biggest of the lockout. And while we do not know if it will be a good or bad moment — having lost so much already, is there anything that can be labelled as good? — we can probably guess where it will take place.

In a fight that has mostly taken place behind closed doors and unknown locations, the podium is where we receive most of our information and competing interpretations of that information. It has replaced the rink as hockey's stage and has become the defining image of the lockout.

For Bettman and NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr, the podium is where they seem to do their real work.

As we plod along in what has been more than three months of labour strife, the lockout has been as much about spin and public relations efforts as it is about coming to an agreement. Nowhere was that more apparent than on Dec. 5, which if you had to choose might have been the most frustrating day so far of this negotiation.

Leading up to that day, there had been genuine optimism that an agreement was within reach. Owners and players had met privately for two days in New York and had agreed to split hockey-related revenues 50-50, as well as made other concessions. They had reportedly made so much progress that coaches were calling players in Europe to be ready to come home for training camp.

And then, just like that, it all fell apart.

During the day, a podium with the NHL logo had been set up in a Manhattan hotel for what was expected to be the biggest news conference of the lockout. It sat unattended for hours upon hours. Finally, Fehr arrived and relayed to reporters and fans — it was broadcast live across Canada — what seemed to be good news: hockey was close to returning. But as Fehr

spoke, NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly was leaving a voice message on Steve Fehr's cell phone that essentially stuck a pin in the balloon.

The NHL, it turned out, had wanted the union to say yes or no to the offer hammered out the day before, not use it as the basis of another return offer. So, mere minutes after leaving the podium with a smile on his face, Fehr returned and told everyone that "it looks like this is not going to be resolved in the immediate future."

Within the hour, Bettman was gripping the podium like he was on a rollercoaster and through trembling lips raged against Fehr's apparent deception.

Mary Altaffer/The Associated Press

"That reminds me of the last time the players the players said we were close, and we were a billion dollars apart," Bettman said. "I don't know why he did that ... I find it almost incomprehensible that he did that ... I am disappointed beyond belief that we are where we are tonight, and we're going to have to take a deep breath and try to regroup.

"What you're witnessing is very tough bargaining. We kept giving and giving and giving, we made five separate proposals, we kept negotiating against ourselves ... my concern is, and maybe the mistake was, is maybe we should stop negotiating."

Claus Andersen/Getty Images

The day served as a microcosm of the entire lockout. Whether it was Bettman's take-it-or-leave-it proposal to save an 82-game season in October or the decision to meet with U.S. federal mediators in November, the lockout has teased fans by providing false hope that a deal is around the corner. Then, once you get there, you realize that the road keeps stretching on.

"If you would have asked me back then if I thought this lockout would be still going on now, I would have said no," Toronto Maple Leafs defenceman John-Michael Liles said. "You think something would ultimately be figured out. But ultimately, the players have to agree on a deal that is at least decent for us. And so far, there's been bits and pieces that have been proposed to us that we can live with.

"Ultimately, we're not getting anything close to what we had previously. We understand that. But to sit there and say you can have this but you have to take this, it's hasn't really been a negotiation. It's been a lot of take-it-or-leave-its."

The problem during this whole mess is that the two sides have always had an end date in mind. It was not the start of training camp, or the start of the season, or the Winter Classic or any other artificial dates. It was probably always mid-January.

If you would have asked me back then if I thought this lockout would be still going on now, I would have said no

Even then, we are not totally sure.

So with about three weeks to go, both sides continue to move their pieces around the chessboard looking for that final strike that will take the other side down. Last Friday, the NHLPA reportedly voted overwhelmingly in favour of giving its executive board the power to file a disclaimer of interest. The next step would be to file an anti-trust lawsuit against the owners, if it goes that far.

If it does, it is a move that could potentially turn every single player into a free agent, and just might be the biggest moment of the lockout — and potentially in the history of the NHL.

Either way, something is coming. We do not know what it is or if it will be good or bad. But this thing is far from done yet.

National Post LOADED: 12.28.2012

647104 Toronto Maple Leafs

2012 in Sport: Three hockey moments to remember

Michael Traikos

2012 in Sport: Plenty of spin and PR, but still no end to NHL lockout in sight

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Read more...

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National Post LOADED: 12.28.2012

647105 Vancouver Canucks

Mason Raymond and family bound for Sweden,

By Brad Ziemer, Vancouver Sun December 27, 2012

VANCOUVER - Mason Raymond won't play his first game with his new Swedish team until Jan. 3, but the first big challenge of his overseas hockey adventure figures to come New Year's Day when he and wife Megan make the long trek from Calgary with their active nine-month-old son Max.

Raymond was determined that if he was going to play overseas, his family was going to be along for the ride.

"The biggest thing for me in picking a spot over there was I wanted a good fit for my family," Raymond said in a phone interview Thursday.

Raymond signed a deal this week with Orebro HK of the Swedish first division.

"To be honest I've had quite a few offers and I guess I was hopeful we'd have a deal done in the NHL earlier on," Raymond said about the timing of his decision.

He doesn't know much about his new team, other than the fact a good friend, former Colorado second-round pick Jared Aulin, told him it would be a good place to come and play.

"Knowing somebody going into this team helps," Raymond said. "Jared grew up in Calgary as well. He's a few years older than me and we never played hockey together but I got to know him growing up. He talked to me about the team and I'm happy things have worked out."

Raymond also spoke to Daniel and Henrik Sedin, who joked about being able to converse with him in Swedish when he gets back.

"I just said I am going over to your homeland and they said, 'enjoy it, it's going to be fun.' They were also joking about me learning a bit of Swedish."

First, he'll have to learn the names of his new teammates. He didn't recognize many names when he scanned the team's roster on the Internet.

"Carl Gunnarsson (a Toronto Maple Leafs defenceman) is there," Raymond said. "After that, I don't know much about them. I have done some looking on the Internet and that sort of stuff and I have talked to the GM a bit. But they sound like they are looking forward to having me and I am looking forward to going over. I think it's just a great opportunity to play some hockey and get back to playing the game that I love."

Raymond has spent most of the fall skating with a group of players in Calgary and feels like he's as prepared as he can be to begin playing games.

"You are never going to be in game shape until you play real games, but I have been skating in Calgary with a great group of guys," he said. "The Christmas season never helps for staying in the best of shape, but I do feel like I'm in the best shape I can be given the situation."

Raymond remains hopeful that a NHL season can still be salvaged. And if it is, he figures the time he spends in Sweden will serve him well when he returns home to join the Canucks.

"I'll go over there, play some hockey, get some experience and get back into good game shape and hopefully we can still get a season in the NHL and I can come back and jump right back in and feel like I am in good game shape."

Raymond's new team is finding him accommodation in Orebro, a city of just over 100,000 located about two hours west of Stockholm.

"I think it's about the size of Red Deer so there should be a nice, small-town mentality," Raymond said. "Everything is taken care of, they said just bring your clothes and whatever essentials you need and come over and have some fun and play some hockey."

Raymond's agent J.P. Barry said his client's deal runs through the month of January, with an option to renew.

Barry said the 14-team Swedish first division, or Allsvenskan, has become a popular landing spot for locked-out NHLers as the Swedish Elite League has refused to sign NHL players unless they commit to playing an entire season.

Raymond's first game for eighth-placed Orebro on Jan. 3 is against Mora, which features Anze Kopitar of the Los Angeles Kings and Bobby Ryan of the Anaheim Ducks.

"He and I talked quite a bit and I said I think now is probably right about the time and he agreed," Barry said of Raymond. "He's itching to play and you want that and we just felt that Sweden was a good fit for him."

Raymond is just the fourth Canuck regular to sign in Europe. Goalie Cory Schneider is playing for Ambri-Piotta in the Swiss League, Jannik Hansen is skating with Tappara Tampere in the Finnish Elite League and Dale Weise is playing for Tilburg in the Netherlands. Top Canuck prospect Nicklas Jensen is playing for AIK in the Swedish Elite League.

Barry said he expects the Sedins, who are also his clients, to head to Sweden quickly if the NHL cancels its season in mid-January.

"Yeah, I think if the season was cancelled they'd definitely want to play for a while so I think they'd probably leave as soon as that happened," Barry said.

If they do go, the Sedins will play for their hometown team, MoDo, where former Canuck captain Markus Naslund is the general manager.

Vancouver Sun: LOADED: 12.28.2012

647106 Washington Capitals

Capitals prospect Barber helps U.S. chop up Germany

Brian McNally

Hockey fans have to be careful using the world juniors tournament to judge their NHL team's prospects. It's a small sample size, and the competition varies from excellent to nonexistent.

Still, the Capitals have made their living through the draft in recent years, and it must be gratifying to see one of their 2012 selections make a quick impact at the tournament -- especially given where they grabbed him. Riley Barber was Washington's sixth-round pick in June. He is listed at 5-foot-11 and 180 pounds and was good enough to crack Team USA's roster for the tournament.

Barber had a goal and two assists in an 8-0 thrashing of Germany on Thursday in the opening game for Team USA. Germany is the weakest team in Group B, so take it with a grain of salt.

But Barber, 18, is at least building on a fine freshman season at Miami University, where he has eight goals and 14 assists to lead the fifth-ranked RedHawks (11-3-4) with 22 points. That is 12th in the nation and tops among freshmen.

Washington Examiner LOADED: 12.28.2012

647107 Winnipeg Jets

NHL, NHLPA at edge of the cliff

By Paul Friesen

I don't know what millionaires and billionaires get their families for Christmas, but it's time they set their toys aside.

NHL types got to spend extended holiday time at home, for a change, no doubt a silver lining to the amount of gold they've lost. So now there's no reason for them not to hammer out a new CBA.

After all, the alternative isn't pretty, right?

Or is it?

If the NHL and the NHLPA are, indeed, heading towards the edge of a cliff, what's over it?

Will the league even be in business for the start of next season?

There's no guarantee of that if the union decertifies and the two sides end up in a long court battle.

What will the league look like whenever it does throw the doors open again?

I put the question out on Twitter, and a common theme emerged.

— Empty arenas, only now they're empty with games on the ice. — @AlexHoweWPG

— Eventual contraction ... If the season is lost, 6 already shaky markets will die... Who in their right mind buys into NHL ? — @Epwich76

— contraction, 3-4 teams at least — @GimilJetsMan

n kinda makes wonder what the players are fighting for when they are killing teams in the states and job — @pdella19

Contraction is a popular theory. Some of the so-called experts have even raised the possibility.

The thinking is struggling markets in the southern U.S. won't be able to rebound from another lost season, or more. That sponsors and fans will abandon a game they don't have a natural affinity to.

Likely candidates for a headstone in pro hockey's graveyard include the Phoenix Coyotes, Florida Panthers and Columbus Blue Jackets, and that's just for starters.

If you're like me, you're thinking, "Sign me up."

Having a smaller NHL would be like a switch from American to Canadian beer: less watered down, with a little more punch.

How many people in real hockey markets care if we lose the league's bottom-feeders?

Maybe if there weren't as many sinkholes in the league there wouldn't be a labour dispute every time the CBA expired.

Prices might even come down. Because some buildings will be hard to fill. Maybe not in Canada, but in middle-of-the-road markets they're going to have to win back the paying customer.

The drawbacks to contraction? None for the people that matter, the fans.

The only people hurt would be the players. And the owners.

Fewer teams would mean fewer player jobs, obviously. Some two dozen players per team would immediately stop collecting NHL paycheques, many winding up overseas, some in the minors, some worse.

The other fallout would be a drop in franchise values. A shrinking league does not have the appearance of a healthy league.

It's the main reason Gary Bettman has done everything he can to keep the Coyotes afloat, including convincing the rest of the league, and a desperate Glendale city council, to pay the team's bills.

Propping up franchise values, artificially, if need be, is what the game is really all about at the boardroom level. These may be billionaires, but they don't want to see a \$200-million asset become a \$100-million asset, virtually overnight.

Yet that's exactly what could happen, at least in the short-term, if the NHL contracts dramatically.

So, to recap: if this thing hurtles over the cliff next month, we could eventually see a better game at lower prices, while the players and the owners will feel some real pain.

Feel free to get right to the edge, fellas.

We might even give you a little push.

Winnipeg Sun LOADED 12.28.2012

647108 Websites

ESPN / Sting of shame rises as lockout goes on

By Scott Burnside

That creaking and groaning you hear isn't just the sound of chairs being pushed away from holiday tables; it's the weight of the hockey world bearing down on the NHL and its owners.

Every day that passes without formal talks -- two weeks and counting since the two sides could put aside their enmity and appear in the same building, let alone the same room -- is a straw that continues to collect on the bowed back of the pathetic camel that is the NHL.

Every syllable uttered by important figures like New Jersey Devils president and GM Lou Lamoriello adds more weight to a league that has been flayed and filleted from the moment this utterly asinine lockout of its players began on Sept. 15.

Lamoriello, a key figure in the resolution to the last lockout (No. 2 in commissioner Gary Bettman's Terrible Trio of lockouts), told The Star-Ledger he was "embarrassed" that the lockout had gone on this long.

Sure, Lamoriello's relationship with Bettman and the league may have soured over the penalties levied against his squad as a result of the Ilya Kovalchuk contract, but he remains an imposing figure in league matters.

Now, Lamoriello didn't say he was embarrassed at how the league has conducted itself. He is far too intelligent a man to put himself in Bettman's sights with any kind of public criticism. But his candid comments about being embarrassed speak volumes and should ring loud and clear throughout an ownership group that will have no one to blame but itself if this season slips into the abyss in the next couple of weeks.

Veteran netminder Martin Brodeur, Lamoriello's longtime anchor in New Jersey for two decades, told ESPN.com's Pierre LeBrun on Wednesday evening that his veteran GM certainly has earned the right to express himself given his years in the game and the respect people have for him around the league.

And Brodeur himself grows more concerned by the day with the impact of this lockout on the game.

"It's scarier than the other lockouts," Brodeur said, adding that people seemingly don't care about what's happening right now, which should concern everyone involved.

Brodeur, who added that he was 100 percent behind what the NHLPA has tried to do in these talks, also said he was frustrated and "very disappointed" the two sides haven't held talks in a few weeks.

As we await what will apparently be the endgame of this labor dispute, all owners should feel a sting of shame.

As the last days of this lamentable fall and early winter of 2012 tick away, the league remains quiet, waiting presumably for what will be a last-ditch effort to save at least a portion of the 2012-13 season. The feeling is that the league has one more give in it; maybe it's limits on contract length, length of a new CBA, some transitional benefits to the players in the form of amnesty buyouts or some similar method of easing the pain of a revised share of hockey revenues and a lowering of the salary cap. The theory is that the NHL is waiting until the last minute to try to strike a deal because NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr has exploited previous moves by the owners to reach a settlement by continuing to push for more.

It is a dangerous game of brinkmanship to say the least.

The league continues to be hammered in various media -- those that still care enough to turn its attention to a game that can't help but repeat its own labor follies -- while the question of how much damage has been done to the once-thriving game looms large with the season hanging in the balance.

It is imperative that the league and its players come to some sort of resolution to see hockey return this season.

Lose another whole season with legal battles looming and who knows what kind of lunar landscape awaits, which is why many believe the two sides will find a resolution in the final frame of this sordid drama.

But while we wait for that elusive moment, the weight continues to build on the back of a league and a game whose shame apparently knows no bounds.

ESPN LOADED: 12.28.2012

647109 Websites

ESPN / 2012 wasn't just hockey apocalypse

By Scott Burnside

The Winter Classic was a great way to start off the 2012 calendar year.

The NHL lockout makes it hard to remember that there was really hockey outside of contract lengths, HRR and back-diving deals.

But there was. A whole bunch of it. And maybe remembering will help us envision a future where the game returns from the boardrooms and under the thumb of lawyers to the ice, where fans can enjoy it once again. Maybe.

At any rate, here's a look at 2012, the calendar year, in hockey as we remember it.

#### Classic Moments

Jan. 2, 2012: We recall the Winter Classic 2012 -- held Jan. 2 to avoid conflicts with the NFL's final regular-season games -- for a couple of reasons, including the last-minute penalty shot by Danny Briere that gave the host Philadelphia Flyers a chance to tie their hated rivals, the New York Rangers. Briere was denied, though, by Henrik Lundqvist in a fitting end to a terrific 3-2 Ranger victory. Remember the Flyers' starter? That's right, not big-money, big-universe netminder Ilya Bryzgalov but Sergei Bobrovsky, who has since been dealt to the Columbus Blue Jackets. Our other memory, not quite in 2012 but close enough, was seeing 48,000 show up for an alumni game that featured Bernie Parent, Bob Clarke and Eric Lindros. Yeah, tickets were bundled together but folks didn't have to show up. But they did. Just another reminder of the stupidity of the lockout as we consider what might have been this season and the canceled weekend featuring the Red Wings against the Maple Leafs and events scheduled for both Comerica Park in downtown Detroit and at Michigan Stadium.

#### A Winter of Discontent

Jan. 23: The Boston Bruins visited the White House, as is the custom with all Stanley Cup winners. All the team's active players were on hand -- and even some who were no longer with the team -- except defending Vezina and Conn Smythe Trophy winner Tim Thomas, who chose to politicize the normally apolitical moment by staying home. Thomas' stance created a media furor and infuriated many players and Bruins management. The event dogged Thomas throughout the season (he declined to answer questions about it at the All-Star Game in Ottawa shortly after). Thomas and the Bruins were ousted in the first round of the playoffs by the Washington Capitals, the seventh seed, in a hotly contested seven-game series. Shortly after the Bruins' season ended, Thomas announced, via his Facebook page, that he would be sitting out the 2012-13 season. Little did he know that the NHL would sit out as well, as though in silent support of his views.

#### Wild Ride (Down)

Feb. 18: The Minnesota Wild lost 4-0 to the St. Louis Blues, marking the team's 15th loss of some sort in a 19-game span, dating to New Year's Eve 2011. The stretch crippled a Wild team that in mid-December had been atop the NHL standings and tumbled out of the playoffs for the fourth straight season. The collapse set the stage for what would be the most explosive offseason in team history. (See below.)

#### Karma Is a Female Dog

March 2: Coach Randy Carlyle, dispatched earlier in the season by the Anaheim Ducks, was reunited with old pal Brian Burke when Carlyle was named head coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs. Carlyle, who won a Cup with Burke in Anaheim in 2007, replaced Ron Wilson. The firing shows that karma is indeed a, well, you know. Wilson enraged the large Toronto media contingent by announcing via Twitter on Christmas Day that his contract had been extended, a decision he knew would interrupt Christmas for those covering the team. Carlyle could not, however, get the Leafs over the hump, and they missed the playoffs for the seventh straight year. They are the only NHL team to have missed the postseason every season since the last lockout.

#### Sid the Kid Is Back

March 15: Pittsburgh Penguins captain Sidney Crosby returned to the ice after another prolonged absence because of concussion-related issues, collecting an assist in a victory over the Rangers in New York. Crosby had been sidelined since December, but managed to stay healthy for the duration of the regular season and playoffs, collecting 37 points in 22 regular-season games. In June 2012, he would sign a 12-year deal worth just over \$104 million, which should keep him a Penguin for the balance of his career.

#### Never A Dull Moment

March 29: The Montreal Canadiens ended a tawdry period of their remarkable history by firing GM Pierre Gauthier with less than two weeks to go in the regular season. The team had continued a period of decline on the ice under Gauthier, but the 2011-12 season was marked by decisions that made the team a laughingstock. Early in the season, the Habs fired assistant coach Perry Pearn, as if he was responsible for the team's poor play and not the overpaid, underachieving lineup Gauthier had assembled. Later, in December, head coach Jacques Martin was fired and replaced by

the unilingual Randy Cunneynorth, prompting an outcry in the French-speaking province. In a shameful display of pandering to the fan base, owner Geoff Molson apologized for the move, making Cunneynorth a lame-duck coach, the term "lame" pretty much also summing up the Habs' play. The Habs missed the playoffs and Gauthier was replaced by Marc Bergevin, who hired former Montreal head coach Michel Therrien on June 5 to take over the coaching duties.

#### Lose to Get In

April 5: With a shootout loss to the San Jose Sharks in their 81st game of the season, the Los Angeles Kings clinched a playoff berth. After a season in which they fired head coach Terry Murray in December, the Kings would in two months' time go on to win their first-ever Stanley Cup.

#### Lose to Get In, Part II

April 5: Meanwhile, across the continent, the Florida Panthers were clinching their first playoff berth since 2000 in spite of a 4-2 loss to the Capitals. Two days later, they would clinch their first Southeast Division title with a 4-1 victory over the Carolina Hurricanes on the final day of the regular season. The Panthers would go on to a disappointing seven-game loss to the New Jersey Devils in the opening round of the playoffs, but after a decade of meandering in the NHL wilderness, it was hard not to feel enthusiastic about the team's future under GM Dale Tallon and head coach Kevin Dineen. At the risk of pointing out the obvious, the lockout could not have come at a worse time for the Panthers.

#### Steven Stamkos

Steven Stamkos found the net quite often in 2011-12.

#### 60 Is the New 50

April 7: With a goal in the Tampa Bay Lightning's final regular-season game in Winnipeg, sniper Steven Stamkos reached the 60-goal plateau for the first time and earned him his first solo Rocket Richard Trophy for most goals scored in a season. Stamkos had shared the award with Sidney Crosby in 2010, when they each had 51 goals.

#### That's Using His Head

April 11: With time running out in Game 1 of the opening-round series between Central Division rivals Detroit Red Wings and Nashville Predators, Norris Trophy nominee Shea Weber grabbed Detroit star Henrik Zetterberg's head and rammed it not once but twice into the end boards. As per the NHL's bizarre system of punishment, Weber was assessed a \$2,500 fine. The Predators would go on to defeat Detroit in five games. Karmic or not, the Predators would be defeated by the Phoenix Coyotes in the next round of the playoffs after the Preds were wracked by controversy following the news that Andrei Kostitsyn and recently repatriated Kontinental Hockey League star Alexander Radulov were whooping it up into the wee hours at a Scottsdale bar. For what it's worth, Weber was one of the players who lobbied GM David Poile to return Radulov to the team late in the regular season.

#### Doggone It

April 19: Mikkel Boedker scored the overtime winner for the second straight game against Chicago Blackhawks netminder Corey Crawford to give the Coyotes a 3-1 series lead. Both goals were questionable; in fact, if they had not gone in, they would probably not even have counted as shots on goal. The Crawford muffs reinforced the longstanding belief that the Blackhawks, who have failed to make it past the first round after winning the Cup in 2010, have a gaping hole in their lineup that will continue to dog their efforts to return to contender status. This wild first-round series won in six games by Phoenix featured five one-goal games, four decided in overtime. It will likely be remembered most, however, for the disgraceful hit by Raffi Torres on Chicago star Marian Hossa -- which resulted in a 25-game suspension for Torres. That suspension was later reduced to 21 games. Hossa did not play again in the playoffs.

#### Defend Ye Not

April 25: Joel Ward scored at 2:57 of overtime in Game 7 to give the Capitals an improbable 2-1 victory over the defending Stanley Cup champion Bruins. That Mike Knuble was pretty much smothering Tim Thomas in the Boston goal went uncalled as the Caps, under new head coach Dale Hunter, pulled off one of the biggest playoff upsets in franchise history. Again we refer to karma, but in the next round against the Rangers it would be Ward who would take a late double minor for high sticking in Game 5 that would allow Ranger center Brad Richards to tie the game late

in regulation, then set up the winner in overtime as the Caps would fall in seven games.

#### Road Killed

June 9: The Devils defeated the Kings 2-1 at the Prudential Center in Newark to end the Kings' 10-game road winning streak during the playoffs.

#### The Last Game We Saw

June 11: Two days later, the Kings would avenge that loss with a 6-1 pummeling of the Devils to secure their first-ever Stanley Cup championship. The deciding game was marked by an early major boarding penalty to Steve Bernier after the Devils forward rammed L.A. defenseman Rob Scuderi face-first into the end boards. The Kings scored three times on the ensuing power play. To no one's surprise, Jonathan Quick was awarded the Conn Smythe as playoff MVP.

#### One Staal, Two Staal

June 22: Jordan Staal, one of the best two-way centers in the game, was dealt by Pittsburgh to Carolina, where he will join older brother Eric Staal, who happens to be the team captain. The Penguins received Brandon Sutter, a first-round draft pick and a prospect in exchange for Staal, who signed a 10-year, \$60 million extension nine days later.

#### Oilers Are on a Roll

June 22: The Edmonton Oilers selected Nail Yakupov with the first overall pick in the annual draft in Pittsburgh. It marked the third straight year the Oilers have selected first overall. Although the Blue Jackets are generally considered the worst-run franchise in the NHL, the Oilers have to be considered, given that they have yet to appear in a playoff game since advancing to the 2006 Stanley Cup finals. Throw in the three straight No. 1 picks and that's as telling a symbol of dysfunction as any.

#### Zach Parise

The Wild threw a whole bunch of money at free agent Zach Parise.

#### Wild and Wacky Stuff

July 4: After days of rumors and reams of stories about their possible destinations, free-agent gems Ryan Suter and Zach Parise signed identical 13-year deals with Minnesota worth \$98 million each. The signings vaulted the Wild to the top of the pack in the most-improved team discussion and put the team back on the radar in the State of Hockey and beyond. That owner Craig Leipold would later be part of the NHL owners' bargaining committee complaining about the need to change the current economic system didn't go unnoticed by anyone with even a modest sense of the definition of hypocrisy.

#### Taking A Flyer

July 19: The Flyers presented Shea Weber with an offer sheet worth \$110 million over 14 years. The offer sheet accepted by the restricted free agent included \$27 million in payments in the first season of the deal. The Predators breathed deeply and matched the offer. One of the curious parts of the lucrative contract is that Weber's deal does not include a no-trade or no-move clause.

#### Nashing Your Teeth

July 23: After months of speculation, Blue Jackets captain Rick Nash was traded to the Rangers for Artem Anisimov, Brandon Dubinsky, defensive prospect Tim Erixon and a first-round draft pick. Defensive prospect Steven Delisle also went to the Rangers, whose Stanley Cup stock rose immediately after securing the former Rocket Richard Trophy winner. For the Blue Jackets, it is the end of another sad chapter in the franchise's wholly sad history. Erixon is the wild card in the deal, and if Dubinsky reverts to the 25- to 30-goal promise he showed earlier in his career, then maybe the hole in the lineup created by Nash's departure won't seem as great. Still, optically, is there anything worse than having your franchise player throw up his hands in disgust? No. We didn't think so.

#### Morons, More or Less

Sept. 15: The third lockout under commissioner Gary Bettman begins. Fans and media begin a protracted period of coming up with innovative ways to say "morons."

#### Remembering Hockey

Nov. 12: Joe Sakic, Pavel Bure, Mats Sundin and Adam Oates entered the Hockey Hall of Fame as the Class of 2012. And for a moment at least, it

was fun to think about real hockey played by some of the game's greatest players.

#### They'll Be Back

Nov. 17: Flyers star Claude Giroux injured his neck while playing for Berlin in the German elite league. Giroux saw a neck/back specialist in Atlanta before returning to Ottawa to continue working out and rehabbing. Giroux is among dozens of NHLers who flooded European pro leagues after the lockout began Sept. 15. In spite of petulant threats by players like Alex Ovechkin that they would not return to the NHL when the lockout ended, international rules dictate that all players with valid NHL contracts must return to the NHL or face international sanctions.

#### Charity Starts at Home

Nov. 24: Close to 30 NHLers took to the ice at an Atlantic City arena on Thanksgiving weekend to raise money for victims of Superstorm Sandy. Led by the Rangers' Brad Richards, who has been active in post-storm relief efforts, the players raised more than \$500,000. The event was just one of a number of games in which locked-out players have participated, including well-attended charity events in Minneapolis, Toronto and Windsor, Ontario.

ESPN LOADED: 12.28.2012

647110 Websites

ESPN / Worlds craze will heat up without NHL

By Pierre LeBrun

The IIHF world junior championship in Ufa, Russia, is taking center stage in the hockey world over the holidays even more than usual thanks to the NHL lockout.

Hockey-starved fans in North America need a fix and finally got it with Canada and the United States both waxing Germany to open their respective world junior campaigns.

With the NHL Network in the U.S. carrying the Canadian TSN feed for the world junior games involving Team USA and Team Canada, it's a holiday present for fans.

Just imagine, however, if there's no NHL season and how it would impact the men's IIHF championship May 3-19 in Helsinki and Stockholm.

Picture Sidney Crosby, Alex Ovechkin, Steven Stamkos, Jonathan Toews, Evgeni Malkin, Henrik Zetterberg, Pavel Datsyuk, well ... the list would go on and on in terms of NHL superstars who would likely make their way to the men's worlds.

The United States, which no doubt could have the likes of Zach Parise, Ryan Suter and Ryan Miller among other NHL stars, is in a preliminary group in Helsinki to start the May tournament, while Canada -- which could also count the likes of Claude Giroux, Shea Weber and Drew Doughty among others -- is in a group in Stockholm for the May tournament.

"There certainly is potential for that tournament to be a big stage for all of the world's very best players because there are a lot of guys anxious to compete and play real meaningful hockey," Miller told ESPN.com via email Thursday. "I think if the NHL situation gets worse then that tournament becomes a chance to compete and build some chemistry in anticipation of the Sochi Olympics. I hope many of USA hockey's players will see it the same way and be available. I know I would love to be considered to play."

"Hockey Canada wants NHL hockey to start ASAP, but if there is no season, Canada will start preparation early to send the best players to Sweden for the men's world championships," Hockey Canada president and CEO Bob Nicholson told ESPN.com via email Thursday.

Just consider it an Olympic tournament less than a year before the real Olympic tournament in Sochi, Russia.

That was the case eight years ago in Austria when the who's who of NHL stars played in the 2005 men's worlds thanks to the lockout wiping out the whole season in North America. The tourney in Innsbruck and Vienna featured many of the same NHL stars who would skate less than a year later in Torino, Italy, in the 2006 Olympics.

Joe Thornton and Rick Nash went 1-2 in overall tournament scoring that year in Austria, a tourney that also featured the likes of Pavel Datsyuk, Jaromir Jagr, Henrik Zetterberg, the Sedin twins, Daniel Alfredsson, Shane Doan, Dan Boyle, Marian Hossa ... the list went on and on.

Jagr's Czechs topped Martin Brodeur's Team Canada 3-0 in the gold medal final.

I was among the media throng from North America that descended upon Austria for the 2005 worlds and, let me tell you, it was certainly nice to cover the highest-level hockey after a wiped-out NHL season.

Could the IIHF men's world benefit again eight years later? We'll find out within the next two to three weeks whether there's a new CBA in the NHL or a cancelled season.

Just in case, I'll let you know Team USA opens the 2013 men's world May 4 against Austria in Helsinki, while Team Canada goes the same day in Stockholm against Denmark.

We'll have NHL stars in action this spring. It's just a matter of knowing whether it's on both sides of the Atlantic or not.

ESPN LOADED: 12.28.2012

647111 Websites

NBCSports.com /If there's no NHL season, World Championships might be really awesome

Joe Yerdon

One tournament that could get a huge lift from the lockout is the 2013 IIHF World Championships.

Worlds always occurs during the Stanley Cup playoffs, but if there's no season and no Stanley Cup to be awarded thanks to the lockout, the tournament that's usually second banana turns into hockey's featured event of the season.

As Pierre LeBrun from ESPN.com found out, Hockey Canada is already preparing to load up for this year's event in Sweden and Finland.

"Hockey Canada wants NHL hockey to start ASAP, but if there is no season, Canada will start preparation early to send the best players to Sweden for the men's world championships," Hockey Canada president and CEO Bob Nicholson told ESPN.com via email Thursday.

This same situation happened back in 2005 and saw Jaromir Jagr and Dominik Hasek's Czech Republic take out Martin Brodeur and Canada for gold.

Think about it though: Instead of players whose teams either missed the playoffs or got bounced in the first round, you get a load of well-rested and eager to compete superstars. Sign us up right now if we're going to be boned out of an NHL season.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 12.28.2012

647112 Websites

Two former NHLers arrested for fighting at Jack In The Box

Joe Yerdon

One way you never want to make a name for yourself is by getting arrested. For two former NHL players, they didn't follow that logic.

The Laguna Beach Coastline Pilot reports that former Ducks forward Jean-Francois Jomphe and former Maple Leafs forward Rich Costello were arrested on suspicion of assault after getting in an altercation with a car full of area youth at a Jack In The Box restaurant.

According to the story, Jomphe and Costello cut in line at the drive-thru ahead of the car full of kids. This might come as a surprise, but alcohol is

believed to have played a factor in the incident. But what set them off? A little "sign language miscommunication" if you will.

"One of the kids [in the Jetta] did a hand gesture like, 'Hey, what's up' and Jomphe got angry, got out of the cab and went to the guy," Laguna Beach Police Capt. Jason Kravetz said. "Costello went to restrain him, but he's pretty upset and shatters the back window."

Hey, when you want a sourdough cheesesteak melt, you just have to cut in line and reportedly punch and kick strangers to get it.

In case you don't remember, Jomphe played four seasons in the NHL with Anaheim, Phoenix, and Montreal. Costello was a second-round pick of the Leafs back in 1981 and played just 12 career games with Toronto. Now they'll be renowned as the guys who got in a fight in a fast food drive-thru.  
ts.com /

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 12.28.2012

647113 Websites

My hockey predictions for 2013

CNN/Sports Illustrated / Adrian Dater>INSIDE THE NHL

Portland Winterhawks/US national junior team defenseman Seth Jones has a shot at becoming the next face of the NHL.

Portland Winterhawks/US national junior team defenseman Seth Jones has a shot at becoming the next face of the NHL.

Looking Ahead To 2013

Predictions For Each Sport

ROSENBERG: Filling out '13 sports year

NFL: Vick, Tebow find new starting gigs

NBA: Durant surpasses LeBron for MVP

NCAA FB: No repeat Heisman winner

MLB: Dodgers begin world domination

NCAA Hoops: Your national champ is...

NHL: Power overhaul, new teams, more

Boxing: Mayweather suffers first loss

Soccer: Donovan sticks with Galaxy

Tennis: Murray will win another Slam

Golf: Looking forward to Tiger, Rory

MMA: Jones vs. Silva will finally happen

Olympics: Lindsey Vonn comes up short

NASCAR: Jimmie Johnson leads the pack

In anticipation of the new year, SI.com's writers are predicting the stories they think will define the sports landscape in 2013.

First off, this column comes with a built-in disclaimer of interest because a percentage of you readers have expressed a "repudiation, denial or disavowal" -- which is how Webster's defines "disclaimer" -- of interest in the National Hockey League's doings thanks to its mind-numbing lockout. Well, we hear you. Nonetheless, we've been asked to make 10 fearless predictions for 2013. This, of course, assumes that an NHL season of some kind will happen at some point in the calendar year.

So, here we go:

1. Either Donald Fehr or Gary Bettman won't remain at his current job -- Odds are, Fehr will be the one to go. He's 63, after all, and has spoken of his presumed short shelf life as director of the NHL Players Association. The odds have also grown slim on him getting anything resembling a great deal for his clients in the next CBA. The NHL outfoxed him with its preemptive lawsuit in a Manhattan Federal court on December 14 -- gaining the home court advantage the NBA (under the same lockout law firm,



Proskauer Rose) had in its lockout in 2011. Fehr has thus far enjoyed strong loyalty from NHL players -- mostly because they hate Bettman more than they love Fehr -- but the fact is that if the 2012-13 season is canceled, Fehr will have lost the battle and, by extension, his constituency.

Owners will always be better able than players to weather a lost season in today's business world. Players can rage at the injustice of this lockout all they want, but they had a reasonable deal on the table a couple of weeks ago in New York and something -- many suspect it was Fehr injecting himself into the talks again after progress was made without him in the room -- set everything back to square one. The press conference he held on that fateful Thursday night, when he said the sides were close to a deal, despite his knowledge that the league would reject the PA's latest proposal, is now widely seen by many in the agent community as a mistake. Of course, a lost season will also tarnish Bettman's already massively besmirched legacy. More than 10 percent of all NHL games - and counting - have been lost under his watch since he began his reign as commissioner on Feb. 1, 1993. There is some thought that a group of owners would try to oust him should another season be flushed. Trouble is, Bettman needs only eight (technically, seven, since the league still owns the Coyotes) of 30 to back him up should a vote on his job security be tabled.

Translation: he ain't going anywhere, not unless he decides to step down.

2. The NHL will expand by two teams -- The thinking on this is easy to discern: with the loss of revenue that owners will suffer this season, getting two new teams in -- with lucrative expansion-fee money -- will offset most or all of it. This has been one of the more under-reported aspects of the lockout. Quebec and Seattle remain the two frontrunners -- both cities have plans for new arenas well underway -- and their inclusion would likely bring at least a combined \$400 million in expansion fees, plus sold-out buildings for two or three years during a honeymoon period. Expansion could easily be phased in for the 2013-14 season, though teams in each new city would probably need to play in an older existing building for a year or two. Expansion would be great news for the NHLPA, too, and it could explain why the group's leadership is not panicking (much) over the prospect of no 2012-13 season. Of course, this factor from prediction No. 1 will apply: current players will lose the most if the season is canceled.

3. Expect a bunch of new bell-and-whistle rules for 2013-14 -- Rules changes designed to open up the game worked well after the lost season of 2004-05. The league is well aware of this, and should the 2012-13 campaign go up in smoke, the NHL will want to come out with several new goodies to create some "buzz" -- and we use this term advisedly. One change we can reasonably expect: the elimination of the trapezoid line. While this will not create anywhere near the stir that the elimination of the red line did after the last lockout, the truth is that many NHL GMs and players believe the game will be better served again by allowing goalies to play the puck from anywhere on the ice. Too often play became trapped in the corners because pucks ended up there -- partially due to goalies not being able to do much to keep them out. The game is a little more exciting when goalies have free rein, GMs and league personnel now realize. Another couple of possible changes: new continuous two-minute power plays, regardless of a goal being scored, and elimination of the overtime/shootout point for the losing team.

4. Wayne Gretzky will get the money the NHL owes him and reclaim a job in the league -- The Great One, according to numerous reports, was owed about \$8 million on his contract with the Coyotes when the franchise filed for bankruptcy in 2009. When the league took over control of the team and didn't pay him, a rift ensued. At least, that is the belief held by many in the game -- though neither Gretzky nor the league has since spoken on the issue, pending legalities. If the Coyotes become solvent again -- still a big if -- Gretzky should get his dough and those around him believe he will want to get back into the game. Lord knows, the league could use him. Where he ends up is anyone's guess, but lots of teams would love to have him.

5. NHL players won't bemoan the loss of 10-year-plus contracts -- It's a funny thing. Players will often openly mock contracts that are handed out to their brethren. Several confided to Yours Truly that the 13-year deals the Minnesota Wild gave to Ryan Suter and Zach Parise last summer were a "joke." The same sentiment applied to the previous deals signed by players such as Ilya Kovalchuk and Marian Hossa (GALLERY: NHL's biggest contracts). Yet during the current CBA talks, players have clung to the belief that contract length should still be largely unregulated. But their protestations ring hollow. The vast majority of NHLers never sign deals that are longer than five years. The NHLPA is fighting for a cause that benefits the few, not the many. That inherently makes it an anti-union.

6. Seth Jones will be the No. 1 pick in the NHL draft and create a new marketing phenomenon -- Never in the league's history has an African-

American been picked first overall. Jones could change that. The fluid-skating defenseman for the Portland Winterhawks is already coveted by NHL teams that might have a shot at him. If he goes No. 1, expect a Nike-sponsored push of his name across North America as the prime example of hockey's successful crossover infrastructural growth.

7. Claude Lemieux will become a major player on the agent scene -- In 2011, the 4Sports player agency hired the four-time Stanley Cup-winner. In a surprise to nobody who knows the hard-driving son of a Buckingham, Quebec, truck driver, Lemieux has already started attracting numerous clients to his stable. He is vehemently against Gary Bettman's reign and ongoing policies, so expect Lemieux's voice to be heard more at the bargaining tables of the future.

8. Sidney Crosby will lead the NHL in scoring -- There are no friends in hockey when the puck drops, the exception being those who wear the same crest on the front of their sweaters. But after what Crosby has tried to accomplish on behalf of the NHLPA during the lockout, the Penguins superstar will enter into the "Gretzky Zone" of reverence among his peers. That should cut down on his risk of re-injury, especially from concussion, and lead to a scoring title or two or three.

9. NHL coaches will become even less secure -- The job that Darryl Sutter did with the Los Angeles Kings, taking them to the Stanley Cup after replacing the fired Terry Murray, was a bright signal flare to all NHL GMs. The message being: coaching changes during a season very often produce desired results.

10. Fans will return -- The data overwhelmingly shows that fans always come back after a work stoppage of any kind. Despite the dire proclamations, the NHL's will show up at arenas and in front of their TVs, just as they did in 2005. They simply love the game too much to go away for good in big numbers. The owners know this -- which is why they aren't panicking over every passing day of the lockout.

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