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647114 Anaheim Ducks

Movement in NHL talks: If settled, Jan. 19 could be start of season

According to source, league amends proposed terms of contracts and sets Jan. 12 deadline to start camp, which could mean 48-game season, similar to 1994-95 lockout.

By Lisa Dillman

December 29, 2012

Just say it was the league that went up a hill but came down a mountain.

Twenty-two days after a top NHL official declared that term limits on player contracts were "the hill we will die on," the league engaged in a bit of selective amnesia.

The NHL submitted an amended collective bargaining proposal to the players' union that featured movement on the terms of contracts, proposing a six-year limit with an exception of seven-year agreements for clubs to resign their own free agents. Previously the proposal had been five years with the seven-year exception.

Included in the league's proposal was a deadline to start training camps by Jan. 12 for a Jan. 19 start to the season or the 2012-13 season would be canceled, according to a person with knowledge of the matter but not authorized to speak about it publicly.

This would closely mirror the lockout of 1994-95, which resulted in a 48-game season starting on Jan. 20. A handful of owners apparently have been exerting pressure on NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman to make this latest move.

It was viewed as an incremental step, not a closing move, in many quarters.

"If it is take it or leave it, won't go anywhere," said influential player agent Allan Walsh on Friday via text message. "If it is invitation to bargain towards closing [the] deal, we may have something."

An official from the players' union said Friday afternoon that there were internal conference calls with the negotiating committee and executive board. It was expected there would be a conference call with the league Saturday, seeking clarification on some points of the latest offer, and a possibility of labor talks on Sunday in New York.

Publicly, the league would confirm only that a proposal was sent to the union Thursday. NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly, in a statement, called it a "new, comprehensive proposal."

Daly was the official theatrically invoking the dying-on-the-hill metaphor the night talks broke off on Dec. 6. (A federal mediator failed to jump-start negotiations the following week. Federal mediators were involved in negotiations twice.) Games already have been canceled through Jan. 14.

The league's latest offer also increased the year-to-year variance allowed within a contract to 10% from 5%, permitting each team to buy out one player as a "compliance" issue as the new labor deal goes into effect. The amount of that player's contract would not count against the salary cap but would count toward players' share of hockey-related revenues.

The NHL is said to be sticking to a 10-year term for the next labor deal, an opt-out clause for both sides after eight years, and a salary cap set at \$60 million and no escrow limit.

Meanwhile, the league's "make-whole" offer of \$300 million also remains intact as a means of easing players' transition from last season's 57% share of hockey-related revenues to a 50-50 split.

LA Times: LOADED: 12.29.2012
647115 Anaheim Ducks

NHL makes movement with new CBA offer

December 28th, 2012, 11:27 am · · posted by Eric Stephens, Staff writer

Faced with the possible embarrassment of another lost season due to a prolonged labor dispute, the NHL moved off its hard-line stance and tabled a new offer to the players in the latest attempt to breaking the current impasse.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly confirmed the league's latest proposal in a statement Friday morning. The new offer, given to the players' union on Thursday, contains movement in the players' direction in terms of contract rights and salary variance.

Multiple outlets report that the NHL wants a 48-game season to start no later than Jan. 19, essentially creating a deadline in which a new collective bargaining agreement must be hammered out within the next two weeks or run the risk of a second canceled season in a span of eight years.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon," Daly said. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time.

"We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

According to ESPN.com, the league offered to increase the limit on player contracts from five years to six and up the amount that a player's salary can vary between years from five percent to a maximum of 10 percent. The latter is to get rid of long-term deals where the dollar amount drops off sharply so teams will take less of a hit against the salary cap.

The NHL is also putting back on the table its offer of \$300 million in deferred "make whole" payments to players currently under contract to offset money immediately lost when their share of hockey-related revenue dips from 57 percent to 50. A 10-year agreement with an opt-out for both sides after eight remains in place.

Other key parts of the proposal, as reported by ESPN.com, include:

- Teams would operate under a \$70 million cap ceiling this season as a transition move before it drops to \$60 million for 2013-14.
- Unrestricted free agency would remain at 27 years of age or seven years of NHL service. Current rules for entry-level contracts and salary arbitration also stay in place.
- Each team would be able to make one "compliance buyout" of a player's contract with the amount not charged against its cap figure but against the players' share of revenue. Re-entry waivers would be eliminated.
- The league also offered to increase revenue sharing from approximately \$150 million to \$200 million with creation of an industry growth fund to improve the revenue potential of the NHL and its lowest-grossing clubs.

Among other issues include a third-party arbitrator for the on-ice and off-ice discipline of players and the formation of joint committee between the NHL and NHLPA in areas of relations as well as the health and safety of players.

The NHL Players' Assn. is believed to be combing through the 300-page proposal and discussed it with its membership on a conference call. The union would not comment Friday on whether it will present a counteroffer but there will be a call with the NHL on Saturday with both sides likely meeting face to face on Sunday in New York.

Players were also told by the NHLPA to refrain from commenting on the offer but one unidentified Ducks player said he was cautiously optimistic, an often-uttered refrain during the back-and-forth nature of the negotiations.

"Let's not try to get too high, but at the same time, it's good we're talking again," Vancouver Canucks defenseman Kevin Bieksa told the Province. "These are the final minutes. ... We have to put all the cards on the table now and show our best hands and get this thing figured out."

The most significant move in this latest round of often-contentious negotiations is the contract term limits, which players have balked at. The NHL had also offered seven-year lengths for teams to re-sign their own free agents but the union countered with eight years in talks that broke down on Dec. 6.

Daly gave one of the more sensational quotes during the 104-day lockout when he said that the owners' insistence on five-year contract limits is the "hill we will die on." Either the owners reconsidered the dying option or they've moved to a new hill.

It does appear that they're more interested in salvaging a truncated 2012-13 season than embracing a repeat of 2004-05 when that season was erased due to a 310-day lockout. A source told The Canadian Press that the NHLPA has until Jan. 11 to get a new CBA done, allowing for abbreviated training camps to open across the league.

Commissioner Gary Bettman strongly suggested that he does not want a season of fewer than 48 games, the amount each NHL team played in 1995 after a lockout that lasted 103 days. The league has canceled a total of 625 games through Jan. 14, as well as the Winter Classic on New Year's Day and All-Star game that was slated for Jan. 27 at Columbus, Ohio.

Formal talks between owners and players have not taken place since Dec. 13 after failed negotiations with federal mediators. The NHLPA does have the option of filing a disclaimer of interest to dissolve the union, which must be done by Wednesday, after receiving overwhelming approval from the players.

The disclaimer of interest would essentially make the NHLPA a trade association, allowing individual players to file lawsuits against the league in an attempt to declare the owners' lockout an illegal activity according to antitrust laws.

Orange County Register: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647116 Boston Bruins

Optimistic team executive says NHL's new CBA offer a 'tipping point'

By Kevin Paul Dupont, Globe Staff

The NHL on Thursday made a few significant tweaks to its most recent collective bargaining agreement offer, and one optimistic NHL team

executive contacted this morning said he believes it will be a "tipping point" in the negotiations.

The new offer, first reported by ESPN's Pierre LeBrun (@Real_ESPNLeBrun), has the league willing to extend by one year its term limits on individual player contracts. Instead of limiting deals to five years, and increasing those deals to seven years if the player re-signs with his current club, the league has offered to increase its offer to 6 years/7years.

The players have been seeking an eight-year term limit.

Other reporters and bloggers have tweeted Friday morning that the league is standing firm on its desire for a new CBA to span 10 seasons, with either side given the chance to opt out after eight years. The NHLPA has been seeking an eight-year deal with a six-year opt out.

The league also has re-stated its offer of \$300 million for the hotly-contested "make whole" provision, dollars the union has insisted be made available to prevent players currently under contract from taking a potential severe rollback in compensation. When talks broke off two weeks ago, the league hinted heavily that the \$300 million offer would be reduced when/if a new offer was made.

It is believed the NHL's latest offer includes a \$70.2 million salary cap for what remains of the 2012-13 season. The league then wants the cap to fall to \$60 million for the start of the 2013-14 season. The Players' Association no doubt will seek to increase the \$60 million figure.

As of early Friday evening, the union had not formally responded to the league offer.

If these tweaks provide traction to cut a deal, it's possible the union could vote to ratify within, say, the next five to seven days, leading to an abbreviated training camp. If so, it's likely the league would play a 48-game regular season, to begin approximately Jan. 18 and wrapping up at the start of May.

A full round of Stanley Cup playoffs would follow, with a potential Game 7 of the Cup final played no later than the June 20-25 time period.

The NHL lockout, the third in league history, began Sept. 16. Friday is Day No. 104. Keep in mind, when the league and players ended the 1994-95 lockout, agreement was not reached until Jan. 11, and play resumed on Jan. 20.

Boston Globe LOADED: 12.29.2012

647117 Boston Bruins

As NHL lockout drags on, businesses around TD Garden and elsewhere in the region are hurting

By Callum Borchers

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As the National Hockey League lockout slogs on with no resolution in sight, bars and restaurants around TD Garden keep losing revenue — as much as \$1 million for every Bruins game that's canceled, according to the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau.

But the business impact of the Bruins' forced hiatus — all league games have been canceled through Jan. 14 — extends beyond the restaurant industry and Causeway Street. From the lots where fans park their cars on game nights to youth leagues where their children play and the shops where they buy equipment and memorabilia, the NHL's third work stoppage in 19 seasons is taking a toll that mounts with each passing day.

Stanhope Garage Inc., which operates three small parking lots near the Garden, typically takes in \$6,000 per game by filling all of its 200 spaces, said owner Simon Gottlieb. Over the course of a season, the take from Bruins games alone approaches \$250,000. But on the 22 days so far when a home game has been canceled, demand for parking in Stanhope lots has slowed to a trickle.

"We're not getting the revenue we used to get," said Gottlieb. "Specialevent parking is big for us." Lost parking revenue is probably greater for Delaware North Cos., Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs's food service company, which in June signed a 75-year, \$116 million lease for the North Station Garage underneath the Garden. During a full hockey season, the garage would generate \$1.6 million in parking revenue from Bruins games, enough to cover the average- annual cost of leasing it from the MBTA.

But when the Bruins are not playing, the 1,150-space garage is far from full, said T spokesman Joe Pesaturo.

"It was never really a commuter lot because people come to North Station on trains," Pesaturo said. "It was always event-driven."

Delaware North declined to provide revenue figures for the garage, but acknowledged revenue is closely tied to Garden events, including Bruins games. Pesaturo noted that the T has not suffered from the lockout because Delaware North has already paid \$50 million to the MBTA under a lease agreement that is not contingent on whether hockey is being played.

Getting non-hockey events to replace Bruins home games has proven difficult because the NHL cancels contests with only a few weeks' notice. Corporate sponsors have used the Garden for small gatherings on dates when the Bruins would have played. Volunteers for Mitt Romney's presidential campaign set up shop on the parquet floor on Election Day – when the Bruins were supposed to host the Minnesota Wild – but no major replacement events have been scheduled, said Tricia McCorkle, a spokeswoman for Delaware North, which owns the Garden. During the last NHL lockout, in 2004-05, Garden officials booked only one big substitute, a Mötley Crüe concert.

Without Bruins games to attend or watch on television, interest in playing hockey is fading among the team's youngest fans, said Kevin Kavanaugh, executive director of Massachusetts Hockey, the state affiliate of the USA Hockey program. Kavanaugh called the NHL a "huge marketing arm for youth hockey" that drives children to sign up for local leagues.

Over the past five years, statewide participation in youth hockey has increased by 21 percent among children 8 years old and younger, to more than 14,000 players. The Bruins' 2011 Stanley Cup win, especially, gave a big boost to youth hockey.

But the lockout is stunting the growth spurt, Kavanaugh said.

"We will definitely feel the effect in registrations at the end of the year, especially in the younger age groups," Kavanaugh said. "We'd be naive to think there won't be a decline, and that's tough because they're the building blocks for the future."

Diminished enthusiasm for hockey also has hurt businesses that trade on it. At Andover Hockey Shop in Andover, sales are down slightly this season, according to owner Chris Gravell.

"People are still buying the stuff they need, but not the extra stuff," Gravell said.

"Kids used to clamor for mini-sticks or merchandise for whatever team is hot, but not so much [now]. The Bruins stuff I have is not going as quickly as it used to."

The market for hockey memorabilia, where Bruins items are among the most popular, also has been touched by the lockout, said Sean Mahoney, executive vice president of Steiner Sports Marketing & Memorabilia in New Rochelle, N.Y.

"On the collectibles side, some fans are down on hockey and not spending money," Mahoney said. But, he added, "there are others who are spending more because they're not going to games, so they have more to spend on collectibles."

In worse shape than memorabilia, Mahoney said, is the business of booking NHL players for speaking engagements, autograph signings, and other events.

Steiner Sports typically coordinates a half-dozen appearances by NHL players each month, but the demand has mostly evaporated. Many stars are unavailable, anyway, because they are playing in Europe, Mahoney said

"Baseball is by far the biggest appearance business for us, but not having hockey is definitely a small hit," he said.

While sports bars near TD Garden might be the hardest hit businesses of all, their counterparts elsewhere in the state also have sustained a financial blow. At Perfect Game Sports Grill & Lounge in Worcester, an hour's drive from the Garden, crowds have thinned on weeknights, when a Bruins game would have packed the house.

"Nothing beats the Patriots on Sunday, but as far as bringing people in to watch a game on a Wednesday night, the Bruins were absolutely tops — much bigger than the Celtics or Red Sox," said co-owner Michael H. Erlich. "It definitely hurts."

Boston Globe LOADED: 12.29.2012

647118 Boston Bruins

Last hope for NHL season

Stephen Harris

After two weeks of limited or no negotiations, the NHL presented its lockedout players a revised proposal Thursday for a new collective bargaining agreement.

While there are some new elements and alterations in this offer that players will find somewhat appealing, many negative issues remain and it is unlikely this will be an immediate deal-maker.

But it is quite a hopeful sign that the two sides will get together today via a conference call to discuss the new proposal. And if that conversation goes well, it's expected face-to-face negotiations will resume tomorrow in New York.

Could a deal actually be close?

The NHL Players Association held a lengthy conference call yesterday with its members, informing them of the movement the owners made in this proposal. It is possible players could accept it, or continue negotiating based on what is now on the table.

If Thursday's move and this weekend's talks don't end the lockout, the next step in the 105-day work stoppage could be a decision by the NHLPA on a "disclaimer of interest."

Players recently voted overwhelmingly to okay that move, which desolves the union and could lead to anti-trust legislation against the league. The NHLPA executive board has only until Wednesday to take this path.

If we get to that point, with this mess moving into the legal system, fans can probably kiss this season goodbye.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly released the following statement about the new offer early yesterday afternoon:

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late (Thursday) afternoon. We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

Of course, time is running short for an agreement that might save, say, a 48-game season, starting on or shortly after Jan. 15. There would be a very brief training camp, a week or so, and maybe one or two exhibition games.

There are only a handful of significant alterations in the new offer, which, as before, is for a 10-year period, with both sides having the right to opt out after eight:

- The league changed the maximum length of a player contract from five to six years (seven years on players re-signing with the same team). On Dec. 6, Daly proclaimed the five-year contract limit, "a hill we die on." Instead, the NHL retreated.
- The new offer increases the "variance" in new contracts from year to year from 5 percent to 10 percent, which helps the players a little bit, but not much. This would eliminate the sort of back-loaded contracts general managers use as a tool to reduce their salary cap hit.

A typical example: Marc Savard's seven-year deal, which paid \$7 million, \$7 million, \$6.5 million and \$5 million in its first four years, then dropped to \$1.5 million, \$525,000 and \$525,000 in the last three. The players want the variance at 25 percent, which would still render such contracts a thing of the past.

- The salary cap will remain at \$70.2 million for this season, but then take a precipitous drop to \$60 million for 2013-14. Teams will have the right to buy out one player before 2013-14 a so-called "compliance buyout" and the cost will not be charged against the team's salary cap.
- There is a tweak in the draft lottery system among the 14 nonplayoff teams. Up until now, the winner of the lottery could move up only four spots in the draft. So only the bottom four teams in the regular-season standings had the possibility of jumping up to get the No. 1 pick. In the new plan, all 14 teams have a chance slim, but a chance to jump to No. 1.
- The new deal includes a boost in NHL revenue sharing from \$150 million to \$200 million.
- An interesting addition is a new right for players facing disciplinary action to appeal to an impartial arbiter.

These would have been positive steps in negotiations two or three months ago. Are they now too little and too late? We should know within the next couple of days.

Boston Herald LOADED: 12.29.2012

647119 Boston Bruins

New NHL offer leads to scheduled talks with union

Staff Report

NEW YORK — The NHL is set to get back to the bargaining table with the locked-out players' association after a new contract offer from the league broke the ice between the sides.

Those talks are scheduled to take place Sunday in New York, nearly one month after negotiations broke down and pushed the sides further apart.

Without fanfare, the NHL said Friday that it made a new proposal to the union on Thursday in an effort to end the lockout and save the delayed hockey season.

The players' association was still reviewing the document, which was several hundred pages in length, on Friday night and planned to speak to the NHL by telephone on Saturday, and then get together with the league on Sunday.

The sides haven't met since a second round of talks with a federal mediator ended on Dec. 13. They haven't had formal negotiations alone since the first week of the month.

Time is running out to come to an agreement and then play a season of at least 48 games — a number the NHL set as a minimum. The league would like to reach a deal by Jan. 11, start training camp the following day, and open the season by Jan. 19.

"We delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement Friday. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The players' association's executive board and negotiating committee went over the proposal during an internal conference call on Friday, the 104th day of the lockout.

A person familiar with key points of the offer told The Associated Press that the league proposed raising the limit of individual free-agent contracts to six years from five — seven years if a team re-signs its own player; raising the salary variance from one year to another to 10 percent, up from 5 percent; and one compliance buyout for the 2013-14 season that wouldn't count toward a team's salary cap but would be included in the overall players' share of income.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because details of the new offer were not being discussed publicly.

The NHL maintained the deferred payment amount of \$300 million it offered in its previous proposal, an increase from an earlier offer of \$211 million. The initial \$300 million offer was pulled off the table after negotiations broke off earlier this month.

The latest proposal is for 10 years, running through the 2021-22 season, with both sides having the right to opt out after eight years.

The lockout has reached a critical stage, threatening to shut down a season for the second time in eight years. All games through Jan. 14, plus the Winter Classic and the All-Star game already have been called off. The next round of cuts could claim the entire schedule.

The NHL is the only North American professional sports league to cancel a season because of a labor dispute, losing the 2004-05 campaign to a lockout. A 48-game season was played in 1995 after a lockout stretched into January.

It is still possible this dispute could eventually be settled in the courts if the sides can't reach a deal on their own.

The NHL filed a class-action suit this month in U.S. District Court in New York in an effort to show its lockout is legal. In a separate move, the league filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board, contending bad-faith bargaining by the union.

Those moves were made because the players' association took steps toward potentially filing a "disclaimer of interest," which would dissolve the union and make it a trade association. That would allow players to file antitrust lawsuits against the NHL.

Union members voted overwhelmingly to give their board the power to file the disclaimer by Jan. 2. If that deadline passes, another authorization vote could be held to approve a later filing.

Negotiations between the NHL and the union have been at a standstill since talks ended Dec. 6. One week later, the sides convened again with federal mediators in New Jersey, but still couldn't make progress.

The sides have been unable to reach agreement on the length of the new deal, the length of individual player contracts, and the variance in salary from year to year. The NHL is looking for an even split of revenues with players.

The NHL pulled all previous offers off the table after the union didn't agree to terms on its last proposal without negotiation.

Boston Herald LOADED: 12.29.2012

647120 Buffalo Sabres

Hodgson puts on crowd-pleasing show in Amerks win

BY: John Vogl / News Sports Reporter | @BuffNewsVogl

The Amerks set a single-game franchise attendance record Friday, sending 19,070 fans home happy with a 4-1 win over Lake Erie.

Not many things have gone as Cody Hodgson planned in 2012. He's been sentenced to the minors because of the lockout, sidelined with a broken hand and belittled by a former general manager, among other hockey troubles.

But as the days on the calendar dwindle, the year has begun to change. He's back on the ice for the Rochester Americans and showing why the Buffalo Sabres have such high expectations for him.

The fans in Buffalo got to see his turnaround firsthand Friday night. Hodgson scored two picturesque goals in First Niagara Center to help lead the Amerks to a 4-1 victory over Lake Erie. He's scheduled to be one of the Sabres' top two centers whenever the NHL resumes, and he looked the part in front of an announced crowd of 19,070 – an Amerks record and the eighth-largest gathering in American Hockey League history.

"Obviously, everyone wants to see the NHL going, me included, but I'm playing in the best league I can play right now so things are going well," Hodgson said.

The multipoint game continues a quality run for Hodgson since he returned to the lineup Dec. 15. In his six games back, Hodgson has eight points, and the four goals have come in the last two outings.

The center started the season as a point-per-game player, putting up one goal and nine assists in the opening nine games. But a two-handed slash stopped his momentum for longer than anticipated. Originally scheduled to miss a week or two, Hodgson sat out six weeks and 14 games with the broken hand.

"I kept in good shape," said Hodgson, who skated with a long list of people that ranged from Sabres skating consultant Dawn Braid to the Amerks' defensemen to the coaching staffs of Rochester and Buffalo. "I've probably been on the ice more than I would have if I'd have kept playing, but I feel comfortable out there and things are clicking."

Hodgson's return and revival have the Amerks hoping they can find their desired consistency.

They had a three-game winning streak in October but have rode a win-loss rollercoaster to a 15-11-3 record.

"When we play the way we need to and we're focused on it, we have a very good team," coach Ron Rolston said. "We just haven't had the kind of consistency that we'd like."

Now that Hodgson and Mark Mancari are producing, a good run appears possible.

Like Hodgson, Mancari's blueprint for the season sustained serious alterations. The veteran right winger averaged nearly 30 goals over the previous four seasons, and he expected a similar result in his return to the Buffalo organization.

Mancari, though, endured a slump of 15 games without a goal and had just three entering the Amerks' game Dec. 13.

He scored the second goal Friday to extend his points streak to five straight games (two goals, five assists). In the last seven outings, Mancari has three goals and nine points to bring his season totals to six tallies and 22 points.

"I was in a little bit of a slump there," he said. "Now it's time for me to get back on track.

"It was really hard to deal with," added Mancari, who played in the Sabres' organization from 2005 to 2011. "I put a lot of pressure on myself coming back, wanting to do things a lot better this time. It was definitely difficult, but all you can do is work harder and hopefully things will go your way. They're starting to."

Hodgson opened the scoring on the power play, and he didn't need much help to do it. Stationed on the left wing with the Amerks on a five-on-three advantage, Hodgson slowly made his way toward the net. He traveled through the faceoff circle without opposition and reached around goaltender Sami Aittokallio.

Mancari's unassisted goal, rifled into the top corner, doubled the Amerks' lead over the Colorado Avalanche's affiliate.

Hodgson made it 3-0 when he faked a forehand pass to fool a defender and created a clear path to the net. Then, Hodgson fought off the hook of a backchecker and slipped a backhand through Aittokallio's pads to get the crowd roaring.

Nick Tarnasky gave the Amerks a 4-1 lead with 8:06 remaining. Goaltender David Leggio from Williamsville finished with 36 saves.

"It's always nice to play in front of the Buffalo fans," Hodgson said. "They want hockey as bad as we do in the NHL. It's nice to get the win for them."

Buffalo News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647121 Buffalo Sabres

Amerks notebook: Winger Flynn makes most of opportunity

BY: John Vogl / News Sports Reporter | @BuffNewsVogl

Brian Flynn started the season as a healthy scratch. Now he's on a line with two bona fide NHL players.

He's obviously making the most of his opportunities with the Rochester Americans

Flynn skated as the right winger for Cody Hodgson and Marcus Foligno on Friday night as the Amerks returned to Buffalo with a 4-1 victory over Lake Erie. He earned the role while putting up nine goals and 19 points in his first 25 games.

"They're obviously NHL hockey players, so my job's not too difficult out there," Flynn said in First Niagara Center. "I just use my speed and work hard and try to win a lot of loose pucks for them. They both generate a ton of offense."

So does Flynn. He signed a one-year contract with the Sabres' organization last spring after excelling at the University of Maine. He skated alongside Hobey Baker Award finalist Spencer Abbott and recorded 18 goals and 48 points in 40 games.

The collegiate success didn't immediately carry over to the American Hockey League. He had just one assist during a five-game tryout at the end of last season, and he started this year as an extra. But right wing Corey Tropp suffered a season-ending knee injury during the opener, giving Flynn an opportunity.

"We had a lot of injuries early on with Corey and then Cody getting hurt and some other guys getting banged up, so he got some really good opportunities early," Amerks coach Ron Rolston said. "He took advantage of it and was one of our leading point guys in terms of production per game. Then he got banged up a bit, and since then he hasn't been as hot as he was early on but certainly has been competing hard and been getting opportunities."

Flynn shined in November while putting up seven goals and 15 points in 10 games. He'd been blanked in seven of nine contests entering Friday but no longer feels out of place with the Amerks.

"There's an adjustment period, but as of now I feel like I'm through that," the 24-year-old said. "I feel settled. The game seems to have slowed down for me. Once you hit that stage, hopefully you just continue to get better.

"There's been some good stretches where I've done well personally and some not-so-good ones, but it's a long year. I'm trying to keep a perspective on things."

•••

Zemgus Girgensons would have rather spent Friday in Russia as a member of Latvia's national team, but he understands why he was in Buffalo playing for the Amerks.

The Sabres' second of two first-round draft picks is only 18 years old and remains eligible for the world junior tournament, which began this week. Latvia named him to its roster, but the Sabres and Amerks declined to release him.

"It was more of the team's choice," Girgensons said. "I didn't really have an opinion on that."

Would he have liked to play?

"Well, it's my country," he said. "You can't get upset. This is where I'm playing. If I can help this team, it's a lift for me."

Girgensons entered Friday with two goals and six points in 23 games.

"I'm just trying to get better where I can," he said. "I think lately it's been going real good."

• • •

Luke Adam started this season where he left off the last one: doing next to nothing. That changed this month. Adam entered Friday's game with five goals and nine points in 10 December contests, a hot streak that toned down his sluggish start. The forward had just two goals and five points in the opening 15 games.

"The most important thing with Luke is lately he's decided to go out there and make things happen," Rolston said. "I think early on he was just waiting for other guys to help him along in that process and make things happen and he'd finish on things.

"He's doing things you need to do to create the offense. In this league and the same at the higher level, you've got to get to the net and I think he's doing a better job of that. He's getting around the net more and getting deflections and second opportunities."

Buffalo News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647122 Buffalo Sabres

NHL gives 'comprehensive' proposal to NHLPA, which is reportedly drafting counteroffer

The negotiations between the NHL and its players' association are back on.

Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly confirmed reports today that the league delivered a new offer to the NHLPA on Thursday. Though Daly would not go into details regarding the proposal, numerous reports say the NHL moved on key issues.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon," Daly said in a statement. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

Reports say the NHL has upped the term limit on contracts from five years to six (teams can re-sign players for seven years), has increased the allowable yearly salary variance from 5 percent to 10 percent and will allow each team one buyout before the 2013-14 season that won't count against the salary cap but will count against the players' share of revenues.

(ESPN has obtained highlights of the full offer.)

The players reportedly have a conference call at 3 p.m., and Sportsnet.ca reports the NHLPA is crafting a counterproposal.

The sides have until about Jan. 10 to create a new collective bargaining agreement before the NHL cancels the entire season. UPDATE: Reports say the league's deadline to start a 48-game season is Jan. 19, with training camp opening at least seven days prior.

---John Vogl

Buffalo News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647123 Buffalo Sabres

Rochester Amerks top Lake Erie Monsters in Buffalo

Written by

Kevin Oklobzija

BUFFALO — If ever a guy looked right at home on the NHL ice of the First Niagara Center, it was Cody Hodgson on Friday night.

The shifty centerman with the slick hands and ESP vision scored two power-play goals — the first and the third — as the Rochester Americans defeated the Lake Erie Monsters 4-1 in front of a sellout crowd of 19,070.

Starved for hockey due to the NHL lockout, Buffalo fans — as well as a whole lot of Thruway-dashing Amerk diehards — packed the arena. It was the largest crowd ever to see the Amerks play in their 57 seasons, and the eighth largest in American Hockey League regular-season history.

"It was pretty special to play here," Hodgson said. "It pumps you up to get back in this arena."

The First Niagara Center is, after all, where Hodgson should be playing this season. But with no NHL so far, he met the requirements to return to the AHL — mainly, he's still on his entry level contract.

His performance on Friday gave Sabres fans a taste of what awaits. He showed patience and puck trickery on his first goal, darting in through the left circle toward the net and thinking pass before a quick shake-and-bake

move at the crease allowed him to slip it past goalie Sami Aittokallio on the far side. The goal gave the Amerks a 1-0 lead at 14:48 of the first period.

His goal at 7:52 of the second period pushed the lead to 3-0. This time it came on the rush out of the Amerks' zone, triggered by defenseman Brayden McNabb.

Hodgson took a return pass from Marcus Foligno and sped down the left of the slot. Having created his own free space, he again gave Aittokallio two or three fakes to think about before he tucked the puck between the goalie's legs.

In the past two games, Hodgson has combined for four goals and an assist in a pair of victories over the Monsters.

"He's a difference-maker for us, for sure," Amerks coach Ron Rolston said. "I thought the last two games he's been outstanding."

Had he not missed 14 games with a broken hand, he might very well be among the AHL scoring leaders. As it is, he has 5-13-18 in 15 games.

"You know when you give him the puck he's going to do something with it," McNabb said.

Hodgson had a lot of fun making those plays on Friday, too. His parents made the trip down from Markham, Ontario, and being in Buffalo just added a little extra energy.

"It's always nice to play in front of the Buffalo fans," Hodgson said. "They want hockey as bad as we do in the NHL. It was just nice to be back here."

He wasn't alone in those thoughts. The Amerks are 2-0 this season playing in the Sabres' rink; they defeated Hamilton 3-1 on Oct. 23. That game drew just under 11,000. Friday it was packed and noisy.

"It was pretty cool to have all that support from these fans," McNabb said.

Said Rolston: "It was a really great experience for our guys. I think they were focused and motivated and excited by the crowd."

It showed, too. They played a very solid first period, taking a 1-0 lead into the intermission.

Mark Mancari's rocket snap shot from the high slot at 2:10 of the second period made it 2-0. He simply blew the straight-on shot past the glove of Aittokallio and into the top right corner of the net.

After enduring a 15-game goalless drought, Mancari has scored 3-7-10 in his past seven games. That includes three 2-point performances in his past four outings (he assisted on Hodgson's first goal on Friday).

"I'm starting to get back on track," he said.

So, maybe, is the Amerks' team defensive system. While goalie David Leggio was required to make three big saves to preserve a 3-1 lead, it was very much clamp-down time for the final 10 minutes.

"Protecting a lead's a simple thing when everyone's on the same page and tonight we were," said defenseman Joe Finley, who played a team-high 21 minutes, 27 seconds. "It's hard for them to score goals when they're playing in their own end.

Democrat and Chronicle LOADED: 12.29.2012

647124 Calgary Flames

Flames grant Ferland's wish to return to Brandon

By KRISTEN ODLAND, Calgary HeraldDecember 28, 2012RockLake

Michael Ferland received the official blessing of the Calgary Flames to return to the Brandon Wheat Kings on Friday night.

The debut was welcomed, of course, with the Western Hockey League club promoting the six-foot-one, 210 pound power forward's return on their team website, proclaiming 'He's Back!' on their homepage.

Ferland, a native of Brandon, was awaiting permission to play the rest of the 2012-13 season as an overager with the hometown Wheat Kings after floating the idea to the team's play-by-play announcer Bruce Luebke earlier this week. The Flames made it so, just in time for Brandon's home game Friday against the Moose Jaw Warriors.

"We have very high expectations for Michael, and value the power forward traits that he brings to our organization," said Flames GM Jay Feaster in a team release. "It was important to us to have him in training camp, give him some exposure to a pro hockey environment, and get a read on his development."

Ferland suited up for just seven games this season in Abbotsford, registering no points and 10 penalty minutes and experienced growing pains in his first year of professional hockey. Demoted earlier this month to the Utah Grizzlies, he collected one assist and five penalty minutes in three games.

He amassed 96 points in 68 games last year for Brandon in what most thought would be his final year in junior. A fifth-round pick of the Flames in 2010, the six-foot-one, 210-pounder only started playing competitive hockey at age 14.

"It came down to trying to come back for another year of junior," Ferland, 20, told Luebke after a Boxing Day skate with the Wheat Kings. "It's only going to get harder to crack Abbotsford's lineup with the team they have."

The Flames echoed the same sentiments, expressing their commitment to their prospect's development.

"Based on the depth of our team in Abbotsford, and the limited game minutes that Michael is currently able to get there, we felt that it would be in the best interest of his development to return to the WHL, where he can get the minutes that we want him to have, and continue to grow his skill and confidence," Feaster said. "We continue to be bullish on Michael's potential, and look forward to his contributions to the Flames in the future."

When reached Friday, the Wheat Kings refused comment. Moose Jaw beat the Wheat Kings 4-3 while Ferland registered zero points.

Still, he was happy to be home.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again, I've always loved playing in this rink," Ferland said, following his first game back. "It's great to be back here with the boys again, the coaching staff, and like I said I love playing here.

"I haven't really been playing much. I just kinda want to get my groove back. I thought I played a lot tonight. It's probably the most I've played all year, and I'm looking forward to our next game."

ICE CHIPS ... Brandon will visit Calgary on Jan. 2 to play the Hitmen (7 p.m., SN960).

Calgary Herald: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647125 Calgary Flames

NHL softens demands in key areas with latest offer to end dispute, save hockey season (with poll)

Two weeks left before window of opportunity closes

By Chris Johnston, THE CANADIAN PRESSDecember 28, 2012curriebarracks

TORONTO — The NHL is making a serious bid to save the season.

With another year in jeopardy because of a labour dispute, the league softened its demands in key areas of collective bargaining with a new proposal to the NHL Players' Association on Thursday night. The comprehensive offer included compliance buyouts and less restrictive rules on player contracts, according to sources.

The league's proposal calls for a six-year term limit on free-agent deals — up from five previously — and will allow teams to re-sign their own players for up to seven years. It also includes a provision that salary can vary by 10 per cent from year to year during the course of a deal (the NHL's most recent offer proposed a five per cent variance).

A source told The Canadian Press that the deal is contingent on the NHLPA signing off by Jan. 11. Training camps would then open the next day and the season would start Jan. 19.

For the first time during these negotiations, the league is also willing to consider one-time compliance buyouts to help teams transition from a system that saw players receive 57 per cent of revenues to one that pays them 50 per cent. It has proposed giving each team one such buyout, with the money counting against the players' overall share in revenue but not an individual team's salary cap.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly confirmed the existence of the new offer Friday, but declined to comment on its details.

"We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players," Daly said in a statement. "We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The NHLPA's negotiating committee and executive board was scheduled to hold an internal conference call Friday afternoon to discuss the offer.

The proposed length of the agreement is 10 years through the 2021-22 season, with a mutual option for both parties to opt our after eight years.

According to sources, the league's detailed proposal covered both the major issues that have divided the sides and a number of the smaller ones they've already found agreement on during more than five months of negotiations. It also put the US\$300 million in deferred transition payments back on the table — something it had previously withdrawn when talks broke down Dec. 6.

Despite the movement from the league, there is still clearly work to be done. Among the items in the proposal a source indicated the NHLPA isn't keen on is a \$60-million salary cap in 2013-14, which the union believes will result in players paying a high rate of escrow.

The NHL and NHLPA have a little over two weeks to reach an agreement that would save the season. The 104-day lockout has seen all regular-season games cancelled through Jan. 14 and a deal needs to be reached soon to salvage a 48-game schedule — the minimum commissioner Gary Bettman says must be played.

Negotiations have been at a standstill since talks broke off in New York at the beginning of the month, but Daly created a buzz Dec. 19 when he predicted on Hockey Night in Canada Radio there would be a season. Later that day, NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr told reporters the owners needed to show a willingness to negotiate for it to happen.

"I certainly hope he's right," Fehr said of Daly's prediction. "That's the players' goal, that's what we want to try and do. Hopefully, we'll get back together and negotiate out the remaining issues as soon as possible."

As of Friday afternoon, the sides had made no plans to meet face-to-face again.

In the meantime, a decision is looming for the NHLPA's executive board. Players voted overwhelmingly to give that 30-member committee the power to file a "disclaimer of interest" until Jan. 2 — a move that would see the union dissolved and would allow the players to challenge the legality of the lockout in court.

Calgary Herald: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647126 Calgary Flames

Tyler Seguin won't return to Swiss team when Spengler Cup ends Staff Report

Tyler Seguin's season in Switzerland will end when the Spengler Cup does.

The Boston Bruins forward, who has been playing with EHC Biel of the Swiss League during the NHL lockout but donned a Team Canada jersey for the annual tournament in Davos, has opted to not renew his contract when it expires Monday, the team said in a brief statement on its website.

"We thank Tyler for many magic moments, 25 important goals ... and wish him all the best and every success in the NHL!" the statement said.

Seguin had 25 goals and 15 assists in 29 games with Biel, good for third place in the league scoring race. Damien Brunner of EV Zug leads with 53 points, followed by Glen Metropolit of HC Lugano, with 43.

With the league on its holiday break, Seguin was named to the Canadian team taking part in the Spengler Cup. He has one goal in two games in the

tournament, which features five teams from European leagues and Team Canada.

Bruins forward Patrice Bergeron, who is also playing for Canada at the Spengler Cup, recently announced that he had played his last game with Lugano.

Calgary Sun: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647127 Calgary Flames

Flames send prospect Ferland back to Brandon

By WES GILBERTSON , Calgary Sun

The Calgary Flames have granted Michael Ferland's wish.

On Friday, the Flames officially assigned Ferland to the WHL's Brandon Wheat Kings, giving the 20-year-old winger an opportunity to find his scoring touch — and his confidence — with his junior squad.

Ferland is expected to be in the Wheat Kings lineup for Friday's clash with the Moose Jaw Warriors.

"We have very high expectations for Michael, and value the power forward traits that he brings to our organization," Flames GM Jay Feaster said in a statement. "It was important to us to have him in training camp, give him some exposure to a pro hockey environment and get a read on his development. Based on the depth of our team in Abbotsford and the limited game minutes that Michael is currently able to get there, we felt that it would be in the best interest of his development to return to the WHL, where he can get the minutes that we want him to have and continue to grow his skill and confidence.

"We continue to be bullish on Michael's potential, and look forward to his contributions to the Flames in the future."

Ferland racked up 47 goals and 49 assists in 68 regular-season skates with the Wheat Kings last winter, even earning an invite to Hockey Canada's world junior selection camp in Calgary.

His transition to the professional ranks, though, has been anything but smooth

The 6-foot forward, who was charged with assault after an off-season incident outside a bar in Cochrane, was not in tip-top condition when he reported to training camp with the AHL's Abbotsford Heat and was later bothered by a back injury.

He appeared in only seven games with the Heat, registering no points, and managed one assist during a three-game stint with the ECHL's Utah Grizzlies

After skating with the Wheat Kings on Boxing Day, Ferland told radio playby-play man Bruce Luebke that he wanted an opportunity to log regular minutes.

"It's already Christmastime, and I've only played seven games," Ferland said. "It's only going to get harder to crack Abbotsford's lineup with the team they have so, you know, I'm just excited to get back to playing some hockey games here."

Ferland is still property of the Flames, with two full seasons remaining on his three-year entry-level deal.

The question is, will he finish the season in Brandon? The Wheat Kings aren't considered a contender for the WHL title — in fact, they're not even in a playoff position right now — and will likely consider trade proposals for the rugged forward.

Calgary Sun: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647128 Carolina Hurricanes

NHL offers new proposal in hopes of ending lockout stalemate

By Chip Alexander - calexander@newsobserver.com

Could the NHL finally be on the verge of a major breakthrough that will jump-start the 2012-2013 season?

The NHL has made a new proposal on a collective bargaining agreement for the NHL Players Association to consider, NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly confirmed Friday. While Daly offered no specifics, media sources said the proposal would offer a compromise on contracting demands previously made the league, change the year-to-year salary variance previously proposed, and allow one contract compliance buyout per team before the 2013-2014 season that would not count against the team's salary cap.

"We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time," Daly said in a statement released by the league. "We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The NHLPA was to discuss the proposal in a Friday afternoon conference call with the players.

Details of the proposal were reported Friday by TSN and EPSN.com, among other media outlets. The Canadian Press reported the NHL made the proposal contingent on it being accepted by Jan. 11 and the season starting by Jan. 19.

The NHL had been proposing a maximum five-year limit on new contracts (seven years for a team re-signing one of its own players). Daly even said the contract demand, for the league and NHL owners, would be "the hill we die on"

The new offer would be for six-year contracts (still seven years for resignings). The union has proposed eight-year contracts.

The league had proposed a five-percent variance in year-to-year salary during the course of a contract, but is said to be willing to move to 10 percent, closer to the variance the players have been asking for.

The players have been insistent on the league honoring existing contracts as part of a new CBA. The league proposed a make-whole provision in which the players would receive deferred compensation and again has offered to put in \$300 million to help fund that compensation.

The NHL has canceled all games through Jan. 14, including the Winter Classic. There was hope, however, if the season could be started by mid-January that a 48-game schedule could be played, then the Stanley Cup playoffs.

As of noon Friday, no collective bargaining meetings have been scheduled. There have been no meetings since Dec. 13.

News Observer LOADED: 12.29.2012 647129 Chicago Blackhawks

Movement in NHL talks: If settled, Jan. 19 could be start of season

According to source, league amends proposed terms of contracts and sets Jan. 12 deadline to start camp, which could mean 48-game season, similar to 1994-95 lockout.

By Lisa Dillman

December 29, 2012

Just say it was the league that went up a hill but came down a mountain.

Twenty-two days after a top NHL official declared that term limits on player contracts were "the hill we will die on," the league engaged in a bit of selective amnesia.

The NHL submitted an amended collective bargaining proposal to the players' union that featured movement on the terms of contracts, proposing a six-year limit with an exception of seven-year agreements for clubs to resign their own free agents. Previously the proposal had been five years with the seven-year exception.

Included in the league's proposal was a deadline to start training camps by Jan. 12 for a Jan. 19 start to the season or the 2012-13 season would be canceled, according to a person with knowledge of the matter but not authorized to speak about it publicly.

This would closely mirror the lockout of 1994-95, which resulted in a 48-game season starting on Jan. 20. A handful of owners apparently have been exerting pressure on NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman to make this latest move.

It was viewed as an incremental step, not a closing move, in many quarters.

"If it is take it or leave it, won't go anywhere," said influential player agent Allan Walsh on Friday via text message. "If it is invitation to bargain towards closing [the] deal, we may have something."

An official from the players' union said Friday afternoon that there were internal conference calls with the negotiating committee and executive board. It was expected there would be a conference call with the league Saturday, seeking clarification on some points of the latest offer, and a possibility of labor talks on Sunday in New York.

Publicly, the league would confirm only that a proposal was sent to the union Thursday. NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly, in a statement, called it a "new, comprehensive proposal."

Daly was the official theatrically invoking the dying-on-the-hill metaphor the night talks broke off on Dec. 6. (A federal mediator failed to jump-start negotiations the following week. Federal mediators were involved in negotiations twice.) Games already have been canceled through Jan. 14.

The league's latest offer also increased the year-to-year variance allowed within a contract to 10% from 5%, permitting each team to buy out one player as a "compliance" issue as the new labor deal goes into effect. The amount of that player's contract would not count against the salary cap but would count toward players' share of hockey-related revenues.

The NHL is said to be sticking to a 10-year term for the next labor deal, an opt-out clause for both sides after eight years, and a salary cap set at \$60 million and no escrow limit.

Meanwhile, the league's "make-whole" offer of \$300 million also remains intact as a means of easing players' transition from last season's 57% share of hockey-related revenues to a 50-50 split.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 12.29.2012

647130 Chicago Blackhawks

NHL makes new proposal in effort to save season

By MARK LAZERUS mlazerus@suntimes.com December 28, 2012 9:20PM

With the clock ticking down to zero hour and both sides taking to the courts in recent weeks, the NHL made a new proposal to the players union Thursday — one that makes some concessions in the hopes of ending the 104-day lockout and salvaging a shortened season.

"I can confirm that we delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor [collective-bargaining agreement]," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

An ESPN.com report said the league raised its proposed limit on the length of player contracts from five years to six years (seven, if a player is resigning with his own team), doubled the year-to-year

salary variance from 5 percent to 10 percent and allowed each team one amnesty buyout before next season that won't count against the salary cap. The proposal is for a

10-year contract, with each side able to opt out after eight years.

Multiple reports said the NHL wants an abridged training camp to open by Jan. 12, with the season

beginning Jan. 18 or 19. The NHL and the union are expected to talk via conference call Saturday and have tentative plans to meet Sunday.

Commissioner Gary Bettman has said anything less than a

48-game schedule wouldn't have enough "integrity" to be worth playing, so time is running out. All games through Jan. 14 have been canceled, as have the Winter Classic at Michigan Stadium and the All-Star Game in Columbus, Ohio.

In 1995, the lockout ended Jan. 11,

with the 48-game schedule — with every game coming against conference opponents — beginning

Jan. 20 and running through May 3.

In 2004-05, the NHL waited until mid-February before canceling the entire season, becoming the first North American pro sports league to do so because of a labor dispute.

The sides haven't met since

Dec. 13. Since then, the NHL has filed suit in U.S. District Court to prove the legality of the lockout, while the union — which has taken steps to dissolve and become a trade association so it can file

antitrust lawsuits - filed an unfair labor-practice charge with the

National Labor Relations Board.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 12.29.2012

647131 Chicago Blackhawks

NHL makes new proposal to players

By MARK LAZERUS mlazerus@suntimes.com December 28, 2012 1:33PM

With the clock ticking down to zero hour, and both sides taking to the courts in recent weeks, the NHL finally made a new proposal to the players association on Thursday — one that makes some concessions in the hopes of ending the 104-day lockout and salvaging a shortened season.

"I can confirm that we delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

An ESPN.com report said the league upped its proposed player contract term limits from five years to six years (seven, if a player is re-signing with his own team), doubled the year-to-year salary variance from 5 percent to 10 percent, and allowed each team one amnesty buyout before next season that won't count against the salary cap. The proposal is for a 10-year contract, with each side able to opt out after eight years.

Multiple reports said the NHL wants an abridged training camp to open by Jan. 12, with the season beginning on Jan. 18 or 19.

The players association has yet to comment on the new proposal.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman has said that anything less than a 48-game schedule wouldn't have enough "integrity" to be worth playing, so time is running out. All games through Jan. 14 have been canceled, as have the Winter Classic at Michigan Stadium and the All-Star Game in Columbus, Ohio. In 1995, the lockout ended on Jan. 11, with the 48-game schedule — with every game coming against conference pponents — beginning on Jan. 20 and running through May 3, about a month later than usual.

In 2004-05, the league waited until mid-February before canceling the entire eason, becoming the first North American professional sports league to do so over a labor dispute.

The two sides haven't met since Dec. 13. Since then, the NHL has a filed suit in U.S. District Court to prove the lockout's legality, while the players association

 — which has taken steps to break up the union and become a trade association

so it can file anti-trust lawsuits — filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 12.29.2012

647132 Chicago Blackhawks

League makes new offer to NHLPA

TRACEY MYERS

With the clock ticking to save any remnants of an NHL season, the league has made a new offer to the NHLPA.

The NHL made a new collective bargaining proposal to the players' association on Thursday afternoon. Deputy commissioner Bill Daly released a statement earlier today, Day 104 of the lockout, regarding the proposal.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon. We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

According to a TSN.ca report, the league has moved on a few things, including increasing the maximum contract length from five to six years (it remains at seven if a team is re-signing its own player). The report also said that the 'make whole' provision of \$300 million, the one that commissioner Gary Bettman said was supposedly off the table earlier this month, is still there. TSN's Pierre LeBrun also reported further details on the proposal.

"Anything right now we'll take, as far as moving (the process) along here," said Troy Brouwer prior to the conference call. "Guys want to get back to playing hockey. We know the timeline here is getting squished pretty substantially. If something's going to happen, it's going to happen in the next week or 10 days. Right now, players don't know what it all entails. But in the next few days I'm sure there'll be some talks going on, if nothing else, about this proposal."

The players, who talked among themselves via an NHLPA conference call this afternoon, have a lot of information to review; the proposal is nearly 300 pages long.

"Seeing that it was a 288-page document, it will take a day or so for the NHLPA staff to review and get clarification where necessary," Blackhawks forward Jamal Mayers said. "I'm hopeful this will finally lead to real negotiations to get back on the ice."

The league has been adamant that, if there is a season, a minimum of 48 games must be played. The two sides have not talked since the middle of December, when they met with federal mediators in New Jersey. Games are currently canceled through Jan. 14.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.29.2012

647133 Columbus Blue Jackets

NHL lockout: League makes new proposal Owners' offer includes longer contracts

By Aaron Portzline

The NHL labor talks were stoked into action late Thursday when the league made a proposal to the players union that included movement in at least three key areas.

"I can confirm that we delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement yesterday. "We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The NHL Players' Association had a conference call yesterday afternoon, and Daly spoke with union special counsel Steve Fehr about the proposal, which reportedly was issued as an entire, 300-plus page collective-bargaining agreement, not just key points the sides have argued.

The sides are expected to talk again today. If all goes well, a formal meeting could take place as soon as Sunday, Canadian sports network TSN reported.

The league's proposal — a 10-year agreement with a mutual opt-out clause after eight years — included movement on at least three key points, including:

- A six-year limit on player contracts, but allowing seven-year terms for players who were drafted by the club. The league's previous proposal called for a five-year cap, or six years for a club's drafted players. The players' last proposal called for an eight-year term limit.
- A maximum variance of 10 percent from year to year in player contracts. The previous offer was for a 5 percent variance. This is necessary, owners believe, to prevent front-loaded or back-diving contracts that have been used to circumvent the salary cap.
- A provision for contract buyouts before the 2013-14 season. The buyouts would count against the players' 50 percent share of hockey-related revenue, but it would not count against a club's salary-cap figure. Each team would be permitted one such buyout before next season.

Meanwhile, the NHL's offer maintained a \$300 million "make-whole" provision that would help bridge the gap created by contracts that already have been promised and the owners' demand for an immediate 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue.

The 2013-14 salary cap, according to the league's proposal, would be \$60 million.

According to TSN, the NHL wants to have an agreement in place by Jan. 11, with training camps to open the next day. The regular season, likely 48 games, would begin on Jan. 19.

The NHL also has proposed that free agency begin on July 10. It previously has opened on July 1.

The lockout, in its 105th day, has led to the cancellation of all games through Jan. 14.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 12.29.2012

647134 Detroit Red Wings

U.S. falls to Russia; Canada wins again at world junior championship

Posted by James Jahnke

Despite a goal from Michigan defenseman Jacob Trouba, the U.S. lost, 2-1, to Russia at the world junior championship today in Ufa, Russia.

The Americans are now 1-1 in group play. Russia is 2-0.

Albert Yarullin scored on a Russian power play 2:42 into the game. Trouba, a Rochester Hills native, tied it on a power play halfway through the second period. Vladimir Tkachyov netted the winner with 15:50 to play in the third.

Trouba tied for the team high with four shots on goal. He also incurred the minor penalty for interference that led to the Russians' first goal.

Among other Americans with local ties, Riley Barber (Livonia) had two shots and was minus-1, Blake Pietila (Michigan Tech) had two shots, Ryan Hartman (Plymouth Whalers) had four shots, Vince Trocheck (Saginaw Spirit) had two shots and was 13-for-19 on face-offs, and former Whaler J.T. Miller had three shots and was 10-for-17 on face-offs.

Andrei Makarov made 41 saves for Russia. Russia withstood a late twoman advantage for the Americans to hold on for the win.

U.S. goalie John Gibson had 28 saves.

Other local players today

- Canada 6, Slovakia 3: Detroit Red Wings prospect Xavier Ouellet tallied two assists as Canada stayed undefeated. The Canadians trailed, 2-0, after the first period, but scored four times in the second. Ouellet assisted on the third and fourth goals. He also had three shots on goal and was plus-1.
 Fellow Red Wings prospect Jake Paterson (Saginaw Spirit) did not play as a backup goalie for Canada.
- Czech Republic 3, Finland 1: Red Wings prospect Martin Frk had an assist for the Czech Republic. He was minus-1.
- Sweden 3, Switzerland 2 (SO): Plymouth Whalers forward Rickard Rakell had an assist for the Swedes. He also had two shots on goal and was 7-for-11 on face-offs.

Free Press news services contributed.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 12.29.2012

647135 Detroit Red Wings

Metro & state: Tom Wilson's goal lifts Plymouth Whalers over Saginaw Spirit

HOCKEY: Tom Wilson's power-play goal at 11:40 of the second period snapped a 2-2 tie, and the Plymouth Whalers posted a 4-2 victory over the Saginaw Spirit at Compuware Arena. The Whalers snapped a seven-game winless streak. Wilson and Alex Aleardi each had a goal and an assist for the Whalers, now 15-11-5-3 with 38 points -- good for second place in the Ontario Hockey League's West Division. Eric Locke scored a short-handed goal and assisted Garret Ross on a power-play goal for Saginaw (14-17-3-2). The Whalers play at home Saturday at 7:05 against London.

SWIMMING AND DIVING: The Oakland men's team ranks fourth and the women 23rd in CollegeSwimming.com's second Mid-Major Division I rankings of the season. It is the highest ranking in program history for the OU men.

Free Press staff reports

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 12.29.2012

647136 Detroit Red Wings

Catch ex-Red Wings Kris Draper, Joe Kocur at Grand Rapids Griffins game Saturday

Detroit Free Press Staff

While the Red Wings won't be playing this weekend -- thanks to the NHL lockout -- there will be some Wings fare in Grand Rapids.

The Griffins continue their AHL schedule after their holiday break with back-to-back home games against the Toronto Marlies at 7 tonight and Saturday night

Saturday is Red Wings Legends Night at Van Andel Arena and former Wings Kris Draper and Joe Kocur are scheduled to sign autographs and meet fans at 5:45-7:15 p.m. before the game. The first 1,200 fans will also receive a Scotty Bowman bobblehead.

The Griffins also host Rockford at 6 p.m. on New Year's Eve.

BRIEFLY: After some communication during the holiday period, the NHL and the players' association still haven't made any new plans to meet and resume negotiations. Last week, the NHLPA voted 97% in favor of enabling its executive committee to dissolve the union. Executive director Don Fehr has until Jan. 2 to decide whether to file such a disclaimer of interest.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 12.29.2012

647137 Detroit Red Wings

Wings' Daniel Cleary calls NHL's new offer 'positive sign' in talks

By Ted Kulfan

Hazel Park — NHL owners have taken the first step toward salvaging a portion of the regular season.

With the lockout reaching Day 105 today, deputy commissioner Bill Daly confirmed the league presented a new collective bargaining agreement proposal Thursday afternoon to the Players Association.

The sides are expected to discuss the offer in a teleconference today and then possibly set up a meeting.

Locked out Red Wings players, and players around the league, were cautious about commenting on the proposal without studying it in-depth.

"I've always believed anytime you're talking, no matter how good or bad it goes, you never know what kind of traction you can get out of it," player rep Daniel Cleary said Friday after a workout at Viking Arena. "It's a positive sign."

Time is of the essence for both sides in trying to salvage a 48-game schedule, which the league has stated is a minimum to have a meaningful regular season.

The NHL needs to get the regular season started by Jan. 20 at the latest — as it did in 1995 during a 48-game lockout-shortened season. Training camp would need to begin approximately Jan. 10, for that to happen.

All games through Jan. 14 have been cancelled, 50.8 percent of its schedule or 625 games.

"Here we are on December (29th) and the window is closing," Cleary said.

In its latest offer, the league moved on several fronts.

Term limits for player contracts inched from five to six years (seven, if a team is re-signing its own player.

Salary variance (year-to-year salary within a contract) from year to year, and the salary cap would drop from \$70.2 million this season to \$60 million in 2013-14, with teams allowed one contract buyout prior to next season.

The length of the CBA is proposed to be 10 years, with a mutual opt-out clause after eight years.

TSN is reporting the start of free agency would move from July 1 to July 10.

Daly acknowledged the reports of a new offer in a statement to the media.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday (Thursday) afternoon," Daly's statement read.

"We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time.

"We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

There was no immediate response from the Players Association leadership.

Niklas Kronwall, Red Wings co-player rep, was glad to see reports of the league presenting a new offer.

"Obviously it's a good sign and hopefully some good can come out of it," Kronwall said. "We have to try and stay positive and focused."

Detroit News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647138 Detroit Red Wings

Details of NHL's latest CBA proposal: 10-year deal, six-year contract limits, same rules for free agency

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

Here are highlights of the collective bargaining agreement the NHL proposed on Thursday to the NHL Players' Association, per tsn.ca:

Ten-Year Agreement (through 2021/22 season); Parties have mutual optout right after 8 years.

50-50 Revenue Split between Clubs and Players with current HRR Accounting.

\$300 million in "Make-Whole" payments (outside the system) to compensate Players for the reduced value of Player contracts in the early years of the new CBA.

No contractual "roll backs" of Player Salaries.

Clubs can operate with an effective Upper Limit of \$70.2 million in 2012/13; must come into compliance with \$60 million Upper Limit for the start of the 2013/14 season.

Each Club will be entitled to execute up to one "Compliance Buy-Out" prior to the 2013/14 season pursuant to which payments made to the Player will not be charged against the team's Cap, but will be charged against the Players' Share.

Establishment of a Defined Benefit Pension Plan that will provide maximum permissible benefits to Players upon retirement. The Plan will be funded with contributions out of Players' Share and \$50 million of the "Make-Whole" payment amount of \$300 million will be allocated and set aside to fund potential underfunding liabilities of the Plan at end of CBA.

Rules for Entry Level System, Salary Arbitration and Group 3 Unrestricted Free Agency will remain unchanged.

Maximum contract length of 6 years subject to a Club's ability to re-sign its own Player for a term of up to 7 years (provided the Player played his last full season with the re-signing Club). In addition, year-to-year Salary variability will be limited (up or down) to no more than 10% of the value of the first year of a multi-year SPC.

Money paid (above a defined threshold) to Players on NHL SPCs in another professional league (e.g., the AHL or a European league) will be charged against the NHL team's Cap, but not against the Players' Share.

"Cap Advantage Recapture" formula applicable to existing long-term contracts (in excess of 6 years) for years in which Player is retired or fails/refuses to perform under his NHL SPC.

Ability for Clubs to retain/allocate Salary and Cap Charges in the context of Player Trades within specified parameters.

More robust League-wide Revenue Sharing Program (increased pool from approximately \$150 million to \$200 million) with creation of Industry Growth Fund to improve the long-term revenue generating potential of the League and low-grossing Clubs. Formation of active Revenue Sharing Oversight Committee on which NHLPA will participate.

New Player Discipline procedures and protocol incorporating Player appeal rights to a neutral third-party arbitrator for both on-ice and off-ice discipline.

There are a litany of other provisions, which can be found at tsn.ca.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.29.2012

647139 Detroit Red Wings

Source: NHL makes new CBA proposal, compromising on contract length, salary variance

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

The NHL has made a new collective bargaining proposal to the NHL Players Association, compromising on several key issues, including contract lengths, salary variance and buyouts.

A source confirmed to MLive.com that the NHL has moved from five years to six years on contract length and boosted salary variance from five percent to 10 percent, In addition, the league would allow each team one

compliance buyout prior to the 2013-14 season which would not count against the salary cap, something the players had desired but the NHL previously was reluctant to offer.

The league is waiting for a response from the NHLPA. The sides have not spoken since Dec. 13 and have no talks scheduled.

The union's most recent proposal included an eight-year limit on contracts and a 25-percent salary variance.

The NHLPA's executive board has until Wednesday to file for a disclaimer of interest and disband the union, which would enable players to file a class-action anti-trust lawsuit challenging the legality of the lockout, which has reached 104 days.

The league has canceled all games through Jan. 14. In order to salvage a 48-game season (a league-mandated minimum), the sides likely would need a deal in the next two weeks and the schedule would have to start around Jan. 20.

Update: NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly released the following statement:

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon. We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The NHLPA reportedly will conduct a conference call with players at 3 p.m. to discuss the proposal.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.29.2012

647140 Detroit Red Wings

Former Red Wings Stanley Cup winners to sign autographs at Griffins game

Peter J. Wallner | pwallner@mlive.com By Peter J. Wallner | pwallner@mlive.com

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – The Grand Rapids Griffins, who at one point expected to be playing at Comerica Park in Detroit this weekend, instead start a sequence of three home games in four days.

The Griffins, first in the AHL's Midwest Division at 16-9-1-1, host the Toronto Marlies in 7 p.m. games tonight and Saturday, and meet second place-Rockford at 6 p.m. Monday.

Related: Griffins find success in nets with tandem

Originally, the Griffins and Marlies were to play outdoors Sunday, Dec. 30, as part of the Hockeytown Winter Festival and the NHL Winter Classic game on New Year's Day between the Detroit Red Wings and Toronto Maple Leafs outdoors at Michigan Stadium.

The ongoing labor dispute between the NHL and NHLPA forced the games to be scraped Nov. 2. $\,$

Instead, the Griffins bill the Saturday game against Toronto as Red Wings Legends Night. Red Wings alumni and Stanley Cup champions Kris Draper and Joe Kocur will sign autographs and meet fans inside Van Andel Arena from 5:45-7:15 p.m.

Also, 1,200 fans will receive a Scotty Bowman bobblehead. Bowman holds the NHL record for most wins as a coach (1,244) and coached nine Stanley Cup champs, including three in Detroit (1997, 1998 and 2002).

Last week, the Griffins also played three games in four nights and won them all to start a three-game winning streak.

The games this weekend won't be easy for the Griffins, atop the division standings for the holidays for the first time since 1995-96. Toronto leads the North Division at 18-9-1-1 and is unbeaten in its past six games, while Rockford and Grand Rapids are separated by two points in the division. In the last meeting Dec. 7 at Van Andel Arena, the Griffins defeated Rockford

4-2 in a game that featured 132 penalty minutes, including six fighting majors.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.29.2012

647141 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings European prospects: Calle Jarnkrok flourishing, Teemu Pulkkinen off to slow start

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

Calle Jarnkrok, one of the Detroit Red Wings' top prospects, is following up his exceptional playoff run in the Swedish Elite League with another strong season.

The talented and tenacious center who is often likened to Henrik Zetterberg is the leading scorer (10 goals, 28 points in 33 games) for Brynas, the defending league champion.

"He's having a very good year. He's one of the leaders on his team," Red Wings assistant general manager Jim Nill said. "His skills are good, he's always on the puck. He has a little bit of Zetterberg in him, same competitiveness, very tenacious player."

Jarnkrok had 16 points (four goals, 12 assists) in 16 playoff games for Brynas. That performance earned him a spot on Sweden's World Championship club, where he had just one assist in eight games.

Jarnkrok, 21, was Detroit's second pick, 51st overall, in the 2010 entry draft.

The slick puck-handler needs to bulk up his slight frame (5-11, 174) for the rigors of the NHL.

Here's an update on some other Red Wings prospects in Europe:

Teemu Pulkkinen: He's a pure sniper with a terrific shot, but hasn't been burying the puck much with Jokerit in Finland's top league, SM-liiga. He has just seven goals and 15 points in 33 games.

"Slower start, not as much ice time, but the last three weeks he's started to score again," Nill said. "He's getting over the hump, adjusting to a different role."

Detroit's fourth pick, 111th overall in the fourth round, in 2010, Pulkkinen (5-11, 194) is a right-handed shooter who likes to find open spots on the ice and unleash one-timers.

Jarnkrok and Pulkkinen will be in North America next season, competing for a spot on the Red Wings roster.

"Let them come to camp and see where they fit in," Nill said. "If they're ready, good. If not, they'll go to Grand Rapids."

Mattias Backman: This tall (6-3), mobile defenseman is having a solid first season in Sweden's top league, with no goals and 14 assists in 33 games for Linkoping.

Nill called him a good, young prospect who opened many eyes with his performance for Sweden in last year's World Junior Championships.

"Good skater, good puck skills," Nill said. "We're excited about his development. Probably another year in Europe wouldn't hurt."

Selected in the fifth round in 2011 (146th overall), Backman, like most prospects, needs to add weight to his 170-pound frame. He is a finesse player who does not play physical.

Nill said the Red Wings must sign Backman in 2013. Since he can't play in the AHL next season, he'll spend another year in Europe.

"He's 2-3 years away from being ready (for the NHL) if he continues to develop at this pace," Nill said.

Alexei Marchenko: Another defenseman from the 2011 draft (205th overall in the seventh round), he has four goals and seven points in 32 games for CSKA Moscow, where he is a teammate of Red Wings center Pavel Datsyuk.

"He's a good, all-around defenseman. He moves the puck well," Nill said. "We'll make a decision on bringing him over, if he wants to come. Good chance for next year. A lot will depend on him."

Nill said Marchenko (6-2, 183), a right-handed shooter, would have been the top defenseman on Russia's World Junior team last year but he blew out his knee.

He must decide whether to come to North America, where he would be playing in Grand Rapids, or remain in the KHL, where he'd earn more money.

Michigan Live LOADED: 12.29.2012

647142 Edmonton Oilers

NHL makes movement on buyouts, contract length in new proposal, source says

By THE CANADIAN PRESS, CP December 28, 2012

TORONTO — The NHL has presented a new proposal to the NHL Players' Association.

A source says the league's offer calls for player contract limits of six years. The owners had previously been seeking five.

It also includes one compliance buyout per team that would count against the players' overall share in revenue but not against the salary cap.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly declined comment when asked about the proposal.

There are no plans for the two sides to meet.

It's been two weeks since representatives from the league and union last sat down together.

The 104-day lockout has seen all regular-season games cancelled through Jan. 14 and it's believed a deal needs to be reached by then to salvage a 48-game schedule — the minimum commissioner Gary Bettman says must be played.

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647143 Florida Panthers

Panthers prospect Huberdeau helps Team Canada to 6-3 win over Slovakia

Several Panthers prospects are competing in prestigious IIHF World Junior Championships in Russia

December 28, 2012|By Harvey Fialkov, Sun Sentinel

For those Panthers fans starving for hockey they should be checking the daily reports from the 2013 IIHF World Junior Championship being held in Ufa, Russia where several of Florida's prospects are excelling.

Teen phenom Jonathan Huberdeau was a plus-2 with an assist to lead undefeated Team Canada to a 6-3 victory over Slovakia on Friday. Despite forward Rocco Grimaldi finishing with a plus-1 and Vincent Trocheck adding three shots, Team USA fell 2-1 to Russia to fall to third place in Group B with a 1-0-0-1 record.

-Harvey Fialkov

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 12.29.2012

647144 Los Angeles Kings

Movement in NHL talks: If settled, Jan. 19 could be start of season

According to source, league amends proposed terms of contracts and sets Jan. 12 deadline to start camp, which could mean 48-game season, similar to 1994-95 lockout

By Lisa Dillman

December 29, 2012

Just say it was the league that went up a hill but came down a mountain.

Twenty-two days after a top NHL official declared that term limits on player contracts were "the hill we will die on," the league engaged in a bit of selective amnesia

The NHL submitted an amended collective bargaining proposal to the players' union that featured movement on the terms of contracts, proposing a six-year limit with an exception of seven-year agreements for clubs to resign their own free agents. Previously the proposal had been five years with the seven-year exception.

Included in the league's proposal was a deadline to start training camps by Jan. 12 for a Jan. 19 start to the season or the 2012-13 season would be canceled, according to a person with knowledge of the matter but not authorized to speak about it publicly.

This would closely mirror the lockout of 1994-95, which resulted in a 48-game season starting on Jan. 20. A handful of owners apparently have been exerting pressure on NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman to make this latest move.

It was viewed as an incremental step, not a closing move, in many quarters.

"If it is take it or leave it, won't go anywhere," said influential player agent Allan Walsh on Friday via text message. "If it is invitation to bargain towards closing [the] deal, we may have something."

An official from the players' union said Friday afternoon that there were internal conference calls with the negotiating committee and executive board. It was expected there would be a conference call with the league Saturday, seeking clarification on some points of the latest offer, and a possibility of labor talks on Sunday in New York.

Publicly, the league would confirm only that a proposal was sent to the union Thursday. NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly, in a statement, called it a "new, comprehensive proposal."

Daly was the official theatrically invoking the dying-on-the-hill metaphor the night talks broke off on Dec. 6. (A federal mediator failed to jump-start negotiations the following week. Federal mediators were involved in negotiations twice.) Games already have been canceled through Jan. 14.

The league's latest offer also increased the year-to-year variance allowed within a contract to 10% from 5%, permitting each team to buy out one player as a "compliance" issue as the new labor deal goes into effect. The amount of that player's contract would not count against the salary cap but would count toward players' share of hockey-related revenues.

The NHL is said to be sticking to a 10-year term for the next labor deal, an opt-out clause for both sides after eight years, and a salary cap set at \$60 million and no escrow limit.

Meanwhile, the league's "make-whole" offer of \$300 million also remains intact as a means of easing players' transition from last season's 57% share of hockey-related revenues to a 50-50 split.

LA Times: LOADED: 12.29.2012 647145 Los Angeles Kings

Catching up with...Andy Murray! (Part 1)

Posted by Jim Fox on 28 December 2012, 12:45 pm

We know Andy Murray as the all-time leader in wins as coach in Los Angeles Kings history (215 wins from 1999-2006), but he has had a long and successful coaching career, as an assistant, head coach or as a consultant, at so many different levels (Canadian College, U.S. prep School, European Leagues, Canadian National team with numerous tournaments as well as World Championships and Olympic games, NHL and now U.S. College). I caught up with Andy just before Christmas while he was spending some time off in Florida with his wife Ruth during the college Christmas break and we chatted about some of the things he has accomplished in the past, but we started with his current position as head coach at Western Michigan University...

JF: My first question is just getting us up to speed. On July 26, 2011 you were named head coach of Western Michigan University. Last season you were CCHA tournament champions...as we speak, WMU is rated top ten. Please go back to the decision and take us through the process of choosing the US college route.

Andy Murray: Well first of all it caught a few people by surprise. I just had bought this home in Florida and I had been asked to look at a couple of NHL jobs and decided I wasn't going to and I'd actually agreed to be a consultant—and then I was going to be a health consultant with a Swiss Hockey Federation—Brady's there...

...and Jordy was playing—I did a little work with their national team and a few guys that I coached in the NHL, Jamal Mayers in particular, who had played with Western and a few other guys that had played there called me said 'coach we'd like you to go and consider this possibility at Western Michigan'...

...and it's something where I've said that it's kind of on my bucket list of things that I hadn't done yet and I'd always been a fan of college sports—football and everything about the atmosphere and I having my three kids (Brady, Sarah, Jordy) all play college hockey...

...I didn't get to see many games but I watched quite a few on the computer and that type of thing. I always respected the college coaches and thought it would be great and I also thought you only live once and you've got to try it all and I thought I would regret it if I didn't try so I went to the school campus—I was fortunate enough they offered me a job and I came back home and I walked in the door and Ruth (Andy's wife) said 'we are not going to Florida'—(we bought this place two years ago, from the day I bought it, it's the second time I've seen it. We had four days off for the Christmas break so we came down here)—but really it was just something as I said 'you only live once' and it was something I had on my bucket list that I'd love to try and be in the college environment—I mean, I get sideline passes to the football games and the basketball games and the women's volleyball. Ruth and I go all the time there, it's helped keep me young as well and I've enjoyed it—our team has fortunately been successful, we finished tied for second in the regular season which was actually a bit of a surprise, more surprising that we ended up winning the tournament but we're it's been enjoyable.

JF: I've always thought about this—I've never been in this situation certainly as a coach or even as a recruit. I'm sure there are many, but what point do you feel you need to get across when speaking to the parents of a recruit?

Andy Murray: Bottom line is that we'll do things the right way. First of all, if we offer somebody a scholarship; they're getting a scholarship-we're not pulling scholarships off the table and that type of thing. You hear lots of stories where schools are out offering scholarships and all of a sudden they decide they don't want the player and just dump them. But to me I think the bottom line is we will do things the right way. Another thing I do-parents will ask me 'what's your scholarship package' and I've told our assistants right from the get go but we don't talk scholarship until we know a player wants to be a Bronco-first of all, we only recruit players we want and once we have a player in and that player says 'coach I'd love to be a Bronco' then it's up to us to find a scholarship package that fits their family's needs. So I think honesty and being forthright, letting them know that we want players that want to be part of the program-you've heard me say many times, 'we're demanding but we don't have a demeaning coaching style', we demand a lot of players, in the classroom and on the ice and if you're willing to be a part of that package and commit to it we'd love to have you. So I think its honesty. I've fortunately got a bit of a track record where they don't have to go very far to check into my coaching style-I don't push the NHL side-I know my assistants do, quite a bit in the sense that they talk about 'he knows what it takes to get to the next level' and so on, but really we just sell our school and we sell the integrity of our program and we do things the right way and that we'll communicate with their sons everyday and let them know exactly what our expectations are and how they need to adhere to those expectations. Bottom line is just honesty. And we've got a great school, great academic school, we've got a passionate fan base, it's the loudest building in hockey, I'd actually love for you and Bob to come and call a game their sometime...

...it's crazy, it's the loudest building in hockey and I've been in some really loud buildings and it's just crazy and we've never lost a recruit that's come on to watch a game at Lawson Arena, when they see the atmosphere and what it's like, they truly get excited.

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647146 Minnesota Wild

With clock ticking, NHL makes new offer to end lockout

Article by: MICHAEL RUSSO, Star Tribune

The NHL, hoping to jump-start negotiations and end the lockout, softened some of its demands in a "new, comprehensive proposal" tendered to the players late Thursday.

The league informed the union that a deal must be agreed upon by Jan. 11 in order to begin training camps the following day and start a 48-game season Jan. 19, an NHL source said.

"We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players," NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement. "We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The league and union are expected to talk Saturday and potentially meet Sunday.

The league e-mailed all 30 teams late Thursday with the bullet points, including putting the \$300 million "Make Whole" back on the table. That's the money paid back to players in the early years of a new collective bargaining agreement that splits revenues at 50-50.

The NHL made a 10-year proposal with a mutual opt-out clause after eight years. It also proposed six-year maximum contract lengths (up from five in the NHL's last proposal) with teams having the ability to re-sign their own players to seven-year deals. In order to curb the backsliding contracts meant to circumvent the salary cap (i.e. Zach Parise, Ryan Suter and dozens of others), year-to-year salary variances will be limited up or down to no more than 10 percent the value of the first year of the contract (up from 5 percent).

The league would grandfather in the previous \$70.2 million salary cap ceiling meant for 2012-13 under its proposal, but teams must comply with a \$60 million upper limit by 2013-14. The union had been seeking compliance buyouts to aid that process. In the league's latest proposal, teams would be allowed one, but it would count against the player share of revenues.

Revenue sharing would increase from \$150 million to \$200 million.

Games have been canceled through Jan. 14. The next cancellation would terminate the season.

NHL Players' Association Executive Director Don Fehr, who had the proposal e-mailed directly to him from Commissioner Gary Bettman, spent Friday reviewing the extensive proposal. He communicated with the 700-plus player membership, including during an afternoon conference call with his negotiating committee and executive board.

The NHLPA reportedly is working on a counterproposal.

Other than a failed attempt with federal mediators, the NHL and NHLPA haven't formally held a bargaining session since Dec. 6.

Other items, some of which have been reported previously, in the NHL's proposal as obtained by ESPN.com include:

- Changing the NHL draft lottery to allow all nonplayoff teams, not just the five worst teams, the chance to win the No. 1 overall pick.
- Beginning free agency following an interview window.
- The ability to retain or allocate salary and salary-cap charges in player trades (not permitted before).
- Playoff pool increased from \$6 million to \$13 million, with regular increases over course of CBA.
- Annual holiday break increased to Dec. 24-26, adding one day.

• Revamping health and safety measures and improvements to the performance-enhancing substance program.

Star Tribune LOADED: 12.29.2012

647147 Minnesota Wild

NHL sweetens offer to players

Posted by: Michael Russo under The draft, Wild off-season news Updated: December 28, 2012 - 1:53 PM

The NHL has tendered a new proposal to the NHLPA that moves closer to the players in certain areas.

NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly e-mailed the Board of Governors with an update on an offer that includes six-year max contract lengths (up from five, still seven on re-signing your own free agents), max 10% variances in salaries per year (up from 5%) and the willingness to put the \$300 million "Make Whole" back onto the table.

Here's a statement from Daly: "In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon. We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

As part of the 300-page proposal, the NHL says a deal must be struck by Jan. 11 to start camp Jan. 12 and begin a 48-game season Jan. 19, sources say.

The players are looking for compliance buyouts. The league offer would allow one but would come out of the player share.

As per player requests, arbitration, entry-level contracts and free agency remain largely the same.

It is a 10-year CBA term with an opt-out after eight years.

ESPN.com obtained many of the bullet points here, much of which has been reported before. The lone new nugget is the fact that the league is looking to change the draft lottery to give all non-playoff teams the chance to win the No. 1 pick, not just the five worst teams

The NHLPA has not responded to this very detailed proposal yet, one that is described to me as basically a full CBA tendered.

Right now, no meetings are scheduled, but that is bound to change as both sides look to save the season and begin a 48-game schedule.

As you know, it's been a rollercoaster of emotions all lockout, so don't get your hopes up yet. But are players and owners really willing to risk the future of their careers and this league for the minor details separating the sides now?

Again though, we'll see how the NHLPA reacts to the fine print. I'd suspect a counteroffer, so no doubt there will continue to be ups and downs as we hit crunch time, so don't expect an imminent conclusion.

Star Tribune LOADED: 12.29.2012

647148 Edmonton Oilers

NHL makes movement on buyouts, contract length in new proposal, source says

By THE CANADIAN PRESS, CP December 28, 2012

TORONTO — The NHL has presented a new proposal to the NHL Players' Association

A source says the league's offer calls for player contract limits of six years. The owners had previously been seeking five.

It also includes one compliance buyout per team that would count against the players' overall share in revenue but not against the salary cap.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly declined comment when asked about the proposal.

There are no plans for the two sides to meet.

It's been two weeks since representatives from the league and union last sat down together.

The 104-day lockout has seen all regular-season games cancelled through Jan. 14 and it's believed a deal needs to be reached by then to salvage a 48-game schedule — the minimum commissioner Gary Bettman says must be played.

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647149 Montreal Canadiens

Breakthrough could mean beginning of the end in NHL labour dispute

DAVID EBNER, JAMES MIRTLE

The NHL and the NHL Players' Association – with the 2012-13 season on the line – plan to talk by phone Saturday and meet Sunday in New York to discuss the latest proposal from the league, an offer that may push the dispute to a resolution after negotiations had completely stalled before Christmas.

The NHL offer follows the last significant development, the players voting overwhelmingly a week ago to give union leaders the power to decertify the NHLPA. Last year, the same tactic helped hasten a resolution to labour fights in football and basketball.

Details of the NHL offer, which was made on Thursday night by the NHL on Day 103 of the lockout, were first reported on Friday morning by ESPN and while the NHL gave up a bit of ground, it mostly stood firm. The document, running some 300 pages, was comprehensive and put forth Jan. 19 as the last date a 48-game season could begin, which would require training camp by Jan. 12, so a deal would need to be fully completed within two weeks.

The key element is the addition of an effective deadline, said one owner on Friday afternoon. He said he believed about three-quarters of players would vote in favour of playing a season. However, numerous owners are skeptical about union leader Don Fehr and the group hopes the deadline puts pressure on Fehr.

Players don't feel the league gave up much ground – but it was enough to get talks restarted, said one person who was on a conference call of the union executive and the players' bargaining committee Friday afternoon.

Beyond the contract, there was also a report that the woeful Columbus Blue Jackets would move to the Eastern Conference and the Winnipeg Jets to the West for 2012-13, a prelude to broader realignment of the league's franchises, a process that failed last year.

The core of the "new" NHL proposal yields no ground on key issues. The revenue split is put at 50-50, and the deal is proposed to stretch 10 years. The league's "make whole" offer to honour current contracts is also unchanged at \$300-million, with \$50-million of that being paid into a proposed pension plan that the players would finance. Players had previously not been impressed that a large chunk of the "make whole" money would be paid out years from now.

One area in which the league yielded slightly was on the length of player contracts. The NHL let go of its insistence on five-year contract maximums, going to six in general, or seven if a player is re-signed by his own team. The variance on pay through the contract on such deals was increased to 10 per cent, from 5 per cent – but the effect of eliminating contracts such as those signed last summer by Zach Parise and Ryan Suter, 13 years for \$98-million. The players get paid \$12-million in each of the next two seasons – \$10-million a year in signing bonuses already paid whether there is hockey or not – but take just \$1-million a season in the last two years of their deals – a type of contract structure that infuriated many owners who believe it is a massive salary-cap loophole.

Another small concession was the NHL allowing teams to make one "compliance buy-out" – a kind-of complement to the "make whole" idea. Teams could pay money to one player's contract, which would not count against the club's salary cap, but would count league-wide against the share of money paid to players.

The cut in the salary cap remains large. The owners started the negotiations in July with a proposal of 43 per cent of revenue for players, down from the previous 57 per cent. By mid-October the league had moved to 50 per cent but owners at the time privately said they would not budge further and have not done so since. The maximum effective cap in a possibly saved 2012-13 season would be \$70.2-million – and \$60-million in 2013-14. Sixteen teams – more than half the league – have cap payrolls of \$61-million or more in 2012-13, according to capgeek.com.

On revenue sharing, an idea some players have pushed as central to an improved NHL, the league is putting \$200-million on the table, a purported increase from \$150-million, but the NHL's offer in October to save an 82-game season included \$200-million of revenue sharing. The new NHL offer includes the creation of several committees with owners and players, including one to oversee the revenue-sharing system.

Given the heft of the offer, many smaller issues that were noted as details emerged Friday. In player "working conditions," there was a general point in the summary about how much ice time and mandatory days off during training camps. Other items such as programs to "ensure optimal ice conditions" in buildings around the league were noted. In player health and safety, the creation of electronic medical records was put forth. In performance-enhancing substances, the list of what's banned would be expanded "to include illegal stimulants."

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.29.2012

647150 Montreal Canadiens

A look at the NHL's proposal

JAMES MIRTLE

So the NHL moved. But where did it move and by how much? Is it enough to save the season?

With the lockout into its 105th day, here's a closer look at the three main issues still separating owners and players and what has changed in light of the league's titanic 300-page proposal:

The NHL has not moved from its request for a long-term agreement, as commissioner Gary Bettman wants to come out of this dispute – the league's third lockout in 18 years – with the ability to assure fans and sponsors it won't happen again in the near future.

The league has also kept \$300-million (all currency U.S.) in "make whole" or transitional payments to players on the table in large part because a long-term agreement will make that money easier to pay over time.

The players want a shorter deal in the range of six to eight years, but could be willing to bend.

TERM LIMIT AND VARIANCE

Previous proposal: A five-year term limit for free agents, seven years for resigning players and a strict limit of 5-per-cent salary variance from the first year of a contract

New proposal: A move up to six years for free agents and a 10-per-cent salary variance

The term limit is the area NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly called the league's "hill we will die on," but there was apparently a bit of give on the hill.

This is a subtle shift, but one that is meaningful enough to bring players back to the negotiating table. The variance, however, remains strict enough that it would significantly limit the ability to front- or back-load contracts.

To date, the NHLPA's offer on contract term has been at eight years for all players, as they don't like the idea of a shorter term limit for free agents.

TRANSITIONARY MEASURES

Previous proposal: No transitionary measures, i.e. buyouts or escrow caps

New proposal: An allowance for one buyout in the 2013 off-season that would count against the players' share but not the cap

This one won't have players doing backflips, but it will allow teams that have committed a lot of salary to 2013-14 payrolls to have one "get of out jail free" card and expunge one bad contract from their midst.

A contentious issue on this front remains the NHL's desire for a \$60-million salary cap in 2013-14 despite the fact several teams have close to that amount already committed to payrolls. Expect players to fight for a higher number.

WILL THIS SAVE THE SEASON?

The short answer is not on its own. The players are unlikely to accept the league's offer in its current form and will presumably bring a counterproposal into the mix in the coming days.

A vote by the full membership, if there is one, is likely still another week to 10 days off.

What this offer from the league has already done, however, is pushed the two sides to talk again, established a firmer drop-dead date (Jan. 19) for a season to start, and forced the NHLPA to make the next offer.

Given how close the two sides are on the remaining issues, that should be enough to ensure they get back on the ice within a month.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.29.2012

647151 Montreal Canadiens

New hope for hockey's return

DAVID SHOALTS

Will there be an NHL season after all?

The momentum appears to be there, with a new offer from NHL owners and a conference call scheduled for Saturday between the owners and players. If all goes well on that call, the two sides will reopen negotiations in person in New York on Sunday.

Both sides admit talks this weekend will be a last-ditch attempt to save a shortened hockey season. The NHL and its players have no more than 10 days left to save a 48-game season, a league executive said after the new offer led to renewed talks.

The executive, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of Gary Bettman's gag order on management, said the NHL commissioner made it clear in the past two weeks to both the union and the 30 NHL teams that the last possible date to start a truncated season is Jan. 19. This would allow for a 48-game season, the shortest schedule Mr. Bettman says the owners would allow, plus playoffs that would conclude in late June.

In that case, the executive said, the players and owners need to reach a new agreement by Jan. 5 or 6. That would leave one week to complete enough of the legal paperwork for the lockout to end, another week for training camp and the season would start on Saturday, Jan. 19. Other reports put the deadline to reach an agreement at Jan. 11 in order to start playing on Jan. 19 or the NHL will cancel the season.

"I think everybody does recognize we're at the end," the NHL executive said. "However the next week plays out, everybody knows what the end result is. We're either making a deal or we're all taking a very long vacation."

The latest burst of optimism in the NHL lockout – which hits 105 days on Saturday, the second-longest one in league history – came in the wake of a new offer from the owners sent to NHL Players' Association executive director Donald Fehr in an e-mail message from Mr. Bettman late Thursday afternoon. After a conference call with its executive and negotiating committees on Friday afternoon, the NHLPA agreed its representatives would go over the offer with their counterparts from the owners by telephone on Saturday. The call is to answer any questions from the players and it is hoped in-person negotiations, which broke off in acrimony two weeks ago, will resume Sunday in New York.

Neither side would comment Friday night after the NHLPA conference call ended. Earlier in the day, NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement released by the league he "can confirm that we delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a [collective agreement] late yesterday afternoon. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

In its new offer, the league softened its demands in key disputed areas. It offered to increase the term limit on player contracts to six years from five, with teams allowed to sign their own players for seven years. It also raised the amount salaries can increase annually, to 10 per cent from 5, and allowed teams to make one "compliance buyout" of a contract in the summer of 2013 that would not count against its salary cap.

There was also movement on the salary cap for this season, as the NHL offered to let teams have a cap of \$70.2-million (all currency U.S.) for 2012-13, although it would be pro-rated to account for the 34 games lost on the 82-game schedule to the lockout. But in 2013-14, the cap would drop to \$60-million to reflect the move to a 50-50 split of NHL revenue between the owners and players.

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647152 Montreal Canadiens

New Year's Resolution: NHL and players' union looking to resume talks on Sunday

JAMES MIRTLE and DAVID SHOALTS

The National Hockey League moved towards the players on a new collective agreement, and it may be enough to rescue a shortened season. But time is running out to get the deal done.

The league presented the NHL Players' Association a modified offer late Thursday that moved on several key elements of its last proposal. Then on Friday, following an afternoon conference call among the players, it was decided both sides would convene by conference call on Saturday with negotiations planned to follow on Sunday in New York, according to a report by Winnipeg Free Press columnist Gary Lawless.

Saturday's conference call will see representatives from the players and owners look through the NHL's latest offer for a collective agreement. They will go over any questions about it in advance of the anticipated negotiations on Sunday.

The NHL and its players have no more than 10 days left to save a 48-game season, a league executive said in the wake of the owners' offer.

The executive, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of NHL commissioner Gary Bettman's gag order on management, said the commissioner made it clear in the last two weeks to both the union and the 30 NHL teams the last possible date to start a shortened season is January 19. This would allow for a 48-game season, the shortest schedule Bettman says the owners would allow, plus playoffs that would conclude in late June.

In that case, the executive said, the players and owners need to reach a new agreement by Jan. 5 or 6. That would leave one week to complete enough of the legal paperwork for the lockout to end, another week for training camp and the season would start on Saturday, Jan. 19. Other reports put the deadline to reach an agreement at Jan. 11 in order to start playing on Jan. 19.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

Most notably, the NHL has increased its offer of a term limit on contracts from five years to six, with teams able to sign their own players to seven-year extensions.

The two other major changes are: an increase in the maximum year-to-year salary variance on contracts from 5 per cent to 10 per cent; adding the

ability to make one compliance buyout in the summer of 2013 that would not count against the cap.

The remaining aspects of the league's last proposal, including the \$300-million in "make whole" transition payments and a 10-year CBA length, appear to have stayed the same.

ESPN.com provided a comprehensive breakdown of the NHL's offer, which is believed to be close to 300 pages long.

Several players contacted by The Globe and Mail on Friday had yet to see the offer, although that may not be unusual as the negotiating committee would be the first to view it.

"Believe it when I see it," one player said via e-mail.

It's unlikely the deal would be enough for the players to decide to put it to a vote, but there was no immediate word following the union's conference call.

The proposal, which came amid rumours many owners told Bettman they did not want to lose the entire season, finally adds some optimism after the two sides went without meeting for the past two weeks.

Last week, players voted to give the NHLPA's executive board the authority to file a disclaimer of interest, which would effectively dissolve the union. The board has until Jan. 2 to act on that.

The NHL has already cancelled games through Jan. 14, which is just over 50-percent of the regular-season games.

Toronto Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.29.2012

647153 Montreal Canadiens

Dave Stubbs: 20 years since last Cup

By Dave Stubbs, The Gazette December 28, 2012

MONTREAL — The Canadiens approached the '12-13 campaign with high hopes, having finished dead last the season before, then roared promisingly out of the gate with three straight victories.

Drat. Opened the record book to the wrong century.

That would have been the 1912-13 Canadiens, about to begin their fourth season in the pre-NHL National Hockey Association after having finished fourth in 1911-12's four-team loop.

Things wouldn't end well 17 games after that quick start; the not-yetnicknamed Habs would finish the 20-game schedule with a 9-11 record, good for fifth place in an expanded six-team league.

They'd return in 1913-14 with a new president and a new coach/team captain in Jimmy Gardner, finishing tied for first with the Toronto Blueshirts before losing a two-game, total-goals series to choose the NHA's Stanley Cup challenger.

A century later, the Canadiens are still looking for their first victory of 2012-13. Or their first game, in fact, locked out with the players of 29 other NHL teams. So it's without the results of the Habs' 36 scheduled games to this day on the calendar that we take a peek into 2013.

A considerably greater challenge than writing a year-in-review piece is typing a year-in-preview — anticipating the events that haven't yet happened, the athletes who haven't yet stepped onto their field of play.

While it's impossible to predict with certainty what will happen, achieved by whom, there are a few milestones or events we'll absolutely see in the year ahead:

Next June 11 will mark the 20-year anniversary of the Canadiens' most recent Stanley Cup parade. It's a remarkable span when you consider that the franchise won 24 Stanley Cups in its first 83 years of existence — an average of one every $3\frac{1}{2}$ years — and then none in the past two decades.

An entire generation of Canadiens fans has not seen this team win a championship, bringing into sharp relief the words of legendary captain Jean Béliveau in his 1994 autobiography, My Life In Hockey.

Following an unprecedented run of five consecutive Stanley Cups from 1956-60, the Habs went without a title from 1961-64 before beating Chicago in '65 for their 13th Cup.

"The Forum fans were Cup-starved," Béliveau wrote, "and showed their desire to end our four-year drought ..."

The NHL of yore was not that of today's 30-club league, but if four years in Béliveau's day constituted a drought, 20 years would be ...?

How some things never change in this city:

In 1993, rioters spilled into the downtown streets to "celebrate" the Stanley Cup victory over Los Angeles, professional criminals smashing windows and looting kilometres away in what was hardly a spontaneous meltdown of civilized behaviour.

Because of that riot, the 1993 parade was shortened; instead of crawling from City Hall and moving east, north then west to the Forum, it was routed from Lafontaine Park west on Sherbrooke to Guy St. A Forum rally was cancelled altogether.

More recently, mob-mentality mutts — and the career vandals — rioted when the Habs won a 2010 Eastern Conference semifinal against Pittsburgh. A sad, nauseating display, and a sign of how expectations had changed through the years — it wasn't a Stanley Cup that proved worthy of criminal acts, but only eight of 16 wins needed to get there.

For fear of offending the eternal optimists among the Canadiens' current faithful, the 18-season drought (let's not count locked-out 2004-05) will reach 19 this season, 20 years on the calendar — Friday's labour-front developments renewing hopes, again, that there might be a season at all.

There's no question the Habs are moving in the right direction with a strong front office rebuilding a club that has dog-paddled among the sharks for too long. But you don't undo in one off-season many years of having driven the piles of your foundation into the sand.

There is strong talent in the system, expensive contracts working their way to term. There is the rainbow of perhaps a radiant future taking form, but the pot of gold will not be found in 2013.

With their next game, we will be witness to a 333rd consecutive Bell Centre sellout announced by the Canadiens, no matter that some in the 21,273 will come dressed as empty seats.

Fans are rightfully disillusioned. They are angered by the NHL, which toys with spectators' loyalties and the cash they overspend, assuming they'll return with the unconditional love of a lapdog.

Everyone involved in this lockout is delusional if they think that fans will easily forgive. Many will be back, but with shallower pockets, and a generation of casual fans might be lost forever.

The Canadian Football League won't have the same hurdles to clear, and the circuit is richer for the return of ageless, graceful Anthony Calvillo as quarterback of the Alouettes.

Here's hoping the 101st Grey Cup, to be played in Regina in November, will see the Saskatchewan Roughriders represent the West and feature the snow and cold and all the garbage the Canadian climate can throw at it. This would again illustrate, needlessly, the mettle of CFL fans in the league's most devoted market. There should be a law against playing the Grey Cup under a roof.

The Montreal Impact aims to make the playoffs in its second season in Major League Soccer, having raised the big-league curtain last year at Saputo Stadium.

We'll have April's 2013 IIHF Women's World Hockey Championship a drive up Highway 417 in Kanata and Nepean, an event worthy of the attention it gets.

Formula One racing returns to Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in June for the Canadian Grand Prix; NASCAR's Nationwide Series, meanwhile, has rumbled off into the sunset, the stock-car series and local promoters unable to reach a deal to return for a seventh edition.

Professional tennis and golf will return to the city and nearby, and many sports off the beaten path with small but fiercely loyal followings will pay visits, too.

The Canadiens, of course, will remain the locomotive that pulls the train of sports in Montreal.

Perhaps we'll even see a game in 2013. The very real concern has been that, should negotiations finally collapse to kill this season, the league and team owners would be in no rush to get a deal done. The on-time start of the 2013-14 season would then hardly be guaranteed.

A century ago last month, the NHA's radical rule changes included a regulation that would fine a goaler \$2 if he laid on the ice to stop a shot.

If only there was a rule today to prohibit the stupidity and pigheadedness, on both sides, that has suspended this NHL season and put it in very real jeopardy, costing so many so much.

A game that is in the blood of millions of fans has become an afterthought, apathy having long ago replaced passion. If the NHL and its players understand the gravity of this, as they say they do, they've been doing a terrific job thus far of disguising it.

Read more:

http://www.montrealgazette.com/sports/Dave+Stubbs+years+since+last/77 54231/story.html#ixzz2GRFSa08v

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647154 Montreal Canadiens

Theodore shines for Panthers in fantasy win over Habs

PAT HICKEY

THE GAZETTE

SUNRISE, Fla. - Jose Theodore says there's no added thrill in beating his former team.

"I'm a Montreal guy and I had some good years with the Canadiens, but it's not like there's anybody that was on the team when I played there," Theodore said Friday night after making 23 saves to lead the Florida Panthers to a 1-0 victory over the Canadiens.

Theodore became the second former Montreal goalie to beat the Canadiens in as many nights. Mathieu Garon was the winner Thursday as the Tampa Bay Lightning edged Montreal 4-3 in overtime.

"The important thing for me was to get the win" said the 36-year-old Theodore, who last played for the Canadiens in 2006. "We started to turn things around last season and we're thinking like a playoff team."

Theodore said the busy holiday schedule seemed to catch up to the Canadiens.

"I remember from my time there that the trips before and after Christmas were always tough because you were away for a long time and the holidays were a distraction," Theodore said.

The Canadiens, who dropped to seventh place in the Eastern Conference standings, have a 2-2-1 record on the road trip that ends in Carolina on New Year's Eve.

Stephen Weiss scored the game's only goal at 1:31 of the opening period. Carey Price, who made 33 saves, made a stop on Tomas Fleischmann, but he left a rebound and George Parros pushed it to Weiss.

"We have to generate some more offence," head coach Michel Therrien said. "I think that's the third time this season that we've held the opponent to one goal and lost the game. We played well defensively, but there was no jump on offence."

The Canadiens will get a chance to recharge their batteries Saturday. They have a free day on the beach in Fort Lauderdale and can sleep in Sunday before taking a mid-day flight to Carolina, where they will practice Sunday afternoon.

The Canadiens will be back at the Bell Centre on Jan. 3 when they play the New Jersey Devils.

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647155 New Jersey Devils

Union and N.H.L. to Discuss New Offer

By JEFF Z. KLEIN

Published: December 28, 2012

After owners made an extensive new proposal, the N.H.L. and the players union agreed Friday to resume bargaining this weekend in a bid to end the 104-day lockout and salvage the 2012-13 season.

Representatives from the league and union will talk during a conference call Saturday, with the union seeking clarification on a number of matters in the proposal. The two sides are expected to meet in face-to-face in New York on Sunday.

The talks are the first significant contact between the two sides in two weeks. They come only about two weeks before what many consider the deadline for canceling the regular season.

Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly confirmed that the league extended an offer for a new collective bargaining agreement Thursday.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor C.B.A. late yesterday afternoon," Daly said in a statement distributed Friday by the N.H.L. He did not reveal details of the proposal.

"We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible," Daly said.

According to numerous reports, the owners moved in a few key areas in their latest proposal.

The owners dropped previous demands to make free agency and salary arbitration more difficult to achieve. In the new offer, those procedures would remain unchanged from the collective bargaining agreement that expired in September.

The owners' previous demand that individual player contracts be limited to five years — termed "the hill we will die on" by Daly earlier this month — was altered to a six-year limit. For players re-signing with their current teams, the owners left unchanged their proposed limit of seven years.

The year-to-year salary variance in individual contracts changed to a maximum of 10 percent from the previously proposed 5 percent.

For the first time in the negotiations, the owners offered to allow each team to make one "compliance buyout" of a player's contract before 2013-14, to help the team get under the \$60 million cap. The buyout would not count against the salary cap.

The owners did not change their offer regarding the term of the proposed collective bargaining agreement. It remains at 10 years, with an opt-out clause for either side after eight years.

The last bargaining session between the N.H.L. and the union took place Dec. 13. Since then, the league has filed a pre-emptive motion in federal court and with the National Labor Relations Board to uphold the legality of the lockout. Meanwhile, players authorized the union's executive board to disclaim interest, which could lead to individual players filing antitrust suits against the league.

But the N.H.L.'s new offer could signal an effort to settle the lockout within the next two weeks. Daly indicated this month that the lockout would have to be settled by mid-January to stage a 48-game schedule.

Should the lockout extend beyond mid-January, the season could be canceled.

The lockout is the third since Gary Bettman became commissioner in 1993. Bettman announced a settlement of the 1994-95 lockout on Jan. 11, with play resuming on Jan. 20. During the 2004-5 lockout, Bettman canceled the season in mid-February.

Since Bettman took office, the N.H.L. has canceled 2,323 regular-season games because of lockouts, more than 10 percent of its scheduled contests during his tenure.

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647156 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout update: Further details leak after NHL made new offer to NHLPA

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

Negotiations appear to have restarted in earnest after this morning's news regarding the owners' new proposal to the players' union.

Aside from the changes the NHL made in their proposal -- you can find them in this comprehensive list from TSN -- there's even more news that's come out of the move made by the league.

As The Star-Ledger's Rich Chere reported, deputy commissioner Bill Daly confirmed the offer was made. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible," Daly said in a statement.

Then there's the report from the Ottawa Sun's Bruce Garrioch, who tweeted his sources said "owners have privately informed [Gary] Bettman cancelling the season is not an acceptable option."

On top of that, we now know there's a "drop dead date" according to Renaud Levoie of RDS.ca -- Jan. 11. John Shannon of Sportsnet had it as Jan. 19. ESPN's Pierre LeBrun said the timetable is "an agreement no later than Jan. 11, the opening of training camps Jan. 12, and the beginning of the regular season Jan. 19." All of that matches the previous reports that a deadline would be around mid-January.

So, as usual, the next question is: now what? After the NHLPA had a conference call this afternoon, Gary Lawless of the Winnipeg Free Press tweeted a source said "players and league will convene by conference call on Saturday and hope to meet in person Sunday in New York."

As always, stay tuned.

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.29.2012 647157 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout: Owners' new proposal could save partial season

Rich Chere/The Star-Ledger By Rich Chere/The Star-Ledger

The majority of NHL owners apparently aren't interested in making the length of free-agent contracts "the hill we die on" or even the sticking point that leads to the cancellation of the 2012-13 season.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly, who uttered those dramatic words Dec. 6, confirmed yesterday the league made a new proposal Thursday with the hope of getting a collective bargaining agreement and saving a partial season.

The proposal, which league representatives had hoped would remain secret, was leaked by a member of the union.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon," Daly said in a statement Friday.

"We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The league is now willing to allow six-year contracts, as well as raising or lowering the yearly salary variance by no more than 10 percent. In past proposals, owners wanted to limit deals to five years with a five percent variance. Clubs would be able to sign their own players to seven-year contracts (no change in the owners' stance).

The NHLPA conducted a conference call with its executive board Friday. It wasn't immediately known whether the proposal would be put to a vote from

the 750-member union or if Players' Association executive director Donald Fehr would offer a counter proposal.

Representatives from the union and league are scheduled to talk on a conference call today, with a possible face-to-face meeting Sunday.

Some give-and-take is expected, but time is running out on salvaging a 48-game season. League officials suggest a deal must be agreed upon soon so legal work could be completed in order to open training camps Jan. 4 or 5. An in-conference schedule of probably 48 games would begin Jan. 11 or 12.

The players' recent vote, which would allow the NHLPA's executive board to file a disclaimer of interest and dissolve the union, may have been a factor in the owners' decision to give some ground. The union had until Jan. 2 to file and test U.S. antitrust laws which could declare the lockout illegal.

There have also been suggestions that owners told commissioner Gary Bettman canceling the season was simply not an option.

The owners' latest proposal, as reported by ESPN.com:

- Term limits on contracts would be six years (up from the five years in previous proposals). Clubs could re-sign their own players for seven years.
 Yearly salary variance would be 10 percent (up from the league's proposal of five percent).
- Each team would be allowed one compliance buyout before the 2013-14 season that would not count against the salary cap but would count against the players' share.
- The owners' 'Make Whole' provision of \$300 million to compensate players would remain on the table.
- · There would be no rollbacks of player salaries.
- The CBA would be for 10 years (through the 2021/22 season) with both sides able to opt out after eight years.
- The salary cap would be \$60 million for 2013-14, with teams allowed to operate with an upper limit of \$70.2 million this season.
- Entry-level contracts, salary arbitration and Group 3 unrestricted free agency standards would remain unchanged.

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.29.2012 647158 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout update: NHL made new offer to NHLPA, reports says

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

Finally, after weeks with no movement in lockout talks, there's a bit of news to discuss.

ESPN's Pierre LeBrun reported an NHL player said the league made a new offer.

The changes include six-year limits on contracts (seven for players who stay with their own team), "salary variance" can be 10 percent instead of five and "one compliance buyout before the 2013-14 season that will not count against the salary cap but will count against the players' share."

The one thing staying the same? "Make Whole" money is still \$300 million.

It doesn't mean the lockout is suddenly closer to being lifted. But it's an improvement over the lack of action, especially with the clock ticking toward Jan. 2 and the legal battle that could ensue if the players' file a disclaimer of interest

LeBrun said Bill Daly "wouldn't confirm" the report. But there have been multiple confirmations by other reporters. The Star Tribune's Michael Russo tweeted the offer was for the collective bargaining agreement to last for 10 years (something that's been on the table previously) and that the NHL "updated [its] board via email last night."

Now, the union will get to respond. Will they flat-out reject it? Will they work off this offer and negotiate on it? Or will the NHLPA decide the only way to get what it wants is by letting the courts decide the lockout?

We won't know those answers just yet. All we know is the process has begun again.

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.29.2012 647159 New Jersey Devils

NHL lockout: League makes new proposal hoping to restart talks

Rich Chere/The Star-Ledger By Rich Chere/The Star-Ledger

The NHL quietly made a new proposal to the Players' Association on Thursday, hoping to restart negotiations on a new collective bargaining agreement.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly has nowconfirmed the proposal, reported by ESPN.com.

Daly released the following statement regarding the new proposal:

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon. We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and

consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

He did not offer details of the proposal.

The offer is said to be for a 10-year CBA and includes the following details:

- -- One compliance buyout per club that would not count against the cap but would count against the players' share.
- -- The length of contracts would be a maximum of six years (up from the proposed five). Teams could re-sign their own players for seven years.
- -- Salary variance on contracts from year to year would be 10 percent (up from the proposed five percent).
- -- Make-whole figure would remain \$300 million.
- -- The salary cap would remain \$60 million.

Although no talks have occurred over the past few days, the league reportedly made the new proposal on Thursday with the hope of keeping it quiet. The NHLPA is currently reviewing the offer.

The league has canceled games through Jan. 14 (50.8 percent of the schedule). Owners do not want to cancel the entire season and are hoping to begin play on Saturday, Jan. 19, with training camp opening a week earlier.

Star Ledger LOADED: 12.29.2012 647160 New Jersey Devils

NHL labor in crunch time

By LARRY BROOKS

Brooks on The ultimate round of bargaining between the NHL and NHLPA will continue this weekend as the players craft a counter-proposal to the league's latest offer, presented to the union late Thursday.

The parties will conduct a conference call today in anticipation of a meeting in Manhattan tomorrow, with these give-and-takes critical to saving a 2012-13 season of between 48 and 52 games that would begin no later than Jan.

The NHL's Canceler-in-Chief Gary Bettman, under pressure in the form of phone calls from big-market owners — including the Rangers' James Dolan, multiple sources report — to resurrect bargaining the league abandoned three weeks ago, made modest adjustments to the previous

offer regarding, most notably, contract term limits for free agents changing teams; salary variance within contracts; and amnesty buyouts.

The league, though, is still proposing a \$60.2 million cap for 2013-14 that represents a drop of 14.53 percent from this year's \$70.2 million compliance figure and would all but certainly result in the players' assuming double-digit escrow losses next year, even including make-whole payments.

A cap of \$60 million next season would both put a squeeze on the approximately 250 players whose contracts are due to expire over the summer while minimizing their choices as unrestricted free agents.

The union is expected to propose a higher 2013-14 cap in the transition to 50/50, perhaps \$65M, plus a cap on escrow losses.

The league's proposed single buyout per team that would count against the players' share, but not against individual club caps, would provide some, but not substantial relief to those clubs hard up against next year's reduced cap.

Given the league's plan to charge cap hits on amounts above \$625,000 for AHL players on one-way contracts, the Rangers would use the amnesty buyout on Wade Redden, who has two years at \$10 million remaining on his deal

The NHL's amended proposal increases contract limits for unrestricted free agents from five years to six years, while retaining a seven-year maximum for players resigning with their clubs. The annual variance allowance would increase from five percent to 10 percent, with the number based on the amount of the first year's salary; e.g. a player receiving \$10 million the first year could have his salary adjusted downward by \$1 million per season.

There are approximately 10 days in which to maneuver, and two weeks to gain a ratified agreement. Regardless of posturing, the league's proposal is open to negotiation. The players will have to calculate not whether a better deal might be available in a week or so, but whether a more equitable deal would be available over the summer weighed against the losses of a canceled season.

A 48-game season would allow the players to earn a pro-rated 58.5-percent of their 2012-13 pay, before escrow.

NHL officials are pondering a flip of conferences for the Blue Jackets and Jets for this season only, for what would be an in-conference only schedule. League realignment is a pending issue.

New York Post LOADED: 12.29.2012

647161 New York Rangers

In Sled Hockey, a Slower Pace but Hard Shots and Hits

By DAVE CALDWELL

Published: December 26, 2012

NEWINGTON, Conn. — Back on her wheelchair and in the dressing room with her teammates, Sara Tabor said it had not been such a bad day on the ice. Her team, the Rangers, had lost twice, but she scored a goal after nearly bowling over a goaltender with her sled.

She laughed when she said opponents grumbled that she should have been called for a penalty, but she already knew that the referees rarely penalize the few women in the Northeast Sled Hockey League. Levels the playing field, you know.

"I play really aggressive hockey," said Tabor, who lives on Long Island and works in Manhattan. "They'll say: 'She's a girl! Why does she get to hold?' The refs never call anything. You get in guys' heads."

Tabor, 31, is in her rookie season with a sled-hockey team sponsored, in part, by the N.H.L.'s Rangers, which explains why players wear red, white and blue sweaters.

Tabor was partly paralyzed when she fell in a shower in Germany four years ago. She grew up in Minnesota and is a Wild fan (and a North Stars fan before that), but had never played organized hockey until she was injured.

She is unable to walk without the aid of leg braces or crutches, and she needs to use a wheelchair to get from Penn Station to work, often slaloming through pedestrians. Hockey has rejuvenated her.

"I count my blessings a lot," she said. Of her injury, she said: "It's not something I dwell on. I just have to get stuff done."

Though able-bodied people play sled hockey, the sport was designed for athletes with mobility limitations caused by injuries or conditions like cerebral palsy. It is a part of the Paralympic Games.

The Rangers are one of six teams in the Northeast Sled Hockey League, the first of its kind, which holds five games one Sunday per month at the Newington Arena, near Hartford. Each team plays eight regular-season games and there are also playoff games. The annual entry fee is \$3,000 per team. Many teams pad their schedules by playing in tournaments.

Players strap themselves into seated \$800 sleds with two skates mounted on the bottom, one at the front, one under the seat. They propel themselves with two half-hockey sticks in a fashion similar to cross-country skiers. Composite sticks cost \$120 per pair and have small spikes bolted to the butt ends. (Tabor tapes hers pink.)

The stick blades are less curved than those on standard ice-hockey sticks, and the elbows of the sticks are straighter than those on ice-hockey sticks, in part because the players are lower to the ice. A 45-minute game is played on a standard rink.

"We're not just some disabled people playing out there who are looking for a pat on the back," said Victor Calise, a founder and team manager of the sled-hockey Rangers.

Calise, also No. 9 (think Adam Graves) on the ice, began playing sled hockey not long after he was paralyzed in a bicycle accident in Queens in 1994 — "the year the Rangers won the Stanley Cup," he said, smiling. Calise, 40, is a commissioner in New York City for the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and lives on the Upper West Side with his wife and two daughters.

Icing and offsides are called, and players on sleds often clash — and crash — while jousting for loose pucks in corners. Penalties are rare, but they are called by two able-bodied officials. There is only one concession at Newington: Players who are not in the game sit inside the boards, nudging live pucks back into play.

The pace of sled hockey, of course, is much slower than, say, even the youth games played at Newington Arena, but the action can be ferocious. Wrist shots are hard, and players occasionally separate shoulders and snap collarbones when they slam into the boards.

"It's full contact," said Taylor Chace, 26, a player for the United States Paralympic team who sustained a severe back injury while playing junior hockey in New Hampshire 10 years ago. "There's just as much as ablebodied hockey."

As a volunteer for the Wheelchair Sports Federation, Calise serves as a liaison between the organization and the Rangers, who provide the sledhockey team with jerseys, the use of their logo, ice time for practice twice a month at their training facility in Greenburgh, N.Y., and, occasionally, a grant. There is also an affiliated youth program.

Calise, who grew up in Queens playing street hockey, said the Rangers' affiliation with the sled-hockey team generates positive publicity for both teams. But he added that in a city with 800,000 disabled residents, it should be easier to find players than it has been. The Rangers have about 20 players on their roster, including three women.

Asked to describe just how much of a workout a game is, Calise smiled and said: "Depends on how hard you push on your shift. You can't just push yourself out there and play."

On a recent Sunday, the Rangers played back-to-back games against two of the best teams in the N.S.H.L.: the NEP Wildcats, a Durham, N.H.-based team for which Chace plays, and the Flyers, whose players are from the Philadelphia area.

Each team can have up to three able-bodied players, but no more than two of them can be on the ice at one time, said Ken Messier, the president of the league and one of its founders in 2005. The team known as the Rangers joined in 2007.

"If you have a good goalie, he can make up for a lot — just like regular hockey," said Messier, who helps run the Connecticut Wolf Pack, another N.S.H.L. team.

Then there are players like Tabor. She is a sled-hockey devotee who has gone from a newbie to a player who is considering trying out for the United States women's sled-hockey team.

She has made friends here quickly, and her boyfriend, Larry Minei, also plays for the Rangers. She said she is beyond the point of thinking that she merely caught a hockey bug.

"We don't really think of ourselves as inspirational stories," said Tabor, who added: "We work out, we eat everything that regular hockey players do. It's just that we play with our legs strapped down."

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: December 29, 2012

An article on Thursday about participants in the Northeast Sled Hockey League referred incorrectly to the plans of one of the players, Sara Tabor. She is considering trying out for the United States women's sled-hockey team — not the sled-hockey team that will compete at the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia. (Only the men's sled-hockey team competes in those Games.)

New York Times LOADED: 12.29.2012

647162 New York Rangers

NHL makes new proposal conceding compliance buyouts, awaits NHLPA response, wants hockey by Jan. 19 or 20 to play season

By Pat Leonard

The NHL quietly sent a revised proposal the players' union's way late Thursday afternoon that moved on several issues, including a concession that teams be allowed one compliance contract buyout each — a previous "non-starter" for the league and its owners in these collective bargaining negotiations.

HockeyBuzz.com first reported the NHL's proposal early Friday morning, on Day 104 of the NHL lockout. The players' union was deliberating Friday and is expected to respond, but the NHL's proposal was 300 pages long, so no immediate response was expected.

In the NHL's offer, details first reported by HockeyBuzz.com and confirmed by the Daily News include:

- 1. Capping player contract lengths at six years instead of five (and sevenyear maximums for players re-signing with their own clubs)
- 2. Increasing the maximum variability of a player's year-to-year salary from five percent to $10\%\,$
- 3. Keeping the Make Whole amount of \$300 million on the table
- Allowing the compliance buyout of one player per team before the start of the 2013-14 season.

The compliance buyout allows a team to buy out a player's contract without incurring the contract's hit on the club's salary cap (think the Rangers and Wade Redden). According to ESPN, though, each buyout cost still would be charged against the players' 50-percent share of league revenue, rather than occur outside of the revenue system.

The league moved on the buyout issue because teams need help fitting under a proposed adjusted salary cap of \$60 million for the 2013-14 season, but the union likely will not accept the idea of each buyout counting against their adjusted revenue share.

There also would be no limit on escrow in the 2013-14 season, according to the LA Times. The union wants a limit on escrow payments that players would have to make back to the clubs if the NHL doesn't hit its projected revenues for that season.

Hockey must be back on the ice by Jan. 19 or 20 – or in 22-to-23 days – in order for the NHL to fit a 48-game season, the Daily News has learned. That would mean completing a deal by Jan. 11 or 12, leaving room for training camp.

Otherwise, commissioner Gary Bettman will make the 2012-13 schedule the second cancelled NHL season in eight years. The NHL obviously would open a season sooner than Jan. 19 or 20 if the league and union can reach a deal before then. The 1994-95 season shortened by a lockout that contained 48 games began on Jan. 20.

All games through Jan. 14 already are cancelled, including the Winter Classic. The All-Star Game is also cancelled.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that wedelivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement released early Friday afternoon. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

New York Daily News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647163 NHL

Breakthrough could mean beginning of the end in NHL labour dispute

DAVID EBNER, JAMES MIRTLE

The NHL and the NHL Players' Association – with the 2012-13 season on the line – plan to talk by phone Saturday and meet Sunday in New York to discuss the latest proposal from the league, an offer that may push the dispute to a resolution after negotiations had completely stalled before Christmas.

The NHL offer follows the last significant development, the players voting overwhelmingly a week ago to give union leaders the power to decertify the NHLPA. Last year, the same tactic helped hasten a resolution to labour fights in football and basketball.

Details of the NHL offer, which was made on Thursday night by the NHL on Day 103 of the lockout, were first reported on Friday morning by ESPN and while the NHL gave up a bit of ground, it mostly stood firm. The document, running some 300 pages, was comprehensive and put forth Jan. 19 as the last date a 48-game season could begin, which would require training camp by Jan. 12, so a deal would need to be fully completed within two weeks.

The key element is the addition of an effective deadline, said one owner on Friday afternoon. He said he believed about three-quarters of players would vote in favour of playing a season. However, numerous owners are skeptical about union leader Don Fehr and the group hopes the deadline puts pressure on Fehr.

Players don't feel the league gave up much ground – but it was enough to get talks restarted, said one person who was on a conference call of the union executive and the players' bargaining committee Friday afternoon.

Beyond the contract, there was also a report that the woeful Columbus Blue Jackets would move to the Eastern Conference and the Winnipeg Jets to the West for 2012-13, a prelude to broader realignment of the league's franchises, a process that failed last year.

The core of the "new" NHL proposal yields no ground on key issues. The revenue split is put at 50-50, and the deal is proposed to stretch 10 years. The league's "make whole" offer to honour current contracts is also unchanged at \$300-million, with \$50-million of that being paid into a proposed pension plan that the players would finance. Players had previously not been impressed that a large chunk of the "make whole" money would be paid out years from now.

One area in which the league yielded slightly was on the length of player contracts. The NHL let go of its insistence on five-year contract maximums, going to six in general, or seven if a player is re-signed by his own team. The variance on pay through the contract on such deals was increased to 10 per cent, from 5 per cent – but the effect of eliminating contracts such as those signed last summer by Zach Parise and Ryan Suter, 13 years for \$98-million. The players get paid \$12-million in each of the next two seasons – \$10-million a year in signing bonuses already paid whether there is hockey or not – but take just \$1-million a season in the last two years of their deals – a type of contract structure that infuriated many owners who believe it is a massive salary-cap loophole.

Another small concession was the NHL allowing teams to make one "compliance buy-out" – a kind-of complement to the "make whole" idea. Teams could pay money to one player's contract, which would not count against the club's salary cap, but would count league-wide against the share of money paid to players.

The cut in the salary cap remains large. The owners started the negotiations in July with a proposal of 43 per cent of revenue for players, down from the previous 57 per cent. By mid-October the league had moved to 50 per cent but owners at the time privately said they would not budge further and have not done so since. The maximum effective cap in a possibly saved 2012-13 season would be \$70.2-million – and \$60-million in 2013-14. Sixteen teams – more than half the league – have cap payrolls of \$61-million or more in 2012-13, according to capgeek.com.

On revenue sharing, an idea some players have pushed as central to an improved NHL, the league is putting \$200-million on the table, a purported increase from \$150-million, but the NHL's offer in October to save an 82-game season included \$200-million of revenue sharing. The new NHL offer includes the creation of several committees with owners and players, including one to oversee the revenue-sharing system.

Given the heft of the offer, many smaller issues that were noted as details emerged Friday. In player "working conditions," there was a general point in the summary about how much ice time and mandatory days off during training camps. Other items such as programs to "ensure optimal ice conditions" in buildings around the league were noted. In player health and safety, the creation of electronic medical records was put forth. In performance-enhancing substances, the list of what's banned would be expanded "to include illegal stimulants."

Globe And Mail LOADED: 12.29.2012

647164 Ottawa Senators

NHL makes movement on buyouts, contract length in new proposal to NHI PA

By Chris Johnston, Canadian Press December 29, 2012

TORONTO -- The NHL is making a serious bid to save the season.

With another year in jeopardy because of a labour dispute, the league softened its demands in key areas of collective bargaining with a new proposal to the NHL Players' Association on Thursday night. The comprehensive offer included compliance buyouts and less restrictive rules on player contracts, according to sources.

The league's proposal calls for a six-year term limit on free-agent deals -- up from five previously -- and will allow teams to re-sign their own players for up to seven years. It also includes a provision that salary can vary by 10 per cent from year to year during the course of a deal (the NHL's most recent offer proposed a five per cent variance).

A source told The Canadian Press the deal is contingent on the NHLPA signing off by Jan. 11. Training camps would then open the next day and the season would start Jan. 19.

The NHL and NHLPA plan to review the proposal on a conference call Saturday and could meet in person on Sunday.

For the first time during these negotiations, the league is also willing to consider one-time compliance buyouts to help teams transition from a system that saw players receive 57 per cent of revenues to one that pays them 50 per cent. It has proposed giving each team one such buyout, with the money counting against the players' overall share in revenue but not an inpidual team's salary cap.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly confirmed the existence of the new offer Friday, but declined to comment on its details.

"We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players," Daly said in a statement. "We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The NHLPA's negotiating committee and executive board was scheduled to hold an internal conference call Friday afternoon to discuss the offer.

The proposed length of the agreement is 10 years through the 2021-22 season, with a mutual option for both parties to opt our after eight years.

According to sources, the league's detailed proposal covered both the major issues that have pided the sides and a number of the smaller ones they've already found agreement on during more than five months of negotiations. It also put the US\$300 million in deferred transition payments back on the table -- something it had previously withdrawn when talks broke down Dec. 6.

Despite the movement from the league, there is still clearly work to be done. Among the items in the proposal a source indicated the NHLPA isn't keen on is a \$60-million salary cap in 2013-14, which the union believes will result in players paying a high rate of escrow.

The NHL and NHLPA have a little over two weeks to reach an agreement that would save the season. The 104-day lockout has seen all regular-season games cancelled through Jan. 14 and a deal needs to be reached soon to salvage a 48-game schedule -- the minimum commissioner Gary Bettman says must be played.

Negotiations have been at a standstill since talks broke off in New York at the beginning of the month, but Daly created a buzz Dec. 19 when he predicted on Hockey Night in Canada Radio there would be a season. Later that day, NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr told reporters the owners needed to show a willingness to negotiate for it to happen.

"I certainly hope he's right," Fehr said of Daly's prediction. "That's the players' goal, that's what we want to try and do. Hopefully, we'll get back together and negotiate out the remaining issues as soon as possible."

In the meantime, a decision is looming for the NHLPA's executive board. Players voted overwhelmingly to give that 30-member committee the power to file a "disclaimer of interest" until Jan. 2 -- a move that would see the union dissolved and would allow the players to challenge the legality of the lockout in court.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 12.29.2012

647165 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL makes new offer to players in bid to salvage season

Sam Carchidi. Inquirer Staff Writer

Posted: Saturday, December 29, 2012, 1:56 AM

The NHL has made some concessions - most notably in the length of contracts and including amnesty buyouts - in an effort to salvage part of the season.

Representatives from the league and the players' union are expected to have a conference call Saturday to discuss the developments and may meet Sunday in New York.

Friday was the 104th day of the lockout, and games have been canceled through Jan. 14.

According to multiple reports Friday, the league has offered teams one compliance (also known as "amnesty") buyout before the 2013-14 season, and has proposed allowing six-year contracts, an increase from the previous offer of five years. There was no change in a previous proposal in which teams could re-sign their own players to seven-year deals.

The players, who had a conference call Friday to discuss the developments, want eight-year maximums on contracts.

In addition, the NHL included a provision that a salary can vary by no more than 10 percent from the first year of a long-term contract. The league had previously proposed a 5 percent variance.

The offers are contingent on having a collective bargaining agreement in place by Jan. 11 and a 48-game season starting on Jan. 19.

The new deal would give teams a \$70.2 million salary cap this season, but it would drop to \$60 million in 2013-14, ESPN.com reported. The players' union is likely to protest the latter figure.

The owners still want a 10-year agreement, with both parties having a mutual opt-out after eight years. The players want an eight-year pact, with an opt-out after six years.

In the compliance buyout, each team could make one such move before 2013-14, and the player's contract would not count against the cap, but would count against the players' 50 percent share of hockey-related revenue.

The compliance buyout is seen as a way for teams to get down to the proposed \$60 million cap in 2013-14, and goalie Ilya Bryzgalov is among the players the Flyers would probably consider at that time - that is, unless players on the long-term injured list (such as Chris Pronger) start counting against the salary cap in the new CBA.

The proposal also includes the owners' contributing \$200 million toward revenue sharing; a weighted draft lottery for non-playoff teams; creation of an interview period for unrestricted free agents; players' appeals on discipline matters being heard by a neutral third-party arbitrator; and an extended Christmas break (Dec. 24-26).

Reportedly, there is also talk of moving the Winnipeg Jets to the Western Conference and Columbus to the Eastern Conference this season.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647166 Philadelphia Flyers

With owners' new offer, pressure builds to settle NHL lockout

Frank Seravalli, Daily News Staff Writer

Posted: Friday, December 28, 2012, 10:02 PM

Since the doors were chained shut to NHL locker rooms and arenas on Sept. 15, the same sentiment has been echoed from players around the league: "We want to play."

The players have said it. On Friday, the owners showed it.

Fearing the cancellation of a second season in 8 years because of labor unrest, and the very real possibilities of franchise values dropping by 25 percent or more, and hockey falling further out of the U.S. sporting landscape, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman emailed the NHL Players' Association a hefty, 300-page proposal for a new collective bargaining agreement.

Friday's proposal presented numerous meaningful concessions on behalf of owners to try and salvage a season.

The ball is clearly now in the players' court. The only problem is that no one knows exactly how NHLPA executive Donald Fehr will handle this nuclear football. Having watched Fehr fight for the last 4 months, we have a pretty good idea how it might all play out.

In short: Don't hold your breath. The end is not imminent. But Friday was the beginning of the endgame.

The NHLPA held an executive board and negotiating committee conference call on Friday, with Flyers players Braydon Coburn and Scott Hartnell participating, to mull over the latest details. The sides are expected to speak Saturday, with a likely face-to-face meeting on Sunday's agenda in New York City.

Saturday is the 105th day of this lockout. More than 50 percent of the season's schedule already has been whacked.

Still, if you are Fehr, there's no real reason to rush back to the bargaining table.

Since long before the NHLPA more or less walked out on a possible deal on Dec. 6 in New York, scripted with Tony Award-deserving choreography, Fehr has been advising his players to hold out for better terms. It has been working. Slowly, but surely, the NHL has been inching toward the players.

Consider: The three remaining sticking points on a deal on Dec. 6 were length of the CBA, term limits on player contracts, and salary variance on player contracts to squash back-diving and front-loaded deals. The NHL moved significantly on all fronts on Friday - increasing player contract term limits, allowing for opt-out clauses on the CBA term and salary variance percentages.

The "make whole" money, which was supposedly off the table, remains at \$300 million - up from nothing in early November to \$211 million on Nov. 21. Other contracting issues that previously were sticking points - such as entry-level deals, arbitration rights and unrestricted free-agent rights, which the owners were seeking to limit - will remain unchanged from the previous CBA.

For the first time in this process, the NHL officially laid out a drop-dead date with its proposal, according to the Canadian Press. This offer is contingent upon agreement on Jan. 11, starting training camp the next day, and opening a 48-game season on Jan. 19.

Let's not forget that Fehr still has the option of playing the "disclaimer of interest" card in federal court by Tuesday, which would dissolve the union and force litigation. In many ways, the timing of Friday's latest proposal is not surprising, as the league is trying to prevent a courtroom battle that it believes will blow up the season.

Fehr's job was to prevent the players from getting annihilated in bargaining. He's already accomplished that - and then some. It is my belief that his players are as antsy - or possibly more so - than the owners, who are clearly pressuring Bettman to play a season at all costs. The entire sport, as observers on both sides are quickly recognizing, could be wiped off the map completely with another iced season.

Games already are canceled through Jan. 14. By my watch, that means Fehr still has about 2 more weeks to milk the owners.

The deal might or might not get any better this time around, but he certainly will keep trying.

Details of NHL's offer

What exactly is in the NHL's latest, 300-page offer? Here are the biggest details:

A 10-year collective bargaining agreement, with mutual opt-out clauses after 8 years.

Salary-cap system, with \$70.2 million limit in 2013 shortened season, dropping to \$60 million for 2013-14 season. That \$60 million mark figures to be a sticking point in negotiations.

\$300 million in "make whole" payments from owners to players to honor current contracts. This is the same payment Gary Bettman said was "off the table" on Dec. 6. This also means there would be no "rollbacks" of player salaries.

Each team would be allowed one "compliance buyout" of a contract to soften the transition to \$60 million cap. Payments to player would not count against the salary cap, but would count against the players' overall 50-50 division of hockey related revenue.

A 6-year maximum on veteran contracts, though teams would have the option to re-sign their own players to a 7-year deal. This is a change from the 5-year (6-year re-sign) limit that the NHL proposed on Dec. 6.

Contract variance limited to no more than a 10 percent increase or decrease from the first year salary in multiyear deal, in an effort to cut down on front-loading or back-diving deals, which the Flyers used to their advantage in the last CBA. The previous NHL offer on Dec. 6 called for a 5 percent maximum variance.

A weighted draft lottery that would allow all non-playoff teams a crack at the No. 1 overall pick.

Unrestricted free agents would be granted a 10-day interview period in July, similar to the NBA's current setup. Players could begin visiting teams on July 1, but would be unable to sign until July 10. This would cut down on tampering and allow for players to make more well-rounded decisions.

Slap shots

Danny Briere signed a contract extension with the Berlin Polar Bears, of the German Eishockey League, on Thursday. Briere, who has posted 33 points in 20 games, signed for the remainder of the season, but still maintains an

opt-out clause to return to the U.S. if a new CBA is brokered in the NHL . . . Claude Giroux, who returned from Berlin to Ottawa to nurse a neck injury, remains in Canada. Giroux is hoping for labor peace before setting a new course of action . . . Of the Flyers who originally started the season in Europe, only Jake Voracek, Ilya Bryzgalov, Ruslan Fedotenko and Briere remain overseas. Wayne Simmonds, Matt Read and Giroux have returned home. Max Talbot and Bruno Gervais are skating in the 84th annual Spengler Cup tournament in Davos, Switzerland, before returning to their European teams.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647167 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL tries to salvage part of season

POSTED: Friday, December 28, 2012, 3:49 PM

The NHL has made some concessions in trying to salvage part of the season

According to multiple reports Friday, the league has offered teams one compliance (some call it "amnesty") buyout before 2013-14, and has proposed allowing six-year contracts, an increase from the previous offer of five years. There was no change in a previous proposal in which teams could re-sign their own players to seven-year contracts.

The players want eight-year maximums on contracts.

In addition, the NHL included a provision that a salary can vary by 10 percent from year to year over the course of a contract, ESPN.com reported. The NHL had previously proposed a five percent variance each year.

The offers are contingent on the having a collective bargaining agreement in place by Jan. 11 and a 48-game season starting on Jan. 19.

The new deal would reportedly give teams a \$70.2 million salary cap this season, but it would drop to around \$60 million in 2013-14. The players' union is likely to protest the latter figure, saying it will greatly reduce salaries.

The owners still want a 10-year CBA, with both parties having a mutual optout after eight years.

In the compliance buyout, each team could make one such move before 2013-14, and the player's contract would not count against the cap, but would count against the players' 50 percent share of hockey-related revenue

The NHLPA scheduled a conference call to discuss the offer on Friday afternoon.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647168 Philadelphia Flyers

USA falls to Russia in World Junior Championships

Deanna Vasso, Philly.com Staff

Posted: Friday, December 28, 2012, 1:13 PM

Team USA fell to 1-1 in the International Ice Hockey Federation's World Junior Championships, falling to Russia, 2-1, Friday morning in Ufa, Russia.

The Americans knew that playing against the host team would likely be a struggle, and their fears were realized early when they fell behind 1-0 in the first period. Team USA spent the majority of the period on the penalty kill and had few scoring opportunities.

Jacob Trouba scored the only goal for the Americans in the second period to tie the game, but the Russians fired back early in the third period with the game winner.

Flyers prospect Shayne Gostisbehere, who scored a goal in the Americans' 8-0 rout of German a day earlier, was again one of the standout stars in the game for Team USA. The puck-moving defenseman was constantly in motion and took the puck to the net any chance he got.

Gostisbehere, a third round pick in the 2012 draft, was having a good sophmore year at Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., and has impressed Flyers director of player development Ian Laperriere with his performance on the international stage thus far.

The Inquirer's Sam Carchidi reports,

"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." [For the full story]

Team USA gets a break tomorrow but will be back early Sunday morning at 4:30 a.m. when it faces off against Team Canada, which leads Group B with a 2-0 mark.

All of the games will be broadcasted live on NHL Network, and will be replayed in the evening. For the full TV schedule visit USA Hockey.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647169 Philadelphia Flyers

Report: NHL makes new offer to players

Philly.com Staff

Posted: Friday, December 28, 2012, 9:57 AM

With the NHL inching toward a cancelled season, the league made a new offer to the NHL Players' Association on Thursday, according to a report from ESPN.com.

Citing a an anonymous player as a source, Pierre LeBrun reports that the new offer "moved on the term limit for player contracts, salary variance and buyouts, according to the player."

More from LeBrun:

The league's insistence on a five-year limit has been a major sticking point with players, who countered Dec. 6 with a willingness to limit deals to eight years.

Details of the new offer include:

- Term limit on player contracts moves to six years from the five years NHL asked in previous offers (seven years if you're re-signing your own player).
- Year-to-year salary variance moves from 5 percent (NHL's previous offers) to 10 percent.
- Each team will be allowed one compliance buyout before the 2013-14 season that will not count against the salary cap but will count against the players' share.
- The Make Whole provision stays at \$300 million.

To Flyers fans, the most interesting detail of the new proposal could be the allowance of a contract buyout before the start of the 2013-14 season. Much like the amnesty clause adopted in the NBA's latest collective bargaining agreement, teams will basically be able to hit the "undo" button on a contract that has been restricting them against the salary cap.

Reaction from fans on Twitter has been to move on from Ilya Bryzgalov, who signed a nine-year, \$51 million deal in June of 2011.

Immediately after reading the word "buyout" Flyers fans are calling for Bryz's head. But a buyout in new CBA still comes from player pockets

- Sarah Baicker (@sbaickerCSN) December 28, 2012

Games have already been cancelled through January 14, and the NHLPA has until January 2 to decide if they want to file a notice of disclaimer of interest, which would dissolve the union.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 12.29.2012

647170 Philadelphia Flyers

A NEW NHL DEAL?!?!?! ... Well, we'll see

Having already trashed approximately half the scheduled season and having gained exactly nothing - because they all underestimated Donald Fehr's ability to render everyone around him empty and emotionless - the NHL's owners today backed down to a point of where they have given an ultra, final, last absolutely end-all offer (unlike only the final, last absolutely end-all offer given the last time they backed off a little).

Does it absolutely mean "THE SEASON WILL BE SAVED!!!!?"

Of course not. But it does seem enough owners have finally panicked to the point of telling league commissioner Gary Bettman - who will be lucky to hang onto his job after this fiasco - to do whatever he can to wake Fehr up long enough to strike a deal. If that happens, they'll likely end up with a 48-game season crowded into a period of some three months, with the start date of Jan. 19. It will be about the same length of games and time that took place in 1995, which was exciting to watch despite all the groin pulls for the players for the first month or so.

Anyway, the Stanley Cup finals would be done in time for an NHL draft, which will be jammed in near the end of June, with the free agency period beginning July 10 instead of the usual July 1.

This, of course, would all be based on the players agreeing to such things. Which would mean Fehr would have to stay awake long enough to nod his assent.

The players went over the NHL proposal via a conference call last night and it likely will lead to a Sunday negotiating session which may - or may not - reveal real progress.

Anyway, various sources have supplied all the details of the latest NHL proposal, and I'll highlight just a few points from it...

Under the new proposal, a new CBA would be for 10 years, though the two sides would have mutual rights to re-open the agreement after eight years (in 2020).

The revenue split would be 50-50. The "make whole" provision, which has caused a lot of angst on the players' side, would be settled at a \$300 million figure that the NHL would pay out to settle current player contracts.

No rollbacks of salaries for the players; the payroll cap for each team would be a pro-rated \$70.2 million this season; about \$10 million less the next season.

No changes in entry level contract, salary arbitration and Group 3 free agency rules ... which is a big collective concession by the owners.

The maximum contract length for players would be six years; but if a club is re-signing its own player it could go to seven.

There are other provisions. In fact, this proposal goes on and on and on. But these are the main points that have to be countered by the NHLPA, and believe me, this union, with this union leader, will want a counterproposal.

But at least both sides, again, are finally interested in trying to end this ludicrous stalemate.

One other thing: A clause in this mess would enable teams to amnesty one contract by the start of the 2013-2014 season, to keep under what then will be \$60 million cap.

Which would mean this coming, shortened season would be Ilya Bryzgalov's last chance to prove himself here. Otherwise, he'll be gone.

posted by Rob Parent

Delaware County Times LOADED: 12.29.2012

647171 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL makes concessions in new CBA proposal

Staff Report

Late Thursday, and after far too many days of quiet, the NHL made a new offer to the NHLPA in hopes of ending the 104-day-old lockout.

And, according to multiple reports, the new offer does contain some concessions in key areas. However, as of Friday afternoon, no meetings were scheduled between the league and union.

The offer was first reported by blogger Eklund of Hockeybuzz.com.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon," said NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly in a statement. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time.

"We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The NHL's newest proposal includes maximum contract lengths of six years (or seven, for a team re-signing a player), up from five years. It also would allow a variance of 10 percent on salaries, up from 5 percent. Also of note, the new offer includes \$300 million in "Make Whole."

Flyers fans' ears pricked, of course, at the possibility of a new CBA containing a "compliance buyout" ahead of next season, which would not count against the cap but would count against players' share of hockey-related revenue. But we'll save the Ilya Bryzgalov debates for another time.

The salary cap would drop to \$60 million for the 2013-14 season. The CBA term is 10 years, with an opt-out after eight.

As of now, all games are canceled through Jan 14. In order to save the 2012-13 season, games would have to start some time in mid-January – and the first of the month is only three days away. Considering players would have to return from overseas in time for an abbreviated training camp, we could know very soon whether the latest proposal could lead to a 48-game season, as opposed to simply another turn in the road.

To put it another way: We're likely either three weeks away from the start of the season, or two weeks from its cancellation.

The NHLPA has not yet responded to the offer. A conference call is said to be scheduled between the union and players later today.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 12.29.2012

647172 Philadelphia Flyers

NHL players mulling owners' new offer

Flyers' player rep Coburn not overly optimistic

Written by

Randy Miller

Flyers player rep Braydon Coburn was awake early Friday morning reading internet reports that NHL owners finally have come off their "hill we'll die on" mid-December offer with a new proposal to end a season-long lockout.

With time short to make a deal to save the season, the veteran defenseman's initial reaction wasn't cautious optimism that the owners' new proposal would lead to a shortened season. No, Coburn has had hope and lost it too many times over the last few months to allow himself to get excited so quickly.

"The devils are always in the details," Coburn said by phone from his inlaws' home in Calgary. "I just saw there was an offer and there were unnamed sources. One of the things I've learned through this whole process is it's been a roller coaster, so you try to get the best information you can and go from there."

On Day 104 of the lockout, the NHLPA held a Friday afternoon conference call to update players on details of the owners' new offer, which closes

differences on some sticking points, such as contract lengths. The union is expected to spend the weekend studying the offer and, possibly, formatting a counter proposal.

A possible sticking point is owners not giving in on the length of a new Collective Bargaining Agreement in their new offer. Once again, they proposed a 10-year deal with a mutual opt-out after eight seasons, while the union' last offer was for eight years with a player opt-out after six.

The owners' new offer, according to ESPN.com, would call for a \$70.2 million salary cap for this season that drops to \$60 million for 2013-14.

Previously, the sides agreed on a 50/50 split on hockey-related revenue that favored players' 57-43 in the previous CBA.

The "make whole" provision, money to reimburse players for lower salaries in the first few seasons of a new CBA, remained at \$300 million in the latest offer.

Owners were at \$211 million until their Dec. 13 offer. The union's best offer has been \$393 million.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly acknowledged the league's new proposal in a Friday press release: "In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late (Thursday) afternoon. We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

If this latest proposal becomes the framework to a resolution, the NHL is expected to schedule a 48-game regular season that would begin, according to reports, by Jan. 19 at the latest.

Asked if that's enough time to be ready, Coburn said: "I don't know. That's tough to say. I've never really been through this before. I've been skating wherever I go ... in Philly for a couple of weeks and now in Calgary."

Dozens of NHL players, including several Flyers, currently are playing in European leagues or the American Hockey League, while others, like Coburn, regularly have skated to stay in shape.

Flyers players have been renting ice at their Skate Zone practice rink in Voorhees for semi-regular morning workouts since September. Scott Hartnell, Jody Shelley and Kimmo Timonen often have participated.

"Everything about this has been abnormal," Coburn said. "You get into a certain routine where you get into training camp, then you get play some exhibition games and in October you start the season. Being home for late October ... being in Canada for Christmas and seeing the snowfall ... everything about this lockout has been just weird."

Coburn says he was on the road for 17 hours traveling from his in-laws in Saskatchewan to Calgary over the holidays. He's hoping he'll now be back in Philadelphia very soon.

"That would be great," he said.

This new proposal comes a week after players overwhelmingly voted to give their union power to decertify, and thus file an antitrust lawsuit against the NHL, if it deems necessary.

The owners' proposal ended a stalemate in which the sides hadn't met face-to-face since Dec. 13. At the time, Daly threatened that the previous offer would be "the hill we will die on."

According to reports, NHL owners moved on players contract maxing out at six years instead of five, and seven years if a team is re-signing its own player. Also, the owners offered for the first time a compliance buyout clause that would allow teams to free themselves of one contract before the 2013-14 season that would not count against the salary cap, but would go against players' share of hockey-related revenue. The union is for compliance, but with owners picking up the tab.

If the NHLPA accepts a deal that includes a buyout, the Flyers could say goodbye to Russian goaltender Ilya Bryzgalov, who is just one season into a nine-year, \$51-million contract.

Acquired in a 2011 offseason trade-and-sign, Bryzgalov struggled during parts of the 2011-12 season and seemingly had trouble adjusting to life in Philadelphia, which includes a tougher media and fan base than he'd been accustomed to during previous NHL stops in Anaheim and Phoenix.

If Bryzgalov departs, the Flyers might make a deal with Boston for 2008-09 Vezina Trophy winner and 2011 playoff MVP Tim Thomas, who had been planning on sitting out the 2012-13 season. The Bruins already have a young star goalie to play in Tuukka Rask.

Thomas, who turns 39 in April, has one-year to go on a four-year, \$20 million contract that includes a \$3 million salary and \$5 million cap hit for 2012-13. The deal also includes a no-movement clause, which Thomas waived last July.

Regardless of what happens between the Flyers' pipes, it appears there's a real chance there will be hockey this season whereas just a day earlier it was looking like the entire season would be canceled. During previous NHL lockouts, the 2004-05 season was lost while the 1994-95 season was reduced to 48 games and began in January.

So far this time, the NHL has canceled games through Jan. 14 - 50.8 percent of the regular-season schedule.

Courier-Post LOADED: 12.29.2012 647173 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers' Coburn: Players waiting for details of NHL's new offer

Randy Miller

Courier-Post Staff

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proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

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Reach Randy

Courier-Post LOADED: 12.29.2012

647174 Philadelphia Flyers

Report: NHL makes new offer, includes concessions

Written by

Dave Isaac

There's only so much sand left in the hourglass before this year's would-be NHL campaign is canceled, but it appears there is still a sense of urgency to salvage some semblance of a season.

According to multiple reports, first reported by hockeybuzz.com's Eklund, the NHL sent the NHLPA a new offer late Thursday night and it moved in the players' direction on some key issues.

Reports say that although the length of the NHL's proposed CBA is still 10 years, it made concessions on player contracts, salary variance and buyouts.

The last time the NHL and NHLPA formally met, in New Jersey on Dec. 13, it seemed like both sides were firm in their respective stances and concessions were not likely. The NHLPA claimed it made most, if not all, of the concessions in the negotiations so far.

In the reported offer Thursday night, the NHL finally made some movement. They raised player contracts from five years to six years, but the plan allows for seven-year deals for players re-signing with their teams. Variability doubled from five to 10 percent. The deal also still includes \$300 in "make whole."

Interestingly, the proposal also reportedly includes one buyout per team that counts as hockey-related revenue but does not count against the salary cap. If that caveat comes to life, conventional thinking says the Flyers might look at goalie Ilya Bryzgalov, who has eight years remaining on his contract and carries with it a \$5.6 million cap hit until 2020.

More to come shortly.

Courier-Post LOADED: 12.29.2012 647175 Pittsburgh Penguins

NHL, union to resume labor talks

By Rob Rossi

The NHL and Players' Association will resume face-to-face negotiations on a collective bargaining agreement Sunday in the wake of the league's latest labor proposal.

The league Thursday presented the players union with a proposal in which the NHL moves from its previous positions on players' contract term limits, variance and buyouts, sources said.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly declined to discuss details of the offer Friday but said, "We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The Players' Association declined comment.

The sides will talk over a conference call Saturday.

A union executive board meeting was called Friday afternoon, Penguins players said.

Several Penguins players said Friday morning they had not studied details of the proposal, and some were not aware a new offer had been presented.

The Penguins players declined to comment after the Friday afternoon executive board meeting. It is unknown which, if any, of them would attend the Sunday meetings.

Sources said notable elements of the new offer include:

- A 10-year term, with mutual opt-out clauses after Year 8.
- Preservation of the salary-cap system, with a \$70.2 million cap for the 2013 season dropping to \$60 million for the 2013-14 season.

- A 50/50 split of future revenue, which last season the NHL reported was a record \$3.3 billion.
- Owners have insisted on a 50/50 revenue split similar to the economic systems the NFL and NBA put in place after respective lockouts in those leagues in 2011. NHL players collected 57 percent of revenues in each of the seven years of the last labor contract.
- A six-year maximum on veteran contracts, though a club could sign its own player to a seven-year deal provided that player was under team control for the last full season. The previous league offer called for five-year maximum limits on veteran contracts.
- No more than a 10 percent increase or decrease to the first year of a player's salary on a multi-season contract. The previous NHL proposal called for a 5 percent variance.
- Owners' revenue sharing at \$200 million. The previous NHL proposal called for \$150 million, which was the approximate total under the last labor deal

The NHL offer was made in the form of a 300-page document. Top NHL officials want more than a term sheet if there is an agreement in principle. Officials believe wording of the final labor contract was unfavorable to the league after a term sheet was signed to end the lockout that wiped out the 2004-05 season.

The NHL has canceled games through Jan. 14 as part of a lockout enacted Sept. 15, when the last labor contract expired. Daly previously said a 48-game season must begin by "mid-January."

The NHL is eight years removed from becoming the first North American professional sports league to lose an entire season because of a labor dispute.

The sides have not bargained since meetings in New York on Dec. 5 and 6. Neither NHL commissioner Gary Bettman nor union executive director Donald Fehr attended those meetings, which were sparked by a push from Penguins ownership, high-profile captain Sidney Crosby and his agent, Pat Brisson, to bring moderate voices into the mix.

Those meetings broke when the union offered a proposal that owners were not expecting, the sources said.

The union executive board faces a Tuesday deadline to file disclaimer of interest that would disband the union. Players on Dec. 21 authorized the executive board to make this legal maneuver. Union officials have not publicly said if there is a decision to file the disclaimer with the U.S. Department of Labor.

If it does not file by Tuesday, the union could set a new deadline for filing a disclaimer of interest by starting over the process and asking its more than 700 members to vote in favor of new authorization for the executive board.

The NHL has a pending class-action complaint against the union in New York federal court and an unfair practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board.

Penguins players, including union rep Craig Adams and Crosby, have declined comment since the league brought legal action. However, players have said privately they would prefer to strike a deal quickly with the NHL instead of taking this labor fight to the courts.

Jared Simmer, an adjunct public policy professor at Carnegie Mellon University, said a union filing a disclaimer of interest "has been considered the nuclear option in previous labor negotiations."

Rob Rossi is a staff writer for Trib Total Media.

Tribune Review LOADED: 12.29.2012

647176 Pittsburgh Penguins

NHL lockout: League offer might trigger progress

By Dave Molinari / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

There is, finally, movement in the NHL lockout.

Whether it represents actual progress toward a new collective bargaining agreement remains to be seen.

For two weeks, officials of the league and the NHL Players' Association had exchanged little more than long-distance dirty looks, and the chances of salvaging even an abbreviated season seemed to shrink by the hour.

But Thursday, the NHL -- whose previous offer was of the take-it-or-leave-it variety -- submitted what deputy commissioner Bill Daly described as a "new, comprehensive" proposal to the union.

The NHLPA took it seriously enough to conduct a conference call with its members Friday, offering its impressions of a package that reportedly covers about 300 pages.

There was little public reaction from players in the wake of that call, and much of what was said privately was guarded, perhaps because the finer points of the proposal still were being digested.

The players and league are expected to conduct a conference call today to discuss the offer and clarify any issues the NHLPA might have about it. A face-to-face bargaining session could be finalized then, with one Sunday in New York a possibility.

The league's proposal calls for a 10-year CBA, with an opt-out clause after eight. Some of its more significant features include:

- Contracts would be limited to six years, up from five in the NHL's previous offer. Players could be re-signed for up to seven years.
- Salaries would be allow to vary 10 percent from year to year, up from 5 percent in the previous offer.
- Teams would be allowed to buy out one contract before the 2013-14 season without having that money count against its cap ceiling. It would, however, count against the players' share of hockey-related revenue.
- · Re-entry waivers would be eliminated.
- A weighted lottery that would give all non-playoff teams a chance to end up with the No. 1 choice in the draft would be introduced.
- The cap ceiling for 2012-13 would effectively be \$70.2 million, but would drop to \$60 million for the following season.
- Teams would be allowed to trade (or hold onto) salaries and/or cap space, within specified limits.
- The start of free agency would be pushed back from July 1 to July 10.
- Unrestricted free-agency guidelines, salary arbitration and entry-level rules would be unchanged from the CBA that expired Sept. 15.
- Salaries above a designated level paid to players with NHL contracts who are working in another pro league would count against his NHL club's cap ceiling.
- There would be a period before signings are permitted in which unrestricted free agents could be interviewed by teams interested in them. Previously, any such contact was viewed as tampering.
- The Christmas break would be extended to include Dec. 26, as well as Dec. 24-25.
- The rule limiting teams to four conventional recalls after the trade deadline would be adjusted.

Before being briefed on the NHL's proposal, several Penguins who participated in a player-organized workout at Southpointe said they had not been anticipating an offer from the league.

"At this point, I think you'd be an idiot to try to predict or expect anything," defenseman Brooks Orpik said.

Forward Craig Adams, who is the Penguins' player representative, seemed underwhelmed by what little he'd heard of the offer, like the one-year increase in maximum contract lengths and the rise in year-to-year salary variances.

Still, he saw the league putting a fresh proposal on the table as a plus.

"I wouldn't say [those changes are] 'significant,' " he said. "I guess that would strike me as the smallest possible moves you could make in those departments.

"But they're moves in our direction, and that's not to be discounted or taken lightly."

If both sides move far enough and do it within a couple of weeks, there might still be NHL hockey this winter. The league reportedly has targeted Jan. 19 as the latest possible starting date for a 48-game season.

"We've waited this long," Orpik said. "We might as well stay patient here the next couple of weeks and see what happens. Something has to happen, for good or bad, in the next couple of weeks."

Post Gazette LOADED: 12.29.2012 647177 Tampa Bay Lightning

NHL makes new offer; lockout enters critical stage

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The NHL made a new offer to the players' association, hoping to spark talks toward ending the long lockout and saving the hockey season

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly said today the league presented its proposal Thursday and was waiting for a response. The sides haven't met in person since a second round of talks with a federal mediator broke down Dec. 13.

The lockout has reached its 104th day, and the NHL said it doesn't want a season of less than 48 games. That means a deal would need to be reached mid-January.

"We delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA," Daly said in a statement today. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

A person familiar with key points of the offer told The Associated Press that the league proposed raising the limit of individual free-agent contracts to six years from five — seven years if a team re-signs its own player; raising the salary variance from one year to another to 10 percent, up from 5 percent; and one compliance buyout for the 2013-14 season that wouldn't count toward a team's salary cap but would be included in the overall players' share of income.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because details of the new offer were not being discussed publicly.

The NHL maintained the deferred payment amount of \$300 million it offered in its previous proposal, an increase from an earlier offer of \$211 million. The initial \$300 million offer was pulled off the table after negotiations broke off earlier this month.

The latest proposal is for 10 years, running through the 2021-22 season, with both sides having the right to opt out after eight years.

A conference call with the players' association's negotiating committee and its executive board was scheduled for this afternoon and was expected to last several hours.

The lockout has reached a critical stage, threatening to shut down a season for the second time in eight years. All games through Jan. 14, plus the Winter Classic and the All-Star game already have been called off. The next round of cuts could claim the entire schedule.

The NHL is the only North American professional sports league to cancel a season because of a labor dispute, losing the 2004-05 campaign to a lockout. A 48-game season was played in 1995 after a lockout stretched into January.

It is still possible this dispute could eventually be settled in the courts if the sides can't reach a deal on their own.

The NHL filed a class-action suit this month in U.S. District Court in New York in an effort to show its lockout is legal. In a separate move, the league filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board, contending bad-faith bargaining by the union.

Those moves were made because the players' association took steps toward potentially filing a "disclaimer of interest," which would dissolve the union and make it a trade association. That would allow players to file antitrust lawsuits against the NHL.

Union members voted overwhelmingly to give their board the power to file the disclaimer by Jan. 2. If that deadline passes, another authorization vote could be held to approve a later filing.

Negotiations between the NHL and the union have been at a standstill since talks ended Dec. 6. One week later, the sides convened again with federal mediators in New Jersey, but still couldn't make progress.

The sides have been unable to reach agreement on the length of the new deal, the length of individual player contracts, and the variance in salary from year to year. The NHL is looking for an even split of revenues with players.

The NHL pulled all previous offers off the table after the union didn't agree to terms on its last proposal without negotiation.

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 12.29.2012 647178 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning G Anders Lindback no longer with Ilves Tampere but okay after "weird" injury

Tampa Bay Lightning goaltender Anders Lindback had the stitches in his cut right knee removed on Friday and said he plans to be back on the ice "in a couple of days."

Lindback, though, will be working out on his own as his contract with Finland's Ilves Tampere has expired. Before making a decision on resuming play he will wait to see how things go with negotiations between the NHL and its players on a new colective bargaining agreement.

Lindback, 24, whom the Lightning signed over the summer to a two-year, \$3.6 million deal, was productive with Ilves Tampere. He was just 3-6-4 in 13 games but had a 2.33 goals-against average and .930 save percentage. But even Lindback agreed his Dec. 18 knee injury was "weird."

He said it happened at a morning skate during a three-on-two drill in which he "opened up" to make a save "and the puck hit my knee. I wear two sets of knee pads, so it was just one of those things. The puck just slipped through. I thought it was just going to be bruised and when I got into the locker room and took my gear off I was bleeding all over. It was really weird. It was a good shot, I guess."

Lindback's agent, Michael Deutsch, reiterated the knee sustained no structural damage and Lindback said, "It's healing really well."

He said he cannot wait to get back to the NHL and his opportunity with the Lightning, which wants Lindback to be its long-term solution in goal.

"Of course, I'm very anxious," Lindback said. "I'm excited for the opportunity in Tampa with the team and the organization. Sooner or later it's going to happen, and I'm looking forward to it."

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 12.29.2012

647179 Tampa Bay Lightning

NHL says it delivered a "new, comprehensive proposal" to players in CBA negotiations

The NHL appeared to make a significant move in an attempt to break the deadlocked negotiations with its players on a new collective bargaining agreement and delivered a new proposal Thursday afternoon.

"I can confirm that we delivered a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA," deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement released by the league. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had the opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

A report in the Ottawa Sun said the league has targeted a Jan. 21 start date for the season. The Dallas Morning News reported a potential start date is Jan. 19. Assuming a seven to 10-day training camp and time to put paperwork together once a deal has been struck, you can count backwards to see how quickly a deal will have to be done. Some say it's by as early as Jan. 5.

As is typical in these things, several points in the NHL's proposal have leaked out. This according to Canada's Globe and Mail:

The league apparently has increased from five to six years its proposed limits on contracts, though teams would still be able to re-sign their own free agents for seven years.

The league proposed allowing one amnesty buyout in the summer of 2013 that would not count against the cap. Previously, the league had said no to this because that would be "money outside the system."

The league increased from five to 10 percent an allowable year-to-year variance within contracts. That is to help protect against back-diving contracts. The players have offered a 25 percent high-low range.

The Players' Association has a 3 p.m. conference call to discuss the offer.

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 12.29.2012 647180 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning's Crombeen on NHL proposal: Caution still needed

By Damian Cristodero, Times Staff Writer

B.J. Crombeen wants to believe the NHL's latest offer will be the turning point that leads to a new collective bargaining agreement and an end to the 105-day NHL lockout.

But the Lightning right wing, a member of the Players' Association negotiating committee, is not ready to go all in. That despite the league's 300-page proposal made Thursday in which it moved some of its positions closer to those of the union.

"It's encouraging to see them take steps toward us. There's a sense of optimism for that," Crombeen said. "But having said that, if they're going to continue to negotiate with take it or leave it, I wouldn't be overly optimistic."

Several reports said the league, under pressure from several owners who do not want the season canceled, hopes to start at least a 48-game season by Jan. 19. If so, a CBA would need to be agreed to by about Jan. 5 to allow about a week for paperwork to be finalized and at least a seven-day training camp.

If that timetable isn't met, the season might be lost. Games through Jan. 14 and the Jan. 27 All-Star Game are gone.

"If they're actually willing to talk," Crombeen said, "I think there's a deal to be done."

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly, in a statement, said the NHL is "not prepared to discuss the details" of its "new, comprehensive proposal."

But specifics were leaked:

- A six-year limit on contracts, though teams can sign their own free agents for seven. The league previously offered a five-year limit. Players propose an eight-year limit.
- Salary variability of 10 percent from year-to-year within contracts. The league previously proposed 5 percent. Players propose a 25 percent highlow range.
- One player buyout in summer 2013 that would not count against the salary cap. The league previously resisted this because, as Daly said, it would be "money outside the system."

There are still points of contention.

The league wants a 10-year CBA with a re-open option after eight years. Players want an eight-year deal with a six-year re-opener.

Because there will not be salary rollbacks, players are concerned about potentially large escrow deductions from their checks. Those are supposed

to ensure that players do not receive more than the 50 percent of league revenue to which they will be entitled, down from 57 percent.

The league also proposes realignment for 2013-14.

Crombeen confirmed the sides likely will speak by phone today and could meet Sunday. If so, it would be their first meetings since Dec. 13.

"By them moving on a few things, it doesn't get a deal done just like that," Crombeen said. "There are a lot of issues, but we always felt since those meetings a few weeks ago that we were fairly close and if we had a partner willing to meet with us a deal will get done.

"We're hopeful this is a sign they're willing to do that. Only time will tell."

Tampa Tribune LOADED: 12.29.2012

647181 Toronto Maple Leafs

World juniors: Team Canada's JC Lipon suspended one game

Kevin McGran

Sports Reporter

UFA, RUSSIA—Team Canada will be without JC Lipon for its game against the United States at the world junior hockey championship.

The Canadian forward was suspended one game for his hit to the head of Slovakian forward Tomas Mikus in Friday's 6-3 win. The suspension leaves the Canadians with just 11 forwards for the key match. Boone Jenner will be serving the last of a three-game suspension for an illegal hit on a Finnish player in an exhibition.

If there was a break for Canada it was that Anthony Camara received word he would not be suspended for his hit on Patrik Luza, who was carried off on a stretcher. Both Lipon and Camara were ejected from Friday's game.

Canada is in first place in its group with two regulation wins, but faces its toughest opponents on Sunday (the 1-1-0 Americans) and Monday (the 2-0-0 Russians) to complete round-robin play.

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.29.2012 647182 Toronto Maple Leafs

World junior notebook: Leafs prospect Rielly shines in win over Slovakia

Kevin McGran

Sports Reporter

UFA, RUSSIA—It was not a typical Morgan Rielly goal. But it was a key one.

The Maple Leafs prospect scored on one-timer Friday, a second-period goal that kick-started Team Canada's come-from-behind 6-3 win over Slovakia.

"It's a little bit uncharacteristic. I don't take a lot of snapshots," said Rielly. "If you ask me it went straight in. I'm pretty sure it got tipped."

Rielly's goal on a two-man power play got Canada within one after Slovakia opened up a 3-1 lead.

"We just kind of turned to each other and I think we all knew we had to be better," said Rielly. "We have a whole lot of talent and we knew if we played our game, we'd be fine. That's what we did."

Ty Rattie — set up by Rielly — scored $3\frac{1}{2}$ minutes later to tie the game, but acknowledged Rielly's goal as the key to the comeback.

"That was huge," Rattie said of Rielly's goal. "We needed to utilize that 5on-3 and he's such an offensive player and so gifted. That really jumpstarted our comeback.

"We really got going after that and started to take over the game."

Mark Scheifele scored before the period ended as Canada got a lead it wouldn't relinquish.

"It's always a blast playing for Team Canada, but when you come from behind like that, it just makes it better," said Rielly.

READY FOR ACTION: Nate MacKinnon, the projected No. 1 pick in the summer draft, has had a limited role so far in the world junior tournament. But one that is getting bigger.

With Boone Jenner out for three games, the 17-year-old MacKinnon had been a fourth-liner in this tournament dominated by 19-year-olds, instead of his projected role as the 13th forward. Now, with J.C. Lipon facing a disciplinary hearing on Saturday for his hit to the head of a Slovak player on Friday, MacKinnon could get even more action. He and Jonathan Drouin — also 17 and his Halifax Mooseheads linemate — stepped up on Friday with Canada's bench shortened due to game ejections for Lipon and Anthony Camara

"I thought Nate MacKinnon and Jonathan Drouin were outstanding," said Canada coach Steve Spott. "They looked like 19-year-olds out on the ice. I thought they were both tremendous. They controlled the puck, were hard on forecheck. Once those guys got more ice time, more opportunity, they definitely took advantage of it."

MacKinnon says he'll do whatever the team needs.

"My mind is always in it, no matter how much I play," said MacKinnon. "I'm ready to help the team whatever way I can. Tonight I got a little bit more minutes toward the end and I thought we did a pretty good job out there. If it comes up, I'll definitely be ready for it."

MacKinnon is used to being the top gun on any offence he's played for. Now he's a secondary player on this talent-loaded Team Canada roster.

"It's been fun, honest. It's a different experience. It's a good experience as well," he said. "It's fun to see a team win and obviously I'm not a part of it as other guys, but it's about all 23 guys chipping in and doing a good job."

SUBBAN CONFIDENT: Through two games, the most important thing is that Canadian goalie Malcolm Subban has two wins.

The one Friday against Slovakia wasn't pretty. He looked shaky in the crease, and gave up a ton of rebounds, but he got the win, stopping 25 of 28 shots.

"I felt the biggest thing for me was making the big saves and giving my team a chance to win every night," said Subban. "I felt I did that these two games."

It was a bit of a surprise to be down 2-0 in the first period to Slovakia.

"I felt like I handled it well, I wasn't getting down on myself. I stayed in the zone and stayed calm and kept making the saves I needed to make."

Coach Spott seems intent on sticking with Subban for the tournament.

"The challenge for Malcolm, like all our players, is to get better every day," said Spott. "As the games get more important, he's going to have to be better. I think he realizes that. We're fully confident he'll get the job done."

TV NUMBERS DOWN: Even though Canadian hockey fans have been suffering through a scarcity of the game this year, TSN took a ratings dip when it broadcast the country's opening game at the world juniors on Boxing Day, the Star's Alex Ballingall reports.

Because the annual tournament is being played in Ufa, Russia, Wednesday's game aired live at 4:30 a.m. EST. An average audience of 372,000 tuned in to watch the Canadian squad beat Germany 9-3, according to TSN. The number of viewers peaked at 575,000.

Last year, when the tournament was in Calgary, the Boxing Day game attracted an average audience of 2.3 million.

TSN re-aired Wednesday's game at noon EST, which garnered an average viewership of 849,000, according to the broadcaster. But overall, nearly 5 million Canadians watched some part of the Canada-Germany game on Boxing Day, compared to about 5.45 million for last year's match on the same day.

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.29.2012

647183 Toronto Maple Leafs

World juniors: Ex-Leaf Phil Housley guides strong USA team

Kevin McGran

Sports Reporter

UFA, RUSSIA—You might not think a hockey powerhouse would hand over the reins of its world junior hockey team to a high school coach.

But Phil Housley is no ordinary high school coach.

The long-time NHLer — even an ex-Maple Leaf, albeit for a very short period of time — is coaching Team USA at the world junior hockey championship.

"I've been around him a lot, and he's such a good hockey person," said Jim Johannson, GM of the American entry. "He understands the tournament, and he has more experience than I think people recognize."

Indeed Housley — inducted into both the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame and the IIHF Hall of Fame — has twice been an assistant coach at this tournament and a head coach at the under-18s. He has also long represented Team USA internationally.

"He really understands the international game," Johannson said of Housley. "And the tournament is in Russia, which is different from a tournament in other places. He has a calming effect with the players. Nothing really rattles him too much. If things aren't perfect, it's okay, it's hockey."

Housley spent 21 years in the NHL, starting with Buffalo as a hotshot rookie right out of high school without ever playing in major junior or college.

Now he coaches high schoolers in his native Minnesota and loves it.

"You're dealing with kids that are in school, kids who are academically trying to strive to get better and get to college," said Housley. "At the same time, some of these kids are looking to further their career, getting to the next level, whether it's junior or college, so there's not as many games, but the games themselves there's a tremendous balance.

"We don't have the depth that other teams do. We have two really good lines, but the three and four aren't going to be compared to USHL or junior, but we still do the same things. We teach the kids how to play the game the right way and it's a challenge. You have to be very patient. You're trying to make a difference in kids' lives."

When USA Hockey asked him to coach their world junior entry, he jumped at the chance.

"Why wouldn't you? It's a great opportunity," said Housley. "I've got to thank USA Hockey. They've had a huge impact on my playing career, when I was 18, making the national team. But my coaching career, as well, starting with the U-18s and a couple of world junior teams and the national team. So, it's a great challenge at the world junior tournament because of the depth of players we have now and high expectations."

The U.S. has a win and a loss so far, and faces Canada on Sunday. The Americans could well be a gold-medal contender, but last year ended up in the relegation pool.

Housley has the respect of his players.

"He's got this demeanor about him that he's calm and collected," said American captain Jake McCabe. "But he's shown at times he can be really fired up and get us going. It's nice to have a little bit of both. He's a great leader."

At the time of Housley's retirement, the native of South St. Paul, Minn., was the NHL's all-time leader in points (338-894-1,232) and games played (1,495) by an American-born player. Both records have since been eclipsed.

"When a guy comes from high school hockey and jumps right into the pros, obviously he's a pretty darn good player," said McCabe. "We were looking up his stats. He's got some ridiculous 80 and 90 points as a defenceman in the NHL. It's pretty impressive. When you're practising out there and he's shooting the puck around, you can see he still has it."

Housley coached his eighth year at Stillwater High School in Minnesota.

"I really enjoy it," said Housley. "Not to say I wouldn't think about moving further. The reason why I took the job in 04 my kids were in the same

school district. I was able to spend more time with my family. It's been great up to this point."

While Housley is best remembered for being a Buffalo Sabre, he played for seven teams in all, including Winnipeg, Calgary (twice) and the Leafs (one regular season game and three playoff games at the very end of his career in 2003).

"I broke my foot in two places. I had one practice," said Housley. "Those guys in those last six weeks are getting ready for the playoffs and here I had one practice. I thank Pat Quinn for giving me an opportunity. It was a lot of time in the hotel and I couldn't skate because my foot was broken.

"I certainly enjoyed my time in Canada. It sort of pushed you as a player . . . knowing there's all eyes watching you."

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.29.2012 647184 Toronto Maple Leafs

U of T student studies hockey heart attacks for old-timers

Alex Ballingall

Brent Bradley considered himself to be in good shape. He worked out regularly at a local gym in Ottawa, and played drop-in hockey three times a week

Then, one period into a hockey game in November 2011, Bradley collapsed to the ice in front of his goalie, felled by a sudden heart attack that left him without vital signs for three minutes.

"I likened it to the feeling and sound of an elevator running out of electricity and stopping," said Bradley, now 62.

"One second I was playing hockey, and the next I was meeting St. Peter."

He regained consciousness after a firefighter on the opposing team shocked his heart back to life with the arena's defibrillator. He discovered the arteries around his heart were severely clogged, and underwent quadruple bypass surgery to save his life.

"I was very, very, very lucky," said Bradley, who returned to play hockey in September.

Stories like this are routinely passed around casual hockey leagues across the country. The sum of such anecdotes might hint at an underlying danger to drop-in hockey. Or it might simply represent what happens when middle aged people push themselves too hard on the ice.

Perhaps surprisingly in a hockey-mad nation like Canada, the issue has received scant scientific scrutiny.

"A lot of middle-aged men play pickup hockey, and a lot of them have heart attacks," said Jack Goodman, associate professor at the University of Toronto's Clinical Cardiovascular Research Laboratory.

"We have virtually no information on what that cardiovascular response is during hockey,"

To help address that deficiency, Goodman's son Zack, a master's student in exercise science, is spearheading a study for his thesis that aims to chart how middle-aged men's heart rates and blood pressure behave while playing hockey.

Zack's hypothesis — as well as his father's — is that the risk of heart problems might be especially acute because of the strenuous stop-and-go nature of the game.

"It's go, go, go. Stop. Go, go, go. Stop. And we don't know much about that," said Goodman.

Previous studies have suggested such exercise could be risky. Last year, a Queen's University professor surveyed heart attacks over two previous winters in Kingston, and found that 7 per cent occurred while the patient was shovelling snow.

"The stopping suddenly is probably less dangerous than the starting suddenly," said Paul D. Thompson, a sports cardiology expert from Hartford, Md. "You're more likely to get that spasm of the arteries when you

start quickly ... (But) there aren't a ton of studies on sudden death during exercise."

On a recent Tuesday night at Phil White Arena in northern Toronto, Marc Koplawitz was suiting up to play hockey. The 53-year-old agreed to participate in Zack's study, and was outfitted with electrical nodes on his chest, as well as a band around his left bicep, so that a machine could chart his blood pressure and heart rate.

"I'm always in favour of research; if I can help out without donating an organ," Koplawitz said, joking as Zack taped down the wires connected to a small computer latched on the back of Koplawitz's hockey pants.

Once the game got going, the defenceman came to the bench after each shift, where Zack took note of the reading on the machine attached beneath his jersey. Koplawitz then sat down for 30 seconds, and Zack took a second reading.

The 23-year-old grad student said he wanted to learn more about what happens during the drop in blood pressure that occurs when players suddenly stop their rapid movements to sit on the bench.

He suspects that "less healthy" players will be more susceptible to heart problems at this stage. They will have faster heart rates that take longer to slow down, which can result in less oxygen being fed to the muscles of the heart, Zack explained.

"That's actually where there is risk of less perfusion to the heart — 30 seconds after they've sat down," he said.

He hopes to have his thesis finished by June, but cautions that his study is merely the scientific equivalent of testing the waters in an under-examined area.

"We're trying to look at the characteristics that might lead to risk," he said.

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.29.2012 647185 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: League offer sparks hope of shortened season

Mark Zwolinski

Sports Reporter

The NHL made what were considered significant concessions in a new proposal to the players Thursday, sparking high expectations that the Maple Leafs and the rest of the NHL will be begin playing a shortened season by the middle of January.

Several players hinted to NHL media on Friday that this latest proposal from the owners "advances" previous issues on maximum contract lengths and other key points that have stalled negotiations up to this point.

The lockout enters its 105th day Saturday, and while the two sides have not met formally in more than two weeks, the players called a 3 p.m. meeting Friday to discuss the league's proposal. The league will hold a conference call with players on Saturday to explain the proposal and answer questions, and the two sides could meet face-to-face as early as Sunday in New York.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late (Thursday) afternoon," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a release Friday.

"We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

To that end, the league showed flexibility in some of the most contentious areas of the talks. It extended maximum contract lengths from five to six years and increased salary variance from 5 per cent to 10 per cent — concessions that touched on and/or mirrored key components of the players' proposal three weeks ago.

Maximum contract lengths and CBA term remained key points in the negotiations, and the players had tabled an eight-year maximum on new deals Dec. 6.

A proposal Thursday of a \$60 million payroll ceiling in the first year of the deal was said to be a potential issue for the players; but the overall sense, even with some pessimism rising on Twitter over the entire negotiating process, is that a deal is close at hand.

Here's a look at the highlights of the NHL proposal, according to a document received by ESPN:

- A maximum contract length of six years, with the exception of seven years if a team signs its own player. Salaries are not to vary any more than 10 per cent up or down from the first year of the deal.
- A 10-year agreement under a new CBA, with mutual opt-out rights after eight years.
- Some \$300 million in "make whole" payments to equalize player contracts in the early years of the deal.
- A 50-50 split of hockey-related revenue and no rollbacks on player contracts.
- A \$70-million payroll ceiling, but clubs must operate at \$60 million in the first year of the deal.
- Each team permitted one compliance buyout that counts against the players' share of hockey-related revenue, not the salary cap.
- Rules for the entry-level system, salary arbitration and Group 3 unrestricted free agents will remain unchanged.
- Increase the revenue-sharing program from \$150 million to \$200 million, with the establishment of an industry growth fund to help stabilize financial the growth of the league and low-grossing teams.

While there is no word yet on a counterproposal from the players — and a return to the bargaining table — it's believed the union will review the proposal over the weekend. The document they received from the league is about 300 pages in length.

The two sides have not met since Dec. 13, and those talks — which included U.S. federal mediators — broke off without any progress.

Since then, the players also voted overwhelmingly in favour of authorizing their executive board to effectively dissolve the union under a disclaimer, and proceed to court where it could challenge the lockout's legality under U.S. antitrust laws. It appears the two sides will return to the negotiating table before the union resorts to the disclaimer.

Commissioner Gary Bettman has said the season, if it is saved, cannot be played unless there is a minimum 48-game schedule. The league cancelled games through Jan. 14, and it's believed a deal needs to be in place before that date in order to get teams back into training camps for a puck drop on or around the Jan. 20.

Timeline scenarios now being talked about include a new CBA in place by the weekend after New Year's Day, and the resumption of training camps following that. It could take a week to 10 days for preparation, which would take the process to around Jan. 16 to 19 for the season opener.

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.29.2012 647186 Toronto Maple Leafs

NHL lockout: End to pointless hockey fight now in sight: Cox

By Damien Cox Sports Columnist

Only two things, it would seem, can stop the NHL from finally beginning its season sometime early in the new year.

An act of God, something more definitive than that which the Mayan calendar produced last week.

Or the sudden, forced departure of Gary Bettman at the hands of embittered hardliners in the NHL camp.

Since neither is anticipated, feel free to start imagining cold Saturday nights in front of the fire with the game on again, and familiar faces like Sidney Crosby and Steven Stamkos flitting across the screen, and the beginning of

another Maple Leaf soap opera-like season, and a resumption of the always fascinating discussion as to why hockey doesn't sell in Phoenix.

Sometime on Thursday, the NHL submitted a revamped offer to the NHL Players' Association, the first active movement between the two sides in about three weeks.

The players won't immediately agree to it, and there's stuff yet to be resolved. Such as the 2014 Winter Olympics, and will the NHL go?

So, with face-to-face meetings possible for Sunday, we've probably got another few days yet of ultimatums, thinly veiled threats, leaks and professed exasperation before there are fake hugs all around.

Looks like Jan. 10 is now the unofficial "drop-dead date" — camps open on Jan. 13, a 48-game season to commence on Jan. 20th — which at least won't interfere with the world juniors in Russia.

In exchange for an across-the-board 12.5 per cent pay reduction and limits on the length of contracts players can negotiate, the owners have either stopped asking for givebacks in other areas or actually offered the players things, like what amounts to a \$300 million signing bonus.

It's a far cry from where the owners were when this dance began in September. They would get the 50-50 split on revenues that they crave, a massive improvement from the 57-43 split in favour of the players that was the case.

Still, it won't be the colossal victory for the owners many had predicted, and that will be because the passive-aggressive approach of NHLPA boss Donald Fehr prevented a rout.

The resolve of the players, who by this time in the last set of collective bargaining talks back in 2005 were already cracking, is really to be credited for this becoming a tougher fight, although it will always be debatable whether they could have got a similar deal months ago and saved a lot of money.

Still, Fehr's ability to wait and then wait some more has taken its toll. He was never going to say "yes" to anything before January 2013. Even this newest NHL offer came after three weeks of Fehr essentially doing nothing but simply waiting, while his membership surrendered \$10 million in salaries per day to bankroll his patience and legacy.

That "hill we're prepared to die on" that NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly spoke about several weeks ago? You know, the league's unwillingness to move from five-year limits on contracts? Well, the owners moved.

Some hill. Some death. Fehr didn't blink when Daly said it, and just waited.

And therein lies some danger.

Assuming that act of God doesn't materialize, only the removal of Bettman by owners who believe he has already surrendered too much ground seems likely to stop this deal from getting done.

That seems unlikely, but if Fehr responds to the latest owners offer with a new laundry list of items, as has been his pattern all along, hardliners could end up taking over on the NHL side, perhaps even pushing Bettman out and hurtling towards some kind of NHL nuclear winter.

"If this or something close to this doesn't get it done, we're not playing," said one league source. "Then we're in a twilight zone. See you in the fall with 26 teams."

But really, at this point, more reasonable types in both camps are likely to prevail. The owners will be getting one big monster cookie and the players getting lots of little nibblies, with the owners getting less than they hoped for (while the industry suffered untold damage) and the players standing their ground (at an enormous, unrecoverable cost in salaries).

The best the fans can hope for is a long-term CBA — the league still wants 10 years — and thus an extended period of labour peace.

The league has also proposed a group of seven joint committees, including an "Owners-Players Relations Committee" which will, presumably, convene from time to time to discuss why the owners and players hate each other so much.

Fine, put together as many joint committees as necessary. Then get back to it. Get back to owners and players and agents conspiring to find all the loopholes necessary to beat the brains out of the other teams.

As always, enemies will again become friends very quickly.

Toronto Star LOADED: 12.29.2012

647187 Vancouver Canucks

Bieksa on urgency of league's latest CBA proposal: 'These are the final minutes'

Ben Kuzma

VANCOUVER — No sooner did a trio of Vancouver Canucks respond Friday to leaked details of the NHL's latest collective bargaining agreement proposal than the union advised its members to zip their lips. A conference call to review the league's 300-page document and a crafted response from NHL Players' Association executive director Donald Fehr would come first. Then a counter-proposal. Any necessary venom would be spewed later.

However, by not initially taking the league to task on only moving contract lengths from five to six years, adjusting contract variance from five to 10 per cent and insisting that one contract buyout next summer that won't count agains the salary cap will allow teams to comply to a \$60 million US ceiling, the union is biting its lip to not further stall the stagnant process. After all, if a CBA is struck by Jan. 5, camps would open Jan. 12 and a 48-game schedule would commence Jan. 19.

Still, the responses were understandably measured and reserved when word spread of the league's offer.

"Actually, I had no reaction," said defenceman Kevin Bieksa. "It's been so long in going through the ups and downs and I haven't looked at the proposal in depth yet, so I can't comment until we digest the numbers. Let's not try to get too high, but at the same time, it's good we're talking again.

"These are the final minutes. If there were no talks leading up to these (next) three weeks, it would be a pretty pathetic effort by both sides and I think the public would realize that. We have to put all the cards on the table now and show our best hands and get this thing figured out."

Not that it's going to be easy. Not when clubs can operate at a \$70.2 million cap ceiling this season and then chop it by \$10 million in 2013-14. The Canucks have 13 players signed for \$55.4 million next season and one buyout isn't going to ease the burden of icing a competitive team. Not with Alex Edler looking for a rich contract extension and not with cheaper players coming back in a Roberto Luongo trade. With 10 contracts expiring after this season, the Canucks obviously back the union pushing for a \$67 million ceiling.

The league still wants a 10-year CBA length with a opt-out clause after eight and the players are pushing for an eight-year agreement with an out after six years. The \$300 million make-whole provision to protect most of the contracts in place — and to help fund the pension plan — is in play while the entry-level system, arbitration and unrestricted free agency remain intact. The players can't comment, but the length of contracts and the percentage of variance and the cap ceiling will probably prompt a response in their counter-proposal. And that's something to talk about, even in broad terms when the offer was presented.

"It was definitely a positive feeling," said centre Manny Malhotra, who's part of the 31-player negotiating committee. "We felt we've been the ones coming to the table and addressing their issues and taking into consideration what they say is important. It hasn't been reciprocated, but for them to come to the table with a proposal is positive. We're going to analyze it as much as possible before we deem how much of a move has been made.

"We're not about to be pressured into a situation and we're not trying to bully people. It's getting a fair deal that both parties can live with."

Last week, the NHLPA showed solidarity with 706 of 729 players voting in favour of giving the executive board the right to dissolve the union. It would allow individual players to file anti-trust suits and be paid triple their lost salaries in damages if successful in a court proceeding. The NHLPA has until Jan. 2 to file the disclaimer. It can be filed again but another vote would have to be taken. Canucks captain Henrik Sedin is hopeful it doesn't get to that point and took the high road despite the little he had heard about the latest league proposal.

"It's better than sitting around eating turkey and ham," joked the centre. "I haven't seen anything, but if they've moved that's a good sign. This is

make-or-break. We know if nothing gets done, the season is going to be cancelled and there's a lot of pressure on both sides. But that's what you need to get a deal done.

"We want to play. We want to get a deal done. If they're prepared to sit down and talk about the issues, then that's a great sign."

Vancouver Province: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647188 Vancouver Canucks

Canucks say NHL's latest proposal addressing buyouts, contract lengths is a positive sign

By Ben Kuzma, The Province December 28, 2012

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A conference call to review the league's 300-page document and a crafted response from NHL Players' Association executive director Donald Fehr would come first. Then a counter-proposal.

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Vancouver Province: LOADED: 12.29.2012

647189 Washington Capitals

NHL owners make new CBA offer to NHLPA

Posted by Katie Carrera on December 28, 2012 at 11:11 am

The NHL made a new offer to the NHLPA Thursday that included movement on contract term limit, salary variance and compliance buyouts, according to ESPN's Pierre LeBrun. The two sides have not met since Dec. 13, and as of Friday morning no future sessions have been scheduled.

From LeBrun:

Details of the new offer include:

- Term limit on player contracts moves to six years from the five years NHL asked in previous offers (seven years if you're re-signing your own player).
- Year-to-year salary variance moves from 5 percent (NHL's previous offers) to 10 percent.
- Each team will be allowed one compliance buyout before the 2013-14 season that will not count against the salary cap but will count against the players' share.
- The Make Whole provision stays at \$300 million.

Additional details of the league's proposal were obtained by ESPN Friday afternoon and you can check out all of the highlights here.

"In light of media reports this morning, I can confirm that we delivered to the Union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA late yesterday afternoon," NHL Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said in a news release Friday afternoon. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the Union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

Could the new proposal spark negotiations that could salvage a shortened season? We won't know that until the union reviews and responds to the offer, but the clock certainly is ticking. In order to play a 48-game season, the two sides likely need to reach an agreement by the second week of January.

This latest offer by the league comes just a few days ahead of the NHLPA's self-imposed Jan. 2 deadline to file a disclaimer of interest. Last week, players voted overwhelmingly to give the NHLPA's executive board the power to disclaim interest, a move that would dissolve the union and make the NHL subject to anti-trust lawsuits.

• Meanwhile in the KHL, Nicklas Backstrom will miss Dynamo Moscow's game against Lev Praha Friday after suffering a neck injury against Slovan

Bratislava Wednesday. Backstrom was scheduled to visit doctors on Thursday and Friday, according to his European agent Gunnar Svensson.

Russian Machine has video of the hit that sent Backstrom into the boards awkwardly Wednesday and caused the injury.

- Businesses around Verizon Center are feeling the pinch from the absence of hockey crowds. "You can't beat the business that comes with the Caps games. We compare everything to them," says Arvind Nair, the general manager at Clyde's of Gallery Place.
- John Feinstein on the lockout: No sport gets it all wrong the way hockey gets it all wrong.

Washington Post LOADED: 12.29.2012

647190 Washington Capitals

NHL makes new offer to players

By IRA PODELL

NEW YORK (AP) - The NHL says it has made a new contract offer to the players in an attempt to end the lockout and save the season.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly says in a statement Friday that a "comprehensive" proposal was made a day earlier, although he would not discuss details.

He adds that the league is "hopeful" that once the union and its negotiating committee review the proposal "they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

The lockout is in its 104th day. The NHL says it doesn't want a season of less than 48 games. To make that possible, a deal likely must be reached by mid-January. The sides haven't met face to face since talks with a federal mediator broke down Dec. 13.

Read more: http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/dec/28/nhl-makes-new-offer-to-

 $players/?utm_source=RSS_Feed\&utm_medium=RSS\#ixzz2GR6hpgfq$

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647191 Winnipeg Jets

DAY104 NHL lockout: Too much at stake to not reach deal: Hainsey

Jets D-man suggests league, union return to owners and players meeting face-to-face

By: Tim Campbell

NATIONAL Hockey League Players Association negotiating committee member Ron Hainsey, the Winnipeg Jets defenceman, wants the league and its owners to stop dragging their heels.

Hainsey said Thursday that the NHLPA is ready and willing to meet for negotiations to try to find a resolution to the current labour impasse that hits Day 104 today.

He has even suggested the sides return to the format from early December that saw players, including Hainsey, talking face-to-face with owners, including Jets co-owner and governor Mark Chipman.

Asked if he's reached out with that request to the league, Hainsey said: "You'd have to assume they saw that. It was pretty widely circulated last week. "The caveat was that Don (Fehr, NHLPA executive director) and Gary (Bettman, NHL commissioner) would join this time and hopefully we'd

quickly come to a resolution. "But it looks like they're not interested. But what you're asking is accurate, they we're ready to meet."

Hainsey said he realizes there's an appearance that he's changing his tune from early December, when he was part of the players-owners sessions that went off track after two days.

"I think it's been made public that I delivered the message that we weren't prepared to go forward without our staff," he said. "So they had no real interest in continuing negotiations.

"The players aren't sure how to complete a multi-billion-dollar deal without our staff."

The NHL has said it also is prepared to meet but that it wants to do so only if it can hear something new from the union, or agreement on the three "must-haves" the owners asked for in early December.

"In mediation the next week, we were told their offer was what it was," Hainsey said. "If we cared to nibble at one small piece, then they would listen but outside of that their position was take it or leave it.

"And word out there continues to be portrayed like this, that if we're waiting for them (to alter their offer) we'll be waiting forever because Don changed the rules in December, whatever that means."

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said Thursday that there have been no new developments and that no meetings with the NHLPA had been scheduled.

NHL games have been canceled through Jan. 14 and nobody doubts that time is running short.

"I think it's safe to assume mid-January is a critical time," Daly told the Free Press. "I'm not going to suggest January 14 is a deadline, though."

Just more than a week ago, Daly suggested his best guess for the future was that a deal gets done somehow.

Hainsey ventured a similar thought on Thursday.

"I have to believe we get something done," the Jets defenceman said. "I believe the cost of this is way too much."

Winnipeg Free Press LOADED 12.28.2012

647192 Websites

ESPN / Debate: Will NHL's offer end the lockout?

By Scott Burnside and Craig Custance

Scott Burnside and Craig Custance debate whether the NHL's new offer is enough to get the players back on the ice.

BURNSIDE: Greetings and top of the season to you, my friend. Well, for all of us who have been waiting and hoping for a happy New Year vis-à-vis the

NHL lockout, things are looking a lot more positive than they were a day or two ago. As our good friend and colleague Pierre LeBrun reported Friday morning, the NHL has presented the NHLPA with a new offer that moves off key issues like a cap on salary lengths and transitional payments. The league has agreed to move off a five-year cap on all contracts, the so-called hill on which the league would die, offering a six-year cap with an additional year for teams re-signing their own players. That has been a huge deal for the players.

At the risk of tooting our own horns, the new NHL offer bears a striking resemblance to the framework of a possible deal provided to us by an NHL governor a couple of weeks ago. Top players that we canvassed reacted favorably to such a framework, suggesting at the very minimum it was the kind of deal that could/should be taken to the membership for a vote. There are obviously miles to go before we sleep (with all due respect to Robert Frost), but given the backdrop of a rapidly closing window of time in which to get a deal done, one has to view this as a significant development, or am I simply seeing what I want to see at this point in the process?

CUSTANCE: I've tried to develop a healthy dose of pessimism with each offer because it seems like the response from the other side is never as cheery as it is from those of us so eager for this all to end. But you're right, there are some important movements made in this offer. I've never gotten the sense from players I've spoken with that the length of the CBA is nearly as important as the limits put on standard player contracts. Considering the talk we heard in New York, the change to a six-year max on signing free agents from other teams is significant. And you can't overlook the variance, which the NHL has now moved to 10 percent. That's important.

You're right, it looks closer to the offer you floated, and every player I spoke with about that offer seemed to think it was at least worth a vote. We'll see if they still feel that way when it's coming from the NHL. I'll be interested to see the NHLPA's response since Donald Fehr's strategy has been consistent from the outset: Keep waiting. His patience has been rewarded with improved offers as this lockout has extended, but the players want to play and something in this framework may be good enough to do it. I also found it interesting that compliance buyouts are part of this one. Any teams you see jumping on this?

BURNSIDE: I wonder if the buyout becomes the one area with which the league might be willing to tinker. We know some players are worried about the drop-off in salary cap from the first year, which will remain at \$70.3 million (prorated over the balance of the 2012-13 season), to \$60 million in Year 2 of the deal. Would the league agree to have one-time buyouts not count against hockey-related revenues as a way of keeping that reduced cap in effect even though players won't like the potential impact on escrow? But to your point, I can't help but think there will be a bevy of buyouts as teams try and prepare for a significant reduction in the cap, with guys like Wade Redden and Scott Gomez at the top of the list. But what about Ilya Bryzgalov, the "star" of the free-agent crop a year ago whose play and personality left more than a few in Philadelphia cold? And if GM Paul Holmgren did pull the pin on Mr. Humongous Big Universe, what would Plan B look like with Sergei Bobrovsky in Columbus? See, there you go Craig, you've got me thinking real hockey and real hockey decisions. Curse vou.

To your point about Fehr, though; it goes without saying that this is the defining moment for him. This isn't necessarily a take-it-or-leave-it offer from the league, but I don't think he can start adding things to the equation the way he did in New York when he attached the demands for transitional elements. He has done a masterful job of pushing the envelope even as the league has gone where it said it wouldn't go, but my gut tells me the envelope is pretty much at its limit. Does he think so? Does the membership think so? I guess we'll find out in the next few days. What does your gut tell you?

CUSTANCE: Well, my gut said we'd be playing hockey on Jan. 1 when all this started, so my gut hasn't been entirely dependable. But I continue to be optimistic that we'll see hockey in January. You bring up a great point on transition rules. When I checked with one player this morning to get reaction to the NHL's offer, his immediate response was to ask what the salary cap was next year. That's a real concern for the players. If it ends up being \$60 million, the players are going to get nailed with a healthy escrow hit, which some view as a rollback. So that could end up being the next focal point of negotiations. At the same time, doesn't the payoff that comes with playing as soon as possible help mitigate any losses in escrow next season? There's a small window to get things done before the NHLPA's deadline to file a disclaimer of interest. Five days and counting. You think that helps light a fire under negotiations to get this thing done?

BURNSIDE: Well if there's not a burning sensation under both the players and the owners at this stage of the proceedings, something is terribly wrong. But the fact that the players voted so overwhelmingly to give the NHLPA's executive committee the power to file a disclaimer of interest (706 to 22 according to LeBrun) -- thereby dissolving the union and setting the stage for multiple antitrust lawsuits in the United States -- added even more urgency to the dynamic. Neither side knows exactly how a legal challenge by the union and counterchallenge by the league already in place would turn out, but the safe bet from experts is that we would be entering a whole new arena in terms of ugliness. Certainly we saw the NBA and NFL settle labor disputes with the threat of decertification as a backdrop. Not sure if it was the threat of the disclaimer or merely a look at the calendar that brought us to this point in the NHL lockout, but in some ways it's a moot point. The reality is that the league has started the machinery on what most if not all observers believe is the final act in this tawdry little play.

I have remained optimistic that at some point common sense will enter the picture and we'll see NHL hockey this season. No reason the two sides shouldn't be back on the ice by mid-January. Of course, there's no reason we're having this discussion in the final days of 2012 either, so there you have it. OK, best guess on when and how the league gets going? Or does it?

CUSTANCE: I'll revise my prediction to a Jan. 16 start of the season, with a 50-game season. That would allow us the possibility of an exciting 50 goals in 50 games chase by Steven Stamkos or someone else, which is the kind of excitement the league will need to attract sports fans turned off by another lockout. Plus, I like round numbers. But they'd have to move fast to get there. The players will have a conference call at 3 p.m. ET today to mull things over and debate the details of this offer, but it has to be close. If there's some wiggle room on transition rules and the salary cap next season, I'm even more optimistic. Was told by a source last week that some of the smaller things are all but agreed upon -- like a third-party appeal process for supplemental discipline and moving the start of free agency to later in July. This offer seems to address some of the bigger issues. Now we wait and see if it's enough.

ESPN LOADED: 12.29.2012

647193 Websites

ESPN / Highlights of NHL's Dec. 27 proposal

By Pierre LeBrun

An NHL team source provided highlights from the latest offer the NHL gave to the union on Thursday:

 \bullet Ten-Year Agreement (through 2021/22 season); Parties have mutual optout right

after 8 years.

- 50-50 Revenue Split between Clubs and Players with current HRR Accounting.
- \$300 million in "Make-Whole" payments (outside the system) to compensate Players

for the reduced value of Player contracts in the early years of the new CBA.

- · No contractual "roll backs" of Player Salaries.
- Clubs can operate with an effective Upper Limit of \$70.2 million in 2012/13; must

come into compliance with \$60 million Upper Limit for the start of the 2013/14 $\,$

season.

• Each Club will be entitled to execute up to one "Compliance Buy-Out" prior to the

2013/14 season pursuant to which payments made to the Player will not be charged

against the team's Cap, but will be charged against the Players' Share.

• Establishment of a Defined Benefit Pension Plan that will provide maximum

permissible benefits to Players upon retirement. The Plan will be funded with

contributions out of Players' Share and \$50 million of the "Make-Whole" payment

amount of \$300 million will be allocated and set aside to fund potential underfunding

liabilities of the Plan at end of CBA.

 Rules for Entry Level System, Salary Arbitration and Group 3 Unrestricted Free

Agency will remain unchanged.

 Maximum contract length of 6 years subject to a Club's ability to re-sign its own

Player for a term of up to 7 years (provided the Player played his last full season

with the re-signing Club). In addition, year-to-year Salary variability will be limited

(up or down) to no more than 10% of the value of the first year of a multi-year SPC.

• Money paid (above a defined threshold) to Players on NHL SPCs in another

professional league (e.g., the AHL or a European league) will be charged against the

NHL team's Cap, but not against the Players' Share.

• "Cap Advantage Recapture" formula applicable to existing long-term contracts (in

excess of 6 years) for years in which Player is retired or fails/refuses to perform

under his NHL SPC.

 Ability for Clubs to retain/allocate Salary and Cap Charges in the context of Player

Trades within specified parameters.

• More robust League-wide Revenue Sharing Program (increased pool from

approximately \$150 million to \$200 million) with creation of Industry Growth Fund to

improve the long-term revenue generating potential of the League and low-grossing

Clubs. Formation of active Revenue Sharing Oversight Committee on which NHLPA

will participate.

 New Player Discipline procedures and protocol incorporating Player appeal rights to

a neutral third-party arbitrator for both on-ice and off-ice discipline.

• Flexibility-related adjustments to Payroll Range System, including (in addition to

Salary/Cap Charge allocation in Player trades):

- 1. Lower Limit obligation without performance bonuses;
- 2. Elimination of Re-Entry Waivers;
- 3. Creation of Salary Cap exceptions for emergency roster situations/goaltender

injuries;

- 4. Waiver exemptions for mid-season signings of Club's own European Players:
- 5. Availability of Performance Bonus Cushion in every year of the CBA;

- 6. Creation of "interview period" for Unrestricted Free Agents.
- · Various Player contract enhancements and protections, including:
- 1. Early activation of "No Move/No Trade" clauses in contract extensions;
- 2. Additional restrictions on Club "buy-out" rights of Player contracts;
- 3. Modified Waiver obligations for Clubs / enhanced Waiver opportunities for

Players;

- 4. Standardization of reimbursements and benefits related to Player assignments (trades, loans, recalls, etc.);
- 5. Continued increases in League Minimum Salary and Per Diem;
- 6. Playoff Pool increased from \$6.5 million to \$13 million in Year 1; additional

regular increases over the balance of the CBA term;

- 7. All minor league salary paid in USD;
- 8. Liberalized "Cap treatment" standards for Club initiatives benefitting Players.

such as "parent-son" road trips; milestone awards/gifts; parental travel and lodging for attendance at EL Player games, Club provision of various types of

"professional development"-type services for Players, etc.

- · Player "Working Condition" improvements, including:
- 1. Ice-time restrictions and mandatory "days off" requirements during Training

Camp;

- 2. Club practice schedule and "days off" requirements during the Regular Season:
- 3. Extended "Christmas Break" (i.e., December 24-26 "days off" for all purposes);
- 4. Mandatory facility standards for Visiting Teams relating to training/medical

supplies, workout equipment and dressing room standards/supplies;

5. Implementation of "best practices" and continued League initiatives to ensure

optimal ice conditions;

6. Tighter restrictions/regulation of Club off-season conditioning requirements

and Club Conditioning Camp;

- 7. Establishment of annual Orientation and Development Program for Rookies/First Year Players.
- New CBA Article devoted exclusively to Player Health and Safety measures and

covering such matters as:

1. The establishment of a Joint NHL/NHLPA Health and Safety Committee with

equal representation from the NHL and the NHLPA;

2. The establishment of "Standard of Care" and "Professional Duty" obligations

owing from team health care professionals to Players;

 The establishment of minimum requirements for "health management" staffing

and resources;

4. The establishment of standards for the creation, updating and maintenance of

Electronic Medical Records for Players;

- Improvements to Second Medical Opinion procedures and protocol and Fitness to Play determinations;
- 6. Implementation of additional steps and safeguards to monitor the use (and

possible misuse) of prescription medication by Players.

- 7. Increased flexibility for Players for rehabilitation of injuries during the offseason.
- Elimination of NHLPA "Guarantee" of Escrow shortfall and increased NHLPA

discretion to determine in-season Escrow Rates.

 Completion of expert third-party review of SABH Program and commitment to make

recommended modifications and improvements, as appropriate.

- Improvements to existing Performance Enhancing Substances Program, including:
- 1. Expansion of Prohibited Substances List to include illegal stimulants;
- 2. The establishment of testing protocol for HGH;
- 3. Varied forms and times of testing throughout the year;
- 4. The establishment of protocol for "reasonable cause testing";
- 5. Incorporation of agreed-upon appeal procedures from "positive" test results:
- 6. Commitment to work with the AHL and the PHPA to expand Program to cover

AHL Players.

- Joint (NHL/NHLPA) Committees:
- 1. Formation of new "Owner-Player Relations Committee," with broad-

participation from Owners and Players intended to foster and establish better

understanding and stronger working relationships.

2. Formation of new "Revenue Sharing Oversight Committee" to oversee the

operation of the Revenue Sharing System.

- Formation of new "Joint Health and Safety Committee" to make recommendations to the NHL and the NHLPA on Player Health and Safety matters.
- 4. Formation of new "NHL/NHLPA Equipment Working Group" to study, promulgate and enforce minimum standards for protective equipment utilized

by NHL Players.

5. Refined and enhanced role for "Player/Club Competition Committee" (CBA

Article 22) with greater consultation and interaction with the NHL General Managers' Committee.

6. The "NHL/NHLPA Joint Owner-Player Broadcasting/Marketing Committee"

(CBA Article 32) will be reconstituted to consult and establish policy on League broadcasting and marketing matters, as well as other League business functions and initiatives.

7. The NHL/NHLPA International Committee (CBA Article 24) will be charged

with jointly identifying, creating, exploiting and managing new international business opportunities involving NHL Players, in which the NHL and NHLPA

will participate as 50-50 partners. The NHL/NHLPA International Committee shall also have an advisory role in planning and executing NHL events conducted outside of North America.

 Players provided access to NHL.com platform for their individual Player websites

and social media.

 Implementation of a weighted Draft Lottery in which all non-Playoff teams compete

for opportunity to choose first overall in the annual Draft.

• Exclusive negotiating rights window for European Draftees extended to one period

covering four years, instead of two periods covering two years each.

 Modification to "Four-Recall Rule" to remove limitation on "number of transactions"

following the Trade Deadline; replace with limitations on the total number of Recalls

on roster at any one time after the Trade Deadline.

- Updated and improved Grievance Arbitration process and procedure.
- Enhanced access to Game Tickets for Visiting Team Players and NHLPA.
- NHLPA representatives to be provided reasonable access to Club facilities and

Players at reasonable times.

ESPN LOADED: 12.29.2012

647194 Websites

ESPN / NHL presents 'comprehensive' offer

By Pierre LeBrun

ESPN.com

The NHL has made a new proposal to the NHL Players' Association with time ticking toward a canceled season, the league has confirmed.

In a statement released Friday, NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly called the offer a "comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA," saying it was delivered to the union late Thursday afternoon.

"We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time," Daly said in the statement. "We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

A player who requested anonymity told ESPN.com earlier Friday the offer advanced what was on the table for term limits for player contracts, salary variance and buyouts.

Debate: Will Offer End Lockout?

The league's insistence on a five-year limit has been a major sticking point with players, who countered Dec. 6 with a willingness to limit deals to eight years.

The two sides did not meet Friday, the NHLPA needing time to review the lengthy and detailed offer from the league. The NHL and NHLPA will have a conference call on Saturday, a source said, with the NHL answering questions from the union regarding the offer, after which they hope to schedule an in-person meeting as early as Sunday in New York.

The NHLPA had scheduled a 3 p.m. ET players internal conference call Friday to discuss the offer and determine the next step, multiple sources said. Several players were not yet aware of the proposal when the news was reported Friday morning.

One source said it could take the entire weekend for the union to sift through the details of the latest offer -- approximately 300 pages in length -- and formulate an appropriate response.

Details of the new offer, as obtained through an NHL team source by ESPN.com, include:

- Term limit on player contracts moves to six years from the five years NHL asked in previous offers (seven years if you're re-signing your own player).
- Year-to-year salary variance moves from 5 percent (NHL's previous offers) to 10 percent.
- Each team will be allowed one compliance buyout before the 2013-14 season that will not count against the salary cap but will count against the players' share.
- The Make-Whole provision stays at \$300 million.

The proposed collective bargaining agreement would remain a 10-year deal (through the 2021-22 season) with a mutual opt-out option after eight years. The rules for the entry-level system, salary arbitration and Group 3 unrestricted free agency also remain unchanged.

Sources told ESPN.com that the league's offer also shared key dates that could be observed to get a season under way: an agreement no later than Jan. 11, the opening of training camps on Jan. 12, and the beginning of the regular season on Jan. 19.

The season needs to start by Jan. 19 in order to accommodate a 48-game regular season, which would see the playoffs end in late June. Of course, should a deal be concluded before Jan. 11, the league could add more games to the schedule, as well.

One area believed to be a concern among the players will be the proposed \$60 million salary cap, beginning in 2013-14 (clubs will have a \$70.2 million upper limit in 2012-13). Sources indicated that players are wary of the implications the cap would have on escrow amounts.

The proposal also includes procedures and protocols for player discipline (allowing players the right to appeal to a neutral third-party arbitrator), a joint NHL/NHLPA Health and Safety Committee (with equal representation for both parties), an expansion of player drug testing.

Other elements that would be new to the NHL: The creation of an "interview period" for unrestricted free agents, like the NBA, and the implementation of a weighted draft lottery expanded to all non-playoff teams.

Daly, reached by ESPN.com, would not confirm the reported details of the league's latest offer.

The two sides last met Dec. 13, when mediators failed to produce any progress.

Since then, the NHL has canceled games through Jan. 14. In total, 50.8 percent of the regular-season schedule has been scrapped.

During a news conference in New York on Dec. 6 -- the last time the two sides swapped proposals -- NHL commissioner Gary Bettman suggested that anything less than a 48-game season would not be acceptable. Given that the league has said it is willing to push a season into late June, a 48-game season likely would have to begin around the third week of January, which means a deal would need to be struck by mid-January at the very latest.

Once a deal is reached, teams will need at least a week for training camp before the season begins. In the meantime, the NHLPA's executive board has until Wednesday to decide whether to file a notice of disclaimer of

interest -- dissolving the union -- after players last week voted overwhelmingly to give the executive board the right to do so.

That may not be an option they explore given Friday's latest offer, however.

Multiple players have told ESPN.com that their preference would be to quickly negotiate a new deal rather than file the disclaimer. However, the union may employ the move as a last resort if no traction is gained in the near future.

Information from ESPNNewYork.com's Katie Strang was used in this report.

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Sportsnet.ca / Spector on NHL: League, players do the dance

Mark Spector

Hockey fans, we have lift off.

An upgraded offer by the National Hockey League, enticing its Players' Association back to the table, is exactly how the progression had to work. NHLPA head Donald Fehr will now counter this offer, but the gap has closed, and even these greedy men can't burn a season now, can they?

The league has reportedly moved from a five-year player contract limit to six (still seven years if signing your own player). They've beefed up year-to-year contract variance from 5% per season to 10%. They've put the \$300 in "make whole money" back on the table, as if it were ever off.

The NHL will allow one "compliance buy-out" per team prior to next season, reportedly not counting against the cap, but counting against the players' share of revenues. So the players can have a buy-out, as long as they're willing to pay for it. Nice.

The rumour is out that the owners have informed commissioner Gary Bettman that losing a season is simply "not an option," an order we believe has been in place since September. We also believe that 750 players feel the same way.

All of those upgrades were included in an offer tendered to the NHLPA on Thursday night, a fact first reported by our friend Eklund on Hockeybuzz.com. And all serve as an open door to allow the players to tell each other that, this time, it wasn't the NHLPA moving towards the centre.

It was the owners.

In a negotiation that has left us sour at both sides, the NHL has surely been the most stubborn. The league opened with a ridiculous offer back in August — remember 43%? — and has simply worked slowly off of that insulting position, labelling each jump as movement towards a deal.

Next the league identified four chief areas where they refused to negotiate — things like term of the CBA, contract terms, buy-outs, etc. — and drew their greedy line in the sand. Because these were areas of the new agreement that the NHL "had to have" they told us.

Contract length was " a hill to die on." Well, today they moved off of that hill.

It is an unreasonable method of negotiation, when one considers that the four areas the league claimed as their own were likely the four most important elements for the players as well. Who is the league, to grab the major tenets of a new CBA and label them "nonnegotiable?" Then complain that the NHLPA is inflexible?

The players, of course, share plenty of the blame here. If you've read this space in recent months, you know we're pretty much disgusted with both sides of this mess.

But after completely rolling over in 2004-05 — yes, we know, it turned out better than anybody thought for the players — it is imperative for the NHLPA that their union is not seen to be completely giving in again.

In short, it has been our opinion through this Christmas break that if the league moved 30% of the way towards a settlement, the players would fall over themselves covering the final 70% of the ground.

The owners have never wanted to lose an entire season over this, even knowing that they will make their losses back through the life of a more favourable CBA. Players, we believe, are desperate to play. They know better than anyone that every dollar lost is irretrievable on their side; that every paycheque today's player misses will be made up by a future player who might only be in bantam today.

So now we dance the dance again.

The NHL will 'fess up that, yes, it made the NHLPA a new offer. But this is a final, nonnegotiable one, Bettman will promise. "There are many owners who are upset we've gone this far," the league sources will leak, predictably.

Fehr will assess the offer, and in his 3 pm ET conference call with players, he'll tell them how little the league has really moved. How this is a sign that Bettman is not allowed to lose a season, and as such, the time for serious negotiation has arrived.

Fehr will come back at the league asking for much more, and in the coming days the league will make him out to be a jackal that really doesn't want hockey to be played at all. "We're negotiating against ourselves here," they'll claim, in all seriousness.

In the end, the NHL will tweak a few things (perhaps shaving a year off the term of the new CBA to nine years, with a seven-year opener), and the players will cover more than half the ground that lay between the two parties before this latest offer.

Then they'll start buttering up you, the fan, for the return of the game.

And if you think these guys have been slick thus far, wait until they start wooing you, the disgruntled, trod-upon hockey lover.

That, folks, will be priceless.

Mark Spector is the senior columnist on sportsnet.ca

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