

April 27, 2012

Written by Jeff Angus

Thursday, 26 April 2012 21:21 - Last Updated Friday, 27 April 2012 15:28

Forum will be offline briefly. The big "forum merge" is about to go down.

Zidlicky and Andy Greene were the only Devils over 30 minutes (the game went to double OT).

Adam Henrique scored his first two goals of the series, including the winner.

Florida absolutely crushed New Jersey on faceoffs, but that didn't make the difference last night. Smithson and Goc were a combined 32 wins and 11 losses in the circle.

Tomas Fleischmann played the series with a broken hand - impressive stuff. I thought he looked pretty good for much of the series, too.

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Stephen Weiss had a phenomenal game - he scored a goal and played close to 30 minutes. Also fired six shots on goal.

Mike Weaver led the Panthers with 10 hits.

Brian Campbell was one shift shy of hitting the 40-minute mark.

[Derek Stepan](#) has been arguably the best Ranger forward over the past few games. Encouraging sign as they now move on to the stingy Capitals squad.

The DobberHockey panel selections for Round 2 will be up at some point early Friday evening.

[Henrik Lundqvist](#) was a difference-maker for the Rangers last night. For all of his regular season successes, he hasn't done it in the playoffs... yet. Last night was a huge step in the

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right direction.

Full marks to the Sens – many had them pegged as 14th or 15th in the East. Great coaching, great goaltending, and some standout performances from

[Erik Karlsson](#)

and

[Jason Spezza](#)

propelled them to a very evenly played seven game series against the best team in the Eastern Conference.

[Eddie Lack](#) may be ready for the NHL, but current teammate in Chicago, [Nolan Baumgartner](#) , [believes he is a year or two away.](#)

““He’s probably a year or possibly two away,” said the 36-year-old UFA blueliner who would like to return to the organization next season. “He still has some learning to do and there’s no better place than the AHL. To go and back up somebody, I think it would be detrimental for him to be sitting on the bench most of the year and not get in games. He’s got the skill set, it’s just the maturity and learning how to be a pro and he’ll be set after that.”

The [Roberto Luongo](#) situation is an interesting one, and it definitely deserves its own column. I hope I’ll get around to writing one in due time. Until then, I’ll ramble on my thoughts regarding

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prospective destinations:

Tampa Bay – the Lightning make the most sense. They need a goalie, Luongo would love to play in Florida, and there is the connection with Yzerman because of the Olympics. Luongo likely wouldn't fetch a huge return (I laughed at [Victor Hedman](#)'s name being tossed around on TV). I'd guess either [Ryan Malone](#) or a prospect like [Brett Connolly](#) would be coming to Vancouver.

Florida – [Jacob Markstrom](#) is the goalie of the future, but is he ready now? Even if he isn't, the Panthers are probably better off going with a stop gap like [Jose Theodore](#) for another season until Markstrom is ready. Luongo will be playing for at least six more seasons.

Toronto – the media pressure in Vancouver isn't why he wants out, it is because he sees that Schneider stole his starting gig. Toronto has Dave Nonis, who originally stole Luongo from Florida back in 2006. The Leafs have a clear need for a goalie, but like Florida, do they want more of a stop gap? Do they still believe [James Reimer](#) is the goalie of the future? How about [Tim Thomas](#) to Toronto?

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Chicago – hilarity aside, this actually makes some sense (provided Chicago moves salary out). The Hawks need stability in goal, and they won't get that from a [Corey Crawford](#) and [Ray Emery](#) duo. I can't imagine Luongo wanting to listen to Chelsea Dagger 100+ times, though....

Any other teams that could be interested in him? I didn't bother mentioning Columbus – don't see Luongo wanting any part of that mess.

I'm taking Nashville over Phoenix for one major reason – Alex Radulov. Both clubs have elite goalies, solid defensive groups (not counting [Derek Morris](#)), and a slew of two-way forwards. Radulov is the only elite forward in the series (apologies to [Radim Vrbata](#)). I think he swings this one in Nashville's favor.

LA/St. Louis may not be the most offensive series, but it will be an interesting one. The two teams are very similar – big forwards who aggressively forecheck – mobile defensemen combined with defensive bruisers, and athletic and elite goaltenders in [Brian Elliott](#) and [Jonathan Quick](#). If [Jeff Carter](#) gets over the injury that made him invisible against the Canucks, the Kings could make a series out of this. The Blues have more depth, but [Jonathan Quick](#) is capable of stealing a few games. Haven't decided on this one just yet.

Do black colored jerseys lead to more penalties? [A somewhat relevant study...](#)

"The NHL has conducted similar research in the past and the results were inconclusive, specifically because teams primarily wore darker jerseys on the road -- where road teams will generally get called for more penalties anyways. With the rule changes in 2003 leading to more home teams wearing the darker jersey (and some teams, like the Stars, wearing black) researchers were able to conduct a better experiment that tied penalties to actual jersey instead of home and away team.

The results, compiled from researching 52,098 games from the last 25 seasons, state that teams that wore black jerseys are penalized more often than teams that wore white. This isn't about "darker" jerseys -- this is about teams that wear black."

To say that [Nino Niederreiter](#) had a disappointing season would be about as severe an understatement as you could make. The former 1st round pick had one goal and zero assists in 55 games on Long Island. Lighthouse Hockey has an [interesting read](#) on Niederreiter, and player development in general:

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"What happens next year with Nino? He could head to Bridgeport of the AHL, which he was ineligible to do this season, and get some seasoning there. He could stay on Long Island, play like a bull in a china shop and lead the Islanders to the playoffs with a mix of brute force and dazzling stick skills.

*Or he could average another eight minutes a game and score two goals, doubling his career totals. And the Islanders, through a mountain of incompetence, neglect and instability, could pulverize Niederreiter's will to play hockey and send him crying back to Lucerne to become a watchmaker or one of Lindt's **master chocolatiers**.*

*Whatever happens will be just the next episode in the story of **Nino Niederreiter's** career. I guess the good news is that It can't possibly be worse than the premiere. I hope."*

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Not exactly the most glowing praise.... but as a value investor in hockey pools, your “buy low” lights should be blinking out of control right now. Niederreiter had everything go wrong this past year. His value won't ever be lower. He may end up busting, or he may end up being a star in a European league. But only one year ago many were projecting him to score 20-25 goals as an NHL rookie. One bad season should help you form an opinion on a player, but it shouldn't be the “be all, end all” of evaluation.