

15 Prime Cuts: Schroeder, Kadri, realignment, and more

Written by Jeff Angus

Sunday, 10 February 2013 19:29 - Last Updated Monday, 11 February 2013 22:15



This week, I take a look at Alex Killorn, Joe Morrow, Jordan Schroeder's great play in Vancouver, Nazem Kadri's surprising physical presence, and more.

1. This season has been short on good news for Washington Capitals fans, but here is a little glimmer of hope for the future – top prospect Evgeni Kuznetsov [plans on coming over to the NHL after the Sochi Olympics.](#)

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"I promised to play for Washington after the Olympics," Kuznetsov said, as translated by RMNB's Fedor Fedin. "I want to play in [DC], but I'm playing for Traktor right now. I have a contract, and I will continue to fight with sweat and blood playing for such a great club."

When asked why he chose to stay in Russia during the summer, either because of the Olympics or money, Kuznetsov gave a very short answer. "I knew there was going to be an NHL lockout," Kuzya replied. "That's it."

If and when he does join the Caps, expect his impact to be both immediate and significant. It is a bit of a risk to own or trade for him right now as none of this is set in stone, but where's the fun in playing it safe all the time?

2. I love the way [Nazem Kadri](#) is playing this year. He isn't the biggest guy on the ice, but he is a lot stronger than he has been in previous years, and he loves to throw his weight around.

Here is a beauty of a hit he had on Montreal defenseman

[Alex](#)

[ei Emelin](#)

on Saturday night:

{youtube}4ovKvQqOhN0{/youtube}

3. Wayne Gretzky recently told reporters that [Henrik Zetterberg](#) has been his favorite NHL

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player to watch play over the last decade.

[Mike Babcock also heaps praise on his captain in this NHL.com column.](#)

"I think he's the best Swedish player they've ever put in the NHL," Gretzky told NHL.com.



4. [Jordan Schroeder](#) was sensational for the Canucks on Saturday night, and he is going to force the team into a tough decision when [Ryan Kesler](#) comes back (which doesn't seem to be any time soon, even though Kesler has been flying around at practice and has been seen hammering one-timers, too).

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Schroeder's strength allows him to play a strong two-way game at 5-8, and his smarts have allowed him to click on arguably the fastest line in hockey (between [Mason Raymond](#) and [Janrik Hansen](#)).

Right time and right place for his second of the night:

{youtube}UOgV7aSM8Vw{/youtube}

Kesler will be returning along with David Booth, and that duo should anchor the second scoring unit (with either Chris Higgins, Mason Raymond, or Zack Kassian on the other wing).

5. [Jarome Iginla](#) looked like was skating in quicksand on Saturday night. To be fair, he doesn't exactly have the best supporting cast around him, but is father time finally catching up to Iggy?

6. I mentioned a few weeks ago how during his time as a player agent, Canucks GM Mike Gillis paid attention to Detroit GM Ken Holland and his player development methods. Both clubs exercise extreme patience with regards to keeping talent in the AHL, and both teams have

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rookies and young players in prominent roles this season.

For the Canucks, Schroeder, [Zack Kassian](#), and [Chris Tanev](#) give the Canucks three important players all on cheap entry-level contracts, and for Detroit, they have been able to rely on the likes of [Brendan Smith](#) (who is out with a shoulder injury), [Jakub Kindl](#), Gustav Nyqvist, and [Tomas Tatar](#), among others. There is no downside to leaving a player in the AHL for a few extra months or even an extra season (especially compared to the downside of rushing a player to the NHL).

Detroit has had trouble breaking the puck out of their own zone this season (not really a huge surprise considering they lost Lidstrom and Brad Stuart in the summer), but for the most part they are still playing really good hockey. It helps when your top scorers are also elite defensive forwards, too.

7. [Sidney Crosby](#) shares his thoughts on player safety (among other issues) [in this candid interview with the Globe & Mail](#).

I'd recommend reading the entire thing, but if you don't feel like doing so, here is an interesting excerpt:

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"I care about hockey. I love the game. I felt like it wasn't doing anyone any good, especially all the fans, but also the game that we had grown over the last seven or eight years – it wasn't doing the game any good. So I felt like I needed to be vocal for that reason."

Crosby's longtime agent, Pat Brisson of Los Angeles, says that Crosby has always been acutely respectful of other players. When Crosby was a 16-year-old junior phenomenon with the Rimouski Océanic, he told Brisson to refuse the endorsement offers that flooded in after he signed with Reebok and Gatorade. He didn't want to go too far, too soon.

Brisson remembers Crosby telling him, "It's not right. I haven't even played in the NHL yet. What will NHLers think of me?"

8. Portland Winterhawks forward Nicolas Petan is playing his way into the 1st round of the 2013 NHL Draft. The Delta, BC native checks in at 5-9 and 170 pounds, [but he currently has 40 goals and 98 points through only 56 games.](#)

He's certainly had some talented players to learn from over the years in Portland:

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As far as the draft goes, Petan has played second fiddle to Winterhawks teammate Seth Jones, who's considered the top draft-eligible prospect this year. The attention paid to Jones has brought some extra exposure for Petan, and scouts are raving about his improved speed and determination compared to last season.

"It was just about coming in after a hard-working summer and making that effort pay off," he said.

As a 16-year-old, Petan spent some time early in the season centring a line with Rattie and current Calgary Flames forward [Sven Baertschi](#) . But when the Winterhawks made some trades to acquire veterans, he found himself on the fourth line.

9. The NHL and NHLPA are [still discussing realignment](#) (which is as good as official from what I have heard). I don't believe the fine details have been hammered out yet, but I'd expect to see a situation where every team plays in every rink during a normal 82 game regular season. As someone who likes to follow the Canucks on the road, I am all for this if it means more California road trips!

10. I mentioned his name last week, but wanted to bring it up again – if you are in a relatively deep keeper league and want to add a prospect that will make an immediate impact in 2013-14, take a look at Minnesota's Jason Zucker. Zucker plays a game eerily similar to current Wild forward [Zach Parise](#) , and he currently has 41 points in 45 AHL games with Houston. Zucker

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may not have the offensive upside of Mikael Granlund or Charlie Coyle, but he should be a very good player in the NHL for a long time.

A big goal from earlier this season:

{youtube}A_aqezkXj_E{/youtube}

11. [Jonathan Cheechoo](#) was signed to an AHL contract with the OKC Barons a few weeks ago. He turns 33 this summer and has probably already had his last kick at the NHL can, but he has been very productive for the Barons. He has five goals and 12 points in only seven games. Even if he never comes back to the NHL, it is nice to see him finding success once again.

12. I will be unveiling my picks for the Sochi Olympics rosters in the coming weeks. I have enjoyed reading many of the rosters that various media members and hockey writers have been putting together. I'm just trying to figure out who to put with [Sidney Crosby](#) ? How does [Jamie Benn](#) on the left wing and [Steven Stamkos](#) on the right sound?

