Follow Notch's observations all week long at the Leaf's rookie tournament in Kitchener.

Thursday, September 10 @ 7 PM EST

Ottawa vs. Toronto

As I walked in it was obvious that this was the largest crowd in attendance all tourney. A Senators and Leafs matchup tends to bring out the masses to cheer on their favorite Ontario team.

Goalies:

I was hoping for a **Robin Lehner** vs. Jonas Gustavsson matchup in the pipes, but as I scanned the creases, it was only Lehner that I saw. James Reimer was in net for Toronto.

The game was fairly competitive for one period, and then the floodgates opened – or was that Reimer's five-hole? It was actually his glove side that was manipulated, but either way, it got abused. In the second period, after three straight shots went in the Toronto net, you could see in the posture, stance and movements of Reimer that he no longer wanted to be in the net. He got his wish to start the third period. Andrew Engelage took over for him. Obviously I can't say too many good things about Reimer and he will obviously need to work on his mental focus if he let things spiral out of control so quickly.

Lehner, although not tested much was his usual sharp self. Not only was he positionally sound, but also mentally strong. To see as few as shots as Lehner did in this game yet always seem to be into each and every play is something that only the successful goalies have in them. The shots that Lehner did see were of the quality scoring chance variety. Lehner let in one goal in each of the two games he played and both goals came late in the third period. That may be a

trend to watch and could counter my previous strong mental focus statement. Lehner can thank his play in the two games he started for his invite to the Sens main camp starting on September 15th.

For the second straight game, I have to mention **Eric Condra** next. He was the best player on the ice yet again for Ottawa. He potted two goals, picked up one assist and a handled himself pretty well in a fight – that usually stands out in most peoples eyes. Condra was one of the older players in the game at the ripe old age of 23 and having four full years of experience with the University Notre Dame. Condra has speed to burn and his quick release was evident today. His tenacity on the forecheck and desire to win battles will be another nice addition to Bingo. Unless Ottawa gets riddled with injuries, Condra should see himself lead Bingo in scoring. There is no room for him in Ottawa. That's too bad, he plays his heart out. A main camp invite he was given as a token of the Sens appreciation.

I haven't mentioned **Mike Hoffman** yet. I have to after this game. I have always noticed him on the PK getting in the lanes and working his butt off, but he showed a bit more in this affair. At even strength this game, he used his blazing speed many times to break in alone or create and odd man rush. He has all the tools to be a PK specialist, a checking-line forward with some scoring touch. Think Chris Kelly with speed and hands. Actually check that, think Antoine Vermette.

Jim O'Brien finally scored. He played a solid game. He was physical, a thorn in the Leafs side and chipped in with a couple points. He is back to being a perfect Mike Fisher clone. Heart and soul player that all Sens fans wish would score more often.

What can you expect if you are an undrafted player and then you are offered a tryout with an NHL team? Well, if you are **Brendon Svendsen** and spent your last season as an Alternate Captain for Bowling Green State University, all you can ask for is an opportunity. When you get it, you better make the most of it. Svendsen did just that. Although I didn't really notice Svendsen against Boston, he never quits on a play and has speed to burn. His PK play was stellar. I spoke with Brendon's agent after the game and he is happy with his play and even happier that he has fit in so well with the Senators organization. He insinuated that Brendon expects to start the year in Bingo. I can see that and would be shocked if anything different happens.

Jason Bailey sustained a mild concussion against Boston and did not play in this game either.

Fine, I will quickly mention **Erik Karlsson** again. Awesome. Welcome to the Ottawa Senators and thank you for being their PP Quarterback for years to come. I have no idea how you see the openings you do. Why do you feel the need to do a Denis Savard spin-o-rama to get away from a checker and then make a perfect pass to a wide open teammate for an easy tap in?

This game really was a mismatch and I could mention every Senator for something they did right.

Onto Toronto (for more on Toronto's prospects, see Stu McDonald's latest column) – I already touched on their starting goalie in Reimer. He should be happy about that as it is the only thing that touched him - it certainly wasn't the puck.

Viktor Stalberg was the best player for Toronto in the first period. He is fast, shifty, has great hands, vision and a nice wrist shot. Not only is he good with the puck, he works hard without it. I was shocked to see him finish every check and they weren't just little love taps either. He also battled in the corners and was willing to take a hit to make a play. That analysis was all after the first 20 minutes as he was easily the best player on the ice for either team after the first period. Problem is, he then disappeared. Other than Ottawa taking over the game in the second with five goals, I am not sure why he changed his play so drastically. Either way, I saw the good qualities of Martin Havlat-light in him.

Nazem Kadri played with emotion in the third period and started to hit anything with a Sens jersey on. He took penalties for it, but at least he tried. He seemed small, probably because he is, but he made up for size deficiencies with his effort.

Tyler Bozak seemed very afraid to go into the corners and if it wasn't for his goal in the third period on a quick release wrist shot in third period I would have nothing but negative things to say about him. His skating was below average and I do not know if his knee is 100 percent yet.

Christian Hanson – Was invisible which is hard to do for a big guy.

Now onto the good part. Dobber challenged me to talk to Senators GM Bryan Murray at some point. I can't pass up a challenge and hate losing at anything. All game I was keeping one eye on Murray. With one minute left in the third period I could see he was getting ready to leave his seat. He started getting all his papers together and was looking around. I raced from my seat and made my way over to his section. I waited in the tunnel one section over, where I spoke with a couple of agents for about five minutes. Murray finished up his conversation with a fan and started walking right towards me. I abruptly ended my session with the agents and approached Murray, introducing myself.

Notch: What are your expectations for Ryan Shannon this year?

Murray: Well, we expect him to be a good player for us, a key player. 20 goals would be a number we think he can and should achieve.

Notch: The line Shannon played on last year with Fisher and Foligno near the end of the season was one of your best. Would you like to see that line stay together this season?

Murray: That line was very productive for us, but this year's camp and Cory will decide what happens with line combinations. I always leave those decisions to the coach.

This is where I get a little to comfortable:

Notch: Yeah, I know it also depends on what happens with Heatley, if he stays, if he goes and what return you get for him if he goes. But, I am a member of a great hockey website called Dobberhockey.com and I know that a lot of Sens fans on there really like that Fisher, Foligno, Shannon line.

Murray: It was a good line for us. Nice to meet you.

Notch: Likewise. Thanks for your time.

Thanks for reading everybody. I hope all my updates helped a little bit.