My THN column yesterday focused on the most consistent players in the league this year. Including Kessel, Fleischmann and the Nuge. Also, here is my Puck Daddy piece.

For what it's worth, Kris Letang seems as though he is on the mend, but would need to be symptom free for a week before getting clearance. He's probably looking at 10 more days on the shelf, barring a setback (or something unreported).

Realignment! Per TSN

Conference 1

Boston, Buffalo, Florida, Montreal, Ottawa, Tampa Bay, Toronto

Conference 2

Carolina, New Jersey, NY Islanders, NY Rangers, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington

Conference 3

Chicago, Columbus, Dallas, Detroit, Minnesota, Nashville, St. Louis, Winnipeg

Conference 4

Anaheim, Calgary, Colorado, Edmonton, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Jose and Vancouver

Teams play outside their conference twice each team, and within their own conference five or six times each team. Top four teams in each Conference quality for the playoffs – 1 vs. 4, 2 vs. 3.

For what it's worth, I'm thrilled that they are going with four conferences instead of this six division stuff. Fairly happy with the process, although if I were in charge I would screw history and politics and go strictly by geography. That would mean moving the Florida teams into Conference 2, bumping the three New York teams up to Conf. 1, and swapping Colorado with Winnipeg (UPDATE - I take this last point back. Neglected to consider time zone difference between those two teams)

Boy did Matthew Barnaby really blow it. First the whole domestic dispute with his ex, and then he gets drunk and drives a car that was missing a tire. Now ESPN has fired him. I'm not a big fan of ex players becoming analysts anyway. There are exceptions – I think Nick Kypreos is

great, for example. Don Cherry, Kelly Hrudey are other good ones. The jury is still out on Aaron Ward. But definitely do not really get a whole lot from listening to Jamie McLennan and Mike Johnson. And I have no idea what PJ Stock's purpose is, don't even get me started. The point is, there has been an influx of ex players getting a shot, when meanwhile there are no doubt plenty of great broadcasting students or unknown radio analysts/commentators around the continent who could be great but we'll never know because these stations would rather give Tie Domi a 10-episode tryout. How many Elliotte Friedman's are out there waiting to be discovered?

Okay, back to fantasy hockey. Mikhail Grabovski missed the game because his wife is having another baby. Wasn't the last one just a year ago? Killing his owners, i.e. me in one league…and two babies that close together will really hurt the energy level (take it from me haha).

Michael Del Zotto was hammered into the boards towards the end of the game and was down for a long time. No word on the injury at this point, but I'm sure he'll miss some time.

Rich Peverley has quietly put together a four game points streak (six assists). His ice time was up over 20 minutes last night as the coach starts to really lean on him. Looking at the last three seasons, it would seem that his range is 41 to 55 points…and with the lack of PP time, and the depth of the Bruins, you would have to think that he would be on the lower or middle part of that range. But with his ice time, his performance in the postseason last year, his plus/minus, the prime of his career…man, this is a tough one. Where do you peg him? His pace is 57 points, which is a career high. I had him for 40 points in the fantasy guide, but now I would be surprised if he fails to reach 50.

Benoit Pouliot has three points in four games. He also saw a season high 14 minutes Monday. No, I don't recommend him, but it's something I'll be watching to see if anything has come of it by three games from now.

Tim Thomas stopped 45 of 46 shots. The win streak continues and the quest for back-to-back Vezinas continue.

Malkin had nine shots, Kennedy had eight. Malkin has just one point in three games (zero goals) despite 20 shots in that span. His 100 shots ties him for third in the league now – and he missed seven games.

Craig Anderson has three assists already. He's on pace for 10! Nice bonus in leagues that reward that (like mine).

Two more goals for Zack Smith – he's up to 15 points on the year now.

Dmitry Kulikov picked up another three points last night, quietly putting together a nice breakout season. He needed a power-player partner (Campbell) and quality players to pass the puck to on the PP (the big line). And now that he has those things, he's really flourishing.

Under his new/old coach Dale Hunter, John Carlson was up to 26 minutes of ice time yesterday and picked up three assists. He has four points in the four games now under Hunter. It was the second most ice time that he received all season and the past three games mark the most ice time he has seen in any three game span this year. Oh, and he had eight shots.

The Kings have shuffled the deck again. Here are the new lines: Gagne-Kopitar-Williams Brown-Stoll-Hunter Penner-Loktionov-Moreau Clifford-Fraser-Westgarth. . Poor Loktionov – set up to fail. Mike Richards did not skate.

JVR – back in practice and could be back for Wednesday's game.

Brenden Morrow " looks pretty good " for Thursday. And Alex Goligoski was also skating, but from what I read in that piece, I get the feeling that the points may not come in the first couple of weeks because the thumb is affecting his shot.

Interesting notes here about St. Louis – Colaiacovo is set to return, Brian Elliott will get the start and Vladimir Sobotka has been moved to center. Elliott is coming off his worst start of the season and he's playing a tough Detroit team. Hitchcock could be setting him up to fail here, and it's win-win for him – if Elliott gets the W, then obviously Hitch is happy. If he loses for the second time in a row, it justifies riding the Golden Boy (Halak) on a more consistent basis.

Update on Filppula – the cut on his leg was on the right shin and is not too serious. He may play tonight.

Rangers prospect Christian Thomas was named OHL player of the week.

I'm reading that Andrei Markov had successful knee surgery. Didn't I read that last time, too? If it was so successful, why is he having it again? Headline writers love throwing around the word "successful" even if the doctors can't measure the success or failure of the surgery until weeks later.

Here's a break for Matthias Tedenby owners – he is now replacing Dainius Zubrus on the Elias/Sykora line.

Phaneuf with the big hit!

{youtube}fRv1rDb9HVQ{/youtube}