

**December 18, 2011**

Written by Chris Nichols

Sunday, 18 December 2011 00:13 - Last Updated Sunday, 18 December 2011 13:44

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The Flyers say that Sean Couturier [stayed in a hospital](#) overnight for observation because the docs needed to check for possible skull fractures or internal bleeding. Claude Giroux has been moved to the IR to make room for Ben Holmstrom (not an indicator of anything new being serious if you're a Giroux owner, since it can be retroactive to Dec. 10). Paul Holmgren does say that both Giroux and Brayden Schenn are "probably not options for the short-term." Again, the team will rely heavily on Danny Briere now. The article notes Matt Read likely moves to centre now with Max Talbot still as the other pivot.

A few quick notes...

Mike Richards skated with the normal jersey in practice today - not the no-contact one. Several Kings' beat reporters indicated he looks fine out there too. Good to see. He was on such a roll before he got hurt and Darryl Sutter needs this guy asap.

Lightning send Evan Oberg down. Hawks have recalled Jeremy Morin.

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Mikael Backlund is back for the Flames tonight and it looks like he'll centre Blake Comeau and Lee Stempniak again. Brent Sutter says Backlund has to compete harder and show more emotion.

No timeline for Martin St. Louis' return, but it may not be as long as initially feared.

Adam Burish tells the coaching staff he's ready to go. Kari Lehtonen is also apparently feeling really good, although his return still likely won't come until after Christmas. Richard Bachman will get another start on Monday.

Tyler Seguin says a chat with Zdeno Chara on Friday helped give the youngster a boost before the Philly game.

PMB and Mikko Koivu practiced with the Wild today. Devin Setoguchi, Guillaume Latendresse and Casey Wellman did not.

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Sidney Crosby will be eligible as a UFA in the summer of 2013. Are the Pens wary because of the concussion issues? [No way, says Ray Shero](#) . He also offers thoughts on signing James Neal.

Tonight's my first chance to offer a few thoughts on 24/7 since this year's version debuted Wednesday, so read a little further down for a whole section on it.

Evgeni Malkin delivered another stellar performance Saturday, this time a five-pointer against the Sabres in an 8-3 shellacking. He has points in five straight and this was his fourth multi-pointer in that span. He has eight games of at least two points in his past 13 starts. Dominant. The crowd was chanting, "Geno! Geno!" This was his fourth career five-point outing.

Matt Niskanen has points in six of seven and he's taking full advantage of the injury to Kris Letang with oddles of power play time. At the rate Penguins are being injured, Simon Despres may be running PP1 by the New Year. Dan Bylsma said earlier today Letang is still not skating and that anything he might be doing at this point is still light. The wait continues.

It didn't get very much press coverage this week, but Teemu Selanne was back in Winnipeg tonight. #drippingsarcasm No need to go too in-depth here, but just enjoy every last game we get to see him play. Same goes for Nicklas Lidstrom. The home crowd was eating it up tonight and they got a nice win to boot. Selanne called it a dream come true to get a chance to play in the 'Peg one more time. I distinctly remember Selanne obliterating Mike Bossy's rookie goals record because I was a huge Bossy fan growing up. I was not a happy camper at that point.

Bryan Little, who has been so hot on that line with Evander Kane and Blake Wheeler, left with an upper-body injury. I saw both Alexander Burmistrov and Nik Antropov fill the L1 C role after

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that flipping around the games this evening.

Tobias Enstrom made his way back to good health after recovering from his broken collarbone and he jumped right into the scoring summary tonight, playing the power play point and at regular strength with Dustin Byfuglien, his normal partner, and making poolie dreams come true in time for Christmas.

Niklas Hagman has five points in his past four games after potting a goal here. Not everyone has been able to take advantage of playing with Ryan Getzlaf and Corey Perry over the years when it hasn't been Bobby Ryan, but in the short term Hagman has been able to get the job done.

Erik Johnson had 1G, 1A tonight and has points in three in a row. Start of something, or grasping at straws? I still think he can salvage this season for single-season owners, but it always depends on how good your free agent options are. He's still a tremendous buy-low option in deeper keeper leagues, IMO.

Following his 1-0 shutout over the Jets the other night, Michal Neuvirth stopped 26 of 28 for the Caps tonight in a 2-1 loss to the Avs. After the game: "Obviously that first goal was horrible, I lost it in the crowd. And just the one goal, it's hard to win." The Caps are 4-5 under Dale Hunter.

Mason Raymond has six points in seven games since making his season debut and given how long that injury layoff was, that's quite impressive. It was Cody Hodgson and Maxim Lapierre opening on his line tonight. Normally you need to lower your expectations in those situations when a player hasn't been active for so long, but his effort and his great situation with the Canucks have lent themselves to good results so far.

T.J. Oshie has 16 points in his past 20 games since the start of November, so his overall total of 21 points in 31 games undersells his current value. He has Alex Steen and David Backes on his line in St. Louis.

Kings' beat reporter Helene Elliott had this from Dustin Brown after tonight's 8-2 beating at the hands of Detroit: "We got our asses kicked. And there's really no excuse. It's time for everyone in this room to wake up. Guys have got to take responsibility in here because it doesn't matter whether Stevens is our coach or whoever they're bringing in. It doesn't make a difference who the coach is. It's going to be the players that play the games and it's going to be the players that need to take responsibility."

If you're a fan of the Kings, you should be elated that the Darryl Sutter hire is finally official. He'll take over behind the bench Tuesday and, IMO, he's exactly what this team needs to get out of neutral (more like reverse tonight) and start climbing not only back into a playoff position, but also begin its ascent back to challenging for a higher playoff seeding and attempting to secure first place in the Pacific division. The West is so tight anyway and they're not far out of anything, by any means, but this roster should clearly be faring much better than they are. You never know how quickly a coach can turn things around, but by the time the All-Star break is over next month – if not sooner - I'd expect the Kings to be ready for a really nice hot streak. Love me some Sutter coaching.

Todd Bertuzzi and Jiri Hudler, winging it with Pavel Datsyuk and Henrik Zetterberg respectively, continued their hot streaks tonight. Bertuzzi has 10 points in his past 11 games with a +8 rating and no minus games in that stretch. Hudler has eight points in his past six starts.

Mike Milbury tells [his side of the story](#) .

Brad Richards scored with 0.1 seconds left in the third to give the Rangers a 3-2 over Phoenix. Of more interest to fantasy owners might be that blueliner Michael Del Zotto, who regularly sees as much power play time as he can handle, is up to 10 points in his past 10 affairs.

Another shutout for Tim Thomas. Yawn. Zdeno Chara was back in the line-up for the Bruins in a rough and tumble affair which cost the Flyers – already down one Claude Giroux - Sean Couturier, who was struck in the back of the head by a Kimmo Timonen shot. The offensive burden and opportunities on centre Danny Briere are increased now, but he thrives under the pressure.

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Jacques Martin is out in Montreal. Randy Cunneyworth is in and he was behind the bench tonight against the Devils for his NHL coaching debut in a 5-3 loss. Pierre Gauthier mentioned the injuries and adversity Martin had to deal with, but he said the team's consistency – or lack thereof – was a real concern. Cunneyworth, to CBC, before the game: "Each player has to provide more in terms of delivering work for the team." He also talked about needing to utilize the team's speed to become as dangerous as they should be.

As Tomas Kaberle pushed his point streak to six games tonight, with his dramatic seasonal turnaround continuing, P.K. Subban quietly has points in three in a row. Coaching change or not, ideally Kaberle's acquisition can continue to provide an offensive spark for Subban and his frustrated poolies.

Also from that game, Kurtis Foster picked up his first two points with the Devils and he saw big PP minutes again. That's exactly why he was acquired from the Ducks and with a regular role there, there's no reason why he shouldn't be able to thrive as a depth addition on most poolies rosters.

Jeff covered the Turris/ Rundblad trade earlier today, but I just wanted to add a few things that'll hopefully be of interest to you...

From Bryan Murray's presser Saturday afternoon: He felt David Rundblad was going to get shuffled aside for the balance of this season, given the puck-movers who are already on the

team. Said Rundblad might make his mark with the Sens next year or several years down the line. Kyle Turris, on the other hand, is a top six asset who can come in and hopefully contribute right away as the second line centre. It's tough to see the Sens part with such a nice offensive talent like Rundblad, but as Murray said... pieces in the top six cost. This should be exactly what Turris needs to get his career going and whether we see immediate dividends or not in fantasy, this trade absolutely helps his keeper poolie value moving forward. Considering he had no points in his only six starts to date and that he'll be given a consistent chance to succeed right off the bat in Ottawa, his single-season value can only go up from here anyway.

I heard a bit of audio from Rundblad himself from the Coyotes' web site. He talked about how he's looking forward to using his power play skills, but also continuing to round his overall game. He says he's been getting used to the smaller North American rinks and how much quicker the game is. Rundblad says it'll be good to see Oliver Ekman-Larsson again. Also talks about Nicklas Lidstrom is the greatest Swedish player ever.

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This afternoon I sat down to watch 24/7: Flyers/ Rangers for the second time and... wow. Just wow. As was the case with last season's edition, the cinematography is just so beautiful. The storytelling ability of HBO for any sport has been breathtaking over the years, but when it's the pastime we love so much it makes an even bigger impact for the viewer. There were so many high points of the first episode, but for me what really rung true was the humanity that not only do we as fans occasionally forget about as daily outside observers... but also don't generally have the privilege of seeing from our positions.

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Everything out of Ilya Bryzgalov's mouth was pure gold. 12 kinds of awesome. He's a character, as we already knew, but he's also a really thoughtful guy. Introspective.

Max Talbot's hallway encounter with Dan Byslma... very cool. The moment Talbot found out from Peter Laviolette in the dressing room before the game that his line would be starting against his former team ("May as well get right into it Max, huh?") and to see Talbot's reaction to it and those of his teammates? Extraordinary. He's an eight-year pro and yet that smile at that moment... so great.

The Flyers post-game win ritual of dancing to Mac Miller? Tough not to grin while watching that display.

As only HBO can do it, John Tortorella's thoughts on team bonding ("You go through circumstances together... some winning, some losing, some situations in the room...") are melded seamlessly into Artem Anisimov's heartfelt apology to his teammates following the Tampa Bay goal scoring celebration. I mean, that's epic television right there. Un-freaking-real.

We get to see how teammates always stand up for each other on the ice and in the press, but to be able to see those same sentiments behind the scenes in the locker room? Incredible. The look Sean Avery – who knows a thing or two... or 600.. about stupidity landing someone in the

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dog house – gave Anisimov walking back into the room for the intermission was absolutely priceless.

The pride in Ryan Callahan's parents. Where and how his blue collar roots were grounded.

“My dad always told me no matter what you do, if it's yard work or out on the ice, you do it 110% and you give it all you have and that's something I take a lot of pride in and something that was just brought to me by my parents.”

The way his dad choked up talking about Ryan's captaincy. Man. The touching post-game moment with his 95-year old grandma really hit home with me too.

If you haven't seen this series yet, it's a MUST. Don't have HBO? Get it for a month. Or wait until the last episode airs and then get it for a day and watch them all consecutively on-demand. Or go to a friend's house who has it. Do what you have to do.

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Block off an hour each week. Turn off your phone. Sit back. Relax. Soak it all in.

HBO has done it again.

Should you be so inclined, you can [follow me on Twitter](#) .