

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

Happy early St. Patrick's Day to all those real Irish people out there (as well as the rest of you). May your beers be cold and never ending! Ramblings up early on Friday evening - will update throughout Saturday morning from last night's action.

Wish I was in Winnipeg last night (you don't hear that every day). Apparently the Jets fans were giving it to Ovechkin pretty good all game. They were rewarded with a win, too. With every Washington loss we are seeing the importance of Backstrom to that team. No one can come close to doing what he does on the ice.

Blake "Superstar" Wheeler had a point and four shots on goal.

Byfuglien is quietly (at least to me) having a great statistical season - two more points last night, and nine shots on goal.

Pavel Datsyuk is back for the Wings tonight, but Franzen is out (back spasms).

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

Josh Gorges blocked 10 shots last night. More saves than some goalies make in a period. Wow!

Kuba scored the OT winner. He's been a rock most of the season for Ottawa - a big turnaround from a player the Sens couldn't give away for free a few years ago. He'll break the 30 point barrier this season, too.

The Northeast Division-leading Ottawa Senators (wait, what?) beat Montreal in OT last night to leap past Boston in the standings.

The Oilers/Flames game was a good one last night. Caught most of it. Eberle and Nugent-Hopkins were sensational.

Where would you rank Eberle among all forwards right now? Top 10? 15? The kid is amazing. 31 goals now, outside shot for 40 on an awful hockey team. Imagine how good he'll be once Edmonton has some defensemen on their roster. He's going to contend for a few Art Ross

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

trophies in his career...

Nugent-Hopkins had two goals and six shots last night. Like Eberle, he's only scratching the surface. Of the three Edmonton youngsters, I'd take him first, Eberle second, and Hall third. Nothing against Hall, but he doesn't have the hockey sense of the other two, and he plays a reckless style of hockey that may lead to a few injuries.

Jeff Skinner has been [suspended](#) for two games.

Cory Schneider is getting the nod for the Canucks tonight (Saturday). Wouldn't at all surprise me to see the team run with him for a bit if he plays really well.

Jaden Schwartz, who will 100% be on my top 10 fantasy prospect forwards list coming out in a few weeks, makes his NHL debut tonight (Saturday). Has 90 point upside – gritty, skilled, tenacious winger. Hey, sounds a lot like a current Devil, no?

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

Schwartz will skate on the Blues second unit with Langenbrunner and Berglund.

The Ducks have numerous young forwards who are very close to making the leap to the NHL.

[Here](#)

is a very thorough breakdown of them.

Palmieri:

"His confidence continues to grow, his speed is impressive, and he has an underrated shot. He could fit as a top-six scorer or a bottom-six checker, and it seems to be up to him which role he plays as he is capable of doing both."

Peter Holland:

"Holland is a pretty big centre, which is always a hot commodity, but he has shown in the past to be a little soft, and lacking in grit. Scouts saw him as a player with huge talent, but without the

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

know-how and consistency to use it to his advantage. After a couple of exceptional seasons with the Guelph Storm, and with 49 points in 58 games this year as a member of the Syracuse Crunch, he is becoming very attractive as a call-up next year."

Etem:

"Etem is likely to spend time developing for a while yet, but his exceptional speed, and consistently impressive defensive game are undeniable assets that he already possesses. He is showing some off-the-charts potential as a top six forward, and a premier penalty killer, for the Ducks in the future."

[Detroit is struggling without Lidstrom right now](#) – is this a sign of things to come once he retires?

"If this is what life without the future Hall Of Famer is going to look like, it's no wonder that general manager Ken Holland's off-season priority will be to coax Lidstrom into playing again next year, which would be his 21st season in the NHL. Lidstrom will miss his ninth consecutive

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

game Saturday, the longest period of time he's ever been out of the line-up in his remarkable career."

Put me in the camp that says this isn't a sign of things to come.. The Wings have a ridiculous amount of cap space – obviously you can't replace Lidstrom, but you can do a damn close job with a player like Suter, who is in his prime, and prospects like Kindl and Brendan Smith.

DobberBaseball writer Fred Poulin takes a look at [the magic fourth-year breakout](#) over on the Hockey Writers. Poulin does a great job breaking down the production of a few of the best young players in the league. Statistically, it is hard to argue with this strategy (obviously to be accurate you'd have to analyze every single player), and it also reinforces why you should never overrate prospects.

Do you really want to wait four years to win? For guys like Stamkos it is obviously worth it, but many times you just end up in a situation where you are chasing your tail by perpetually rebuilding.

Andy McDonald is out for a few weeks with his shoulder injury. Big blow to the NHL-leading Blues, but it could have been worse. He'll be back in time to get some games in before the playoffs start.

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

The other half of the OHL coaches poll – [the Western Conference](#) – Ryan Murphy (my 3rd best defensive keeper) wins best skater and second best stick handler.

[Marcus Foligno is off to a great start](#) with the Sabres.

Islanders prospect [Brock Nelson is having a great season](#) in the NCAA. He projects as a gritty, two-way center, but like Casey Cizakas, there may be more offense there than many think.

"Said his coach, Dave Hakstol:

"He's very much a complete hockey player," Hakstol said. "That's probably the thing I like the

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

most about him. He plays hard for his teammates every night." [...] "He's deceiving, that's the best way to put it," Hakstol said. "He gets the puck off his tape quickly. He can do it in traffic. He's found a lot of different ways to score goals and to help our team win."

"The Zack Kassian trade came as a shock to most, but the reason Buffalo felt comfortable dealing Kassian was Marcus Foligno. The young rookie has showed energy and determination and willingness to bang some bodies around (something Kassian wouldn't do in Buffalo.)"

[Quebecor is serious about acquiring an NHL club](#) . I have been to Quebec City before and had a great time – beautiful city that deserves NHL hockey again. They just need to get a new arena up.

" Quebecor closed a 25-year, \$33 million naming-rights and management deal for a state-of-the-art arena that's scheduled for completion in 2015. The value of the agreement rises to \$63.5 million if Quebec City lands an NHL franchise.

Construction of the publicly financed arena would be the first step towards the return of NHL

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

hockey to the provincial capital. The Quebec Nordiques left for Denver to become the Colorado Avalanche in 1995.

Quebecor president and CEO Pierre Karl Peladeau has made it clear he would be interested in buying a team. The company undertook a major expansion of its sports holdings in 2011. Quebecor launched TVA Sports, a French-language specialty channel that would be the lead broadcaster for a future NHL property.”

More NHL expansion talk – the Winnipeg ownership team [has some advice](#) for those in Saskatoon who want to acquire their own team.

““We started the conversation in 2001 when we made our interest known, but it wasn't until 2007 that we were invited to make a presentation to the league,” says Chipman, who is the Winnipeg Jets' co-owner. “Then there was four years of being very patient and working on the project quietly. You might, similarly, have to be that patient (in Saskatchewan). These things don't just happen overnight.”

But Chipman — who spearheaded the NHL's return to Winnipeg — says he believes the league can succeed in Saskatoon, as long as the prospective ownership group spreads its geographic reach outside city borders and across the province.

St. Patrick's Day

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 16 March 2012 19:15 - Last Updated Saturday, 17 March 2012 11:24

Isolation, he says, won't work. "I don't think about it in terms of Saskatoon. I think about it in terms of the overall Saskatchewan market," Chipman said Thursday from Winnipeg."

Happy St. Patrick's Day:

{youtube}TOZHwWFjb30{/youtube}

Taylor Hall got absolutely leveled - lost his balance on this one:

{youtube}wttzK-Q_Frk{/youtube}