BREAKING: Alexander Radulov has reportedly reached an agreement (note - link updated again at 9am ET) with his KHL club to be released from the contract there. Barry Trotz: “I don’t expect him to play against the Edmonton Oilers (Tuesday) but I’d like to him in Pittsburgh (Thursday).” I’m going to break down the implications of this massive fantasy hockey news **before 1:30pm ET**
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Correction on the below - it is PETE HADLEY who is leading the Experts League, not John Ireton. I mixed him up with another strong fantasy player who fell ju-u-ust short last year of winning the Experts League. But Hadley is the guy who has won his way up the ladder and is now beating the experts!

This got buried pretty quickly, but it's a good read - Chris Nicholls on the importance of paying attention down the stretch, even if your team is out of it.

So I wrote this ramble on the Leafs and Brian Burke, and how some of the media talking heads figure he’s had enough time with this project. But then it turned into a full-blown article, so I here is my piece on Brian Burke and the state of the Maple Leafs
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I fired off a $100 check to Hockey Fights Cancer , as a result of losing a bet to B. Kerr of Last Word On Sports
. Kerr was upset in September when I said that Erik Cole would never get 50 points again. Uh, oops? Cole has reached that number already. But can I say I lose a bet if the cash goes to support the fight against cancer? It was win-win. You can donate as well by following the HFC link above.

Here is Sunday morning's Studs and Duds piece.

I committed a cardinal sin in fantasy hockey on Friday. The Expert's League roster deadline of noon was missed by 13 minutes. It being my fourth league and the fact that I was sick much of last week contributed. But my team I thought had been stuck battling for sixth/seventh has surged up to third place in just one week. So missing the deadline was stupid to say the least. The resurgence was due to Ilya Bryzgalov and Danny Briere finally showing up. By the way, ahead of me is Ryan Ma at 101 points, and John Ireton **Pete Hadley (sorry Pete for the mix-up)** – the fellow I warned you about – at 102 points. Ireton moved up from the Entry Tier two years ago, and graduated by winning the Pro Tier last year. Now he's winning the Experts Tier. If he wins, I'll do what I can to convince him to give us all some tips, because clearly he's the best of the best. You don't win that often by accident.

Chris Nicholls made a great point yesterday – Mikhail Grabovski's jersey not being tied down Saturday could have won some H2H battles for the week. It gave him 25 PIM on a cheesy oversight (why would Grabovski want to tie down his jersey?). Nicholls says "get PIM as a positive stat the hell out of fantasy". And I wholeheartedly agree. In fact, I'll consider changing the 3-Tiered Invitational next year to include Hits instead of PIM. What better way to force

myself to get more accustomed to hits then to put them into my league and lead by example?

Too subjective, by home arena? No more subjective than PIM by referee. Or 20 PIM for a small, skill guy not tying down his jersey. What's more fluke/subjective?

The Ducks have signed goaltender John Gibson to an ELC. We won't be seeing him next year or the year after, but with a contract in his back pocket now, he can focus on getting even more on their radar.

I really enjoyed Puck Daddy's take on the NHL's latest marketing campaign " Because it's the Cup ".

The 10 Hobey Baker nominees are: Justin Schultz (ANA), Spencer Abbott (undrafted, unsigned), Jack Connolly (undrafted, unsigned), Brian Dumoulin (CAR), Troy Grosenick (undrafted, unsigned), Shawn Hunwick (undrafted, unsigned), Tim Kirby (undrafted, unsigned), Torey Krug (undrafted, unsigned), Austin Smith (DAL), Reilly Smith (DAL). Many of the undrafted players noted above were mentioned in the Midseason Guide.

Nathan Gerbe has been out with a UBI. While I truly believe that he takes the next step next season (I've been saying 2012-13 ever since he exploded on the fantasy scene four years ago), I'm now quite convinced that he's a Band-Aid Boy. He's a tough little guy, and in great shape, so there's hope. But at this point, I'm thinking 0.75 points-per-game but only 65 games played for 2012-13. That's a 60-point full season, but the games missed would cut that down to 49. In using the Martin St. Louis comparison – when St. Louis was 26 he had just finished 40 points in 78 games. He then had 35 in 58, or a 0.66 points-per-game average, indicating what's to come. That's where Gerbe will be at next year at age 25. If the comparable holds, then he'd be a 65-plus player in 2013-14 if he can stay healthy.

So much for Dustin Tokarski. I felt that he had a real chance to string together some wins, but he's gone 1-2-0 and the team would rather put him in the AHL than risk ruining his development by keeping in this situation too early. So the team signed Sebastien Caron (remember him?). He'll push Tokarski to the minors, and you'll see him get some starts. It's okay if TB ruins Caron's confidence, since they don't have a stake in his future. The move makes sense, and time is short – they don't have time to see if Tokarski can get things going in the next game or two.

With six points in his last seven games, Daniel Briere is starting to ramp himself up for the playoffs. I have little doubt that he'll get a point-per-game there.

In three games since returning, Kris Letang has three points and is plus-6 with 14 shots. One of these years he's going to stay healthy. Then Erik Karlsson will have some competition. But only if that 'healthy' year happens while Crosby and Malkin are still around.

If it wasn't clear before, it's certainly clear now – Ilya Bryzgalov is a product of his team's system and the defensemen around him. The Flyers get Grossmann and 'voila' Bryzgalov is a superstar goalie again. In 10 games since the deadline he has lost once, has four shutouts and has allowed three goals in a game just once.

Evgeni Malkin has a four-point lead over Steven Stamkos and they each have 11 games remaining. Claude Giroux is tied with Stamkos, but he only has 10 games remaining. Tight!

David Backes blocked a shot with his foot on Saturday, but there is good news – there is no fracture and he'll be traveling with the team. He may miss a game or two, but it sounds as though he won't miss much time beyond that. Meanwhile, same article , Alex Steen (concussion) is probably going to be in the lineup within the next couple of games. He is joining the Blues on their trip.

Here is a waiver pickup for you – Antti Miettinen. Notorious for being streaky, he has points in each of his last three games (four in all). That's half of his production for the entire year right there.

There is some chatter about Steve Mason not knowing that – all this time – he could have been wearing bigger pads. He had a great game Sunday, and five of his last six outings were quite

strong. Has he turned the corner? He's worth picking up if you're desperate for goaltending, and most of you are. With Sanford injured last night (and reportedly in crutches), it looks like Mason will get most starts going forward.

Keith Aucoin had eight points in the last 10 games that he has played and it seems as though every time I look at the Washington summaries he's in there these days. He played a season high 16:41 Sunday.

Crosby to Malkin:

{youtube}ZTZKgJ70oHc{/youtube}

Ovechkin with a beauty – watch the second replay – between his legs to beat Keith!

{youtube}kc-nEk-FE18{/youtube}