

April 13, 2012

Written by Jeff Angus

Thursday, 12 April 2012 22:30 - Last Updated Friday, 13 April 2012 13:10

Daniel Sedin skated today before practice. Likely out tonight.

Keith Ballard draws in for Aaron Rome, and Andrew Ebbett will play for the suspended Byron Bitz.

[Antoine Vermette](#) was dangerous all night – he scored a goal in about 19 minutes of ice time. An underrated deadline pick up. May not be worth his contract, but he is a solid two-way player.

[Jonathan Toews](#) showed no signs of rust, recording two points in 25 minutes of ice time (OT included).

Raffi Torres was a one-man wrecking crew against Chicago last night - some things haven't changed from last year.

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Martin Hanzal also had a great game. He logged some tough minutes, threw eight hits, and scored the OT winner.

Corey Crawford was good, but Mike Smith was great. He carried on his stellar play from the end of the regular season.

My latest for the Canucks Army is now up on CanucksArmy.com. Four keys to Game 2 tonight. An excerpt:

"The Canucks did a great job this season of dispelling the notion that they are a group of divers. Max Lapierre dropped the gloves with regularity, and the team avoided any fines or suspensions from the league. However, the diving and embellishment that was so prominent last playoff run unfortunately appeared all too often on Wednesday. Not only is Ryan Kesler never going to get a call in his favor ever again, but if he keeps snapping his head back on contact he is going to give himself a concussion.

Beyond the flopping, the team needs to stop trying to intimidate the opposition. They did so well this season getting back to their skating and skill game – the lack of composure on Wednesday is a little bit troubling."

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[Braden Holtby](#) almost stole game one for the Caps – Washington was thoroughly outshot and outplayed (and outhit) by the dominant Bruins. [Chris Kelly](#) scored the only goal of the game in the first OT period.

Happy Friday the 13th!

[Tyler Seguin](#) led the B's with five shots on goal. [Rich Peverley](#) was second with four – both of them saw lots of PP time.

[Martin Havlat](#) not only made it through the entire game without getting injured, he also scored two of San Jose's three goals.

As many predicted, the series is going to come down to St. Louis using their depth against San Jose's top end talent.

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[Patrick Marleau](#) played just about the quietest 25 minute contest imaginable.

[Patrik Berglund](#) scored both St. Louis goals.

Most interesting stat of the night – defenseman [Kevin Shattenkirk](#) had 11 shots on goal.

I was the only DobberHockey writer to pick the Panthers in round one. All of the statistics and numbers favor the Devils. I like the way this Florida team is constructed. Speed, tenacity, and depth. They have a lot of mobility on the back end, too. It isn't the sexy series, but the hockey will be really good. The Devils are actually a pretty fun team to watch (unfortunately, not many people do).

The CHL playoffs continue on – I wish I got to follow these more. I followed the Vancouver Giants quite closely a few years ago, but I unfortunately don't have time to do that right now (and they were eliminated a few weeks ago). CHL hockey is fantastic, especially when the pressure is ratcheted up.

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The Saint John Sea Dogs have won their eight playoff games by a combined 63-18 score. Charlie Coyle, [Zack Phillips](#) , [Stanislav Galiev](#) , [Jonathan Huberdeau](#) , [Nathan Beaulieu](#) – the list goes on and on.

Portland star [Ty Rattie](#) left the game on Wednesday night with an injury after being slammed into the boards. Rattie is a Blues pick, and forms one-half of the dynamic duo for the Winterhawks, along with Calgary prospect [Sven Baertschi](#) .

[Darren Helm](#) is out for the rest of the playoffs with a lacerated forearm. There is some good news – no nerve damage, and the Wings are expecting him to be ready for camp in the fall. A big loss, though, as Helm has been great for Detroit in past playoff seasons, and depth is crucial at this time of year.

Gustav Nyqvist will likely draw in on a line with [Justin Abdelkader](#) and Cleary.

Thomas Drance offers his recap of the Kings/Canucks game one – [right here](#).

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“ Alex Edler was something of a goat because of a brain-dead giveaway that resulted in [Dustin Penner](#)'s late game-winner. It was a bad play, by a defenseman who is clearly not the team's best defensive option. That said, Edler had a strong game overall scoring a goal and helping the club to out-chance the Kings when he was on the ice. As good as Edler was for most of the game, however, you can't be making mistakes like that late in playoff games on the team's number one pairing. I'm already curious to see how long this series goes before Hamhuis and Bieksa are reunited. ”

[Emerson Etem](#) has signed a tryout contract with Anaheim's AHL affiliate in Syracuse – he tore apart the WHL this season, and it will be interesting to see how quickly he adjusts to the pro game.

The Oilers [plan on coming back](#) with a [Devan Dubnyk](#) and [Nikolai Khabibulin](#) combination to start next season (as of now, at least).

The lack of a suspension for [Shea Weber](#) is criminal. A brutal, vicious, violent head shot – not only a head shot, but Weber fully grabbed [Henrik](#)

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[Zetterberg](#)

's head and drove it into the glass. Colin Campbell's back, I guess.

Two games for [Byron Bitz](#) – fair suspension for a stupid and dangerous hit on LA's [Kyle Clifford](#)

Doesn't sound like Clifford is going to play tonight.

[Mile High Hockey takes a look](#) at the Joe Sacco extension. As I mentioned yesterday, there are some interesting fantasy ramifications to this move.

*"It is ironic that originally I was going to write a story today about **Peter Mueller** and how he might be ill-suited to a Top 6 role. I'm bumping that to next week, but it ties in nicely. Sacco's performance behind the bench is difficult to evaluate, in part because only ONE team has spent less money towards the cap than the Avalanche. One might argue that Sacco's .511 winning percentage with the roster he's been saddled with is a marvel. On the other hand, the **Nashville Predators** have spent just a shade more than the Avs, and they've been in the playoffs all three years.*

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*I simply don't know how to evaluate Joe Sacco, and almost every facet of his coaching seems to be at odds with each other. The Avs improved by 20 and 26 points during two of his years, and dropped by 33 points in the other. His handling of the goalies this year was masterful...but did he burn out **Craig Anderson** 3 years ago? (And don't even get me started on the goaltending last year). The defense is greatly improved. The defense is inconsistent. The Avs work hard. The Avs don't show up for big games. The PP is great. The PK is terrible. The offense has gone from great to terrible. Is Sacco squeezing all he can out of a limited roster, or does he shoulder some blame for the inconsistency?*

I don't have a clue, to be honest. But we know that Sacco will be behind the bench next year. I, for one, would love to see what he can do with a bonafide NHL roster. Until that happens, we really can't give Skipper Joe a fair evaluation. And no, I won't be holding my breath for that to happen."

Joe Nieuwendyk [offered his thoughts](#) on a variety of issues related to his Dallas Stars yesterday. Some takeaways:

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"Lites would also make it known that the Stars have the flexibility to actually spend in free agency, something that we've been hungry for the last few years but have never had the chance to actually enjoy.

"The good news is we have flexibility. You need cap room and flexibility to be successful, if you don't have you can't," said Lites. "The difference between this year and last year there now is a guy there that you can call and say we have an opportunity to sign this player to this contract and he can make a difference for us for ten years. That opportunity didn't exist before. That's in the unrestricted free agent market."

"On the prospects and what it's like seeing these guys finally in Austin:

It's really encouraging. Those of you that are knowledgeable about our system have been talking a lot about our Austin situation. Now that the players we have that are coming in are turning pro...I was just there last night watching them and it brings a smile to your face to see Alex Chiasson, the big body, flying down down the wing and scoring his first pro goal.

Jack Campbell, working his butt off backstopping them to victories the way he has early in his pro career. **Austin Smith**, up for the Hobey Baker this year. **Scott Glennie** has made some big strides. We have big Patrik Nemeth flying over to be a big bodied Swedish defenseman down there for us. It goes on and on.

Brenden Dillon

, who played the other night, it was the first time for Stars fans to really see him.

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The Stars are in a good spot. Not a great one, but a good one. They have a core in place – [Kari Lehtonen](#)

,
[Alex Goligoski](#)

,
[Trevor Daley](#)
, Benn, Eriksson, Ott, Ribeiro, and
[Michael Ryder](#)

. They have a new owner who seems more than willing to spend some money. They have sat on the sidelines over the past few years on deadline day and during free agency due to ownership issues – they lost

[Brad Richards](#)
because of it. A stable ownership foundation will have a massive trickle-down effect on the management, the coaching staff, and the players.

Slick play by Jeff Carter:

{youtube}OKqDW4iB1x8{/youtube}