I'm pleased to announce that Gates Imbeau - GMGates - is the new assistant manager for all of Dobber Sports. Very thankful to have him on board, he's already been a savior - the organization king! Congrats and big thanks to Gates.

Good news for owners of Caps players - Dale Hunter has indeed stepped down as coach. No matter how tightly the next coach pulls in the reins, I don't think it could match what Hunter did. Not arguing with the success at all. Just sayin...

Todd Richards is the new coach of the Blue Jackets - the team removed the interim tag from his title and signed him to a two-year deal.

Well, there you have it. The end of Nikita Filatov's NHL career. Thanks to our friend Alessandro Seren Rosso, the link to the Filatov announcement in which he has signed to play with Salavat Yulaev Ufa in the upcoming season.

The prevalent opinion on the Conn Smythe race seems to be – Dustin Brown or Mike Smith .

And if that wasn't your opinion before, it's probably your opinion after last night's game. Brown had this life-or-death desire to win, a sense of urgency as if it were Game 7. It goes deeper than the two points and seven shots on goal. Or his six hits. Well, actually, that paints the picture about right.

I thought this would be a Mike Smith versus Jonathan Quick thing, and I thought it would be the sizzling, white-hot Quick beating the simmering, white-hot Smith by a nose. But Smith outplayed Quick, despite the loss. He had to, since the first and most of the third periods were all Los Angeles. Smith stopped 44 of 47 shots. Quick let in a shot that was taken from the parking lot. (Clip below)

With the kind of all-around player that he is, and especially with how well he is playing in the postseason in a shutdown role, Jarret Stoll is in for a big payday this summer. He's a UFA, and I think a lot of GM's covet the traits that he has. And naturally, a big contract would mean a bigger role, which should lead to more points. I don't believe the Kings will keep him, given the money they have tied up and the prospects on the way. Though a Cup win would change things.

Slava Voynov had the game of his life, firing six shots on goal and picking up an assist. Next season I think he gets in the 40-point range, as long as he isn't struck by the jinx. We've only seen it in spurts so far, but the coach is gaining trust in this guy with every game.

Jeff Carter continues to struggle, managing just four points so far in the postseason. I'm often asked if I think he'll bounce back next year, and I believe he will. But much depends on his health. The key to a rebound is – a summer to recover, to fully heal, and play at the top of his potential. But if he can't shake the injury bug, which more often than not has something to do with his foot, than I don't see much out of him at all. I have no interest in making an offer for him, but if an owner were to come to me with one and the price is right, I'd be happy to roll the dice.

Anze Kopitar has seven points in his last four contests.

Adrian Aucoin is still on the shelf with an "undisclosed injury".

I saw a headline "Good defense and goaltending does not mean boring hockey". I completely agree. Hockey is great entertainment, nothing comes close. However, those of us 37 and older will remember the offense of the 80s and smile. Remember the 5-4 games between the Oilers and the Flames in the 80s, and tell me that wasn't slightly more enjoyable than say a 1-0 Kings win over the Blues from this era. I don't believe anyone who bemoans low-scoring hockey finds it as bad as it comes across in their words. They would just like to see an extra goal or two each game, and have an underlying fear that perhaps in the seasons ahead the scoring will go down even further.

It's not going back to the "boring days" of before the lockout. The clutching and grabbing isn't

nearly as bad. But now it's all about clogging the front of the net and block shots. It's about moving all five guys in a nice formation towards the puck carrier and almost completely preventing a safe pass to a teammate. Coaching continues to improve. I'm fine with the coaching styles of today. But I don't see why we can't make the power-play rule the way it was 80 years ago – serve the full two minutes. Scoring goes up, but the games that we are watching do not change. It's not a new rule, or a 'drastic change'. It's bringing back the old rule. But the NHL will do something – they've been on record as saying that they monitor the offense and want to keep the goals-for within a certain range. Go above that range and they introduce rules that restrict. Go below that range and they introduce rules that loosen things up.

To check out how you're doing in the standings of my playoff pool, click "playoff pool" up top. Thanks again to our sponsors The Fan Zoo and Cool Hockey – prizes for the pool include a framed and signed Alex Burrows pic from TFZ, as well as a custom jersey from CH.

Former NHLer Patrick Thoresen had a six-point game for Norway at the World Championship Sunday. NHL GMs have been lukewarm about bring him back, but he does have interest in returning to the NHL. But in 2010, when he made a bit of an effort to get a contract, he wasn't successful. So I don't he would be this time (plus I'm not sure of his contract situation in the KHL either). But if you see his name come up beside the words "signs a contract", then pay attention for sure.

Did anyone else find that the Capitals, in the third period Saturday, were playing like the Keystone Cops? What a joke. I've never seen so many horrible gaffes in such an important game. That power play was disgusting. The shorthanded goal should have counted, but it didn't so they got a second chance – and they still whiffed. Ovechkin coasted the entire game, other than maybe five shifts. Disappointed. Wanted to see better hockey on Saturday, especially with the idiots at NBC making me wait three days for that game.

Ilya Bryzgalov will bounce back next season for one key reason – Nicklas Grossman n. Bryz's numbers improved dramatically once Grossmann joined the squad.

Here are my picks for Round 3, along with the rest of the Puck Daddy crew. DobberHockey's picks will be up later today.

The KHL has announced, according to multiple sources, that all returning Russians from the NHL will not count against the salary cap. So give my best to Alex Semin please – take care buddy!

An NHL with a salary cap, cannot compete with the KHL when that league does not have a salary cap (for NHL players). This latest move will lure a LOT of NHLers. I'm not sure of the exact rules, but this could also impact the draft (Yakupov, Grigorenko) in terms of their draft spot slipping a little.

How much money are the Russian billionaires willing to lose to make this thing grow? The

arenas are small, they have had terrible – avoidable – tragedy twice over the last few years… and yet they want to continue going toe to toe with the NHL, and give money to players hand over fist. How long can this sustain itself?

Just another reason why the NHL should go to a strict luxury tax instead of a hard cap.

Is Patrick Kane losing focus? Columns such as this one , giving an opinion on Kane after reports of his partying 'antics' leaked, are being more common. I don't think any less of him as a player in terms of skills or upside. Not one iota. But, and this is just a personal "hunch", if I own him I'm shopping him. The name carries a lot of weight in trade talks still. I would take advantage of that before it changes.

Morris… scores! From the red line!

{youtube}DsA7FOCTios{/youtube}

Puck Daddy pointed me to this clip. Wow – did Alex Goligoski ever get rammed into the boards. He was okay… but so was
Kris Letang
that game when he got clipped, came back… but then later missed a lot of time. Talk about dangerous:

{youtube}ntPQVRRbLjk{/youtube}