

June 02, 2012

Written by Jeff Angus

Friday, 01 June 2012 22:12 - Last Updated Saturday, 02 June 2012 17:27

Huge news out of Russia - Vladimir Tarasenko is leaving the KHL for St. Louis this fall. The gritty and skilled Russian forward isn't a lock to make the Blues, but he's been a star in the KHL for the past few years - he's as good of a bet as you are going to get.

Poolies who own him - this is huge news. Plays with some of the jam that Ovechkin did/does.

Correction on position - Tarasenko is a right winger. Apologies with projecting him as a center. The Blues are quite deep on the RW, but it is easy to assume they would open a spot up for Tarasenko if he earns it.

[The 2012 DobberHockey Prospects Report is available for purchase and download! Check it out here.](#)

Game 1 of the Calder Cup – Norfolk defeated Toronto 3-1.

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[Ben Scrivens](#) was great for the Marlies, stopping 39 of 41 shots.

[Carter Ashton](#) , who has been out for a few weeks with a concussion, scored the lone Toronto goal in his return. Lots of upside – guy was a dominant force in the WHL. Probably a few years from making a consistent NHL impact though. He clearly wasn't ready last season with the Leafs.

[Cory Conacher](#) , the AHL MVP and potentially the next Martin St. Louis, had a goal, an assist, and six shots on goal to lead the Admirals to victory.

[Mark Barberio](#) had a helper and five shots on goal from the back end.

Some notes from our 2007 guide – five years ago:

Carey Price , G

As good as Halak is, Price is going to be much better. Where Halak will be your average NHL starter, Price could very well be a star. This giant of a goaltender reminds some of Ken Dryden. When a netminder has this kind of size and is positionally sound to boot, it becomes almost impossible to find a hole. He backstopped Team Canada to gold at the 2007 World Juniors this past January, giving an indication that he is (and will be) a big-game goaltender. Give him three years and he'll be a starter.

Potential: All-Star starting goaltender.

Ryan Callahan , RW

His heart and work ethic shot him up the Rangers' depth chart until he finally landed a spot on the NHL roster. That spot is there to stay, as Callahan will become a full-fledged NHLer this year. The AHL All-Star will do anything to get his team a goal – there is no corner he won't go into and no net he won't sit in front of. The Rangers plan to play Callahan on a scoring line. He gets better every year (he was drafted in the 15th round into the OHL – 15th round!) and that will surely continue at the NHL level. Despite his rough style, he seems to be quite durable. He

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did have knee surgery in the offseason of 2006, but has yet to have an injury make him miss significant time.

Potential: Second-line player (30-35-65+, 110 PIM)

[Kris Letang](#) , D

It is quite possible that [Kris Letang](#) will be the most prolific blueliner in the NHL since Paul Coffey. On the Penguins? No question it's possible. Letang put up big-time numbers in the QMJHL as an 18-year-old and did it again at 19. He made the Penguins out of training camp last year, scored two goals in seven games before being sent back to the Q for more ice time. He also captained Team Canada at the World Juniors, winning gold. He will likely make the team in the fall, but will be a 30 or 40-point rearguard for two years until

[Sergei Gonchar](#) moves on. When that happens – watch out.

He'll need to work on keeping his PIM's down though.

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Potential: No.1 defenseman on the No.1 power play in the league (20+-50-70+, 120 PIM)

Some thoughts on [Elliott Friedman's 30 Thoughts:](#)

Courtesy Glenn Healy: [Zach Parise](#) 's gone 186 consecutive games (regular season and playoffs) with at least one shot on goal. Last time he played and didn't get one? November 6, 2009 - a 2-1 win over the Islanders.

Not surprising, but impressive nonetheless.

An interesting note for the goalie fans:

The NHL measures legality of goaltender pads by each person's individual height. No goalie

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wore shorter ones by those guidelines than Brodeur, who made a switch around All-Star weekend. He added an inch of length and widened the tops, also by an inch. The changes were to protect the five-hole. His save percentage before All-Star was .895. After, it jumped to .921. The weird thing is he's given up 10 goals through the five-hole in the playoffs - including [Colin Fraser](#)'s series-opener in Game 1.

Dallas coach Glen Gulutzan was on the radio yesterday, and dropped an interesting note – the Stars are thinking about moving [Jamie Benn](#) back to his natural position of wing.

Benn played center last season, and did quite well there. There are pros and cons of playing him at each position – at center he gets the puck more, but also has more defensive responsibilities.

The free agent market for centers is bone-thin (which is why Toronto overpaid for [Mikhail Grabovski](#) and Calgary signed Roman Cervenka from the KHL). The Stars won't be able to replace Benn, and they may struggle to even find an adequate second line center.

Bruins GM Peter Chiarelli confirmed yesterday that [Tim Thomas](#) may sit out the season. Apparently Thomas gave him a few reasons, one of them being family.

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[Tuukka Rask](#) , anyone? I presume [Anton Khudobin](#) would be the back up – his fantasy would increase dramatically, too.

If Thomas does sit out, the Bruins will suspend him. I believe his cap hit will still count since he signed his contract when he was 35+ years old (can't come off the books).

The Bruins could save most of the \$5 million of wasted cap space (although his actual salary is only \$3 million) by putting [Marc Savard](#) on the LITR, freeing up just over \$ 4 million.

A very, very strange situation. I guess family/lifestyle reasons factor in.

I have no inside sources in the Boston room, but something tells me there won't be too many tears shed. Thomas threw his teammates under the bus with his White House situation earlier this season, and Rask is ready to start.

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Mike Gillis told the local papers that he hasn't contacted anyone regarding Luongo. Sure Mike, we believe you.

[Marian Gaborik](#) will be out for up to six months as he undergoes surgery to repair a torn rotator cuff. Brutal injury for the Rangers, and this opens up the door for a rookie or two at the beginning of the season.

[Carl Hagelin](#) has likely solidified his spot with the team. [Mats Zuccarello](#) is going to play in the KHL next season, opening up a roster spot.

Chris Kreider could be ready, but it would be foolish to hand him a roster spot without him earning it. Big difference between an 82-game grind and the whirlwind he experienced in the playoffs (not to take anything away from how good he played).

A huge wildcard, and a player I mentioned a few days ago – the Rangers signed undrafted skilled forward Marek Hrivik, and he had a sensational playoff run with the Connecticut Whale (I know they are using their name as a tribute to the Whalers... but the Whale? Come on).

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Hrivik is big and skilled, and could be a dark horse for a roster spot. He wasn't on my radar until a few weeks ago, and he has moved up very, very quickly.

[Henrik Tallinder](#) is ready to play, but I'm not sure the Devils will make any changes to their defense at the moment. Can't really fault any of their blue liner's in the Game 1 loss.

According to Pierre LeBrun, the LA Kings will be in the hunt for [Zach Parise](#) this offseason. I'm not sure why this news couldn't wait a few days....

In all seriousness, what team won't be in the hunt for Parise? [Rick Nash](#) will make a nice consolation prize. Parise is going to get some ridiculous contract offers, but he doesn't strike me as a guy to chase the money (exclusively, at least, it is always a factor).

Sticking with Mr. LeBrun, the Penguins are going to attempt to sign [Jordan Staal](#) and [Sidney Crosby](#) to contract extensions this summer. Good luck – any negotiations, especially those with young stars, are going to be very challenging with a rising cap (for now) and uncertainty regarding a new CBA.

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The cap increase will apply for the summer, but what happens if the new CBA (the current one expires in mid September) has some changes in it that decrease the cap?

There may be a grandfathering period, or an amnesty contract clause teams can apply to a player, but that is all just speculation at this point in time.

The Ducks signed American forward Ryan Lasch, who had 62 points in Finland this past year. He played on the recent American squad at the World Championships, and the Ducks must have liked what they saw. He was a teammate of [Bobby Ryan](#) 's growing up, as well.

Finally, the announcement we have been waiting for. The Predators came to terms with..... Daniel Bang?

Bang, a 25-year-old, had 18 points in 50 games with AIK of the SEL this past season. He is 6-3 and over 200 pounds – could compete for a roster spot this fall in Nashville, but more likely he will start off in the AHL.

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Right now, the Capitals have six defensemen under contract, not including [John Carlson](#) , [Mike Green](#)

, or

[Dennis Wideman](#)

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Roster spot locks are [Karl Alzner](#) , [Dmitry Orlov](#) , [John Erskine](#) , [Jeff Schultz](#) , and [Roman Hamrik](#) .

I don't see [Tom Poti](#) coming back – the Caps will find a way to get him off the books.

Colorado needs to be patient with [Tyson Barrie](#) and [Stefan Elliott](#) . Elliott, especially, proved he wasn't ready for the NHL yet (I was wrong on his NHL readiness last season).

He's a great skater, but he seemed to struggle with his decision making in the faster NHL.

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Patience with defensemen is never a bad idea – look at [Slava Voynov](#) with Los Angeles. He spent four full AHL seasons before getting the call up (although his AHL career started at the age of 18).

An interesting read on Marc Crawford's [impending legal obligations](#) with the Moore/Bertuzzi trial, and how that may affect him getting hired in Montreal.

Since there were no NHL games on Friday, I decided to do some offseason speculating. Premature, you bet. With Lidstrom retiring, the Wings will have a ton of cap space to toss around (they already did assuming he was going to come back... so things are going to be very interesting in Hockeytown).

For next season, Detroit will return Niklas Kronwall, [Jonathan Ericsson](#), [Ian White](#), [Jakub Kindl](#), and [Brandon Smith](#).

[Brad Stuart](#) is a goner, and [Kyle Quincey](#) is an RFA (who will likely be brought back).

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Kronwall is ideally a good #2/3 defenseman. Quincey a #4. Ericsson can play like a #3 or a #7, depending on the night.

Smith has top four upside, but he isn't there yet. Same goes for Kindl, although he projects as more of a two-way guy than Smith, who should be an offensive contributor for the Wings quite soon.

Even if the Wings successfully lure [Ryan Suter](#) out of Nashville (something everyone seems to be speculating), they still need to add another defenseman. Some potential pairings:

Suter-White

Kronwall-Smith

Kindl-Ericsson

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A decent defensive group, but something tells me the Wings won't want to promise starting spots to both Smith and Kindl out of camp. There are several interesting free agency options, including [Barret Jackman](#) and [Jason Garrison](#) . There is also the trade route – Vancouver will likely look to give [Keith Ballard](#) a fresh start, as the talented two-way defenseman has never fit in with the Canucks.

Imagine Ballard and Kronwall on the same pairing? Both like to throw hits from the left side, so it may be tough to have them paying together, but opposing forwards would definitely have to keep their heads on a swivel.

Canuck fans should be excited with the potential of [Zack Kassian](#) . He is putting in monster work this offseason, as he quite obviously didn't have the stamina and fitness level to be an NHL regular just yet. He started off great after the trade from Buffalo before fading down the stretch and into the postseason.

Even with the Kassian acquisition, the Canucks want to add some youth and size. In a two-part column series, I have mentioned six players they could target, including Chicago's Kyle Beach and Tampa Bay's [Brett Connolly](#) .

Read [Part I](#) and [Part II](#)

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My buddy Rhys Richards takes a look at the [end of an era in Detroit:](#)

[Nicklas Lidstrom](#) is Hockeytown. He has prepared many Red Wings for his departure. Because of him, [Henrik Zetterberg](#), who it is believed will become the next captain, [Pavel Datsyuk](#), Niklas Kronwall, and others will continue to make Hockeytown meet the standard that he set.

As General Manager Ken Holland once told the Detroit Free Press, “[Lidstrom]’s Picasso. They think differently. It’s a gift.”

The words of another Picasso resonate even more. As Tampa Bay General Manager and former Red Wing great Steve Yzerman told yahoo.com, “[Lidstrom]’s going to go down as one of the all-time best defensemen ever to play.

Having played with him and watched him closely from his first game in the NHL — people know about it now, but we said it all along — you have to watch him closely to appreciate how good he is, what a great athlete he is, because he makes the position look so easy. He was just a ... he is a special athlete.”

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And so, Detroit, the NHL, and the hockey world will and should bid a fond farewell to the person teammates and others often called "the Perfect Human."

Farewell, Nick:

{youtube}IX1uvEsDnag{/youtube}